





More Than Homework Help: Filipino Secondary Students' Lived Experiences of Parental Involvement and Academic Performance

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study explored Filipino students' lived experiences of parental engagement and its perceived relationship to academic success. Guided by interpretive phenomenology, the research sought to understand how learners made meaning of their parents' involvement in their educational journeys. Participants were purposively selected, and data were gathered through semi-structured interviews to capture rich and in-depth narratives. Thematic analysis was employed using phenomenological procedures, including bracketing, horizontalization, and meaning clustering, to identify common patterns across participants' experiences. The findings revealed that students primarily viewed parental involvement as a source of relational connection and emotional support rather than mere academic supervision. Four major themes emerged from the analysis: children's growing autonomy, parental expectations as both motivation and pressure, monitoring of academic performance, and parents' emotional presence. While academic monitoring and high expectations were recognized as potentially motivating, participants also described these practices as stressful when perceived as excessive or controlling. In contrast, understanding, encouragement, and emotional availability were consistently identified as the most meaningful forms of parental engagement. The study concluded that parental involvement influences learners' motivation, confidence, and self-concept more through its emotional quality than through parents' actions alone, highlighting the importance of autonomy-supportive engagement that aligns with children's developmental needs.

Keywords

Parental involvement; academic success; Filipino students; emotional support; learner autonomy

How to Cite

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Author Contributions

The authors contributed to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing, and supervision. The authors approved the final manuscript.

Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards.

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement has consistently been identified as a critical factor influencing students' academic success and overall development across educational contexts. Students whose parents actively participate in their education generally perform better academically and demonstrate greater adaptability within school environments (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jaynes,

2010; Ates, 2021). Such involvement extends beyond monitoring homework and grades to include communicating with teachers, establishing educational expectations, providing guidance, and offering emotional and material support. These practices have been found to positively influence students' motivation, self-efficacy, mental health, and engagement in learning (Nye et al., 2006; Cosso et al., 2022; Jeynes, 2024). Recent evidence further suggests that parental involvement enhances learners' behaviors that contribute to academic achievement, particularly among senior high school students (Mabanag et al., 2025). Likewise, collaborative efforts between teachers and parents in facilitating students' homework strengthen shared responsibility for learning and create supportive educational environments (Miguel & Abulon, 2016).

However, parental involvement is not limited to academic supervision but also functions as a relational and emotional process that shapes learners' educational experiences. Parenting behaviors characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and sensitivity contribute to positive developmental outcomes and children's well-being (Roggman et al., 2013). In the Philippine context, parental encouragement and guidance have been shown to positively influence learners' attitudes and mathematics performance (Cruz & Natividad, 2022). Similarly, parents themselves experience both rewards and challenges as they support their children's learning, illustrating the emotional investment inherent in family engagement (Arma, 2025). These findings emphasize that parental involvement is a dynamic process embedded within everyday family interactions rather than a set of isolated educational tasks. Effective family engagement also requires meaningful collaboration among parents, educators, and communities to foster supportive learning conditions for adolescents (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020).

Research likewise suggests that the effects of parental involvement vary depending on contextual and psychological factors. Positive relationships between family involvement and academic achievement have been documented across different countries, including Ghana, Uganda, China, and Italy, although these relationships are often influenced by emotional intelligence, academic self-efficacy, school climate, and parental aspirations (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016; Li et al., 2019; Longobardi et al., 2022). Parental expectations, in particular, have emerged as a significant dimension of family involvement. Expectations communicated by parents can motivate learners to pursue academic excellence and shape future aspirations (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Nevertheless, adolescents may also experience stress and pressure when attempting to satisfy these expectations (Costigan et al., 2010). Experiences connected to future goals further influence adolescents' engagement and identity formation (Asakawa & Csikszentmihalyi, 1998). More recent studies have highlighted the complex nature of family involvement, demonstrating that parental support may simultaneously serve as a source of empowerment and emotional burden, particularly during periods of educational transition and uncertainty (Kang et al., 2024; Peng et al., 2024).

Despite the extensive body of evidence linking parental involvement to academic success, important gaps remain. Existing studies have predominantly employed quantitative approaches that focus on measurable outcomes and generalized models of engagement, often overlooking how students themselves interpret and make meaning of parental involvement. Although some investigations have explored the roles of emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and mental health in explaining academic outcomes (Khajehpour, 2011; Topor et al., 2010; Vahedi & Nikdel, 2011), relatively few studies have examined these relationships from the perspectives of adolescents, particularly within the Philippine context. Furthermore, educational experiences are shaped by broader environmental conditions such as school climate, material resources, and family environments (Trinidad, 2020; Buctot et al., 2021). There is also limited attention to diverse student populations, including adolescents navigating developmental transitions and those with varying educational needs (Flores de Apodaca et al., 2015; Serna & Martínez, 2019). Although longitudinal studies have begun to explore reciprocal relationships between parental involvement and academic performance (Yang, 2025), little is known about how Filipino secondary school students experience, negotiate, and understand parental involvement in their everyday academic lives. Addressing this gap, the present study employed an interpretive phenomenological approach to examine Filipino adolescents' lived experiences of parental involvement and its perceived influence on academic performance. By foregrounding students' voices, the study seeks to generate deeper insights that may inform educational policies, strengthen school-family partnerships, and promote developmentally responsive forms of parental engagement that support both academic achievement and socio-emotional well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study used a qualitative research method to examine what Filipino high school students actually thought about parental participation and how it affected their academic performance. A qualitative method would be best because it would allow for a deeper understanding of what parental participation in their daily school lives means to the participants. The research followed an interpretive phenomenological approach, which seeks to understand how people make sense of their experiences in specific social and cultural settings. This aligned with the study's focus on lived experiences.

Participants

Participants in this study were forty secondary school students in the Philippines enrolled in junior or senior high school in private schools. Purposive sampling was used to select participants, ensuring they had direct, meaningful experiences with parents involved in their school lives. One must be a high school student currently enrolled; two must live with or regularly contact at least one parent or guardian; and three must be ready to share personal experiences related to parental involvement and academic success. The number of subjects was based on "data saturation," meaning that adding more interviews did not yield any new important themes.

Instruments

A semi-structured interview guide made by the researcher was used to collect the data. The interview guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed, thoughtful responses about their experiences with family involvement, the

forms it took, and how they thought it affected their academic performance. Follow-up and probing questions were used to elicit more information from their answers and ensure they understood what was being said. Before the data were collected, the interview guide was reviewed to ensure it was transparent and valuable, and flexible enough to allow people to discuss events they considered important.

Collection

Individual, in-depth conversations were used to collect data. These could have taken place in person or online, depending on the subjects' access and availability. Before the interviews began, subjects were informed about the study's goals, that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time without consequences. All subjects provided informed consent, and for those under 18, parental or guardian permission was also required. With the subjects' permission, interviews were recorded on audio and then typed up word-for-word to ensure accuracy. Each conversation lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using an interpretive phenomenological approach to understand the meanings participants attributed to their experiences of parental involvement and academic performance. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. The researchers repeatedly read the transcripts to become immersed in the data and gain a holistic understanding of the participants' narratives. To ensure methodological rigor, bracketing was employed throughout the analytic process. The researchers consciously identified and set aside their own assumptions, beliefs, and prior experiences concerning parental involvement and academic achievement through reflexive journaling and analytic memo writing. This process minimized the influence of researcher bias and allowed participants' voices to remain central to the interpretation of findings. Following familiarization with the transcripts, horizontalization was conducted by treating each participant's statements with equal value during the initial stages of analysis. Significant statements describing participants' lived experiences of parental involvement were identified and extracted without prematurely assigning hierarchical importance. These statements were subsequently examined for their underlying meanings and organized through meaning clustering, wherein related ideas and experiences were grouped into thematic units. The researchers moved iteratively between individual narratives and emerging themes to construct rich textual and structural descriptions of the phenomenon. Through this process, common patterns and shared meanings across participants' accounts were identified, resulting in the development of overarching themes that represented the essence of Filipino secondary students' experiences of parental involvement and its perceived influence on their academic performance. Data collection and analysis proceeded concurrently until data saturation was achieved, as evidenced by the absence of new themes or meaningful insights from subsequent interviews. This iterative analytic process strengthened the depth, credibility, and authenticity of the findings.

Trustworthiness

The rigor of the study was established through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the data and member checking. A subset of ten participants reviewed the preliminary interpretations and thematic summaries to verify whether the findings accurately reflected their lived experiences. Their feedback affirmed the authenticity of the interpretations, and minor clarifications suggested by participants were incorporated into the final analysis. Transferability was strengthened by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research setting, participant characteristics, and methodological procedures, thereby enabling readers to determine the applicability of the findings to contexts similar to their own. Dependability was ensured through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting each stage of the research process, including participant recruitment, interview procedures, coding decisions, theme development, and methodological reflections. This transparent documentation enabled the consistency of the study procedures to be examined and evaluated. Confirmability was established through reflexive journaling and the preservation of analytic records demonstrating that the findings emerged from participants' narratives rather than the researchers' predispositions or preferences. Collectively, these strategies enhanced the trustworthiness and overall rigor of the phenomenological inquiry.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the study, strict ethical guidelines were followed. The appropriate institutional groups gave their permission for the study to go ahead. The participants' privacy and secrecy were protected by assigning them fake names and removing any information that could be used to identify them from recordings and reports. Also, all the data were kept safely, and only the expert had access to them. The study followed the ideals of respect, beneficence, and justice, ensuring that the people who took part were treated with respect and that their stories were accurately told.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interview narratives revealed that Filipino high school students perceived parental involvement as a multifaceted and deeply relational experience rather than a series of isolated academic tasks. Participants described their parents' involvement not only in terms of monitoring school requirements but also through emotional encouragement, guidance, shared responsibilities, and the communication of expectations. Four interrelated themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) parental involvement as emotional support, (2) parental involvement as academic monitoring, (3) parental expectations as both motivation and pressure, and (4) negotiating autonomy during adolescence. Collectively, these themes suggest that the influence of parental involvement on academic performance is mediated by how adolescents interpret and experience their parents' actions. These findings support previous literature emphasizing that family engagement is a relational process shaped by communication, emotional connection, and shared educational goals rather than merely observable parental behaviors (Yang et al., 2023; Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020).

1. Parental Involvement as Emotional Support

Participants consistently emphasized that the most meaningful form of parental involvement involved emotional presence rather than direct academic instruction. Learners described how encouragement, reassurance, expressions of concern, and simple affirmations of trust motivated them to persist despite academic difficulties. Knowing that their parents genuinely cared about their educational journeys increased their confidence, resilience, and willingness to overcome setbacks. For many participants, emotional support created a sense of security that made school-related challenges more manageable.

These findings align with previous studies indicating that parental involvement extends beyond behavioral participation to include emotional responsiveness and psychological support (Jeynes, 2010; Porumbu & Necşoi, 2013). Emotional support has been associated with stronger school engagement because it fosters students' feelings of belonging and acceptance (Topor et al., 2010). Parenting practices characterized by warmth and responsiveness similarly contribute to positive developmental outcomes and emotional well-being among adolescents (Roggman et al., 2013). In the Philippine context, parental guidance and encouragement have also been found to shape positive learning attitudes and academic dispositions among learners (Cruz & Natividad, 2022). The present findings suggest that adolescents value being understood and emotionally supported more than receiving direct instructional assistance, underscoring the importance of nurturing relationships during this developmental stage.

The findings indicate that adolescents value emotional presence, encouragement, and understanding more than direct academic assistance. This suggests that parents should prioritize nurturing positive relationships characterized by empathy, active listening, affirmation, and emotional availability. Educational institutions may also develop parent education initiatives that emphasize the importance of emotional support in promoting learners' motivation, resilience, and self-confidence. Guidance counselors can provide interventions that strengthen parent-child communication and help families recognize that emotional connectedness is a powerful contributor to students' academic persistence and well-being.

2. Parental Involvement as Academic Monitoring

Students also described parental involvement through activities such as checking grades, monitoring school requirements, reminding them of deadlines, and discussing their academic progress. Many participants interpreted these actions as demonstrations of care and accountability that encouraged them to fulfill their responsibilities. Others viewed such practices as routine aspects of family life and expected parental roles.

Consistent with previous studies, parental monitoring emerged as a common form of involvement associated with improved academic outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017; Mabanag et al., 2025). Participants viewed parental monitoring as a means of promoting accountability, discipline, and awareness of their academic responsibilities. Teacher-parent collaboration in facilitating homework likewise illustrates how shared educational responsibilities can support students' learning experiences and reinforce expectations between home and school (Miguel & Abulon, 2016). However, the effectiveness of monitoring appeared to depend largely on how it was enacted and interpreted. Participants appreciated monitoring when it was framed as supportive guidance and genuine concern. Conversely, repeated checking, excessive supervision, or controlling behaviors often generated anxiety and frustration. These findings reinforce the notion that parental involvement is not inherently beneficial or detrimental; rather, its effects depend on the quality of parent-child interactions and adolescents' perceptions of parental intentions (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020).

The results demonstrate that academic monitoring becomes beneficial when adolescents perceive it as supportive rather than controlling. Parents are encouraged to monitor academic progress through collaborative discussions, reminders, and constructive guidance while avoiding excessive supervision that may undermine trust and increase anxiety. Schools can facilitate this process by equipping parents with practical strategies for developmentally appropriate monitoring and maintaining regular communication regarding students' progress. Teachers may likewise frame academic feedback in ways that encourage parents to act as partners in learning rather than enforcers of performance.

3. Parental Expectations as Sources of Motivation and Pressure

Parental expectations emerged as another significant dimension of involvement. Many participants perceived their parents' aspirations as expressions of confidence in their abilities and concern for their future success. High expectations motivated them to study harder, set goals, and persevere through academic challenges. Students often interpreted these expectations as evidence that their parents believed in their potential.

At the same time, participants acknowledged that expectations could become burdensome when perceived as excessive, unrealistic, or strongly tied to family pride and sacrifice. Some adolescents reported experiencing pressure, fear of disappointment, and heightened anxiety when they felt unable to meet these standards. These findings mirror previous research demonstrating the dual nature of parental expectations. While parental aspirations can promote academic achievement and shape educational ambitions (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010; Jeynes, 2024), they may also contribute to emotional distress when adolescents perceive them as unattainable (Peng et al., 2024). Similarly, adolescents navigating parental expectations often experience both strengths and challenges as they strive to satisfy family standards (Costigan et al., 2010). Engagement with future-oriented goals has likewise been associated with identity formation and academic investment during adolescence (Asakawa & Csikszentmihalyi, 1998). The findings highlight the importance of balancing high expectations with empathy, open communication, and emotional support to foster healthy motivation.

The dual nature of parental expectations highlights the need for balance between high aspirations and emotional sensitivity. Parents should communicate expectations clearly while ensuring that academic achievement is not equated with self-worth or family acceptance. Expectations grounded in encouragement and realistic goal-setting can motivate adolescents to strive for excellence without experiencing excessive pressure. Guidance counselors and school personnel may offer programs that promote healthy family dialogues about aspirations, stress management, and shared educational goals.

Such initiatives may help families harness the motivational value of parental expectations while minimizing their potential psychological burden.

4. Negotiating Autonomy During Adolescence

Participants frequently discussed their desire for increasing independence as they progressed through high school. Although they acknowledged the importance of parental involvement, many expressed appreciation for parents who gradually adjusted their level of supervision and allowed them to make decisions regarding their studies while remaining available for support when needed. Such autonomy-supportive practices enabled students to develop confidence, self-regulation, and a stronger sense of ownership over their learning.

These experiences support developmental perspectives suggesting that parental involvement evolves as children mature (Otani, 2020; Serna & Martínez, 2019). Adolescents who perceived their parents as respecting their growing independence reported greater responsibility and intrinsic motivation toward academic tasks. This finding is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which posits that autonomy support enhances individuals' competence, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation by acknowledging their perspectives and providing opportunities for choice and self-direction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In contrast, overly restrictive involvement was often interpreted as limiting and undermining self-confidence. These findings indicate that effective parental involvement during secondary education requires responsiveness to adolescents' developmental needs and recognition of their emerging agency. Rather than viewing parental involvement as a fixed set of actions, Filipino adolescents understood it as a relationship-based process that continuously adapts to changing developmental demands.

The findings underscore adolescents' developmental need for increasing independence and decision-making opportunities. Parents are encouraged to adopt autonomy-supportive practices by gradually allowing adolescents to assume greater responsibility for their learning while remaining available for guidance and reassurance. Educators should recognize that secondary school students benefit from environments that foster self-regulation, accountability, and agency. School programs may therefore include activities that develop decision-making skills and personal responsibility while encouraging parents to respect their children's emerging autonomy. Such practices may strengthen students' intrinsic motivation, confidence, and ownership of their educational experiences.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This interpretive phenomenological study revealed that Filipino high school students perceive parental involvement as a relational and meaning-centered experience that extends beyond academic supervision. Four themes emerged from the participants' lived experiences: parental involvement as emotional support, parental involvement as academic monitoring, parental expectations as both motivation and pressure, and adolescents' negotiation of autonomy. Among these, emotional presence was identified as the most meaningful form of involvement, as students valued parents who listened, encouraged, reassured, and remained emotionally available during times of academic difficulty. While parental monitoring and expectations were generally interpreted as expressions of care that promoted responsibility and motivation, they also became sources of stress when perceived as controlling, excessive, or unrealistic. The findings suggest that the impact of parental involvement on academic performance is shaped not only by what parents do but also by how adolescents interpret and experience those actions. Supportive, respectful, and autonomy-sensitive involvement appears to strengthen learners' motivation, confidence, resilience, and sense of responsibility.

Based on these findings, parents are encouraged to adopt developmentally appropriate approaches that balance academic guidance with emotional support and respect for adolescents' growing independence. Schools and teachers should strengthen school-family partnerships by providing parents with opportunities to learn effective strategies for supporting adolescents' academic and socio-emotional needs. Guidance counselors may facilitate programs that enhance parent-child communication, assist families in managing academic expectations, and promote healthy coping strategies among students. Future studies may explore parental involvement from the perspectives of parents, teachers, and guidance personnel, compare experiences across different educational settings and regions, and employ mixed-method or longitudinal approaches to deepen understanding of how family engagement influences adolescents over time. By prioritizing students' voices and lived experiences, educational policies and practices can foster forms of parental involvement that support both academic achievement and holistic development.

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