Parental Involvement, Essential Life Skills, Struggles and Coping Strategies in Assisting Primary Pupils

Ma. Katrina S. Esplana

Abstract

This study determined parental involvement, life skills, struggles and their coping strategies in assisting primary pupils on their homeschooling during the pandemic. Descriptive-correlation research design was utilized in this study using mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between parents' involvement, life skills, struggles, and coping strategies. There were 150 parents comprising half of the entire population of a public elementary school in the province. The results showed strong parental involvement in the homeschooling of the pupils with decision-making as the essential life skill necessary to assist their children. Moreover, learning outcomes came out to be the most struggled factor. To address the issues, parent's coping strategies include maintaining good communication with society, family and self. The findings also revealed positive significant relationship between parental involvement, life skills, and struggles of remote learning with their coping strategies. This study suggests that building a positive atmosphere in education requires uniting the work at home and school. Listening and showing care about their point of view, involving them in decision making, and alternative solutions to problems can help assess parents that concern children. With these results, it was highly recommended for the school administrators to provide a support system between the school community and parents. Parents should be informed about the progress of their children through one-to-one, conferences, online or face-to-face meetings and instill in them how they address family issues that affect children's behavior in school.

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About the author:
Student, Laguna State Polytechnic University - San Pablo City Campus and Elementary Grade Teacher II, San Lorenzo Elementary School - Lucena City

1. Introduction

From the time of birth, a child's first teacher is the parent. As the child grows, parental roles typically involve the guiding, teaching, and raising of children to become good community members. Parents are more benefactors where formal instruction is concerned; guaranteeing that kids have the required arrangement and backing to be admitted, besides in situations where guardians have assumed the full liability of self-teaching with their children (Benjamin, 1993; Ceka & Murati, 2016; Emerson et al., 2012). Parental involvement is important in primary education. This is widely expressed by various experts, including Plowden, who created the perception that schools can promote good communication with parents about various activities in the school and promote excellent parenting support. According to Park et. al (2020), parents' involvement in educating their children contributes in achieving all aspects of child's developmental tasks. The Centre for Child Well-Being (2010) asserts that parental involvement in their children's education not only improves their attitudes, morale, and academic performance in various subjects but also endorses better social adaptation and behavior. These premises were heightened with the impact of the COVID-19 requiring parents to teach their children during the shift of educational platform.

Since the majority of schools shifted to Learn from Home (LfH) and online e-learning, the education system advocates the essential obligation of kids' schooling to the hands of their parents. This underlines the responsibility of parents as main educators (Hapsari et al., 2020). As UNICEF (2020) asserts that the pandemic affects kids' well-being, safety, growth, and future, parents should be empathetic if their children have given indications of being pressured. With this, Sumardiono (2020) questions whether parents can substitute the places of class instructors and subject educators who have been school assistants. The significant change in the living conditions of families because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Wang et al., 2020), might also change the way parents assist their children during their homeschooling.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education has developed and implemented guidelines, plans, and programs to continue education during the pandemic period (DepEd, 2020). As such, the pure online blended learning and modular teaching approach require parents' involvement in the learning process. In particular, majority of schools in Lucena City, Quezon Province utilized blended learning. In this model, guardians need to encourage and direct their

children through modular lessons and online classes during distance learning. Since guidance and counseling are essential components of any educational institution, the counselors' service is not only to those students of the institution but as well as to the stakeholders, particularly the parents. This study argues the parents' capabilities in assisting their children in the primary schools. The parents handling children at the primary level need to adjust and cope with their young in the formative years. They need more understanding in applying set of life skills that will have positive outcomes in the challenge of blended learning during the pandemic. Thus, this study aims to determine the parental involvement, their essential life skills, struggles of remote learning, and the coping strategies for having a child in the primary level.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Parental Involvement

In Philippine society, parenting is crucial as the family is involved and is part of someone's life; however, the society in which Filipino families are used to has changed over the years. As the child's training changes in many settings, the parents' concern is on how they can ensure that these settings can help their children's adaptation skills (Ochoa & Torre, 2017). According to Bartolome et al. (2018), parental involvement tells about how interested a parent is in teaching her kids. It leads to quantitative improvement in student performance across all frameworks (Dixon, 2018). In addition, Sohyun and Kim (2018) argued that parents who saw involvement as an obligation were interested in home school clubs and were unaware of their role in supporting non-academic improvement movements.

According to Lilawati (2020), the parents assist and monitor their children's completion of assignments given by the teacher during distance learning. However, it was reported that only 0.9 percent of parents managed their children's play and learning activities at home (Sari & Maningtyas, 2020). Hamlin (2018) suggests that parents develop skills and promote mental well-being for locally established learning terms because parenting is different for elementary school grades (Jhang & Lee, 2018). According to De La Vega (2015), the involvement of parents is highly encouraged in their children's education to amplify the variety of humans concerned in making important decisions associated with a school's organization, operation, and academics. Studies suggest that parents must possess management skills, leadership and voice.

Management Teams. The main concept of management teams is linked to contingency management theory, an organizational theory that is based on the premise that there is no universally applicable system that can be used by all organizations in all circumstances (Emmanuel et al., 2014). It refers to an individual's or an organization's capacity to lead and coordinate a group of people to complete a certain job (Richter & Lechner, 2011). In the school setting, Cabangon (2020) found that parents become more willing to communicate with the teachers and school when they get involved in the school in terms of management teams. As such, primary education pupils boost their spirits and encourage them to do well in class if they see their parents participate in school's activities and programs whether online or face to face interaction. Meanwhile, Sakamoto (2020) found that parents have already provided an optimal level of learning support even before they participated in school management.

Shared Leadership. Shared leadership is fluid and mirrors a culture of cooperation (Bakir, 2013). Although shared and distributed leadership are two different approaches to leadership, they have a lot in common (Goksoy, 2016). Leadership sharing is broadly classified as teacher involvement in school-wide and instructional decision-making (Chen et al., 2016). In this context, the study of Garen et al. (2021) revealed that parents are more engaged in communicating with the teachers and the school, rather than collaborating with the school community and engaging in decision making with them. As shared leadership can facilitate a team's efforts to accomplish its tasks and support the striving for organizational goals (Klasmeiere & Rowold, 2020), Osorio et al. (2021) suggest that information intervention not only increased parental involvement within schools but also improved parenting behavior outside of schools to support children's learning concerning shared leadership between teachers and parents.

Voice of Parents. Parental voice include goals, hopes, wishes, and dreams for their children, and information that is not traditionally renowned in the educational world. It can also take form in concern, frustration, or anger over isolation, alienation, or disrespect in the educational process (McKenna & Millen, 2013). The use of parental voice is commonly promoted as a powerful tool for improving educational standards (Brown et al., 2020; Bauch & Goldring, 1998). Parental involvement, in terms of the voice of respondents, has a great impact on the school and students. Parents, students, and other members of the school community should have a significant role in influencing school decision-making (Brown et al., 2019).

2.2. Life Skills of Parents

Being a parent involves something beyond parenting. Parents additionally have their interests, wishes, issues, qualities, and needs to satisfy different roles throughout every day (Gravesteijn, 2015; Van der Pas, 2005). Likewise, adding to this well-being are adequately evolved parental abilities like predictable disciplinary practices and utilization of recognition, which can have a good impact on their children's behavior (Vermulst et al., 2012). The key to promoting parent participation is assuring them that group support would help them strengthen abilities they already have (Häggman- Laitila & Pietilä, 2015). Studies suggest that parents possess the following skills.

Communication and Interpersonal Skills. According to Mone (2014), communication is a process in which an individual expresses and communicates his or her feelings, views, and information using common symbols to others. Similarly, Programme on Mental Health (2017) asserts that people relate in positive ways with interpersonal skills. In interpersonal connections, communication skills are crucial. Communication is the base of relationships, and efficient communication occurs when the message sent is the same as the message received (Erozcan, 2013). As to parenting, Runcan et al. (2021) state that the better parent communicates with the child, the better the child-parent interaction will be. Furthermore, the attention of both parents and children reawakened interpersonal connection between them. Openness was built in a modest way to toughen these relationships (Triwardani & Chaerowati, 2019). Similarly, parent-child dynamics have a practical influence on family life (Estonia, 2021).

Decision-making and Problem Solving. Problem-solving is frequently based on the use of algorithms, whereas decision-making is based on intuition and experience (Fazli, 2020). According to Nulsen (2017), parents can become self-reliant when they learn to teach their children about problems rather than solving or ignoring them. With this, Zhang (2020) believes that if parents show their trust and understanding of their children during discussions and are willing to collaborate with them in making decisions, these students' academic performance is likely to benefit. Similarly, the study of Shokoohi-Yekta et al. (2011) showed that learning problem-solving skills offers a chance for better marital communication in addition to developments in parent-child interactions. Parents' participation results to a reduction in children's problematic behaviors and increase in problem-solving and parenting strategies (Shokoohi-Yekta et al., 2018).

Creative Thinking and Critical Thinking. People's dynamic abilities are enhanced by creative thinking. Individuals that practice creative thinking are able to respond to everyday situations more adaptably and flexibly, as well as think differently than others (Erawan, 2010). On the other hand, Lakshmana (2016) defines critical thinking as a capacity to examine data and encounters objectively. Critical thinking can add to well-being by assisting with perceiving and evaluating the components that impact manners and conduct, like morals, peer pressure, and the media. In the context of education, elementary education today aims to help students assess large volumes of information, think critically and creatively, solve difficult problems, and communicate effectively, in addition to teaching reading and writing abilities (Taneri, 2010). Most parents believed that assisting their children with their homework, acquiring diverse toys and books, and allowing their children to play games freely were sufficient ways to promote their creativity. Parents who understand the effects of toys, equipment, games, and activities on children's creative thinking skills can easily build 'creativity-developer' home environments (Taneri, 2012).

Self-Awareness and Empathy. Self-awareness entails recognizing one's own identity, character, strengths and limitations, as well as desires and dislikes. It is frequently a requirement for efficient communication and interpersonal relationships, as well as the development of empathy for others (Ghosh, 2015). This capacity helps parents respond and associate with individuals and their children in ways that are consistent with who they need to be (Tartakovsky, 2014). Communication would be one-way without empathy and can help accept and tolerate individuals who are different (Program on Psychological Wellness, 2017). To avoid problems, parents must always show empathy to their children for them to always feel that they are being taken care of. In this context, Krol and Bratz, (2021) support factors that show a clear, coherent, and stable sense of self as important for empathic responding (Weisz & Zaki, 2017). Parents believe in the relevance of empathy and their part in their children's development of empathy.

Coping with Stress and Emotion. Parents who taught their children at home during the coronavirus pandemic had enormous difficulties in this respect due to special circumstances that limited the possibility of constructive coping (Parczewska, 2021). Parental stress is when parents experience parental demands that conflict with their expectations or when parents lack the financial means to meet their needs (National Academies of Sciences, 2016) which is distinct from other types of stress that parents may face (such as marital or work stress) (Holly et al., 2019). According to Nalla (2015), managing stress means identifying the causes of stress,

recognizing how it affects personal lives, and learning to change environment and lifestyle to relax and act in a way that helps control stress levels. As good parenting requires high adaptability to stress and emotion (Cabangon, 2020), parents must focus on reducing symptoms of stress and burnout by bolstering coping and problem-solving skills, emotion control mechanisms, as well as the ability to apply talents in a flexible manner (Anclair 2017; Eccleston et al., 2012).

Balancing Responsibilities. Researchers have identified four distinct problems: difficulty to balance the needs of parents 'employment and learners, difficulty to help a few children study at home, lack of personal balance, and feeling overwhelmed by parents (Garbe et al., 2020). Despite the circumstances, parents took time, even though they were only partially involved in learning and have spare time at home, to assist their children's learning activities (Lase et al., 2020). Parents thought that there was too much activity to do in the given time (Mateo, 2020). As reports show that the implementation of new normal in education is challenging (Olivo, 2021), Ribeiro et al. (2021) found that online education can be a significant investment in time for parents, especially low-educated parents who have difficulty balancing work and telecommuting with school activities. With the new educational platform, parents must keep a positive response to the challenges in monitoring their children while having time for themselves and other responsibilities that may affect how children participate in academic activities (Bhamani et al., 2020; Greenlee & Reid, 2020).

2.3. Parent's Coping Strategies

Parents agreed that school support is vital especially because they need to balance their work and duties at home for their children. They are convinced that teachers who make efforts in guiding their children virtually are a big help for learning to be possible. However, the rise of online learning is a big leap in the educational system. From traditional teaching to remote learning, it leads families to have a stronger relationships and act as instant learning facilitators. Other extended families were able to lend a hand to working parents to be able to cope with the changes. (Salin et al., 2020). There are various coping strategies that may help parents during the new normal in education. These include teacher's virtual support, support from specialists such as treatment and other social agencies, social contact with friends and relatives through digital

platforms, shared responsibilities, family time, and spending quality time alone (Salin et al., 2020).

3. Methodology

This study used descriptive-correlational research design. This design relates one variable to another variable that contributes to the output of the study. The data come from self-reports collected from questionnaires or interviews, or through observations usually numerical in nature. This method is utilized to gather current conditions; this research design is acceptable for this study. This method was used basically to describe the parental involvement, their essential life skills, and struggles of remote learning, as well as their coping strategies to the primary pupils during Covid-19 pandemic in blended-home learning setup.

The 150 respondents of the study were parents of primary pupils which comprise 50% of the total population of each grade level in one public school in Quezon Province. The samples were selected randomly.

The study used a researcher-made questionnaire as the main tool for gathering data. It was composed of: respondent's profile, extent of parental involvement to the primary pupils, level of essential life skills of parents, level of struggles of parents and the coping strategies of parents. The statements were rated using a 5-Likert scale format of Very High to Very Low. The survey tool was evaluated for internal consistency using Cronbach alpha. The computed Cronbach alpha values were .589, .856, .838, .464, .524, .608, .640, .415, .544, and .596 which clearly indicate that result was acceptable. The pilot testing was conducted to parents of San Lorenzo Elementary School.

Upon the approval of Division Superintendent for the conduct of the study on April 4, 2022, the data gathering was administered from April 11 - 22, 2022. As a preliminary step, the researcher personally approached the principal and gave the letter of intent to conduct the study. The researcher then asked the parents of the primary pupils if they were willing to accept and help as respondents of the study. Questionnaire was given through grade leader advisers and were collected through them as well.

4. Findings and Discussion

Table 1

Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of the Responses in terms of Parental Involvement

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Management Teams	3.68	0.66	High
2. Shared Leadership	3.55	0.63	High
3. Voice	3.57	0.58	High
OVERALL	**3.60**	**0.62**	**High**

Legend: Very High (4.50-5.00); High (3.50-4.49); Moderate (2.50-3.49); Low (1.50-2.49); Very Low (1.00-1.49)

Table 1 illustrates that the mean scores of management teams is the highest among other parental involvement which is 3.68. This means that the respondents on the average are highly involved on the first indicator more than the last two indicators. Based on the obtained values, it is clear that the respondents should be more involved in terms of management teams. When they eventually feel that they play a critical part in the academic progress of their children, they will tend to support all school activities and be attentive, participative, and active parents who always think of the betterment of their children. Moreover, it is always important for them to feel that their voice is highly appreciated to continue involve themselves in school.

Table 2

Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses in terms of Essential Life Skills of Parents

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Communication and Interpersonal Skills	3.91	0.60	High
2. Decision-Making and Problem Solving	3.96	0.71	High
3. Creative and Critical Thinking	3.84	0.62	High
4. Self-Awareness and Empathy	3.93	0.61	High
5. Coping with Stress and Emotion	3.91	0.59	High
OVERALL	**3.91**	**0.63**	**High**

Legend: Very High (4.50-5.00); High (3.50-4.49); Moderate (2.50-3.49); Low (1.50-2.49); Very Low (1.00-1.49)

Table 2 shows that the mean score of decision-making and problem solving (3.96) is the highest among the other life skills. This means that the respondents on the average, often observed most on the importance of this life skill between parents and primary education pupils. In terms of the values of the standard deviation, coping with stress and emotion has the most consistent responses since it has the least value of 0.63. However, the responses are more spread out or dispersed in terms of decision-making and problem solving since it has the greatest standard deviation value. Problem-solving is a way to find new and creative solutions to situations or a problem. Relative to this, problem-solving is often based on the application of algorithms, while decision-making is based on experience and instinct (Fazli, 2020). As parents, the way they deal with problems or discrepancies in their relationships affects their children. When parents find a solution together, they can help the whole family to have a happier, healthier, and stronger relationship. Children always tend to rely on their parents; thus, consistent efforts must be given; careful decisions must be made; and resistance to pressure must be considered to avoid future conflicts.

Table 3

Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses in terms of Struggles of Remote Learning

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Balancing Responsibilities	3.40	0.71	Moderate
2. Non-Positive Learner Motivation	3.37	0.67	Moderate
3. Accessibility	3.42	0.79	Moderate
4. Learning Outcomes	3.65	0.71	High
OVERALL	**3.46**	**0.72**	**Moderate**

Legend: Very High (4.50-5.00); High (3.50-4.49); Moderate (2.50-3.49); Low (1.50-2.49); Very Low (1.00-1.49)

Table 3 shows that the mean score of learning outcomes (3.65) is the highest among the other struggles of remote learning. Moreover, learning outcomes has same standard deviation value of 0.71 with balancing responsibility having a mean of 3.40. Based on the obtained values, it is clear that respondents are more concerned with the effects on how their children learn with distance learning or none at all. Generally, parents are moderately concerned with the challenges of remote learning than the other indicators. Since students were also found to be inadequately prepared for various e-learning and academic competencies and are less motivated to use the

learning management systems (Parkes et al., 2014), parents find it difficult to achieve the required learning outcomes as they assist their primary school children at home.

Table 4

Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses in terms of Coping Strategies

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Macro-environmental Level	3.70	0.63	Often Observed
2. Relationship Level	3.96	0.65	Often Observed
3. Individual Level	3.86	0.52	Often Observed
OVERALL	**3.78**	**0.60**	**Often Observed**

Legend: Always Observed (4.50-5.00); Often Observed (3.50-4.49); Sometimes Observed (2.50-3.49); Rarely Observed (1.50-2.49); Not Observed (1.00-1.49)

Table 4 illustrates that the mean score of relationship level is the highest among the other coping strategies, which is 3.96. This means that the respondents 'often observed' this coping strategy within the family. In terms of the values of standard deviation, the same coping strategy has the most consistent responses. However, responses are more spread out or dispersed since it has the greatest value. This explains the dynamics of family. The age of the parents, number of children, education of the parents, employment, and economic status significantly affect the kind of coping mechanisms employed by the respondents. Similarly, Alontaga and Durban (2012) found that coping strategies of parents are with developmental delay.

Table 5

Test of Significant Relationship Between the Parental Involvement to Primary Education and Their Coping Strategies

Parental Involvement	COPING STRATEGIES			
	Macro-environmental	Relationship	Individual	Composite Mean
1. Management Teams	.259**	.498**	.553**	.525**
2. Shared Leadership	.345**	.452**	.498**	.520**
3. Voice	.348**	.407**	.365**	.450**
Composite Mean	**.349****	**.503****	**.527****	**.553****

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 depicts that parental involvement has a positive significant relationship with coping strategies (r = .553, p < .01) of parents in the primary grade. It implies that when there is parental involvement in terms of management teams, shared leadership and voice, parents tend to cope stress be it in macro-environmental, relationship or individual level.

Parental involvement and coping strategies are significantly related in the sense that collaboration not only helps promote positive behavior, but it can also help reduce challenging behaviors which often times lead to stress and when not managed well will lead to a deeper related-issues. For example, when parents let their children see that they support all school activities and are concerned in their educational progress just like attending homeroom meetings in particular, children acknowledge it and become more responsible. Moreover, it is important for teachers to seize every opportunity to ensure that parents are on board as active team players in their children's education.

Table 6

Test of Significant Relationship Between the Essential Life Skills of Parents and Their Coping Strategies

Essential Life Skills	COPING STRATEGIES			
	Macro-environmental	Relationship	Individual	Composite Mean
1. Communication and Interpersonal Skills	.230**	.485**	.498**	.487**
2. Decision-Making and Problem Solving	.130	.390**	.325**	.340**
3. Creative and Critical Thinking	.280**	.419**	.347**	.421**
4. Self-Awareness and Empathy	.270**	.427**	.346**	.419**
5. Coping with Stress and Emotion	.227**	.358**	.348**	.375**
Composite Mean	**.259****	**.477****	**.427****	**.468****

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows that the there is a positive significant relationship with the essential life skills and coping strategies (r = .468, p < .01) of the parents in the primary grade. This means that the high level of life skills of the parents would help children in the primary grade cope with macro-environmental level, relationship level, and individual level concerns. Parents of children in the primary grade experience more stress and a greater challenge of distance learning during

the pandemic, such as online classes, assistance in the completion of module, main facilitator of learning in a home-school setup, for they don't have the training and knowledge to teach basic reading and the foundation skills that should be taught in the formative years in the school. This finding is supported by Agaton and Cueto (2020) that the abrupt move in education from classroom to home schooling presented learners and their parents with a variety of hurdles, including educational, financial, and technical issues. Despite their difficulties, parents continue to guide their children. Thus, it is critical to develop strategies for dealing with all of these pressures.

Table 7

Test of Significant Relationship Between the Struggles in Remote Learning of Parents and Their Coping Strategies

Struggles of Remote Learning	COPING STRATEGIES			
	Macro-environmental	Relationship	Individual	Composite Mean
1. Balancing Responsibilities	.132	.171*	.059	.147
2. Non-Positive Learner Motivation	.193*	.170*	.134	.200*
3. Accessibility	.122	.087	.065	.110
4. Learning Outcomes	.075	.051	.009	.055
Composite Mean	**.170***	**.154**	**.086**	**.165***

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 reveals the correlation analysis between struggles of remote learning and coping strategies in terms of balancing responsibility, non-positive learner motivation, accessibility, and learning outcomes. After applying the Pearson r statistical tool, it was revealed that parents' struggle of remote learning and coping strategies obtained .165 composite mean showing significant positive relationship. Generally, the extent of parents' struggles of remote learning and coping strategies is significant but weak. This only means these struggles are not much of a hindrance for the parents to cope in different levels of life in general. As Mercader and Abadiano (2020) disclosed in their study that many parents have struggled to get their children to learn, many have attempted to welcome technology and deal with the struggles.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that parents are highly involved in terms of management teams, shared leadership, and voice, with high level of essential life skills. The primary issues and struggles of parents in remote learning was the achievement of the learning outcomes for the primary school subjects. Meanwhile, the primary coping strategy often observed by the parents was the relationship with the family.

With the study findings, parents and teachers may conduct a re-orientation program and may tackle the challenges that they experience in delivering modular learning to strengthen parents' involvement and engagement in school activities as the school partner. The guidance counselor may opt to provide virtual webinars for parents regarding the mental health of their children. The educational institutions may also provide a positive, conducive and a healthy learning environment for students and working atmosphere for the parents and the entire school community even during face to face or distance learning modalities.

The results of this study may help the school develop and implement a program for the parents for the development of skills and ability of pupils at the primary level during school crises.

Acknowledgement

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