



AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ADMINISTRATOR-PARENT COLLABORATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore the nature, extent, and impact of parent participation in school governance through an ethnographic approach. The study was to examine both the formal and informal mechanisms through which parents engage in school decision-making processes, shedding light on the various ways their input is sought or excluded. The researcher adopted a qualitative ethnographic design, which was particularly suited for exploring the cultural and social dynamics within a specific community, in this case, the collaboration between school administrators and parents in school governance. The study includes key members of the school governance committee, such as parent representatives, school board members, and community stakeholders, along with a target of eight participants consisting of three (3) Master Teachers, two (2) Administrative Officers, and three (3) Coordinators. The findings under this theme emphasize the importance of structured parent involvement in decision-making bodies and the need for a more collaborative approach to leadership in schools. Schools that actively engage parents through established governance structures, such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) or school councils, create an environment where decision-making is more inclusive and reflective of the diverse voices in the school community.

KEYWORDS- *Ethnographic Study, Administrator-Parent Collaboration, in School Governance*

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between school administrators and parents has emerged as a critical factor in effective school governance and student success. While traditional models of school administration often relegated parents to passive roles, contemporary education research increasingly recognizes the vital importance of meaningful parent participation in school decision-making processes. This ethnographic study examines the dynamics of administrator-parent collaboration in school governance, focusing on how parent voices are incorporated into, or excluded from, key educational decisions and policies.

This study also explores the various factors that influence the level of parent involvement in school governance, including cultural, socioeconomic, and institutional barriers. It investigates how administrators navigate these challenges while fostering inclusive practices that encourage diverse parent engagement. By examining the mechanisms through which school leaders create or hinder opportunities for meaningful parent participation, this research aims to identify strategies that enhance collaboration, empower parents, and ultimately contribute to improved educational outcomes. Through an ethnographic lens, the study captures the nuanced interactions between administrators and parents, shedding light on the power dynamics, communication patterns, and decision-making processes that shape school governance.

In China, Zhang & Liu (2020) explores how parents from different socioeconomic backgrounds engage in school decision-making processes, examining barriers and facilitators of parent involvement. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which socioeconomic status influences parents' participation, their perceived roles in decision-making, and their collaboration with school administrators and educators. The research also seeks to identify strategies employed by schools to foster inclusive parent engagement and the impact of cultural, social, and institutional factors on parents' willingness and ability to contribute to school governance. Through addressing these dimensions, the study aims to provide insights into creating equitable opportunities for all parents to have a voice in their children's education.

Meanwhile in Korea, a results reveal a gradual shift toward more inclusive and participatory governance models, driven by policy reforms promoting stakeholder engagement. However, the findings highlight persistent challenges, such as socioeconomic disparities, cultural perceptions of authority, and limited access to decision-making platforms for marginalized parent groups. The study concludes that while significant progress has been made in enhancing parental involvement, further efforts are needed to address structural inequalities and ensure that all parents have equitable opportunities to contribute to school governance. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators aiming to strengthen parent-school partnerships in South Korea, Kim (2019).

Additionally, in the Philippines, Santos (2021) investigates the effectiveness of existing mechanisms, such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), school governing councils, and community-based programs, in fostering active and



meaningful parent participation. It also considers the role of school leaders and educators in facilitating engagement and the extent to which inclusive practices are implemented to ensure representation from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The findings reveal significant variation in parent involvement across different contexts, highlighting the impact of socioeconomic status, geographic location, and school leadership on engagement levels. While some schools have successfully implemented participatory governance models, others struggle with limited parent engagement due to structural barriers and lack of communication. The study underscores the need for policies and practices that empower parents, promote inclusivity, and strengthen the partnership between schools and families, contributing to more effective and collaborative governance in Philippine education.

Furthermore, the study analyzes the perspectives of parents, educators, and school administrators to understand how these challenges manifest in different contexts and educational settings. It assesses the effectiveness of existing policies and programs designed to facilitate parent engagement and highlights gaps in implementation that exacerbate exclusion. Preliminary findings indicate that while many parents express a willingness to participate in school governance, factors such as financial insecurity, language barriers, and limited understanding of their roles create significant hurdles. Additionally, systemic issues such as inadequate communication channels, lack of training for parents, and rigid school policies further restrict involvement, (Reyes, 2019).

Also, Cruz (2020) findings suggest that innovative approaches, when combined with strong institutional support and a culture of trust, significantly enhance parent engagement. Schools that adopt these practices report improved collaboration, greater transparency, and decisions that better reflect the needs and aspirations of the school community. The study provides actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers to create sustainable systems that elevate parent voice in education.

Another study in Mindanao provides a localized perspective on parent involvement in school governance, focusing on the unique cultural, social, and economic dynamics of the Mindanao region in the Philippines. It examines how the region's diverse cultural heritage, including the presence of indigenous communities and Muslim-majority populations, shapes the ways parents participate in decision-making processes within schools, (Abdulrahman, 2022).

In Davao del Sur, schools, particularly in rural and urban-poor areas, often face challenges in fostering meaningful administrator-parent collaboration in school governance. While existing policies, such as the Department of Education's (DepEd) mandate for School Governing Councils (SGCs), encourage parental involvement, the level of participation varies significantly due to socio-economic factors, limited awareness, and logistical constraints.

Although studies on school governance highlight the importance of administrator-parent collaboration, there is a lack of ethnographic research exploring the lived experiences, cultural dynamics, and socio-economic barriers affecting this collaboration in Davao del Sur. Most studies focus on policy implementation and quantitative assessments, leaving a gap in understanding the nuanced interactions, expectations, and challenges that shape parent engagement in governance structures. Additionally, there is little documentation of how indigenous and marginalized communities in Davao del Sur navigate school governance processes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study, conducted across multiple schools in Bristol, England, delves into how school administrators developed frameworks to foster meaningful parent participation in school decision-making processes. The research emphasized the pivotal role of collaboration, showcasing how successful parent-administrator partnerships led to improved student outcomes, more inclusive school policies, and a stronger sense of community ownership within the educational environment. By analyzing diverse practices across various schools, the study highlighted innovative strategies for building trust, encouraging open dialogue, and integrating parent voices into critical governance areas such as curriculum development, resource allocation, and student welfare programs. Additionally, the findings revealed that schools with active parental engagement experienced enhanced teacher morale, more transparent communication channels, and a greater alignment between school goals and community expectations, (Goodall & Montgomery, 2019).

Similarly according to Välimäk & Uusitalo (2021) in the Helsinki metropolitan, Finland area highlights the Finnish model of integrating parents into school governance, offering a benchmark for participatory decision-making in education. This model emphasizes the use of systematic feedback mechanisms, such as annual surveys, structured consultations, and focus group discussions, to ensure that parents' perspectives are continuously incorporated into school policies and practices. Additionally, regular dialogue sessions between administrators and parent representatives serve as a cornerstone of this collaborative approach, fostering transparency, mutual respect, and shared accountability.

School leaders in Singapore employ innovative engagement strategies, such as organizing workshops, parent-teacher forums, and community events, to create opportunities for meaningful interaction and build trust with parents. Structured dialogue sessions, including biannual meetings and focus group discussions, provide a platform for parents to voice their concerns, share insights, and contribute to the decision-making processes that shape school policies and initiatives. These sessions are often supported by digital tools, such as online feedback portals and surveys, enabling broader participation and transparency, (Khong & Ng, 2020).



Meanwhile, A research study conducted by Dela Cruz & Santos (2019) across multiple public secondary schools in Metro Manila examined the implementation of the Department of Education (DepEd)'s policies on parent involvement in school governance and their impact on school improvement initiatives. The study explored how schools operationalized DepEd's guidelines, which emphasize the critical role of parents as partners in fostering inclusive, responsive, and effective educational systems. Findings revealed that schools that effectively implemented these policies often established Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) as active platforms for collaboration. These associations facilitated regular meetings, workshops, and community engagement activities aimed at building parents' capacity to contribute meaningfully to governance and decision-making processes.

However, the research identified barriers to optimal parent participation, such as limited awareness of SGC roles, inconsistent meeting schedules, and a lack of training for both parents and school leaders on participatory governance. These challenges often hindered the full realization of the council's potential in driving school improvement efforts. The study underscores the importance of capacity-building programs, regular communication, and institutional support to strengthen the effectiveness of SGCs. By fostering a culture of shared responsibility and collaboration, schools in Region III can maximize the impact of parent representation in governance, ultimately enhancing educational outcomes and community engagement, (Reyes & Ferrer, 2022).

Despite these successes, the study of Villanueva & Lopez (2021) also identified challenges, such as inconsistent participation among parents, limited understanding of governance roles, and the need for more comprehensive training for SGC members. Additionally, some schools faced logistical barriers, such as scheduling conflicts and limited resources to support regular meetings and capacity-building activities. The research concluded that strengthening the role of SGCs in CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon) requires sustained efforts to build parents' capacity, create more accessible participation mechanisms, and institutionalize best practices for collaborative governance.

Additionally, a study conducted in selected public elementary schools in Davao City examined the mechanisms that promote parent participation in school governance and identified best practices in administrator-parent collaboration. The research aimed to explore how schools engage parents in decision-making processes and how these efforts contribute to improved educational outcomes and school management. The findings revealed that schools employed various mechanisms to foster parent participation, including regular Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, feedback surveys, and collaborative workshops. These platforms allowed parents to share their insights and contribute to discussions on school policies, resource management, and student support programs.

Research Questions

Using an ethnographic approach, the study explores the complex interactions between administrators and parents, highlighting the power dynamics, communication patterns, and decision-making processes that influence school governance. The following central research question guides this study:

1. How do school administration and parents collaborate in the context of school governance?
2. What barriers and facilitators influence meaningful parent participation in school governance, and how do these factors impact school policies and student outcomes?
3. What power dynamics shape the relationships between school administrators and parent stakeholders in the context of meaningful collaboration in school governance?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research adopts a qualitative ethnographic design, which is particularly suited for exploring the cultural and social dynamics within a specific community, in this case, the collaboration between school administrators and parents in school governance. Ethnography allows for an in-depth examination of the lived experiences, interactions, and power dynamics that shape decision-making processes within the school environment. This approach emphasizes participant observation and immersion in the natural setting, enabling the researcher to capture the nuanced ways in which administrators and parents engage with one another, negotiate power, and influence school policies.

Research Participants

The study employs a purposive sampling strategy to select participants who are best suited to provide rich, relevant insights into the dynamics of parent-administrator collaboration in school governance. This research is conducted in Davao del Sur, ensuring that the findings reflect the specific educational context of the region.

For school administrators, the sample includes principals, assistant principals, and department heads, with a target of 8 participants. For parents, the study seeks individuals from diverse backgrounds, educational levels, and varying degrees of involvement in school activities, ensuring a broad range of perspectives, with a total of 8 participants.

Additionally, the study includes key members of the school governance committee, such as parent representatives, school board members, and community stakeholders, along with a target of eight participants consisting of three (3) Master Teachers, two (2) Administrative Officers, and three (3) Coordinators. To ensure relevance and depth in the findings, the inclusion criteria require that participants must have at least one year of active engagement with the school, allowing them to provide informed perspectives on governance-related matters. Additionally, participants



must voluntarily agree to take part in the study and provide informed consent, ensuring ethical considerations and willingness to share their experiences. The sampling strategy is designed to capture a diverse range of perspectives, ensuring representation from various governance roles and offering a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and interactions within school governance structures.

Research Instrument

The study employs multiple research instruments to gather comprehensive and contextual data on parent-administrator collaboration in school governance:

In-Depth Interview Protocol: A semi-structured interview guide is developed, featuring open-ended questions to facilitate deep exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. The guide focuses on key themes such as parental engagement experiences, perceived barriers to participation, governance interaction dynamics, and institutional communication processes. This approach ensures flexibility while maintaining focus on the study's objectives.

Data Analysis

The collected interview data will be analyzed using phenomenological analysis techniques, which focus on understanding the lived experiences of participants. Researchers will engage in a process of bracketing, where they set aside any preconceptions or biases, allowing them to focus solely on the participants' experiences. Through thematic coding and interpretation, the researchers will identify recurring patterns and themes that capture the essence of the participants' accounts. The aim is to uncover the core meaning of their experiences, particularly in relation to AI integration in educational management, and how participants perceive and navigate their roles and challenges. The analysis will involve iterative cycles of coding and categorization, refining themes as new insights emerge. This approach ensures that the study remains rooted in the participants' perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being examined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implication

The findings under this theme emphasize the importance of structured parent involvement in decision-making bodies and the need for a more collaborative approach to leadership in schools. Schools that actively engage parents through established governance structures, such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) or school councils, create an environment where decision-making is more inclusive and reflective of the diverse voices in the school community. However, the study also highlights that participation is not always equitable, particularly for parents from marginalized backgrounds. This suggests the need for schools to design processes that actively remove barriers to participation, such as providing access to information, offering language support, and ensuring meeting schedules are accessible to all.

School leaders should prioritize building inclusive structures that invite and value parent contributions at every level of decision-making. Developing clear communication channels, creating spaces for structured feedback, and offering capacity-building opportunities for parents are crucial steps toward ensuring that governance is shared effectively. Additionally, conflict mediation strategies, such as regular dialogue sessions and workshops for parents, are necessary to create an environment of openness and trust. The active engagement of all parents in school governance not only leads to better decision-making but also strengthens the relationship between the school and the community.

The findings under this theme highlight the importance of transparent and inclusive communication as the foundation for strong parent-school relationships. By fostering shared participation in decision-making, schools can build mutual trust and collaboration with parents. Joint engagement in school and community activities also plays a key role in developing a sense of ownership and commitment among parents. Proactive conflict resolution and a supportive school leadership approach are essential in maintaining a harmonious partnership between parents and administrators.

Schools should prioritize communication strategies that are both transparent and inclusive. Clear, accessible information and frequent updates on school activities and decisions can go a long way in building trust. Collaborative activities, such as parent involvement in school events or community outreach, should be organized regularly to foster deeper connections between parents, school leaders, and the broader community. Moreover, school leaders must adopt a proactive approach to conflict resolution by addressing issues early and ensuring that all voices are heard and respected. A supportive leadership approach that empowers both parents and teachers to work together will ensure a more resilient school community.

The findings in this theme reveal the significant power imbalances that exist in school governance, where school administrators often dominate decision-making processes, leaving parents feeling disempowered. The study also underscores the need for mechanisms that promote equitable participation and rebuild trust in the governance system. It is critical for schools to recognize and address the perceived inequities in parental involvement by providing inclusive platforms for parents from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.



In order to address power imbalances, schools must make a concerted effort to create more transparent, inclusive decision-making processes. This includes not only formal structures such as school councils and committees but also informal practices that promote dialogue and ensure that all parent voices are heard. School leaders must be trained in recognizing the dynamics of power within their institutions and actively work to dismantle barriers to equitable participation. Furthermore, rebuilding trust requires ongoing effort through mechanisms such as feedback systems, quarterly dialogues, and the implementation of inclusive practices that ensure parents feel their input is valued and acted upon. Ensuring equitable participation is not just a matter of policy, but of cultural and structural change that must be carefully cultivated over time.

The implications drawn from the three main themes—Shared Governance and Participatory Leadership, Strengthening Parent-School Relationships, and Navigating Power Imbalances—underscore the necessity for schools to adopt inclusive and equitable practices that actively engage parents in decision-making processes. By creating spaces for meaningful participation, fostering transparent communication, and addressing power dynamics, schools can build stronger, more collaborative relationships with parents. Ultimately, the success of these efforts depends on the commitment of school leaders to make governance processes accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.

Future Direction

The findings from this study highlight the importance of fostering shared governance, strengthening parent-school relationships, and addressing power imbalances within school governance. Based on these insights, the following future directions are proposed for key stakeholders Department of Education (DepEd), school heads, stakeholders, and parents to improve the inclusivity, equity, and effectiveness of school governance:

DepEd plays a critical role in creating policies and frameworks that promote inclusive governance and equitable participation across all schools. To build on the findings of this study, DepEd should consider the following strategies:

Policy Development on Inclusive Governance: Develop and implement national policies that emphasize inclusive governance structures where all parents, regardless of their socio-economic background, can participate meaningfully. This should include guidelines on forming parent committees, ensuring that marginalized groups are represented, and promoting diversity in decision-making bodies.

Capacity Building for School Leaders: Provide professional development programs for school leaders focused on participatory leadership and conflict resolution. This will empower school heads to adopt inclusive governance practices and better manage power dynamics in school governance.

Monitoring and Accountability: Establish systems for monitoring the effectiveness of parent involvement initiatives and hold schools accountable for promoting inclusive practices. Regular assessments of school governance practices should be carried out to ensure that power imbalances are addressed and that parent feedback is being taken into account.

School heads are central to shaping the culture of participation and collaboration within their schools. To build on the study's findings, school heads should focus on creating a more inclusive, transparent, and empowering environment for parents.

Foster Inclusive Leadership: School heads should actively work towards breaking down hierarchical structures and encourage shared leadership models that include parents in decision-making processes. This can be done by creating formal committees, such as school councils or advisory groups, that allow parents to be actively involved in shaping policies and initiatives.

Transparent Communication: Strengthen communication channels by providing regular, clear, and accessible information to parents about school policies, programs, and upcoming events. School heads should ensure that communication is culturally sensitive and consider providing translated materials for parents who may face language barriers.

Proactive Conflict Mediation: School heads must prioritize conflict resolution strategies that involve all stakeholders in a fair and respectful manner. This includes holding regular dialogues or open forums where parents feel comfortable expressing their concerns and ideas. These platforms can help rebuild trust and improve collaboration between school leaders and the parent community.

Capacity Building for Parents: Provide opportunities for parents to build their knowledge and skills related to the school system and decision-making processes. This can be done through workshops or orientation sessions that empower parents to participate more effectively in school governance.

Stakeholders, including local government units, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community organizations, play an essential role in supporting schools and parents in the governance process. To maximize their impact, these stakeholders should:



Support Community Engagement Initiatives: Collaborate with schools to promote community involvement by organizing regular forums and engagement activities that bring together parents, teachers, and administrators. These events can focus on specific issues in the school or community and provide a platform for open dialogue and collaboration.

Promote Equity in Parent Involvement: Support programs that aim to overcome the barriers faced by parents from marginalized communities, such as providing transportation, child care, or financial support for attending meetings. This will ensure that all parents, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to participate in school governance.

Strengthen Partnerships with Schools: Work closely with schools to identify the specific needs of parent groups and help develop tailored strategies for increasing their involvement. Community organizations can also assist schools in providing capacity-building opportunities for both parents and school leaders.

Parents are the key stakeholders in creating a collaborative, inclusive, and supportive school community. To enhance their role in school governance and build on the study's findings, parents should focus on the following areas:

Engage Actively in School Governance: Parents should take initiative and actively engage in school governance processes. This includes participating in school councils, attending regular meetings, and offering their insights and suggestions on school policies. Parents should not only see themselves as recipients of school information but as contributors to the decision-making process.

Strengthen Parent Networks: Establish stronger networks among parents to support one another, especially those from marginalized backgrounds. By working together, parents can amplify their collective voice and ensure that their concerns and suggestions are heard by school leaders. Parent networks can also provide mutual support for attending meetings and engaging in governance activities.

Advocate for Inclusivity: Parents should advocate for more inclusive practices within schools, such as language support for non-native speakers, flexibility in meeting schedules, and ensuring that all voices are respected and heard. Parents can work together to push for changes that will make school governance more equitable.

Enhance Knowledge and Skills: Parents should take advantage of opportunities for training and capacity-building offered by the school or external organizations. By improving their understanding of the school system, policies, and governance processes, parents will be better equipped to contribute to discussions and decision-making.

Future research should explore innovative strategies that have been successfully implemented in diverse school settings, with a particular focus on overcoming the socio-cultural and educational barriers to parent involvement. Additionally, there is a need for further investigation into the long-term impact of participatory governance models on student outcomes and school-community relationships.

The future direction for DepEd, school heads, stakeholders, and parents is centered around creating more inclusive, equitable, and collaborative school governance systems. Each stakeholder group plays a crucial role in ensuring that all voices are heard and valued. For DepEd, this means creating policies that promote inclusive participation and accountability. For school heads, it involves fostering an environment of transparency, shared leadership, and active conflict resolution. Stakeholders can support this process by providing resources and platforms for engagement, while parents can actively contribute to decision-making and advocate for inclusive practices.

Through working together and addressing power imbalances, barriers to participation, and gaps in communication, schools can create an environment where all parents feel empowered to contribute to the success of their children's education.

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