

Strengthening Parent's Engagement Amidst Pandemic: A Grounded Theory

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Abstract

The study mainly focused on determining how the parents support and assist their children while studying at home because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It utilized qualitative research with grounded theory as an approach. Using one-on-one interviews, the researchers generated emerging themes from constant comparative analysis of data collected about parents' engagement in children's education in the new normal. Participants of this study were the 27 purposively chosen parents of Calamba Bayside Integrated School. The study was conducted during the school year 2020-2021. In this study, parents describe their experiences regarding their roles in delivering lessons to their children. It also explores the strategies or ways of parents in providing support and assistance to their children while learning at home. The researchers analyzed and interpreted these using initial coding, focused coding, theoretical coding, and axial coding. The results revealed that parents provide support and assistance in the education of their children. These are by sharing inputs, consistent guidance, and provision of their children's educational needs. On the other hand, the challenges experienced by them include parents' level of knowledge, parents' time constraints, and parents' diverse roles. The researchers generated the **Theory of Evolving Parental Roles, which** refers to the functions of parents in education in the new normal.

Keywords: *COVID-19; grounded theory; pandemic; parental engagement*



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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 health emergency brought the biggest challenge in the education system in history. According to the United Nations (2020), it has affected 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and continents. The recent pandemic also brought a major shift in the education system. From a traditional face-to-face learning delivery modality, it changes into either modular and online distance learning, blended learning, or homeschooling.

Despite the challenges in the education system, still, the education officials are very positive that this will not stop the organization from providing quality education. As stated in DepEd Order No. 12, series of 2020, "for modular learning at home, the guidance of trained para-teachers is required. They must be trained on the content and delivery of instruction before implementation to properly and appropriately deliver the instruction". Since the teachers cannot regularly visit the learners, the parents may serve as their para-teachers.

According to Quinn (2020), "parent engagement is often only perceived as necessary when something goes wrong - whether that's COVID-19, or when a child is in trouble at school or fails a test". In her study, she presented different key components of parent engagement, most especially in this time of the pandemic. Some of these components are to develop a love of learning with their children, pass on high

aspirations but realistic expectations, lead learning in the home, take an active stance, and build a home-school relationship.

On the other hand, based on the National Education Association (2011), working in partnership with families and communities will increase the abilities of each partner to learn more about each other to support the goals, hopes, and dreams of our children. A tremendous benefit of the partnership will be an increase in knowledge of families, schools, and communities and an appreciation for the strengths each partner brings to the table.

The above statements boosted the interest of the researchers to conduct this study and implemented Project USAP (Unified Support and Assistance of Parents). This study deals with the implementation of the said project as a strategy to build connections and communications between teachers and parents. Through this, the teachers can aid the parents as to how they can properly support and assist their children while studying at home. This will also allow the teachers to monitor the progress of the learners undergoing modular learning.

The researchers greatly believe that the result of the present study is vital in the formulation of a well-planned strategy and framework that can strengthen parent engagement. Results provided concrete parent practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education in the New Normal

The recent pandemic does not only bring a major shift in the learning delivery modalities, but it also provides enlightenment to the education officials that there is a need to reconsider the goals of education. Developing preparedness for disasters, diseases, and emergencies is one of the goals of making the curriculum relevant, appropriate, and responsive. The curriculum aims to address a set of preparedness competencies in various fields of study (Cahapay, 2020).

In the study conducted by Cahapay (2020), he stated that a curriculum objective in the new normal curriculum must emphasize the development of learners' preparedness competencies. When it comes to curriculum content, the choice between integration and reduction is difficult. On the other hand, school leaders should evaluate instructional approaches which increasingly shifting to an online mode considering various factors. In terms of instructional evaluation, several concerns about assessment of learning serve as effective reminders to educators.

Additionally, Daniel (2020) stated in his study that reassuring students and parents are a critical component of institutional response. Schools and colleges should leverage asynchronous learning, which works best in digital formats, to increase their capacity to teach remotely. Along with typical classroom subjects, instruction should incorporate different assignments and projects that place COVID-19 in a global and historical context. When developing curricula, beginning with student assessment enables teachers to concentrate. Finally, he suggests that once the pandemic is over, there are flexible ways to repair the damage to students' learning trajectories and provides a list of resources.

Parental Engagement in Education

Parental engagement refers to a situation in which parents are directly involved in their children's education. They participate in their children's learning process, and they fulfill their parental responsibilities by ensuring that they assist the learner in learning as much as possible. It does not simply refer to parents inquiring about their children's performance in school, but also to them taking an active role in communicating with them to develop a healthy relationship with them, allowing the process of encouraging, mentoring, leading, and inspiring to be genuine (Clinton & Hattie, 2013:324).

Similarly, Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) assert that parental engagement in their child's educational process provides numerous opportunities for success—improvements in the child's morale, attitude, and academic achievement across all subject areas, as well as behavior and social adjustment. Their study outlined the numerous advantages of parent engagement for students. Children achieve more regardless of their ethnic or racial origin, socioeconomic status, or parent's level of education. Generally, children achieve higher grades, test scores, and attendance. Children are consistently prompt in completing their assigned work. Children have a sense of self-worth, are more self-disciplined, and demonstrate greater aspirations and motivation for school. Children's positive attitudes toward school frequently result in improved classroom behavior and fewer disciplinary suspensions.

According to the National Education Association (2011), collaboration enables every family and community to understand one another. They also support children's goals, hopes, and dreams. One of the significant benefits of collaboration is a greater understanding of families, schools, and communities. It also enables appreciation for the strengths that each partner brings to the table.

RESEARCH METHOD

A constructivist grounded theory perspective positions researchers as data interpreters actively involved in translating and representing participants' lived experiences and covert social processes (Charmaz, 2003a). According to Cooney (2011), rigor is implicit in the grounded theory method, and that application transparency is necessary to establish credibility. Additionally, a fundamental ontological premise of a relativist paradigm is the preservation of researcher reflexivity throughout the interpretation and theoretical construction processes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The researchers used initial coding to label and establish early minor conceptual categories. They utilized focused and theoretical coding to guide analysis toward the development of theoretical categories. Finally, axial coding denotes the relationship and interaction between concepts by determining the properties and dimensions of these categories. The analysis was conducted with a flexible approach, as is customary in constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

On the other hand, the participants of the study were the parents of Grade 9 students of Calamba Bayside Integrated School. The study was conducted during the School Year 2020-2021. The primary source of data was the responses of the participants to the semi-structured interview guide questions.

Moreover, a letter of consent was secured from the Schools Head of Calamba Bayside Integrated School. Thereafter, the participants' consent was secured, and the one-on-one interview was scheduled. Before facilitating the interview, the researcher prepared guide questions and writing materials. Additionally, they hired an assistant to scribe the discussion and take field notes. They compared the transcripts of the recorded interviews to the written account. Following that, the researchers encoded the verbatim transcription, tabulated the data, and analyzed the qualitative data to identify emerging themes.

The following were the questions given to the parents:

1. Can you describe your roles in the delivery of lessons to your children?
2. Can you share your strategies in providing support and assistance to your children while studying at home?
3. Can you share the challenges you encountered in providing support and assistance to your children's education?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the analysis and interpretation of the data collected during this study. This grounded theory study intended to investigate strategies and challenges of parents in assisting and guiding their children while learning at home. The researchers began with gathering information regarding participants' ideas and perceptions on parental engagement. From their study's findings, they drew a parental engagement model to further enhance the utilization of Project USAP that may lead to strengthening parental engagement. This central question guides this research:

What theory or explanation emerges from an analysis of data collected about parents' engagement in children's education in the new normal?

Corollary Question 1: How do you perceive your roles in the delivery of lessons to your child(ren)?

Interview Guide Question: Can you describe your roles in the delivery of lessons to your children?

Table 1. Annotated Exemplars on the Parents Perception Regarding their Roles in the Delivery of Lesson

Participant	Responses	Researcher's Observation
P11	<i>"Sa pamamagitan ng pag-aassist ng kanilang mga aralin sa tuwing dumadating na ang kanilang mga module. At sa pagchecheck ng kanilang schedule ng pagsasagot ng mga module. Dahil dito mas nagiging masipag at nagpupursige silang mag-aral sapagkat nabibigyan ko sila ng suporta at atensyon sa anumang oras kahit mahirap."</i>	The parent expressed her answer with passion.
P19	<i>"Pag alalay sa kanya upang mapabuti amg kanya pag aaral."</i>	The parent expressed assertiveness with his answer.
P22	<i>"Sa panahon ngayon na mahirap ang mag aral para sa mga bata ay kailangang kailangan talaga ng isang magulang na tulungan ito upang mapadali ang pagkatuto ng bata kahit nasa bahay lamang ito."</i>	The parent's expression was inspiring.

Table 1 shows the annotated exemplars of the participants when asked regarding their perceived roles in the delivery of lessons to their children. The testimonies of the participants described that their roles are guiding and assisting their children, providing time and support to their children's studies, and helping them in some difficulties. Most participants stated that they fulfilled their roles as parents in the new normal by guiding and assisting their children. The participants who shared their experiences are P1, P4, P11, P15, P16, P19, P20, P22, P23, P24, and P25.

The findings imply that from the moment a child is born until they reach adulthood, the traditional roles of parents include teaching, guiding, and rearing children to be strong community members. When children enter formal schooling, most parents delegate a significant portion of their formal education to the school. In terms of formal education, parents serve as more of a provider. Assuring that child has the resources and support necessary to participate in education and learning, except in cases where parents have taken complete control of their children's education and learning. Parents have taken on a more supportive role since the pandemic began, assisting their children with assignments and home projects. Additionally, parents can actively contribute to their child's education through parental role construction.

It includes parents' beliefs, perceptions, and experiences. The other contributory factors are a teacher and school invitations to parents to be active participants in their children's education and the parent's socioeconomic status.

Ceka and Murati (2016) state in their study that because of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures, it became clear that parents would have to assume full-time responsibility for educating and assisting their children virtually. In an online survey, the parents were asked if they were actively assisting their children in learning during the pandemic, and only 83% responded affirmatively. When they asked why they were not assisting their children, the overwhelming majority stated that they didn't know how because they were not teachers. Additionally, parents were cited as being too busy or unable to afford the costs associated with supporting their child's education at the time. After analyzing the data, in terms of the parents' educational backgrounds, it was discovered that parents who lacked knowledge about supporting their children's remote learning were more likely to have secondary education or less. Parents who reported being too busy during the pandemic to support their children's remote learning were more likely to have a postsecondary education.

Interview Guide Question: Can you share your strategies in providing support and assistance to your children while studying at home?

Table 2. Annotated Exemplars on the Parents Strategies in Providing Support and Assistance to their Children's Education

Participant	Responses	Researcher's Observation
P4	<i>"Kung siya ay may mga katanungan sinisigurado ko na masasagot ito o maituturo sa kanya ng ayos. At kung may mga kailangang bilhin o gawin activity, naibibigay ko ang kanyang mga pangangailangan para rito."</i>	The parent confidently expressed her answer.
P9	<i>"Binibigyan ko sila ng meryenda dahil nag wowork hard sila at nais talagang matuto, tinutulungan ko rin sila sa mga tanong na hirap intindihin, nakakatulong ito upang ganahan at mas maintindihan nila ang aralin."</i>	The parent proudly expressed his answer.
P22	<i>"Kapag nagtatanong sila, pinapaliwanag ko sa kanila kung hindi nila magets ang gagawin."</i>	The parent's expression was encouraging.

Table 2 exposed that the participants have their own ways of providing support and assistance to their children's education. It shows that parents are really trying their best to help the learners while studying at home. Their testimonies revealed that most participants stated that they are supporting and assisting their children by answering their queries regarding the topics stipulated in the modules or learning activities. The participants who shared those sentiments are P3, P4, P8, P9, P10, P12, P18, P19, P20, and P24.

As a result, successful schools demonstrate that a high level of parental involvement significantly contributes to their success and can even assist in closing achievement gaps between student groups. While 85% of parents believe they can significantly impact their child's learning and academic progress, 46% wish they could do more to support their child's education. Practical and positive parent engagement requires open communication between school and home. This communication should involve all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, administrators, specialists, club leaders and coaches, and the parent-teacher organization.

According to Clinton & Hattie (2013), parents must participate in their children's learning process and fulfill their parental responsibilities by ensuring that they assist the learner in learning as much as possible. It does not simply refer to parents inquiring about their children's performance in school, but also to them taking an active role in communicating with them to develop a healthy relationship with them, allowing the process of encouraging, mentoring, leading, and inspiring to be genuine.

Additionally, schools have made significant strides in improving communication with families, leveraging digital tools to give parents a complete picture of their child's day. As demonstrated by the challenges, the proliferation of tools has fragmented communications to the point where parents are overwhelmed and unsure how to use the information they receive. While parents appreciate the school's communication efforts, nobody achieves the desired results if they cannot act on the information and the school is unsure whether it was received at all. Instead of focusing exclusively on parent-teacher communication, we must develop strategies for improving communication throughout the school, simplifying the process for all stakeholders, and promoting communication between educators and families. It includes limiting teachers' access to tools, reducing the number of places parents must look for information, and making information more actionable. By making it easier for parents to receive communications from the school, administrators can garner support for goals and initiatives. Teachers can foster the desired level of parent engagement in the classroom, and students can receive the necessary support from their families.

Interview Guide Question: Can you share the challenges you encountered in providing support and assistance to your children's education?

Table 3. Annotated Exemplars regarding the Challenges Encountered by Parents in Providing Support and Assistance to their Children's Education

Participant	Responses	Researcher's Observation
P2	<i>"Kami ay may katandaan na at hindi lahat ng kanilang mga tanong ay alam namin ang sagot, hindi kami nakapagtapos ng pag-aaral kaya naman mahirap sa amin ang magisip ng isasagot sa kanila."</i>	The parents sounded regretful.
P19	<i>"Dahil hindi ako nakatapos ng pagaaral may mga bagay siyang tinatanong sa kinang hindi ko kayang sagutin o hindi kayang intindihin."</i>	The parent was very vocal, though they sounded disappointed.
P22	<i>"Sa panahon ngayon na mahirap ang mag aral para sa mga bata ay kailangang kailangan talaga ng isang magulang na tulongan ito upang mapadali ang pagkatuto ng bata kahit nasa bahay lamang ito."</i>	The parents showed positivity despite the situation.

Table 3 revealed the challenges encountered by parents in assisting their children while learning at home. It shows that the primary challenge that they encountered was the difficulty in teaching and explaining some concepts to their children because they were undergraduates. They were not able to fully understand some of the topics because it was far from what they had learned before. The participants who shared those sentiments are P2, P7, P8, P12, P13, P17, and P19.

The result implies that enhancing the quality of education is a multifaceted endeavor. Numerous stakeholders must be involved, including the school, the teacher, the student, the parent, and any other relevant parties. Notably, it requires a strong commitment of participation on the part of those parties to make it happen. The most challenging issue is the students' parents' lack of involvement which has been attempted to address because we believe that parental involvement is critical in their children's education.

Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) assert that parental engagement in their child's educational process provides numerous opportunities for success—improvements in the child's morale, attitude, and academic achievement across all subject areas, as well as behavior and social adjustment. Their study outlined the numerous advantages of parent engagement for students. Children achieve more regardless of their ethnic or racial origin, socioeconomic status, or parent's level of education.

Corollary Question 2: What are the strategies or ways of parents in providing support and assistance to their children while learning at home?

Table 4. Initial Codes, Focused Codes, and Initial Categories regarding the Parents' Strategies in Providing Support and Assistance to Children

Initial Codes	Focused Codes	Initial Categories	Transcription Reference
monitoring and reminding	constant monitoring	constant supervision	P2, P6
not pressuring the children	No parental pressure	securing mental health	P7
answering questions	responding to questions	answering queries	P3, P4, P12, P19, P20
giving their needs	providing their needs	rendering educational needs	P4, P7, P11, P16, P25
helping them with their lesson	assisting learners	guiding learners	P8, P9, P10, P18, P24
reminding them frequently about the task	constant monitoring	constant supervision	P11

Table 4 summarizes the initial and focused codes that examined how parents supported and aided their children while studying at home. The researcher determined the initial categories by comparing the initial and focused codes. Respondents indicated that they assisted their children by answering their children's questions about lessons and meeting their educational needs.

The following are some of the responses of the participants associated with the initial categories:

P4 expressed— "*Kung siya ay may mga katanungan sinisigurado ko na masasagot ito o maituturo sa kanya ng ayos. At kung may mga kailangang bilhin o gawin activity, naibibigay ko ang kanyang mga pangangailangan para rito.*"

P12 uttered— "*kapag nagtatanong sila, pinapaliwanag ko sa kanila kung hindi nila magets ang gagawin.*"

P16 stipulated— "*Lahat ng mga kelangn nya para sa pag-aaral mga gamit nya lage ko binibili para mas makita ko na mgpursige sya o mgka-interes na mag-aral mabuti.*"

Additionally, the researcher used theoretical coding to establish theoretical codes. They accomplished this by examining the researcher's initial categories and the memo they wrote. As illustrated in Table 5, the theoretical codes created are ***time limitations, low level of knowledge, and varied responsibilities***.

Table 5. The Development of Consistent Guidance and Provision of Educational Needs as Theoretical Categories

Initial Categories	Theoretical Codes	Theoretical Category
constant supervision	consistent monitoring	Consistent Guidance and Share Inputs
answering queries	Responding to Queries	
guiding learners		
rendering educational needs	securing educational need	Provision of Educational Needs

Table 5 exemplifies the emergence of "consistent guidance and share inputs" and "provision of educational needs" as the final theoretical categories.

Theoretical Category 1: Consistent Guidance and Share Inputs

Parental strategies for assisting and supporting their children while they are studying at home are included in this category. Parental difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have not stopped them from attempting to constantly guide their children by constantly monitoring and reminding them of the responsibilities that they have.

The converse is true: as they guide their children through school, they are also providing them with inputs on topics that appear to be difficult for the students. They are accomplishing this through their responses to the questions of their children.

Theoretical Category 2: Provision of Educational Needs

This category encompasses the various ways in which some parents assist their children at their place of residence. In recognition of the fact that not all parents are well-versed in the subject matter to fully guide and answer all their children's questions, they are taking steps to ensure that they are able to meet all their children's needs, such as materials for their studies, snacks, and rewards.

Corollary Question 3: What are the strategies or ways of parents in providing support and assistance to their children while learning at home, and how does it contribute to the learner's love for learning?

Table 6. Initial Codes, Focused Codes, and Initial Categories regarding the Challenges Encountered by Parents in Providing Support and Assistance to Children

Initial Codes	Focused Codes	Initial Categories	Transcription Reference
Insufficient time	Limited time	Inconvenient time	P1, P3, P11, P18
Limited knowledge due to educational background	Little knowledge	Lack of education	P2
Inability to explain concepts	Limited understanding	Poor understanding	P7, P17

Difficulty in explaining concepts	Limited understanding	Poor understanding	P8
Lack of knowledge	Inadequate knowledge	Poor knowledge	P10, P12, P19
Different household activities	Different tasks	Different responsibilities	P4, P9, P13
Work	Work responsibilities	Official duties	P16, P25, P26
Varied home responsibilities	Different tasks	Different tasks	P24

As shown in Table 6, the initial and focused codes addressed the difficulties parents face when assisting and supporting their children while they learn at home. The researcher conducted a constant comparative analysis between the initial codes and focused codes to develop the initial categories. According to the participants' responses, the difficulties that they encountered were inconvenient time, poor knowledge and understanding, and work-related concerns.

The following are some of the responses of the participants associated with the initial categories:

P1 stated— *"Kung minsan nag kukulang sa oras dahil sa hindi inaasahang oras ng trabaho."*

P5 mentioned— *"Kami ay may katandaan na at hindi lahat ng kanilang mga tanong ay alam namin ang sagot, hindi kami nakapagtapos ng pag-aaral kaya naman mahirap sa amin ang magisip ng isasagot sa kanila."*

P20 uttered— *"Hindi ko sya gaano natututukan dahil kahit ako ay busy sa hanap buhay pero ginagawa ko ang kaya ko para masuportahan sya."*

Additionally, the researcher used theoretical coding to establish theoretical codes. It is through examination of the researcher's initial categories and the memo they wrote. As can be seen in table 7, the created theoretical codes are ***time limitations, low level of knowledge, and varied responsibilities***.

Table 7. The Development of Emotional Disturbance and Social Disparage as Theoretical Categories

Initial Categories	Theoretical Codes	Theoretical Category
Lack of education	Low level of knowledge	Parent's Level of Knowledge
Poor understanding		
Poor knowledge		
Different responsibilities	Varied responsibilities	Parent's Diverse Roles
Official duties		
Different tasks		
Inconvenient time	Time limitations	Parent's Time Constraints

Table 7 exemplifies the emergence of "parent's time constraints" and "parent's level of knowledge" and "parent's diverse roles" as the final theoretical categories.

Theoretical Category 3: Parent's Level of Knowledge

The "Parent's Level of Knowledge" is the third theoretical category that has been identified. It refers to the difficulty that parents are experiencing in assisting their children because there are some topics that they are unable to fully comprehend in the current curriculum. With the parents' undergraduate degrees, they will occasionally find themselves in a position where they are unable to respond and provide insights into the questions of their children.

Theoretical Category 4: Parent's Diverse Roles

Also, another category is "Parents' Diverse Roles." It refers to the difficulties that parents face because of the wide range of roles and responsibilities that they perform at their residence. The responsibilities of parents are not limited to those of the home; there are some parents who have official obligations as employees. They have a difficult time balancing their work and household responsibilities, which can result in their inability to assist their children's learning while they are at home.

Theoretical Category 5: Parent's Time Constraints

"Parent's Time Constraints" is the fifth theoretical category that has been identified and recognized. It refers to the difficulty that parents face when trying to support and assist their children due to a lack of available time. They have a difficult time managing their time because they are also responsible for a variety of household tasks.

Moreover, based on the categories that emerged, the researchers generated the Theory of Evolving Parental Roles. This theory refers to the roles of parents in education that have been exemplified in the new normal. It follows that, at the present time, parents play an extremely important role in the education of their children. Their roles are evolving and contingent. It explicitly demonstrated the fact that parents can be adaptable in any situation they find themselves in. Parents can guide and monitor their children on a consistent basis if they do so. They can also provide children with insights and ideas that will assist them in achieving success in their educational endeavors.

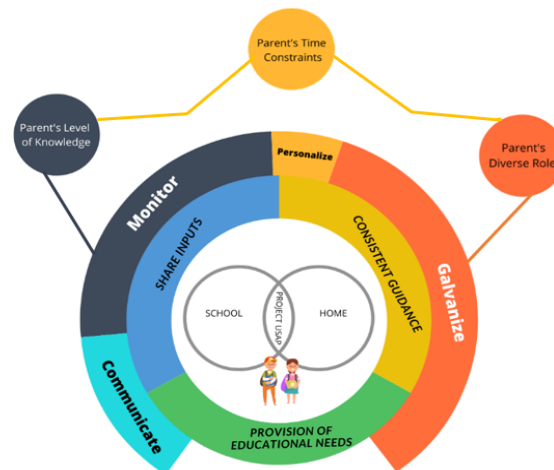


Figure 1: C-M-P-G Parental Engagement Model

Additionally, a model of parental engagement was proposed to strengthen the relationship between parents and school. The C-M-P-G Parental Framework is a way to recognize parents' tremendous efforts in guiding their children through the new educational normal. It encapsulates the four (4) straightforward steps that the school may offer to assist parents in guiding their children. Communicating is the initial step. The school may consult with and communicate with

parents to ascertain their specific needs in assisting their children in their educational pursuits. Monitoring is the second step. The school may conduct consistent monitoring to encourage parents to collaborate with the school/teachers. Personalize is the third step. Given that the Theory of Evolving Parental Roles also guides this model, it is necessary to tailor the school's activities for parents. It will enable both parties to have a more targeted approach to assisting learners in their education, based on the difficulties parents face. Galvanize is the final step. In this step, the school may implement and take innovative action to fully encourage parents to develop intrinsic motivation to be truly engaged in their children's learning process.

This model also includes the strategies used by parents to assist and support their children while they are learning at home, which was developed based on the parents' personal testimonies. Moreover, it demonstrates the new challenges that they had to face.

CONCLUSION

Parental engagement is very vital in this time of the pandemic. Due to the absence of face-to-face classes, parents play a significant role in their children's learning process. The findings of this study indicate that parents encountered a variety of obstacles while assisting and supporting their children's at-home learning. Several of these include parental time constraints, a lack of knowledge, and a variety of roles. There is a genuine need to ascertain their obstacles to implementing programs that will increase parental engagement fully.

On the other hand, the categories about the strategies used by parents to assist their children demonstrate that, despite the difficulties they face, they are doing their best to assist their children while they study at home. They genuinely care about the students.

Furthermore, the developed CMPG parental engagement model is important because it provides a framework for schools to implement programs and appropriate activities for the new normal.

In the future, researchers may conduct a study to determine the efficacy of the newly developed parental engagement model, or they may conduct another study to examine schools' initiatives to assist parents in assisting their children with their educational process.

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