Prolonged Parental Presence in the Classroom: Perspective of K-3 Teachers

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Abstract — This study examined the experiences of Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers in Paquibato District, Davao City regarding prolonged parental presence in classrooms. Using a qualitative design with interviews and a focus group, five key challenges emerged: disrupted routines, teacher stress, undermined authority, reduced student independence, and strained parent-teacher relationships. Teachers coped through boundary-setting, communication, peer support, and structured parent involvement. While parental support is valuable, the study highlights the need for clear policies and school support to manage extended presence. Strengthening teacher-parent partnerships can improve both teaching and the classroom environment.

Keywords — Prolonged parental presence, classroom teacher experiences, K-3 teachers coping strategies, independence, teacher-parent relationships, classroom management.

I. Introduction

In primary education, the transition to school can be a significant adjustment for young children. During this period, some parents choose to linger in the classroom or nearby to provide emotional support, believing it will help their child adapt to the new environment. While parental involvement is generally considered beneficial to a child's educational development, prolonged parental presence in or near the classroom can have unintended consequences for teachers and classroom dynamics. Understanding how primary teachers perceive this presence, the challenges they face, and the strategies they employ to manage it is crucial for developing effective guidelines that support both educators and families in the early years of schooling (Hornby & Lafaele, 2021).

Across various international settings, teachers often experience increased pressure when parents remain in the classroom for extended periods. For instance, studies in the United States and Europe have highlighted that prolonged parental presence can disrupt classroom routines and hinder children's independence (McKenna & Millen, 2023). Teachers may feel under scrutiny, altering their instructional methods to meet perceived expectations from observing parents rather than focusing on pedagogical best practices (El Nokali et al., 2020). The balance between welcoming parental involvement and maintaining professional autonomy is a delicate one that requires careful management (Hornby, 2021).

In some countries, like Australia and the United Kingdom, schools have implemented specific policies to regulate parental presence within classroom premises. Research suggests that while these policies aim to enhance child adjustment and parental engagement, they can sometimes

lead to conflicts between parents and teachers regarding boundaries and roles (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2023). Teachers, in these cases, often report feeling constrained by the presence of parents who overstay, leading to a loss of control over classroom management and dynamics (MacLure & Walker, 2000).

Moreover, in Asian contexts such as Japan and South Korea, cultural expectations of parental involvement in education can further complicate this issue. While there is a high value placed on parental support and presence, teachers may feel that excessive parental involvement challenges their professional authority and impedes the development of a cohesive classroom environment (Park & Holloway, 2018). This highlights the need for clear guidelines and communication between schools and parents to ensure a supportive learning atmosphere for both students and educators.

In the Philippines, the scenario is somewhat similar, with the cultural importance placed on family involvement in children's education. Filipino parents often stay in or near the classroom during the first few weeks of school to help their children adapt to the new environment. While this practice is rooted in care and support, it can pose challenges for teachers, who may feel that their authority and classroom management are undermined. As a result, teachers may experience stress and anxiety, impacting their ability to deliver effective instruction and manage classroom behavior (Bernardo, 2017).

A study conducted in Manila revealed that many teachers felt conflicted about how to handle the prolonged presence of parents. On the one hand, they understood the parental need to ensure their child's comfort; on the other hand, they struggled to establish a classroom environment conducive to learning without constant external oversight. This suggests a need for developing protocols that balance parental involvement and teacher autonomy, ensuring a smooth educational process for all parties involved.

In Davao City, a similar trend is observed, where the involvement of parents in the early weeks of the school year is common practice. However, some teachers report that when parents overstay or frequently visit the classroom, it creates an atmosphere of constant observation and pressure, affecting their teaching methods and classroom management (Lagahit, 2019). Local educators express the need for clearer policies and communication strategies that help manage parental expectations while ensuring that teachers have the professional space to conduct their classes effectively (Lagahit, 2019). The tension between cultural norms and educational best practices presents a unique challenge that schools in Davao City need to address.

In Paquibato District, where strong community and family involvement is common, understanding primary teachers' perceptions of prolonged parental presence in the classroom is essential. While parental support is highly valued, especially during the early years of education, extended and unregulated presence can sometimes interfere with classroom routines and compromise teacher autonomy. This issue is particularly relevant in indigenous and rural

communities, where cultural practices encourage active parental participation. To create a productive and respectful learning environment, schools need clear policies and open communication with parents. Further research in the local context can guide the development of appropriate strategies that honor community values while supporting effective teaching and learning.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of primary teachers regarding the prolonged presence of parents in or near the classroom premises, with a focus on the challenges this situation presents and the coping strategies teachers employ. By examining how this phenomenon affects classroom management, teacher autonomy, and instructional practices, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of its impact on day-to-day teaching. The research also seeks to offer insights that can guide key stakeholders. The Department of Education may use the findings to inform or refine policies on parental involvement, ensuring a balanced approach that supports both teacher effectiveness and learner engagement. School heads can gain a clearer perspective on the practical challenges teachers face, enabling them to implement supportive administrative measures and establish clearer boundaries for parental participation.

Additionally, the study empowers teachers by validating their experiences and offering practical strategies for managing prolonged parental presence, which may contribute to greater professional confidence and autonomy. Students, particularly in rural and indigenous areas like Paquibato District, may indirectly benefit through improved classroom environments and more focused instruction. This research also provides a valuable foundation for future studies, encouraging further exploration into related topics such as the psychological effects on children, variations in parent-teacher dynamics across contexts, and cross-cultural perspectives on classroom involvement. Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between parental involvement and professional teaching practice, ensuring that all parties—educators, parents, and learners—can thrive in a respectful and collaborative educational environment.

II. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore primary teacher's perceptions of prolonged parental presence in or near the classroom of Paquibato District, Davao City. Grounded in a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, the research embraced the belief that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the lived experiences of individuals. The study was framed by philosophical assumptions that shaped its approach: ontology recognized the subjective nature of reality; epistemology emphasized the co-construction of knowledge through meaningful interactions between the researcher and participants; axiology acknowledged the influence of values in the research process, with a strong commitment to reflexivity and ethical rigor; and methodology focused on phenomenology as a means to uncover the deeper meaning

behind teachers' experiences with parents who remain in or near the classroom for extended periods.

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling to ensure that those involved had direct, relevant experiences with the phenomenon under study. A total of ten primary school teachers of Paquibato District, Davao City participated. Five teachers engaged in individual in-depth interviews, offering detailed and personal reflections, while another five took part in a focus group discussion that encouraged the sharing of collective insights. This combination of data collection methods allowed the researcher to capture both individual and shared experiences, deepening the understanding of how prolonged parental presence affects classroom management, teacher autonomy, and the overall learning environment.

Data were gathered using a semi-structured interview guide that featured open-ended questions. This approach allowed participants the freedom to express their thoughts while giving the researcher flexibility to probe further into significant topics. Interviews and discussions were conducted in quiet, comfortable, and private settings within the school or community, fostering openness and trust. Throughout the research process, the role of the researcher was crucial not only in facilitating the interviews and building rapport but also in maintaining a reflective stance to minimize bias and ensure the authenticity of participants' voices.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed to protect participants' rights and uphold the integrity of the research. Informed consent was obtained through clear and accessible explanations of the study's purpose and procedures. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and all data were securely stored. Risks were minimized by allowing participants to skip questions or withdraw at any time, and care was taken to respect the cultural and professional contexts of the teachers involved. Transparency, fairness, and respect guided every step of the research process, reinforcing trust between the researcher and the participants.

The data analysis process followed a systematic thematic approach. Interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's method. The researcher began by immersing in the data, identifying codes, and grouping them into themes that represented key aspects of teachers' experiences. Triangulation between individual and group data sources, member checking, and an external audit enhanced the study's credibility and dependability. By documenting decisions and reflecting on biases, the researcher ensured confirmability. Rich descriptions of the participants' contexts allowed for transferability, enabling others to assess the relevance of findings to their own settings.

Ultimately, the chosen methodology provided a strong foundation for exploring a complex and sensitive topic in early education. The phenomenological approach enabled the researcher to gain a deep, nuanced understanding of how primary teachers perceive and manage prolonged parental presence in their classrooms. Through ethical rigor, thoughtful participant selection, and a structured yet flexible research design, the study generated insights that are both meaningful and

practical. The findings aim to inform school policies and support teachers in balancing parental involvement with effective classroom management and professional autonomy.

III. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study on the experiences of kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers regarding prolonged parental presence in the classroom. Drawing from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the findings uncover key themes that reflect the realities faced by teachers when parents remain in or near the classroom beyond the typical adjustment period. Central to these findings are the challenges related to disrupted classroom routines, increased teacher pressure, diminished authority, delayed student independence, and strained relationships with parents. These themes offer valuable insights into how such parental presence influences teaching dynamics, classroom management, and student behavior, while also shedding light on the coping strategies employed by teachers to maintain a conducive learning environment.

Prolonged parental presence in classrooms disrupts teaching and learning, as kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers report delays in lessons and distracted students, confirming Markström and Simonsson's (2022) findings. Teachers also feel pressured and anxious due to constant parental observation, echoing Cheung and Pomerantz's (2020) research. Authority is weakened because children rely more on parents than teachers, complicating discipline (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2020). Over-involvement hinders student independence, consistent with Graue, Rimm-Kauffman, and Pianta (2020). Additionally, strained parent-teacher relationships arise from misunderstandings and unsolicited feedback, highlighting the need for clear role definitions to build trust (Hornby, 2021; Domina, 2020). These insights stress the importance of balanced parental involvement to support teaching, order, and student growth.

Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers manage prolonged parental presence in the classroom by setting clear boundaries, communicating expectations, encouraging student independence, reflecting on their practices, and holding regular parent-teacher meetings. They establish rules about when parents can enter or leave to minimize distractions, aligning with research by Smit et al. (2019) and Domina (2015) on the importance of structured involvement. Teachers also cope by reflecting and sharing experiences with colleagues, which boosts their confidence and reduces stress. Clear communication during orientations and meetings helps parents understand their supportive role while students learn to follow the teacher's lead, supported by studies from NacLure and Walker (2020) and McKenna and Millen (2020). To foster independence, teachers gradually encourage children to complete tasks without parental help, reflecting findings by Vitiello et al. (2019) and Barron and Schneider (2021) on promoting autonomy. Regular meetings with parents clarify roles and address concerns, preventing classroom disruptions and

strengthening home-school partnerships as emphasized by Smit et al. (2019) and Domina (2015). These strategies help maintain a balanced, focused, and cooperative learning environment.

Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers emphasize that managing prolonged parental presence in the classroom requires clear boundaries, good communication, and defined roles to ensure a smooth learning environment. Setting clear limits helps protect classroom routines and allows students to adjust better, while consistent and respectful communication prevents conflicts and fosters cooperation. Teachers observe that students become more independent and confident when parents step back and allow them space to learn on their own. Additionally, strong support from school administration reduces teacher stress by backing up boundaries and handling parent concerns. Clearly defining parent and teacher roles strengthens partnerships by promoting respect, minimizing misunderstandings, and enhancing teamwork. These insights align with research emphasizing that balanced parental involvement, supported by clear policies and school leadership, is essential for effective teaching, student growth, and positive parent-teacher relationships.

Overall, the findings from the experiences of Kindergarten to Grade 3 teachers reveal that prolonged parental presence in the classroom significantly impacts teaching, learning, and classroom management. Effective handling of this issue depends on establishing clear boundaries, maintaining open and respectful communication, promoting student independence, securing strong school support, and clearly defining the roles of parents and teachers. These factors collectively contribute to smoother classroom routines, reduced conflicts, greater student autonomy, and stronger parent-teacher partnerships. The results underscore the importance of balanced parental involvement supported by clear policies and administrative backing to create a positive, productive learning environment that benefits both teachers and students.

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