
Parental Bi-Cultural Practices in Handling Socio-Emotional Struggles Of Children With Language Delay: A Philippine–Thailand Study

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Abstract — This study explored the bicultural parenting practices of Filipino and Thai parents in addressing the socio-emotional struggles of children with language delay. Using a mixed-methods descriptive-comparative design, the study examined parental practices related to emotional regulation, self-esteem, and self-confidence. A total of fifty (50) parents from Bangkok, Thailand, and Iligan City, Philippines, participated in the quantitative phase of the study, while ten (10) parents, consisting of five Filipino and five Thai parents, participated in the qualitative interview phase. Data were gathered through a researcher-developed questionnaire-checklist and a structured interview guide. Findings revealed that parents frequently used strategies that support children's socio-emotional development. Common challenges included communication barriers, emotional stress, and family adjustment difficulties. Filipino and Thai parents shared similar supportive parenting approaches despite cultural differences. The study concludes that culturally responsive parent support programs and early intervention initiatives are essential for improving the socio-emotional well-being of children with language delay.

Keywords: *language delay, socio-emotional struggles, parental practices, Filipino parents, Thai parents, mixed-method research*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language development is a fundamental aspect of early childhood because it is the primary means through which children communicate, express emotions, build relationships, and participate in social interactions. Children with language delay often encounter difficulties not only in communication but also in socio-emotional functioning, including emotional regulation, peer interaction, self-esteem, and social confidence. Studies have consistently shown that language delay is closely associated with challenges in social competence and emotional adjustment among preschool children. For instance, Ahmed, R., and Johnson, T. (2020) found that children with expressive language delay exhibited lower levels of cooperation, social participation, and conflict resolution than their typically developing peers. Similarly, Wilson, J., et al. (2022) revealed that children with language delay commonly exhibit emotional dysregulation, frustration, and social anxiety, which may vary across cultural contexts.

Socio-emotional development is vital to a child's overall well-being and future success. It encompasses recognizing emotions, regulating behavior, building relationships, and adapting to social environments. According to Kalland and Linnavalli (2023), language development and socio-emotional growth are closely linked, suggesting that difficulties in one domain may adversely affect the other. Moreover, children with language disorders are at greater risk of social isolation, emotional distress, and reduced resilience, particularly when adequate support systems are unavailable (Hernandez et al., 2025).

Parents play a central role in supporting children with language delays because they are the child's earliest and most consistent source of emotional and social guidance. Through responsive communication, emotional coaching, structured routines, and supportive interactions, parents significantly contribute to their children's emotional security and social adjustment. Istianti, Tuti et al. (2023) emphasized that positive parenting practices promote emotional resilience, self-confidence, and healthier peer relationships among children. Likewise, Lee, Yujin et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of healthy parental relationships and parenting practices in fostering children's socio-emotional adjustment.

Recent studies further underscore the importance of parental awareness and involvement in addressing language delays and socio-emotional challenges. Alramadhan, H. et al. (2025) found that many parents have limited knowledge of speech and language milestones, which may hinder early intervention and support. Similarly, Gaffney, T. and McLeod (2024) emphasized that active parental involvement is essential to achieving positive outcomes in speech and language intervention programs. Parents who are well-informed and emotionally responsive are more likely to help children cope with frustration, anxiety, and communication barriers associated with language delay.

The present study is further grounded in major developmental theories that explain the relationship between language development and socio-emotional functioning. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) emphasized that children develop language and cognition through social interaction, while Erikson, E. H. (1950) explained that early childhood experiences strongly influence emotional development and self-confidence. In addition, Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) highlighted the influence of family, school, and community environments on child development and emphasized the importance of parental and social support systems for children with developmental challenges.

Despite the growing body of international literature on language delay and socio-emotional development, few studies have examined parental practices for addressing the socio-emotional struggles of children with language delay in cross-cultural contexts such as the Philippines and Thailand. Existing studies often focus on language intervention or socio-emotional outcomes separately, leaving a gap in understanding how parents respond to children's emotional and behavioral difficulties associated with language delay. Therefore, this study aims to examine the parental practices used by Filipino and Thai parents to address the socio-emotional struggles of children with language delay. The findings of this study are expected to inform the development of culturally responsive intervention programs and support mechanisms that may enhance the emotional well-being and communication outcomes of children with language delay.

Literature Review

Language delay in children has become a growing concern among educators, speech-language specialists, and parents because of its significant impact on communication, academic performance, and socio-emotional functioning. Research indicates that children with language delay often struggle to express thoughts, understand emotions, and interact socially with peers and adults. According to Ahmed, R., and Johnson, T. (2020), preschool children with expressive language delay showed lower levels of social competence and participation in peer interactions. The study found that communication limitations often lead to isolation and reduced engagement in collaborative activities. These findings support the idea that language development is closely linked to emotional expression and social adjustment during early childhood.

The relationship between language and socio-emotional development has received growing attention in recent literature. Kalland, M., and Linnavalli, T. (2023) found strong associations between children's language abilities and socio-emotional competence. Their study showed that children with stronger communication skills demonstrated better emotional regulation, empathy, and peer relationships. Conversely, children with language difficulties were more likely to exhibit emotional frustration, withdrawal, and behavioral challenges. These findings indicate that socio-emotional development and language acquisition are interconnected processes that influence each other throughout childhood.

Cross-cultural studies likewise highlight the emotional challenges children with language delay face. Wilson, J. et al. (2022) examined children in Australia and Japan and found that language delay significantly predicted emotional dysregulation and social anxiety. Cultural differences shaped how children expressed emotions and coped with communication difficulties. Japanese children tended to internalize emotional distress, whereas Australian children were more likely to express frustration openly. The study emphasized the importance of culturally responsive intervention programs that address both emotional and linguistic needs.

Recent research also highlights emotional resilience among children with language disorders. Hernandez et al. (2025) conducted a comparative study of children in the United States and Spain and found that those with language disorders exhibited lower emotional resilience and

social adaptation. However, schools implementing social-emotional learning programs reported improved peer relationships and emotional adjustment among affected children. The researchers concluded that emotional resilience should be integrated into language intervention programs to support the overall well-being of children with communication difficulties.

Parental involvement remains one of the most influential factors in supporting children with language delay. Alramadhan, H. et al. (2025) investigated parental awareness of speech and language delay in Saudi Arabia and found that many parents had limited understanding of developmental language milestones and intervention strategies. The study emphasized that inadequate parental awareness may delay identification and intervention, thereby affecting children's developmental outcomes. The researchers recommended educational programs to improve parental knowledge and practices regarding language delay. Similarly, Gaffney, T. and McLeod, S. (2024) emphasized the importance of collaborative partnerships between parents and speech-language pathologists. Their findings revealed that parental involvement positively contributes to children's communication progress and emotional adjustment. Parents who actively participate in home-based intervention activities help reinforce communication strategies and emotional support mechanisms introduced during therapy sessions.

Parents' experiences raising children with language disorders have also been examined internationally. Harding et al. (2024) examined parents' experiences with speech and language therapy services across ten countries. The study found that parents commonly experienced stress, frustration, and isolation due to delayed diagnosis and limited access to intervention services. Parents also expressed concerns about their children's emotional struggles, peer difficulties, and low self-confidence. The study highlighted the need for accessible support systems and stronger collaboration between professionals and families.

Parenting strategies for children with developmental delays were further explored by Hojjati, A., and Mehdiabadi, R. (2024). Their qualitative study found that parents used structured routines, positive reinforcement, adaptive communication strategies, and emotional support techniques to address their children's developmental needs. Emotional resilience and social support networks were identified as essential coping mechanisms for parents. Although the

study included children with various developmental delays, its findings are highly relevant to understanding parental responses to socio-emotional struggles associated with language delay.

Family systems theory likewise supports the role of parental influence on children's socio-emotional development. Lee, Yujin et al. (2023) found that healthy parental relationships and supportive parenting practices significantly contributed to children's emotional regulation and social competence. The study suggested that positive home environments promote emotional security and reduce behavioral difficulties among children. These findings reinforce the importance of nurturing family relationships in supporting children with communication and emotional challenges. Istianti, Tuti et al. (2023) further examined the role of parents in improving socio-emotional development through a systematic literature review. The researchers emphasized that emotionally supportive parenting practices, such as active listening, positive communication, and emotional validation, contribute significantly to children's emotional resilience and self-confidence. Parents who model healthy emotional responses and provide consistent support help children develop stronger coping skills and social competence. Several organizations likewise emphasize the importance of children's emotional well-being. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health recommends that parents support children's emotional well-being by actively listening, validating emotions, encouraging communication, and maintaining supportive relationships. These practices are especially beneficial for children with language delay who may struggle to express their feelings verbally.

The present study is also grounded in developmental theories that explain the relationship between language development and socio-emotional functioning. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) proposed that children develop language and cognitive skills through social interaction and guided participation. Children with language delay may therefore have limited opportunities for social learning and emotional expression. Likewise, Erikson, E. H. (1950) explained that early childhood experiences shape children's emotional development and self-esteem. Communication difficulties may lead to frustration, shame, and social withdrawal during critical developmental stages. Moreover, Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) emphasized that child development is influenced by multiple environmental systems, including family, school, and community. This theory highlights the importance of supportive interactions among parents, teachers, therapists, and peers in promoting positive socio-emotional outcomes for children with language delay. The ecological

perspective is particularly relevant for understanding how Filipino and Thai cultural contexts shape parental practices and perceptions of socio-emotional struggles.

Lastly, the literature shows that although several studies have examined language delay, emotional regulation, parental involvement, and socio-emotional development, limited research has specifically focused on the parental practices used to address the socio-emotional struggles of children with language delay in cross-cultural settings. Existing studies often examine emotional outcomes or language interventions separately rather than exploring how parents directly manage the emotional difficulties associated with communication challenges. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining the practices of Filipino and Thai parents in addressing the socio-emotional struggles of children with language delay.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of parental practices for addressing children's socio-emotional struggles associated with language delay. The quantitative component used a descriptive-comparative design to assess the extent of parental practices and compare Filipino and Thai parents across profile variables. The qualitative component examined the challenges parents faced and the coping strategies they used. The study was conducted in Bangkok, Thailand, and Iligan City, Philippines. These locations were selected to represent diverse cultural and educational contexts and to enable meaningful comparison of Filipino and Thai parental practices. Participants included parents of children with language delay from selected public, private, and international schools that accommodate children with developmental and language challenges.

The inclusion criteria required that respondents be parents or primary caregivers of children formally identified or clinically observed to have language delay and currently enrolled in selected schools or intervention centers within the study areas. Participants were selected based on their direct involvement in the child's daily emotional, behavioral, and communication support. The quantitative phase included fifty (50) parents, while the qualitative phase included ten (10)

participants selected through purposive sampling to ensure rich, relevant descriptions of parental experiences.

The mixed-methods design enabled triangulation by integrating numerical findings with parents' lived experiences. The quantitative component measured the extent of parental practices using descriptive and inferential statistics, while the qualitative component provided deeper contextual understanding of parental challenges and coping mechanisms. To strengthen the instrument's reliability, a pilot test was conducted with parents who had similar characteristics and were not included in the actual study. Cronbach's alpha was computed to assess internal consistency, yielding an acceptable reliability coefficient of 0.87, indicating that the questionnaire was reliable for data collection.

To ensure validity, the research instruments underwent content validation by experts, including faculty members, school heads, and early childhood educators. Items rated relevant by at least 80% of evaluators were retained or revised as recommended. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. The researcher ensured that all ethical standards for human participants were followed. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, procedures, the confidentiality of responses, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. To protect participants' privacy, pseudonyms and coding systems were used during data analysis and the presentation of qualitative responses. All collected data were stored securely and used solely for academic and research purposes.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, confidentiality was maintained, and participation remained voluntary. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency counts, means, and independent-samples t-tests were used to analyze the data. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes related to parental challenges and coping mechanisms.

The use of a mixed-methods approach strengthened the study's rigor by enabling methodological triangulation through the integration of quantitative statistical findings and qualitative thematic insights. This approach enhanced the credibility, depth, and

comprehensiveness of the research findings on parental practices and the socio-emotional challenges faced by children with language delay.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings in relation to the research objectives. The discussion includes descriptive and comparative analyses, supported by related literature and contemporary studies on socio-emotional challenges among children with language delay.

Profile of the Respondents

The study included parents of children with language delay from Bangkok, Thailand, and Iligan City, Philippines. Results showed that most respondents were in middle adulthood (35–44 years), accounting for 52% of participants, while 48% were 25–34 years old. This suggests that most parents were already mature and established in their family and professional roles, which may influence their caregiving practices and emotional support strategies. Regarding occupation, the largest share of respondents worked in business-related professions (34%), followed by teachers (20%), housewives (14%), nurses (10%), government employees (10%), and professionals such as doctors and engineers (6% each). The occupational diversity implies varying levels of exposure, educational experiences, and parenting practices among respondents. The predominance of business-oriented parents may reflect the entrepreneurial culture observed in Thailand and parts of the Philippines.

Regarding educational attainment, 92% of respondents held bachelor's degrees, while only a small number pursued graduate education. Higher educational attainment may positively influence parental awareness and responsiveness to the developmental needs of children with language delay. Previous studies have emphasized that educated parents are more likely to seek intervention programs and adopt evidence-based parenting strategies (Alramadhan et al., 2025). Most respondents reported having one child (44%), followed by two (36%) and three (20%). This

pattern reflects the trend toward smaller family sizes observed in both Thailand and the Philippines, where economic considerations and changing social norms influence family planning decisions.

The extent of parental practices for addressing socio-emotional struggles among children with language delay was measured using a five-point Likert scale. Weighted means and sub-means were computed to determine the degree of practice among respondents. The interpretation of scores was based on the following scale: 4.51–5.00 = Very Highly Practiced; 3.51–4.50 = Highly Practiced; 2.51–3.50 = Moderately Practiced; 1.51–2.50 = Fairly Practiced; and 1.00–1.50 = Not Practiced.

Parental Practices in Handling Socio-Emotional Struggles

A. Emotion Regulation	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
using a calm voice, gentle touch, and physical closeness to help my child de-escalate during big emotions; avoiding “calm down” commands.	16	13	9	6	6	3.54
helping my child label feelings and acknowledge that feelings are okay, providing words they lack.	13	14	12	8	3	3.52
reducing overwhelming sights and sounds that trigger frustration, adapting routines as needed.	14	14	11	6	5	3.52
discussing emotions in books or daily life to build emotional understanding, even when my child is not upset.	13	14	14	6	3	3.56
setting predictable schedules which provide security and reduce anxiety for my child.	14	14	9	8	5	3.48
demonstrating taking deep breaths or pausing; providing specific suggestions for managing distress.	16	12	13	6	3	3.64
Sub-mean	3.543 Highly Practiced					
B. Self-Esteem						
creating a supportive, language-rich environment.	15	12	11	6	6	3.48
using positive reinforcement (praises, tokens)	13	16	12	7	2	3.62
focusing on my child’s strengths.	14	12	11	7	6	3.42
encouraging independence through choices and skill-building.	15	13	13	6	3	3.62
avoiding criticism, being consistent, and showing I am on his/her side.	13	15	10	7	5	3.48
Giving my child the opportunity to communicate his/her needs first.	14	13	13	7	3	3.56
Sub-mean	3.530 Highly Practiced					

C. Self-Confidence						
creating a supportive, praise-filled environment.	15	12	11	6	6	3.48
using play-based learning (songs, games, role-playing).	12	17	12	7	2	3.60
modeling good communication.	15	11	11	7	6	3.44
allowing time to speak without interruption.	15	13	13	6	3	3.62
focusing on strengths/interests outside of speech.	12	16	10	7	5	3.46
incorporating visual aids and routine.	15	12	13	7	3	3.58
Sub-mean	3.530 Highly Practiced					
Grand-mean	3.534 Highly Practiced					
<i>Range</i>	<i>4.51-5.00 (VHP)</i>	<i>3.51-4.50 (HP)</i>	<i>2.51-3.50 (MP)</i>	<i>1.51-2.50 (MP)</i>	<i>1.00-1.50 (NP)</i>	
<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Very Highly Practiced</i>	<i>Highly Practiced</i>	<i>Moderately Practiced</i>	<i>Fairly Practiced</i>	<i>Not Practiced</i>	

The findings revealed that Filipino and Thai parents highly practiced strategies related to emotional regulation, self-esteem, and self-confidence in handling the socio-emotional struggles of children with language delay. Parents frequently engaged in discussing emotions, encouraging positive communication, offering reassurance, and supporting their children's emotional expression. In terms of emotional regulation, parents demonstrated high engagement in practices that foster emotional understanding and behavioral management. These practices included emotion coaching, behavioral modeling, reassurance, and supportive communication strategies that promoted emotional understanding and adaptive behavior among children with language delay.

However, one of the least practiced indicators was establishing predictable routines and schedules. This may be attributed to demanding work schedules and varying family responsibilities among parents. Existing literature suggests that structured routines are essential for reducing anxiety and improving emotional stability among children with developmental delays (Hojjati & Mehdiabadi, 2024). Regarding self-esteem and self-confidence, parents reported encouraging independence, praising effort, and motivating their children to participate in social and educational activities. These practices align with Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, which emphasizes fostering autonomy and initiative during early childhood. Children who receive consistent encouragement and emotional support are more likely to develop positive self-worth and social competence.

The results further revealed similarities between Filipino and Thai parents in nurturing and emotionally supportive caregiving practices. Both groups valued close family relationships, emotional warmth, and supportive communication. Nevertheless, cultural differences were also evident. Thai parents appeared to emphasize emotional restraint and calm behavioral responses, whereas Filipino parents tended to provide more expressive, verbal emotional support. These findings align with Wilson et al. (2022), who reported that cultural contexts influence emotional expression and coping strategies among children with language delay.

The consistently high ratings across indicators of emotional regulation, self-esteem, and self-confidence suggest that both Filipino and Thai parents recognize the importance of responsive, emotionally supportive parenting practices for children with language delay. The findings further imply that socio-emotional support is viewed not only as a supplementary parental role but also as a critical component of intervention and child development. The similarities between the two cultural groups may indicate that, despite cultural differences, parents of children with developmental challenges tend to adopt nurturing, adaptive caregiving behaviors to reduce emotional distress and improve communication outcomes.

Challenges Encountered by Parents

Sub-Theme	Key Exemplars (Filipino and Thai)	Frequency
Expressive Deficits	FP1: "Dili ma-explain ang emotions" (Can't explain) TP1: "Cannot tell feeling"	10/10
Tantrum Triggers	FP2: "Leading to tantrums daily"; TP3: "Meltdown big"	8/10
Environmental Overload	FP4: "Overwhelming sounds/sights"; TP3: "Overwhelm by noise"	5/10
Sibling Rivalry	FP1: "Sibling kay naa gyud rivalry"; TP1: "Brother jealous"	6/10

Qualitative findings revealed several recurring challenges experienced by parents in handling the socio-emotional struggles of their children with language delay. Thematic analysis identified the following major themes: communication frustration, emotional stress, peer interaction difficulties, limited professional support, and parental anxiety.

Parents frequently reported feeling frustrated when children were unable to express their needs effectively. Communication barriers often led to tantrums, emotional withdrawal, and misunderstandings within the family. These findings align with previous studies indicating that children with language delay commonly experience frustration and emotional dysregulation due to limited communication abilities (Garcia & Santos, 2021; Chen & Liu, 2024). Another prominent challenge was peer interaction and social inclusion. Parents observed that children with language delay were sometimes excluded from group activities or had difficulty maintaining friendships. Similar observations were documented by Ahmed and Johnson (2020), who found that children with language delay demonstrated lower social competence and participation in peer interactions. Parents also reported emotional exhaustion and anxiety due to caregiving demands, societal misunderstanding, and limited access to specialized services. Thai and Filipino parents alike highlighted the need for stronger collaboration among educators, therapists, and families. This supports the findings of Pongsakorn and Leelawadee (2023), which emphasized the importance of emotional support systems and collaborative interventions for children with communication delays.

Despite these challenges, parents demonstrated resilience and a commitment to supporting their children. Many respondents used coping strategies, including seeking professional advice, joining support groups, engaging in faith-based activities, and learning adaptive parenting techniques. These strategies improved parental well-being and caregiving effectiveness. The study's findings affirm that parental involvement is crucial to addressing the socio-emotional struggles of children with language delay. Supportive parenting practices, culturally responsive interventions, and collaborative educational systems are essential to promoting positive developmental outcomes among children with communication difficulties.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by its relatively small sample size and the use of purposive sampling, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. The study also relied primarily on self-reported parental responses, which may be influenced by personal bias and social desirability. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design limited the ability to determine the long-term effects of parental practices on children's socio-emotional development. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the parental experiences and culturally responsive practices of Filipino and Thai parents of children with language delay.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that Filipino and Thai parents strongly use supportive and nurturing strategies to address the socio-emotional challenges of children with language delay, particularly in emotional regulation, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Parents from both cultural groups demonstrated a strong commitment to providing emotional support, encouragement, and guidance to their children despite the challenges associated with developmental communication difficulties. The findings further revealed that children with language delay commonly experience emotional frustration, social withdrawal, difficulties with peer interaction, and behavioral concerns due to communication limitations. These socio-emotional struggles significantly affect children's emotional well-being and social participation, highlighting the interconnectedness between language development and socio-emotional functioning.

Although Filipino and Thai parents shared similarities in their caregiving approaches, cultural differences were evident in emotional expression and coping strategies. Thai parents tended to emphasize calm emotional responses and behavioral control, whereas Filipino parents were more expressive and verbal in their emotional support. These findings underscore the importance of culturally responsive parenting interventions and support programs. The study also identified several challenges parents faced, including emotional stress, communication barriers, limited access to professional services, and societal misunderstanding of language delay.

Nevertheless, parents displayed resilience by using adaptive coping strategies and seeking professional and social support.

Overall, the study highlights the significant role of parents in promoting the socio-emotional well-being of children with language delays. The findings suggest the need for collaborative interventions among parents, educators, therapists, and healthcare professionals to strengthen emotional support systems and improve developmental outcomes for children with communication difficulties. Furthermore, the proposed capability-building program may serve as a valuable resource for enhancing parental knowledge, emotional preparedness, and caregiving practices across diverse cultural contexts.

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