

Facilitating Learning at Home: The Experiences of Parents With Multiple Children

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Abstract: Facilitating Learning at Home: The Experiences of Parents with Multiple Children.

Objectives: The study explored the experiences of parents who are assisting multiple children in accomplishing learning tasks. **Methods:** The study employed a phenomenological research design using semi-structured interviews. Ten parents were purposefully selected to participate in the study. All of them are female and working mothers. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. **Findings:** The gathered data and analysis of the findings identified five emerging themes capped into FOCUS (Facilitating learning tasks, Older siblings help, Challenging and lack of confidence, Understanding, and Safety and security) describing parents with multiple children experiences in time of pandemic. **Conclusions:** One conclusion states that parents' lack of skills and expertise regarding how to teach their children is one of the most challenging aspects.

Keywords: distance learning modality, facilitators, parents with multiple children, lived experiences, challenges.

Abstrak: Memfasilitasi Pembelajaran di Rumah: Pengalaman Orang Tua dengan Banyak Anak.

Tujuan: Studi ini mengeksplorasi pengalaman orang tua yang membantu banyak anak dalam menyelesaikan tugas belajar. **Metode:** Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian fenomenologi dengan wawancara semi terstruktur. Sepuluh orang tua sengaja dipilih untuk berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Semuanya berjenis kelamin perempuan dan ibu bekerja. Analisis data menggunakan analisis tematik. **Temuan:** Data yang dikumpulkan dan analisis temuan mengidentifikasi lima tema yang muncul yang dibatasi oleh FOCUS (Memfasilitasi tugas belajar; Bantuan saudara yang lebih tua; Menantang dan kurang percaya diri; memahami; dan Keselamatan dan keamanan) yang menggambarkan orang tua dengan banyak pengalaman anak di masa pandemi. **Kesimpulan:** Salah satu kesimpulan menyatakan bahwa kurangnya keterampilan dan keahlian orang tua tentang cara mengajar anak-anak mereka adalah salah satu aspek yang paling menantang.

Kata kunci: modalitas pembelajaran jarak jauh, fasilitator, orang tua dengan banyak anak, pengalaman hidup, tantangan.

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■ INTRODUCTION

The world was stirred by the pandemic's devastating effect that every component of society has been tested to overcome its hurdles. In a short period of time, COVID-19 has impacted day-to-day lives, enterprises, and global commerce and travel patterns (Haleem, Javaid, & Vaishya, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020, October 13). The education sector was confronted with the need to shift gears in order to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic's consequences. This has led to the discontinuation of face-to-face instruction in schools, colleges, and institutions. With the outbreak of COVID-19, schools had the opportunity to lay the groundwork for the introduction of digital learning (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021;

Schleicher, 2020; Tria, 2020). There is a chance that the COVID-19 problem will alter global outlook, but it also has the potential to teach humanity about the changes that education must undergo if it is to properly prepare young learners for what lies ahead (d'Orville, 2020). Investment on education may be jeopardized in the next few years as public money is diverted to health and social welfare. Long-term public spending on education is also at risk, notwithstanding some countries' short-term stimulus measures (Schleicher, 2020).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued DepEd Order No. 012 s. 2020, also known as the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BELCP), should deliver education during times of crisis while ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of students, teachers, and DepEd employees. It has maintained a steadfast position that "*Learning must continue.*" DepEd established guidelines for the management of COVID-19 scenarios, as well as regulations for the evaluation of the classroom, educators' work from home and webinars, upgrades, graduation, and recognition, and a variety of options for distant learning during class suspension

periods and similar situations. Diverse modes of remote learning were introduced, including Modular Distance Learning (MDL), Online Distance Learning (ODL), and Television or Radio-Based Instruction (Llego, 2020). The execution of ODL, on the other hand, would be problematic for students with restricted internet connection, few gadgets, and those from low-income backgrounds (Tria, 2020). Thus, the majority of Filipino students prefer modular learning to online learning (Hernando-Malipot, 2020).

Consequently, this is completely unfamiliar ground for everyone, especially for parents, who will play a significant role in the new normal setting. Learning will be shifted to kids' homes, with parents taking on some of the duties of teachers. Several concerns have been expressed as a result of these developments, including what kind of education will be provided at home, how parents will manage their children's learning, particularly those of toddlers, and what class schedule will be followed by parents who have full-time jobs (Bendijo, 2020; Hernando-Malipot, 2020). Thus, parents are strongly engaged in the MDL in terms of motivation, coaching and tutoring, and monitoring student compliance (Bhamani, et al., 2020; Gumapac, Aytona, & Alba, 2021; Agaton & Cueto, 2021). It was also clear that parents are quite involved, particularly in the preparation of healthy meals, the buying of school supplies, and involvement in meetings to explicitly encourage and motivate (Gumapac, Aytona, & Alba, 2021). As tutors and coaches, they utilized strategies and techniques to assist their children, such as translating items into the mother tongue, scheduling and monitoring activities, and creating goals. Similarly, parents also inspect completed outputs, organize learning kits, and communicate with school.

In addition, parents have encountered a variety of obstacles, including the new mode of learning in a virtual environment; instruction

delivery; dissatisfying academic outcomes; financial struggles while continuing to work for the family during lockdown; difficulties with the use and access to technology; and personal issues related to health, stress, and learning style (Agaton & Cueto, 2021). It also reveals the impact of COVID on children's learning, the assistance provided by schools, and tactics employed by caregivers at home to assist children in their educational endeavors (Bhamani, et al., 2020). Additionally, it is critical to consider the different aspects to ensure learning at home as played by parents, including educational experience, navigating roles and responsibilities, recognizing privilege, routine, monitoring and communicating about COVID, vacillating emotions, connection, and meaningful experiences (Weaver & Swank, 2020).

On the other hand, schools conduct parents' orientation before opening classes to inform parents or guardians of the learners about the current educational setup, things to prepare, and other information. As stated in DepEd Order no. 29 s.2021, *Brigada Eskwela* (School Brigade) and *Oplan Balik Eskwela* (Oplan Back to School) are implemented in the run-up to the start of classes, with a particular emphasis on information dissemination and the establishment of partnerships that will complement the Department of Education's efforts to ensure quality basic education. However, this does not go far enough to help students and their parents with distance learning. A more robust program of homeroom guidance in public schools was put in place by DepEd (Llego, 2021).

The said program provides guided opportunities for learners during Homeroom Guidance to supplement their educational activities. Academic Development, Personal and Social Development, and Career Development are the three aspects of Homeroom Guidance (HG). Academic Development Domain involves

all of a learner's academic demands and concerns. The Personal and Social Development Domain is concerned with concerns or issues relating to learners' uniqueness (self), relationships with others, and community interaction. The Career Development Domain encompasses all occupational and work-related difficulties and issues encountered by learners. This entails the learning of skills, attitudes, and knowledge that will help students to successfully transition from school to the workplace and from job to job throughout their lives. Usually, class advisers conduct one hour or more of *Kamustahan* (synchronous online meeting) with their classes once a week.

Despite the efforts, the parents still experience difficulties in assisting their children in this kind of modality as dictated from the results of some study. While numerous studies have examined the role of parents in the new normal, there has only been a small amount of research done specifically in the Philippines. Additionally, the majority of study publications did not explicitly discuss parents' experiences aiding learning with multiple children. As a result, it is deemed necessary to conduct this research in order to better understand the experiences of parents who have multiple children taking the task as facilitators of learning at home and how they managed to cope up. Thus, provides information on how schools could possibly assist parents in the new normal setting.

■ METHOD

Descriptive phenomenological research design was used to explore the experiences of the parents with multiple children facilitating learning at home in the new normal. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenological research is a qualitative technique in which the researcher elucidates the core of human experiences with a phenomenon as recounted by study participants.

Likewise, descriptive phenomenology focuses on uncovering the “essence” or “essential structure” of any phenomenon being studied, i.e., the characteristics that distinguish it from anything else (Morrow, Rodriguez, & King, 2015).

A total of ten participants (all females) were purposely selected from two elementary schools in Laguna and Quezon provinces for the academic year of 2021-2022. Purposive sampling ensured that all participants encountered the phenomenon of interest. Likewise, the age of the participants ranged from 24 to 49 years old with 2 to 5 children studying under the MDL modality. Majority of the participants are high school graduates (70%) while others are college (20%) and highschool (10%) undergraduates. and all of them are also working parents.

Semi-structured interview questions were developed by the researchers in order to capture the lived experiences of the participants. This provided the researchers with the opportunity to learn about the participants’ perspectives on how they aid their children while participating in the modular distance learning modality. Participants were given ample opportunity to clarify their

responses, and at various times, the researchers offered follow-up questions to go deeper into their experiences. This was done in order to make the interview conversational and open for everyone.

Before the conduct of the interview, the researchers obtained permission from school principals to investigate the school’s record with parents who had multiple children under the MDL modality. Since face-to-face transactions are very limited to the area of study, the researchers sent letters to the parents through their Messenger account, requesting permission to participate in the study. An online semi-structured interview using the Google Meet or Messenger was then conducted for every participant who granted permission to be part of the study. Apart from the letter, the researchers discussed the ethical considerations and indicated that the discussions would be recorded.

The recordings were initially transcribed verbatim and, if necessary, any personally identifiable or highly identifiable information was removed from the transcripts. To analyze the data, thematic analysis was used. The Quirkos

Table 1. Profile of participants

Parti- cipant	Gender	Age	Status	Highest Educational Attainment	Work/ Occupation	Number of children
A	Female	39	Cohabitation	High School Graduate	Caretaker	3
B	Female	39	Married	High School Graduate	Businesswoman	3
C	Female	24	Married	College Undergraduate	Tailor	3
D	Female	37	Married	High School Undergraduate	Businesswoman	5
E	Female	49	Married	High School Graduate	Canteen Crew	2
F	Female	40	Cohabitation	High School Graduate	Businesswoman	4
G	Female	49	Married	High School Graduate	Canteen Crew	3

H	Female	29	Married	College Undergraduate	Online Seller/Delivery	3
I	Female	29	Cohabitation	High School Graduate	Online Seller	3
J	Female	29	Married	High School Graduate	Drafting/ Gardening	3

tool was utilized to assist the researchers in coding, identifying themes, and creating explanations for their findings.

■ RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study explored the lived experiences of parents with multiple children studying regarding their strategies in facilitating learning at home. The analysis of the findings of this inquiry identified five emerging themes capped into **FOCUS** (Facilitating learning tasks, Older siblings help, Challenging and lack of confidence, Understanding, and Safety and security) describing parents with multiple children experiences in time of pandemic.

Facilitating learning tasks

Parents would be required to participate actively in the learning process in a distance learning strategy. They would be the ones to help and lead their children through the modular lessons that would be sent to students while they were performing remote learning. The modular approach allows students to learn from the comfort of their own homes. Due to limited contact with teachers, learners will look up to their parents or guardians as role models.

In this pandemic, parents were the ones who guided and taught their children. When the participants asked their role the responses were almost the same - "*Not only parents, but we are also teachers*" (Participant C). "*I feel like I've also become a teacher*" (Participant D).

Due to the pandemic, the participants felt as though they were also teachers. Indeed, motivating, guiding and tutoring, and monitoring student compliance are all important roles for parents to play in MDL (Bhamani, et al., 2020; Gumapac, Aytona, & Alba, 2021; Agaton & Cueto, 2021).

Their parents are their first teachers, and they have a significant influence on the development of their character. Actual learning is molded by a combination of home and school education. Parental encouragement has been critical to pupils' performance. Their responsibilities do not stop at the house; they also participate in school activities. In modular distance learning, the major function of the parent is to establish a connection and guide the child. Parents or guardians are responsible for communicating with teachers. The majority of participants divulged that they communicate with their teachers whenever they have a question. They ensure that their children are capable of responding to and complying with all of their requirements. Occasionally, parents assist their children in accomplishing tasks.

Older siblings help

Parents, like teachers, students, and other participants in the educational process, are still adjusting. The majority of interviewees agreed that they rely on elder siblings to guide their younger siblings when they are working or have other responsibilities. Participant F said that "*while I was not at home, the elder brothers and sisters*

guided the little ones but I checked". Participant E mentioned that, *"I ordered my son because I work"*. Similarly, when parents are unfamiliar with or unable to comprehend some learning tasks, they seek assistance from older siblings. They said that they had already forgotten the subject and that the older siblings had only recently taken the subject and were therefore able to answer the questions.

Growing up with siblings has a significant impact on a child's childhood and everything that follows. Brothers and sisters are frequently a child's first playmate as well as an adult's oldest buddy. However, sibling relationships unfold in surprising ways, with unanticipated outcomes (Sang & Nelson, 2017). Brotherhood and sisterhood can help parents overcome problems and develop social skills. This custom of siblings assisting one another with homework or educational assignments is not new. Because they are in the same learning environment, the new regular setting only serves to reinforce the link that already exists between siblings.

Challenging and Lack of Confidence

The respondents are all aware of the efforts of DepEd to continue the learning of their children despite the pandemic by implementing distance learning, modular learning, and blended learning. However, there are some challenges they have encountered in these different approaches.

Parents face challenges educating and managing their own children in modular remote learning. As Participant B stated, *"it's quite challenging because I have a lot to do to assist my husband in earning a living."* As previously stated, all participants are working mothers. They found it quite challenging to balance the responsibilities of being a mom and a worker. The majority of the time, the children work independently and are only assisted by the parents

when they have questions. This coincides with Bendijo (2020) and Hernando-Malipot (2020) had mentioned that the class schedule of children also depends on the availability of parents who have jobs.

Likewise, just like other families experience that difficulty in the internet connection - *"It's difficult because sometimes there is no internet."* (Participant D). It is also important to take note that Participant D has 5 children who use the internet. According to Salac and Kim (2016), the country's current Internet infrastructure ranks low among the Asian developing nations in terms of Internet access. Thus, the lack of an adequate internet connection has been the primary source of contention in the new normal school setting (Pastor, 2020; Moralista & Oducado, 2020; Tria, 2020).

On the other hand, parents lack confidence in their ability to teach their children. As Participant H mentioned, *"It's difficult because the teacher's teaching is different from the parent's teaching"*. Participant I also shared that, *"It's hard because I don't feel their focus on studying unlike in school where they really did it now because they seem to be lazy."* Parents expressed that it is sometimes difficult to teach their children because they are unsure whether they are steering them in the right direction. They had the impression that their children were still looking to their teachers for guidance.

Due to the prevalence of school closings and remote instruction, it was difficult to balance duties. The anxiety that comes from having multiple obligations. Several participants expressed concern about the limited amount of time and energy they had available to them. It becomes significantly more difficult if both parents work. They have their own work schedules that they must adhere to. Keeping a constant eye on their children has become difficult now that domestic help is unavailable, and letting children

do things their own way is a smart place to start (Alicamen & Abadiano, 2020).

Understanding

Parents are forced to deliver the lesson which requires them to comprehend the lesson and explain it to the child. As stated by the respondents of the study:

“Sometimes there are a lot of mistakes, I also don't know how to answer them, but it's okay.” (Participant E). *“My teaching is okay but sometimes I don't know anything”* (Participant G)

These statements show how parents' knowledge plays such a big role during modular distance learning (Alicamen & Abadiano, 2020). However, it can be divulged that parents are also not looking into getting high scores as stated by Participant E.

As previously stated, the majority of participants are high school graduates, and they find it difficult to assist their children through the lesson and tasks since they lack the necessary skills and expertise to do so. Likewise, as mentioned, parents requested the assistance of older siblings in assisting the younger ones in the completion of their assignments. When parents do not comprehend the directions or lessons that their children need to learn, they ask the teachers for help. This was also revealed by the study of Bhamani, et al. (2020) that children's learning, the assistance provided by schools, and strategies employed by parents at home to assist children in their educational endeavors are needed in this new learning modality.

Safety and security

According to the majority of parents who were asked about the current setup of education via distance learning modality, they believe it is the best strategy since they are concerned about their children's security. As stipulated in the

Department of Education's Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), the new mode of instruction responds to and commits to protecting the health, safety, and well-being of learners, teachers, and workers.

Parents agreed that the primary concern should be their children's safety and security. To avoid putting their children in danger, they will do everything it takes to help them complete their education, no matter how tough it may be for them.

“I believe it is acceptable for our children to be safe since, even in the event of a pandemic, my children can continue their education at home.” (Employee E). *“I do not worry about my children becoming sick because I know that covid-19 is everywhere.”* (Distributor D).

CONCLUSIONS

The current study's findings include the lived experiences of parents with multiple children and how they promote learning at home in a modular distance mode. Their perceptions and experiences on their roles as underpinned in the following conclusions. Respondents indicated that they cared about their children during this pandemic by providing them with guidance and assistance in doing learning tasks. The parents were able to adapt to the new situation and handle the new learning environment with the support of the child's older siblings. Parents confront difficulties in overcoming this circumstance. Apart from their family's economic status, parents must also consider their children's education. Proper scheduling must be considered in guiding their children.

One of the most challenging aspects is the parents' lack of skills and expertise regarding how to teach their children. It

appears to be one of the impediments to educational accomplishment in the event of a pandemic. Strong support of teachers in guiding parents must be critically observed and implemented. While parents understandably prioritize safety, this pandemic must not prevent children from learning.

■ CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there was no conflict of interest in the completion of this research project.

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