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NAVIGATING PARENTAL BELIEFS: TEACHERS' STRUGGLES IN ENGAGING FAMILIES WITH CONFLICTING EDUCATIONAL VALUES

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ABSTRACT

Educational research highlights that teachers frequently encounter cultural and value-based mismatches with parents, which impede effective engagement in schooling. This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to explore and describe the lived experiences of teachers navigating parental cultural differences that limited participation in Lambayong District III. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the research examined how educators confronted conflicts arising from divergent cultural, religious, and educational perspectives. The findings revealed that parental beliefs, traditional expectations for discipline and memorization, and socio-economic responsibilities significantly influenced participation in school activities. Teachers responded to these challenges by practicing cultural sensitivity, balancing empathy with professional responsibility, employing open communication and mediation, reflecting on their teaching, and fostering strong teacher–family relationships. These

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strategies enabled teachers to respect diverse beliefs, adapt instructional approaches, address learners' needs, and build trust with families. Additionally, teachers emphasized the importance of professional development in cultural competence, effective communication, flexible and inclusive school policies, community engagement, and strong institutional support. Training in cross-cultural understanding and culturally responsive teaching enhanced teachers' confidence in managing conflicts and collaborating with families, while flexible policies and participatory programs facilitated inclusive parental involvement. Community-oriented activities and access to mentorship further supported teachers in addressing cultural gaps and promoting equitable learning environments. The study concludes that effective teacher–family engagement requires a holistic, context-sensitive approach that integrates professional development, policy, and community partnership. By prioritizing mutual understanding, respect, and collaborative problem-solving, schools can foster inclusive and supportive learning environments that strengthen both student outcomes and community trust.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication, parental engagement, culturally responsive teaching, teacher professional development

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Educational research indicates that teachers often face cultural mismatches with parents—differences in values, communication styles, and expectations—that hinder effective engagement in schooling. In culturally diverse environments, implicit biases and varying beliefs about academic roles contribute to this dynamic.

Research indicates that teachers in the U.S. often perceive immigrant or minority parents as less involved in their children's education, even when these parents are actively engaged but express their involvement differently. A study by Phoebe Ho (2018) revealed that teachers tend to rate immigrant and minority parents as less involved, regardless of the parents' actual engagement levels. This misperception can lead to biased evaluations of students, affecting their academic outcomes and access to opportunities such as honors programs or academic recommendations. Similarly, a qualitative study by Podadera and González-Jiménez (2023) found that teachers' perceptions of immigrant families often reflect cultural biases, influencing their expectations and interactions with these students. These studies highlight the need for educators to recognize and address their own biases to foster equitable learning environments.

In the Philippines, Garcia's 2018 phenomenological study of low-income Filipino parents identified cultural beliefs—traditional parenting norms, poverty effects, and discomfort communicating with teachers—as major barriers to deeper school involvement. Bartolome et al. (2020) emphasized that kindergarten teachers struggle with cultural and communication gaps, citing the need for frameworks to foster collaboration. Jabar et al. (2021) found that parental involvement in Philippine public schools is shaped by family size, education, social capital, and poverty—factors that interweave with cultural norms and participation levels.

This study contributes to SDG 4: Quality Education, particularly Target 4.5, which seeks to “eliminate gender and wealth disparities, and ensure equal access to all levels of education”, by

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identifying cultural barriers to full participation and providing insights for inclusive parental engagement strategies. It also supports SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, through strengthening community–school relationships across cultural lines.

To investigate how teachers experience and respond to parental cultural differences that limit participation, with three core objectives: Explore how teachers perceive parental beliefs and cultural principles as barriers to school involvement. Identify specific points of conflict—communication styles, educational expectations, and parental roles—as encountered by teachers. Propose culturally responsive strategies and policy recommendations to empower teachers and foster meaningful engagement across diverse family backgrounds.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore to investigate how teachers experience and respond to parental cultural differences that limit participation in Lambayong District III, Sultan Kudarat for school year 2025-2026.

Specifically, this delves with the following questions:

1. What cultural beliefs and educational values held by parents create challenges for teacher–family engagement?
2. How do teachers experience, interpret, and respond to these cultural conflicts in everyday academic interactions?
3. What supports, training, and school policies can help teachers better bridge these cultural gaps and foster collaboration?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to explore and describe the lived experiences of teachers in navigating parental cultural differences that limit parental participation in Lambayong District III. Phenomenology is appropriate because it focuses on understanding the essence of experiences as perceived by the individuals themselves, allowing for rich, detailed insights into subjective experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Using this approach, the study aims to capture teachers' perceptions, emotions, and strategies in real-world educational contexts, emphasizing how cultural variations in parental beliefs influence teacher-parent interactions (Van Manen, 2016). Qualitative research, particularly phenomenology, enables an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena that cannot be quantified, making it ideal for understanding the nuanced challenges teachers face in culturally diverse school communities.

Participants of the Study

The participants consisted of 15 carefully selected teachers from Lambayong III, Schools Division of Sultan Kudarat for the school year 2025–2026. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who meet specific inclusion criteria set by the researcher, ensuring that they have direct experience with parental cultural differences and engagement challenges (Patton, 2015). The number of participants is consistent with phenomenological research guidelines, which suggest smaller sample sizes (usually between 5 to 25 participants) to allow for in-depth exploration of individual experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Selecting teachers who actively interact with parents from diverse cultural backgrounds ensures that the data collected provided comprehensive insights into the phenomena under investigation.

Table 1. Participants' Inclusion Criteria

Qualifications
<i>Participants: 15 Teachers</i>
<p>1. Active Teaching Assignment – Teachers must be currently employed and actively teaching in public elementary or secondary schools within the Lambayong III during the school year 2025–2026. This ensures that participants have direct, ongoing experience with student-parent interactions.</p> <p>2. Experience with Diverse Parental Backgrounds – Teachers must have at least two years of experience working with students whose parents have differing cultural or educational values, providing relevant insights into conflicts or challenges in parental engagement.</p> <p>3. Direct Interaction with Parents – Teachers must regularly engage with parents through conferences, meetings, school activities, or other communication channels, ensuring that participants can provide firsthand accounts of navigating parental beliefs.</p> <p>4. Willingness to Participate and Share Experiences – Teachers must voluntarily consent to participate in the study, including interviews or discussions, and demonstrate openness in sharing their experiences and perceptions regarding parental involvement and cultural differences.</p>

Sampling Technique

During the conduct of this study, a Purposive Sampling Technique was intentionally utilized to carefully select fifteen **15 elementary school teachers from Lambayong III** for school year 2025-2026, who meet the specific inclusion criteria established by the researcher.

Purposive sampling, alternately referred to as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, constitutes a variant of non-probability sampling. Within this approach, researchers exercise their own judgment and discretionary acumen in the selection of individuals from the population to partake in their survey endeavors (Alchemer, 2021). This method of sampling mandates that researchers possess prior knowledge of the objectives underpinning their study so as to effectively pinpoint and make contact with eligible participants through online survey platforms like Alchemer. Researchers resort to purposive sampling in order to secure access to a

distinct subgroup of individuals, whereby all survey respondents are meticulously chosen based on their alignment with a specific demographic or criterion.

Research Instruments

In this study, a semi-structured interview functioned as an exploratory instrument during both in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explore and describe how teachers experience and respond to parental cultural differences that limit participation in Lambayong District III, Sultan Kudarat for school year 2025-2026.

The validity and appropriateness of this tool was substantiated through a rigorous evaluation process conducted by a panel of experts who possess expertise in the development of relevant research instruments.

Data Transcription Process

All gathered raw data from the participants through interviews and FGDs were transcribed using the transcription process as described by Flick (2014), Ngag (2023), and Braun (2009), involves the systematic categorization of textual components, including statements, phrases, and words, into organized groupings or categories. These categories will be either derived from established frameworks or custom-developed to align with the study's specific objectives.

This rigorous transcription process ensured the trustworthiness and credibility of the qualitative data, which served as the foundation for the subsequent narrative analysis and the meaningful interpretation of the gathered raw data.

These categories were either drawn from established frameworks or custom-crafted to align with the study's objectives. To execute this analytical process, a series of vital steps were meticulously followed:

Step 1: Data Organization and Preparation. Initially, all data sources, such as interview transcripts, notes from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and relevant documents, will be meticulously organized and prepared for analysis. This phase ensures the systematic arrangement and accessibility of the data.

Step 2: Data Immersion. Subsequently, the researcher will deeply engage with the data by conducting a thorough review of interview transcripts and FGD notes. This immersive process aids in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the content and context embedded within the collected information.

Step 3: Systematic Coding Process. The third step involves initiating a systematic coding process. Initial codes will be generated by identifying meaningful segments or patterns within the data. These codes will capture essential concepts, ideas, or themes related to the narratives of the teachers with regard to their professional development and its outcomes in their teaching effectiveness.

Step 4: Clustering and Preliminary Themes. Following coding, the identified codes were grouped into preliminary themes based on shared meaning or relevance. This step established an initial structure for organizing the data.

Step 5: Theme Scrutiny and Refinement. Next, the emerging themes and their corresponding codes underwent a process of review and refinement. The researcher ensured the consistency and clarity of these themes, making necessary adjustments. Each refined theme was assigned a descriptive name that succinctly represented the content it encapsulated, facilitating easy identification and interpretation.

Step 6: Linking Data Excerpts. Relevant data excerpts, such as quotes or segments extracted from interviews and FGDs, were selected and associated with the respective themes. These excerpts served as supporting evidence for the identified themes.

Step 7: Thematic Analysis. Finally, the thematic analysis extended beyond surface-level identification. The researcher interpreted the meaning and implications of each theme within the context of the study's objectives, seeking patterns, connections, and variations within the themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the teachers' narratives.

This meticulous and structured process of thematic analysis enabled the researcher to systematically explore and comprehend how teachers experienced and responded to parental cultural differences that limited participation in the Lambayong District III, Sultan Kudarat for the school year 2025–2026.

Data Analysis

In this study centered on uncovering how teachers experienced and responded to parental cultural differences that limited participation in the Lambayong District III, Sultan Kudarat for the school year 2025–2026, a content or thematic analysis approach was employed to examine the collected data. This methodology, as described by Flick (2014), Ngag (2023), and Braun (2009), involved the systematic categorization of textual components, including statements, phrases, and words, into organized groupings or categories. These categories were either derived from established frameworks or custom-developed to align with the study's specific objectives.

Scope and Limitations

The study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to explore the lived experiences of teachers in Lambayong District III, Sultan Kudarat during the school year 2025–2026. It focused on understanding the challenges teachers encounter when engaging families whose educational beliefs and values conflict with those promoted in schools. The participants included teachers from selected public elementary and secondary schools within the district who have direct experience in navigating these parental conflicts.

The study examined what specific struggles and coping strategies teachers employ, who is involved in these interactions, where the engagements take place within the school and home context, when these challenges occur throughout the academic year, how teachers address and manage differing parental expectations, and why these struggles affect both teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes. The research aims to provide a detailed account of these experiences to inform strategies for enhancing teacher-parent collaboration and fostering more inclusive and supportive educational environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Educational research indicates that teachers often face cultural mismatches with parents—differences in values, communication styles, and expectations—that hinder effective engagement in schooling. This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to explore and describe the lived experiences of teachers in navigating parental cultural differences that limit parental participation in Lambayong District III.

The findings revealed that several interconnected factors shape the challenges in teacher–family engagement. Cultural and religious beliefs significantly influence parents’ participation in school activities, particularly when school practices are perceived to conflict with community traditions and values. Differences in educational perspectives also emerged, as some parents prefer traditional teaching approaches such as memorization and strict discipline, which may contrast with student-centered learning methods used in schools.

Also, the study revealed that teachers navigate cultural conflicts in schools by practicing cultural sensitivity, balancing empathy with professional responsibility, using open communication and mediation, engaging in reflective teaching, and fostering strong teacher–family relationships. These strategies allow educators to respect diverse cultural beliefs, adapt instructional approaches, support students’ learning needs, and build trust and collaboration with families. Overall, teachers employ a combination of patience, flexibility, active listening, and empathy to maintain educational goals while honoring community values.

Finally, it shows that teachers perceive cultural competence training, effective communication skills, flexible and inclusive school policies, community engagement, and strong institutional support as essential in bridging cultural gaps and fostering collaboration with families. Professional development in cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural communication equips teachers to understand diverse traditions, respect family values, and manage conflicts. Flexible policies and participatory practices enhance parent involvement, while community-oriented activities and partnerships strengthen trust and shared responsibility. Access to mentorship, guidance, and resources further empowers teachers to address cultural differences confidently and support equitable learning environments.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were made in light of this study's findings:

Strengthening teacher–family engagement requires more than simply encouraging parental participation; it demands a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and economic

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contexts that shape family–school relationships. When schools recognize and respect these realities, they can develop more inclusive and responsive strategies that foster trust, dialogue, and shared responsibility for learners’ success.

Also, educators who reflect on their practice, remain adaptable, and engage families collaboratively not only manage conflicts constructively but also create inclusive and supportive learning environments that strengthen both student outcomes and community trust.

Moreover, creating culturally responsive schools requires a holistic approach where training, policy, and community engagement work synergistically. Teachers’ ability to navigate cultural differences not only improves parent–school collaboration but also promotes inclusive and supportive learning experiences, emphasizing that education is most effective when built on mutual understanding and respect between schools and families.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study, the following were recommended:

1. DepEd may develop regular, hands-on cultural competence and communication workshops for teachers that include role-playing real-life school–family scenarios, especially addressing communities where cultural and religious practices strongly influence participation.
2. School Administrators may implement flexible parent engagement strategies, such as weekend or modular meetings, home visits, and multilingual communication platforms, to include families with livelihood or language barriers.
3. Policy Makers may create inclusive school policies that balance student-centered learning with respect for traditional values, and provide guidelines for culturally responsive teaching practices and conflict mediation.
4. NGOs and Community Partners may facilitate community–school programs that celebrate local traditions, support parental involvement in small-scale school activities, and provide resources for families facing socio-economic challenges.
5. Parents may participate in school activities through flexible channels, share insights about cultural values with teachers, and collaborate to support both academic learning and holistic development of children.
6. **Future Researchers** may investigate the impact of socio-cultural and economic factors on teacher–family engagement in diverse communities and explore innovative strategies to bridge cultural and communication gaps effectively.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

In preparation for the conduct of this study, all the aforementioned plans and recommendations were presented to East-West Mindanao Colleges Inc. to ensure compliance with prescribed procedures and protocols. Within the context of the research focused on examining how teachers experienced and responded to parental cultural differences, it was imperative to emphasize the paramount importance of ethical considerations. Prior to commencing the study, the following ethical principles were highlighted:

Informed Consent: Before participation, explicit and informed consent was diligently obtained from all school heads involved in the study. They possessed a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives, methodologies, potential risks, and benefits. Participation remained entirely voluntary, affording participants the autonomy to withdraw from the study at any juncture without encountering any adverse consequences.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: To safeguard the identities and responses of the teachers, rigorous measures were enacted to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Pseudonyms or codes were employed rather than actual names, upholding the privacy of the participants. The collected data was securely stored with access restricted solely to the research team.

Avoiding Harm: Delicate subjects, such as the challenges inherent in their roles, were discussed with meticulous consideration for the potential emotional and psychological impact on the participants. Strategies were in place to minimize distress, and a support system was readily available to assist participants should the need arise.

Researcher-Participant Relationship: The researcher maintained a professional and respectful rapport when engaging with the school heads. Any actions that could exploit or cause harm to the participants were scrupulously avoided, ensuring their utmost dignity and respect throughout the research process.

Data Protection: Adherence to data protection regulations and laws was unwaveringly followed to safeguard the personal information of the participants. Stringent measures were employed to ensure the secure storage and transmission of data.

Voluntary Participation: Participants were assured that their involvement in the study was wholly voluntary, devoid of any form of coercion or external pressure.

Researcher Bias: The researcher remained vigilant regarding potential biases that might influence data collection and analysis, upholding objectivity and transparency throughout the research endeavor.

Institutional Approval: Before initiating the study, the researcher diligently sought ethical clearance from the pertinent institutional review boards or ethics committees.

Honesty and Integrity: The research findings were reported truthfully and accurately, devoid of any manipulation or distortion to align with preconceived notions or biases.

Beneficence: The potential benefits of the research to educational practices and policies were thoughtfully considered, ensuring that the study positively contributed to the enhancement of the education system.

Cultural Sensitivity: The researcher displayed cultural sensitivity by respecting local customs, beliefs, and practices within the research setting, refraining from imposing external values on the participants.

Inclusion and Diversity: The study's structure prioritized inclusivity and diversity, encompassing a wide spectrum of how teachers experienced and responded to parental cultural differences that limited participation in the Lambayong III Sultan Kudarat for the school year 2025–2026.

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Declaration AI Tools Utilization

I do hereby declare the use AI tools, such as Chat GPT and Grammarly for grammar checking and sentence organization purposes only.

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