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Struggles and Experiences of Parents with Special Educational Needs Learners

♣***Delia Cercado***: *Dampas Elementary School, Cebu Technological University, Philippines.*

Lilibeth Pinili: *Dampas Elementary School, Cebu Technological University, Philippines.*

Danilo Cebe: *Dampas Elementary School, Cebu Technological University, Philippines.*

Janine Joy Cañete: *Dampas Elementary School, Cebu Technological University, Philippines.*

Marjorie Añero: *Dampas Elementary School, Cebu Technological University, Philippines.*

ABSTRACT: *This qualitative-phenomenological study explored the struggles and experiences of parents in managing the educational and developmental needs of children with special educational needs (SEN) at Dampas Elementary School, Tagbilaran City, Bohol. Using a validated five-part interview guide, in-depth interviews were conducted with ten purposively selected parents of SEN learners enrolled during the 2024–2025 school year. The research aimed to uncover the parenting strategies, challenges, and support needs of these families. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which revealed key themes related to parental practices: Guiding Healthy Habits and Language Development, Protecting Vulnerability Through Education, and Navigating Distraction and Learning Challenges. Challenges were categorized under emotional stress, lack of time and resources, and difficulty in understanding special education needs. Despite these struggles, many parents demonstrated resilience, commitment, and adaptive strategies to support their children. The study emphasizes the importance of strong school-home collaboration and tailored interventions to improve outcomes for SEN learners. Findings were used to propose an enhanced Parental Support and Practices Plan, with recommendations for educational stakeholders to strengthen systems that empower and support parents of SEN children.*

Key words*: Developmental challenges, Inclusive education, Parental involvement, Parenting practices, Special Educational Needs (SEN).*

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♣*Corresponding Author: Delia Cercado*

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1. Introduction

Parental involvement is a cornerstone in the education of learners with special educational needs (LSENs). Research shows that when parents are engaged in their children's learning, especially those with disabilities, it leads to better academic outcomes, emotional well-being, and school adjustment (Jigyel et al., 2019), (Berkant et al., 2019). Active involvement enhances children's sense of belonging and contributes to positive behavioral and developmental outcomes (Nordin et al., 2024). Additionally, studies reveal that children whose parents are involved in educational planning and interventions show improved communication and self-regulation skills (Tantiani, 2020). This involvement is especially critical in early intervention, where consistent support from caregivers ensures smoother developmental progress (Jigyel et al., 2019). Hence, parental engagement should be viewed as a fundamental component of inclusive education.

Collaboration between parents and educators is vital for developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and maintaining consistent learning strategies at home and school. Recent research emphasizes that mutual communication between parents and teachers enhances educational outcomes for students with special needs (Habing, 2004), (Berkant et al., 2019). In many cases, teachers recognize that parental input contributes significantly to customizing learning experiences that align with the student's strengths and limitations (Christovam & Cía, 2013). Parents also serve as advocates, pushing for accommodations and services that may not otherwise be prioritized by the system (Lai & Vadeboncoeur, 2013). However, disparities often exist in how much influence parents perceive they have compared to teachers' perceptions, which highlights the need for structured collaboration frameworks (Sukys et al., 2015).

Despite its importance, parental involvement faces many barriers such as limited access to resources, time constraints, and lack of awareness about special education procedures. Research indicates that parents often struggle to understand complex educational policies, which limits their ability to advocate effectively for their child (Jigyel et al., 2019), (Cantor & Cantor, 1995). Financial burdens, especially the cost of therapies and adaptive tools, also hinder consistent engagement (League & Ford, 1996). Emotional stress, isolation, and a lack of support networks further compound the challenges parents face (Lavan et al., 2018). Without accessible support services and clear guidance, many families feel overwhelmed by the demands of navigating special education systems (Nordin et al., 2024).

The rise of digital tools has transformed how parents engage with educators and monitor their child's academic progress. Studies show that online platforms improve communication, allow personalized updates, and promote parental empowerment through data tracking and feedback loops (Tantiani, 2020), (Cheng, 2014). However, the digital divide remains a pressing issue, especially in rural or underserved communities where internet access and device availability are limited (Al-Shammari & Yawkey, 2008). Additionally, parents and educators alike need training to navigate digital platforms effectively and use them to support inclusive learning environments (Jigyel et al., 2019). Therefore, integrating technology with proper guidance can bridge communication gaps and foster real-time collaboration in special education.

Parental involvement contributes not only to academic success but also to emotional resilience and social integration for children with special needs. Students whose parents support them in and out of the classroom are more likely to show positive behavior, increased confidence, and better coping mechanisms in challenging environments (Mavropoulou et al., 2024), (Garguilo, 2003 as cited in Al-Shammari & Yawkey, 2008). Emotional support at home creates a safe space for learning, helping children feel secure and accepted. Especially for children with autism or intellectual disabilities, structured routines and consistent emotional guidance from parents have been linked to better social skills and school attendance (Jigyel et al., 2019), (Cheng, 2014). Such outcomes highlight the multidimensional benefits of parent participation in education.

In regions like Bohol, Philippines, localized research is essential to understand how parents of LSENs navigate educational challenges. While national policies support inclusive education, disparities in teacher training, infrastructure, and support services remain, especially in rural areas (Jigyel et al., 2019). Community-level studies can provide insights into the unique barriers faced by Filipino families and the strategies they use to support their children despite limited resources (Nordin et al., 2024). For example, collaboration between local government units, non-governmental organizations, and schools can lead to more targeted interventions that empower parents through training, financial support, and peer networks (Mavropoulou et al., 2024). A focused study in Bohol can illustrate how proactive parental involvement enhances learning outcomes and builds emotional and social resilience among LSENs.

2. Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative-phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences, parenting practices, and challenges of parents managing children with special educational needs (SENs). A phenomenological approach was chosen because it captures in-depth, first-hand perspectives of individuals, offering rich insights into the day-to-day realities of parents raising LSENs. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which allowed participants to openly share their thoughts, emotions, and strategies in managing their children's educational and developmental needs. A total of ten parents from Dampas Elementary School in Tagbilaran City, Bohol, participated in the study. These participants were selected using non-probability purposive sampling, focusing on parents who had direct caregiving roles for children with SENs enrolled during the 2024–2025 school year. This sampling technique ensured that only

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individuals with relevant experiences contributed to the findings, in line with qualitative research standards (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). The main research instrument was a five-part interview guide validated by qualitative research experts and special education teachers. It covered key areas such as parenting practices, specific challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, emotional reactions upon diagnosis, and support needs. Interviews were conducted in Cebuano, the local language, and translated into English for analysis. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, as described by Wolgemuth et al. (2024), involving systematic coding and theme development. This method helped identify recurring patterns across participant narratives, including themes like promoting healthy habits, emotional strain, communication gaps, academic challenges, and hopes for the future. These findings informed actionable insights to improve support systems for SEN families.

3. Results and Discussion

Parental Practices in Managing the Educational and Developmental Needs of Children with Sens

Guiding Healthy Habits and Language Development. This is vital for their overall growth and success. Healthy habits provide the physical foundation for brain function and learning. Combined with a rich linguistic environment, these habits support cognitive development, especially during the early years of rapid language acquisition. Engaging children in conversations, reading, and encouraging them to express themselves strengthens their vocabulary and boosts social and emotional skills. By fostering healthy habits and language skills, caregivers set children on a path for lifelong learning and well-being.

Participant 1 disclosed that:

> *Gibawalan na nako siya ug chocolate aron dili ma hyper. Sauna whole siya mag tablet karon 2 hours na ang limit mag cge tan-awon ug cartoons. Mag Chinese storya nga dili masabtan. Gina istorya-istoryahan na nako siya karon tudloan ug sulat.* (I've prohibited him from eating chocolate so he won't be hyper. Before, he would spend the whole day on his tablet, but now the limit is 2 hours of watching cartoons. He speaks in Chinese, which is hard to understand. I've started talking to him and teaching him how to write.)

Participant 3 opined:

> *Moingon siya ug mag study ta ma pero kapoy naman ko kaayo from work unya taud-taud makatulog na sad ang bata. Wala gyod koy time para matudloan sila, ang iya ate ug kuya okay mam, siya kay hina man kaayo. Magcge ra sad ug cellphone ug TV.* (He asks me to study with him, but I'm already very tired from work, and soon the child falls asleep too. I really don't have time to teach them; his older sister and brother are okay, but he is very slow. He also just keeps using his cellphone and watching TV.)

But Participant 5 could be a bit strict when dealing with ASD learners:

> *Moreklamo man ug magtuon mi. Busy pod ko kaayo sa tindahan. Mag cge ug dula ug ML sa cellphone. Gibawalan na siya ug TV.* (He complains when we study. I'm also very busy at the store. He keeps playing Mobile Legends on his cellphone. I've already banned him from watching TV.)

Also, Participant 6 is worried about her child's education. She mentioned that:

> *Nag daycare ni siya, wala ni kinder. Kong pabasahon diri sa balay molakaw, dali. ra kalimot walay retention. Dapat atimanon jud ni siya sa maestra dili pasagdan. Dapat tudloan ang bata unsaon pag gamit sa lapis or ballpen dili kay tan-awon ra sa TV.* (He went to daycare; he didn't have kindergarten. If I read to him at home, he quickly forgets and has no retention. The teacher needs to care for him and not just leave him alone. The child should be taught how to use a pencil or pen, not just left to watch TV.)

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Children's physical and cognitive development are clearly correlated, according to their qualitative studies on encouraging healthy habits and language development. Children who eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise have been shown to have improved language and reading abilities.

Data also points to the impact of early language exposure—children who are spoken to regularly and read to in their early years develop larger vocabularies and more vital communication skills. Understanding these patterns through data encourages caregivers and teachers to prioritize a holistic approach, combining physical health and enriched language environments for optimal child development.

The duty of care principle states that it is the responsibility of adults to foster the development of children with impairments. The findings of Opoku et al. (2024) suggested that the development of exceptional children may be impacted by parents' inadequate knowledge of harmful eating. Additionally, the data demonstrates a lack of cooperation and communication among educators about healthy living and nutrition for unique children.

Establishing good communication is also essential to promoting healthy child development, claim Subramanyam et al. (2024). The main factors influencing children's well-being include education, curriculum design, inclusion, teacher preparation and understanding of recent advancements, and parent-teacher contact. A balanced diet, physical activity, a healthy environment, microplastics in kids and teens, and global warming are all critical components of children's development. Understanding the laws and guidelines governing child welfare and protection, as well as taking a scientific approach to wellbeing, are crucial.

The second question asked about parents' feelings when they first learned about their children's special educational needs.

Protecting Vulnerability Through Education. This is one of the most effective ways to empower individuals and communities. Education provides people with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to recognize and overcome risks, whether they are social, economic, or physical. Education equips individuals to navigate challenges and protect themselves from exploitation, discrimination, and harm by teaching critical thinking and problem-solving and fostering self-confidence.

Furthermore, it helps break the cycle of poverty and inequality, as informed individuals can make better health, finances, and safety decisions. Ultimately, education creates resilient communities where vulnerable populations can thrive and protect their future.

According to Participant 2:

> *Sobra akong kaguol mam nga matunto siya sa ubang tawo inig dako kay dili man siya makamao. Dili siya makabasa.* (I'm very worried, ma'am, that he might be deceived by others when he grows up because he doesn't know how. He can't read.)

Participant 3 is worried about her child and said:

> *Pag grade 1 niya giingnan ko ni teacher Biane nga medyo slow lagi daw akong anak. Naguol ko pagkahibawo nako nga dili siya makabasa pa.* (When he was in Grade 1, Teacher Biane told me that my child is a bit slow. I was worried when I found out that he still couldn't read.)

Participant 4 tried to compare the academic achievement of her children, and she mentioned:

> *Ang panganay achiever unya ang bunso mag loading inig compare makaguol ug masuko usahay.* (The eldest is an achiever, while the youngest is slow to respond when compared, which is worrying and sometimes frustrating.)

Participant 5 was stressed on incidents that happen at her home and she said:

> *Pwerte Nakong guola nga 3x siya ni grade 2 na stress ko kay molayat man kono siya kong pugson. Ning hire ko ug tindera aron makatudlo ko niya dili pa jud siya makamao. Nangasuko ang mga magulang niya nako kay ngano dili nako mapugos ang ilang manghod.* (I was extremely worried because he repeated

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Grade 2 three times. I was stressed because they said he would jump if forced. I hired a store helper so I could teach him, but he still doesn't know how. His older siblings got mad at me for not being able to push their younger sibling.)

Participant 6 added:

> *Naguol gud ko kaayo. Alangan man akong latosan.* (I am really very worried. I can't possibly hit him.)

Participant 7 said:

> *Syempre namoblema.* (Of course, I'm worried.)

Participant 8 is also worried regarding the conditions of her child who has an ASD:

> *Na unsaon man na nga mao man gyod hinay man ug utok halos tanan. Maguol pero wala man koy mahimo.* (What can I do when that's just how it is, most of them are slow learners. I'm worried, but there's nothing I can do.)

Participant 9 narrated regarding the worries of her husband on the learning capacity of his child with ASD. She said that:

> *Nabalaka labi na ang iyang amahan kay dili pa kabasa grade 2 na. modular man gud pod ni sila.* (His father is especially worried because he's already in Grade 2 but still can't read. It's because they are on a modular learning system.)

Participant 10 added that:

> *Naguol ko mam ug mawala ko aning kalibutan, asa ning akong mga anak? Labina ning akong panganay dili kabalo sa iyang name kong kinsa siya. Makaila siya sa mga tawo sa palibot pero siya wala kabalo kinsa iya name if naa mo ask. Ug mawala dili gyod ni nako mabalik sa akoa maong ma stress ko maghuna-huna. Tigulang na akong mga ginikanan. 4 mi managsoon pero naan sad sila own family.* (Ma'am, I'm worried that if I leave this world, what will happen to my children? Especially my eldest, who doesn't even know his own name or who he is. He recognizes the people around him, but if someone asks, he doesn't know his name. If he gets lost, I would never be able to get him back, and that's what stresses me out when I think about it. My parents are old now. There are four of us siblings, but they have their own families too.)

The findings reveal that education plays a crucial role in protecting vulnerable populations. Research indicates that more civic engagement, improved health, and lower rates of poverty are all correlated with higher levels of education. Vulnerable groups, such as women and marginalized communities, benefit significantly from educational opportunities as they gain the knowledge to make informed decisions and challenge harmful practices.

Data also indicate that education reduces the likelihood of exploitation, including human trafficking and child labor. By understanding these implications, policymakers and teachers can design targeted programs that empower vulnerable populations, promoting social mobility and long-term resilience through education.

Difficult life situations may leave anybody susceptible. Families with special needs are in danger, as are families dealing with other stressful situations like poverty or parental mental illness. Plavčak's (2024) study reveals that families with special needs require sensitive, flexible, and balanced approaches. Understanding families as a whole is essential, including the emotional phases involved in raising a child with special needs and any other challenging circumstances they could face. Interventions have to be developed together with families and tailored to their needs.

Nowadays, education which focuses on the information and skills kids must learn has emerged as a key determinant of growth and societal success. In reality, though, children's experiences do not match the

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objectives established by adults, and they can feel stressed and reluctant about going to school rather than enjoying it. By studying children's experiences, Soo (2024) investigates the causes of vulnerability in the educational setting.

The third question described a child's educational journey and formulated a theme.

Navigating Distraction and Learning Challenges. Navigating distraction and learning challenges is vital for academic excellence in today's rapidly evolving digital age. Distractions, from smartphones to social media, can interfere with focus and retention, making it harder for students to concentrate on learning. Addressing these issues requires developing solid time-management skills, fostering self-discipline, and creating structured environments that minimize interruptions.

Also, personalized strategies such as breaking tasks into manageable steps, using assistive technology, and seeking support from teachers can be helpful for students with learning challenges. Students can overcome obstacles and stay engaged in their educational journey by managing distractions and tailoring learning approaches.

Participant 1 narrated her experience on her child's day-to-day journey at home:

> *Dili siya ka focus of writing magcge ra siya ug dula. Pero mag kanta kanta siya ug letter ug numbers. Kong mao na iya gusto mao ray iyang buhaton. Mag drawing ra.sukad niskwela siya gusto ra siya magdula.Dili pa kaayo siya makatarong ug storya pero mag English ug intsek tungod sa iyang natan-aw sa cellphone nag halo-halo ang inistoryahan. Akong na pansin nga iyang mata motutok resulta cge sa cge ug cellphone like cocomelon and Tom and Jerry.Dili nako ginatun-an ug suwat, dili nako gina istorya kay busy ko.* (He can't focus on writing; he just keeps playing. But he sings letters and numbers. If that's what he wants, that's all he does. He just draws. Since he started school, he only wants to play. He still can't speak properly, but he speaks in English and Chinese because of what he watches on his cellphone; his stories are mixed up. I've noticed that he stares at the screen because he keeps watching things like CoComelon and Tom and Jerry. I don't study or talk to him much because I'm busy.)

Also, Participant 4 said:

> *Mag cge ra na ug duwa cellphone, nag cge dagan-dagan ug magtuon dili ka focus.* (He just keeps playing with his cellphone, running around, and when studying, he can't focus.)

However, Participant 7 narrated some positive impressions regarding her child's academic journey at home and said that:

> *Makamao siya ug addition, ug multiplication mag lisod siya, Magcge ra ug dula dili mag tuon. Dili sad maminaw storyahan sipat kaayo. Karong hinongitan pa ug mokaon. Alalayan ug taman sa iyang pag tuon diri sa balay bisan pa ug mag cge siya ug ambak ambak. Dili ka focus.* (He knows addition but struggles with multiplication. He just keeps playing and doesn't study. He doesn't listen well and is very distracted. Right now, he even gets distracted while eating. I assist him as much as I can with his studies here at home, even though he keeps jumping around. He can't focus.)

Participant 9 further mentioned:

> *Ang huna-huna sa bata dili angkop sa iyang edad. Kong 8 years old siya murag wala pay buot. Dili seryoso sa iyang study murag naglutaw. Mag cge gamit sa cellphone kay naguba among TV.* (The child's thinking is not appropriate for his age. Even though he's 8 years old, he seems to lack maturity. He's not serious

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about his studies; he seems spaced out. He keeps using the cellphone because our TV is broken.)

Participant 10 narrated her daily activity regarding her child with ASD:

> *Every morning nako sila ginahatod. Pero ug mouli ko kay moduty na mouban pod sila sa akoa inig uli. Mag wild ug dili paubanon mag tantrum. Magsuroy-suroy ra daw sa classroom ingon si teacher Rose. Sa pagkakaron dili pa gyod maka focus ug tuon akong anak maglisod ug sulat.* (I take them every morning to school. But when I come home, they will also join me when I return. They go wild and throw tantrums. They wander around the classroom, according to Teacher Rose. Right now, my child is struggling to focus and study and is having difficulty writing.)

The data on navigating distraction and learning challenges highlights the significant impact of multitasking and digital interruptions on student performance. Studies show frequent distractions, such as smartphone use or social media, lead to decreased focus, lower retention, and poorer academic outcomes. For students with learning challenges, these distractions can exacerbate difficulties, making it harder to process information.

Data also emphasizes the benefits of structured learning environments, reduced screen time, and personalized interventions for learner with learning difficulties. Understanding these trends allows educator to develop targeted strategies, such as mindfulness techniques and assistive technologies, to improve focus and enhance learning effectiveness.

Kovács et al. (2022) examined how various forms of parental engagement (e.g., at home, in school) influence the academic outcomes of children with SEN. It finds that active engagement by parents significantly contributes to their children's educational success.

Rossetti et al. (2021) emphasize how parents advocate for their children's needs in educational environments. It emphasizes the need of communication between parents and educators and the ways in which parents' advocacy work is influenced by their knowledge of SEN.

John (2024) investigates how cultural backgrounds influence parental practices in supporting children with SEN. It explores varying beliefs about disability and education and how these beliefs shape parents' participation in their children's academic growth.

The study of Greenway and Eaton-Thomas (2020) examines how the home learning environment created by parents affects the developmental outcomes of children with SEN. It discusses the importance of tailored learning activities and emotional support.

Specific Challenges Parents Encounter in Managing the Educational and Developmental Needs of Children with Sens

Dedication to Education Amidst Challenges. This highlights individuals' unwavering commitment to learning despite obstacles. This dedication often stems from a deep belief in education as a transformative tool. Whether facing financial hardships, limited access to resources, or personal struggles, those dedicated to education push through adversity with resilience. Their persistence reflects a determination to achieve long-term goals, often relying on creative problem-solving and support networks.

This theme underscores the idea that education is not just a pathway to success but also a powerful motivator that can help individuals rise above challenging circumstances and forge brighter futures.

Being a parent was difficult in handling children with ASD, especially since they do not have formal training in educating ASD. Participant 1 disclosed that:

> *Karon ako na siya gitudloan ug sulat bisan dili siya ka fucos, akong gina istorya.Ako miso inahan wala ko nakahimo ana sa iyaha kay wala koy time. Single mother ko gawas sa financial problem daghan ko kaayo gihuna-huna.* (Now I am teaching him to write even though he can't focus; I talk to him. As a single mother, I couldn't do that for him before because I didn't have time. Aside from financial problems, I have a lot on my mind.)

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Participant 3 narrated:

> *Tungod sa iyang kaki-at dili siya ka focus sa iyang study. Mao pod nay akong problema sa bata. Nagpa tutor ko niya pag summer ingon ang teacher nga eager to learn pero dili focus.* (Because of his restlessness, he can't focus on his studies. That's also my problem with the child. I got him a tutor during the summer; the teacher said he is eager to learn but needs to be more focused.)

Also, Participant 4 mentioned that her child cannot pronounce the words correctly. She said that:

> *Lisod tun-an, mag cge ug dagan-dagan sa classroom motung-tong sa lamesa. Dili mo respond dayon ug istoryahon, magtanga pa, Ug mo istorya dili ka pronounce.* (It's difficult to teach him; he keeps on running around the school and climbing on the tables. He doesn't respond right away when spoken to; he just stares blankly, and when he talks, he doesn't pronounce words correctly.)

Participant 5 narrated regarding her child's attitude:

> *Mag open kos tindahan 6am to 8pm. Kapoy na kaayo ko. Akong anak dili maminaw ug atudloan inig kagabii. Pinangga pod siya kay bunso, magtuman ug iyaha. Ma high blood gyod ko.* (I open the store from 6 AM to 8 PM. I am very tired. My child doesn't listen and doesn't want to learn in the evening. I also love him because he's the youngest, and he gets his way. It really makes me feel stressed.)

On the other hand, Participant 6 complained about the teacher's method of handling ASD learners. She said:

> *Wala man koy problema sa akong anak, dapat ra gyod bantayan giyahan ug mag tudlo. Ang mga maestra karon ang fucosan nila kay kato ra sad makamao.* (There is nothing wrong with my child; he just really needs to be monitored, guided, and taught. The teachers nowadays only focus on those who already know.)

Also, Participant 10 mentioned:

> *Kining paghatod kuha nila, wala na koy pahuway. Wednesday akong day-off mao ra nay time naa koy time nila kay busy man ko Saturday Sunday daghan clients. 5 sila kulang pa akong income para nila, kini pa gyod ilang learnings nga kulang pod need ug attention.* (With this drop-off, I don't have any time to rest. Wednesday is my day off, which is the only time I have for them because I'm busy with many clients on Saturday and Sunday. There are five of them, and my income is still not enough for them, plus their learning needs attention as well.)

The qualitative data reveal significant implications for educational policy and support systems. Studies show that students facing financial hardships, disabilities, or family issues tend to have lower academic performance and retention rates. However, data also highlight that students with access to targeted support, such as mentorship, financial aid, or tutoring, demonstrate higher persistence and success rates. This suggests that while challenges hinder educational progress, strategic interventions can mitigate their impact.

In addition to fostering a positive learning environment, parental involvement boosts kids' motivation, self-worth, and academic achievement when they encounter learning challenges and provides essential support and encouragement. Ybañez et al.'s (2024) study found no correlation between parental participation and the challenges faced by pupils with learning impairments. It was found that a strong bond between parents and teachers is required to provide a supportive learning environment that meets the unique needs of these

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students. Collaboration and shared responsibility are encouraged when parents are involved in their children's education.

According to Chebil and Radjel's (2024) research, despite the fact that professional development greatly enhances knowledge and abilities, real-world application of such skills remains challenging due to a dearth of practice opportunities. The findings also make clear that professional development and ongoing assistance are critical for special education instructors and emphasize the need for targeted, ongoing training to enhance teaching strategies for students with disabilities.

The second question was the ways a parent thinks he/she has grown due to these experiences.

Nurturing Communication and Focused Parenting. This highlights how important good communication is to creating positive parent-child bonds. Children feel more at ease expressing their thoughts and emotions when there is open communication. This nurturing technique enhances children's emotional intelligence and social skills, allowing them to navigate challenges confidently.

Focused parenting, characterized by intentional engagement and active listening, encourages children's autonomy while providing essential guidance. Together, these practices not only strengthen family bonds but also promote positive developmental outcomes, ensuring that children feel supported and understood as they grow and learn.

Participant 1 narrated her challenges in handling children with ASD:

> *Kong makaanak kog balik, dapat jud diay dili ikulong ang bata sa balay.Dapat pirmanente istorya-istorhyaon. Hatagan ug time unya sobra nako siya ka pinagga pero wala namao or dili sakto. Dapat ako na siyang e care, communicate, ang attitude niya sa learning akong fucosan. Sauna high blood kaayo ko.* (If I have another child, I really need to let the child play outside the house. There should be constant communication. I should give him more time; I love him so much, but he's still not learning or not doing things correctly. I need to take care of him, communicate, and focus on his attitude toward learning. I used to be very stressed about it.)

Also, Participant 2 added:

> *Ako dili man gyod ko manglatos ug dili makamao akong anak ako rang pasagdan. Pero dapat jud focusan siya ug basic aron makamao siya. Tas-on pa akong pasensya aron makakat-on akong anak labina sa compute2x ug kwarta.* (I really don't want to scold my child if he doesn't know; I just let him be. But he really needs to focus on the basics so he can learn. I need to increase my patience so my child can learn, especially with calculations and money.)

Furthermore, Participant 3 added:

> *Dapat gyod disiplinahon ang bata aron makafocus sa study. Dapat mahatagan nako ug time akong anak matudloan sa balay.* ("The child really needs to be disciplined so he can focus on his studies. I should give my child time to learn at home.)

Participant 10 disclosed that:

> *Wala koy tulog or kulang sa tulog unta ma change akong life para makahatag pod ko para sa akong mga anak. Kong ako kulang para sa akong kaugalingon mas kulang samot para sa akong mga anak.* (I don't get enough sleep, and I hope my life changes so I can provide for my children. If I'm lacking for myself, I'm even more lacking for my children.)

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Corresponding Author: Delia Cercado

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These data reveal significant implications for child development and educational outcomes. Research indicates that children with parents who engage in open and nurturing communication exhibit higher emotional intelligence, resilience, and academic success. Studies show that focused parenting—characterized by attentive listening and active participation—correlates with children's improved behavioral and social skills.

Furthermore, data suggest that these communication practices can mitigate the effects of stress and anxiety in children, fostering a positive home environment. Educational programs emphasizing these parenting techniques could enhance overall child well-being, leading to healthier family dynamics and more effective learning experiences.

Sultana and Purdy (2024) investigated how important parental education is in tackling the challenges of contemporary parenting, especially when it comes to fostering kids' communication skills. A key component of early development that supports kids' social-emotional and cognitive growth is communication. By cooperating and applying evidence-based strategies, parents may be empowered to create an environment that promotes their kids' learning and overall development. Parents with practical techniques and understanding may help and advocate for their children when they face obstacles, such as communication or learning difficulties, social disputes, academic failures, or other issues.

According to a study by Qorib et al. (2024), communication is crucial to improving the social and emotional development of children with intellectual disabilities. Parents who actively collaborated with instructors reported feeling more comfortable assisting their children in their home learning as well as helping them cope with challenges in both environments. The effectiveness of teaching children with disabilities depends on effective teacher-parent collaboration and therapeutic communication.

The beneficial effects of inclusive, diverse learning settings and parental participation on student success have been the subject of several research. For children with special educational needs, however, labeling and a lack of support for family engagement can lead to exclusionary behaviors that must be addressed. According to the Dan et al. (2024) study, instructors' integration strategies are an essential aspect of the organizational, social, and human elements that affect family engagement. The results could help us better understand how parents and schools interact with kids who have special education needs, as well as how instructors are prepared and supported in this area.

The third question was the kind of support a parent thinks is the most beneficial in moving forward.

Nurturing Learning and Attitude. This focuses on fostering a positive learning environment that encourages curiosity, creativity, and resilience. A nurturing approach involves recognizing individual learning styles and adapting methods to meet diverse needs, promoting a love for learning.

Positive attitudes towards education can significantly impact motivation and engagement, leading to better academic performance. This theme also emphasizes the role of supportive relationships, including those with parents and teachers, in shaping a child’s mindset.

By cultivating a culture of encouragement and growth, we can empower learners to embrace challenges, view failures as opportunities, and develop lifelong learning habits.

Participant 1 said:

> *Isip inahan, ako ra jud makatabang niya pagkakaron.Ako mismo motudlo sa iya. Fucosan sa nako akong anak. Bisan dili pa sa learning pero iyang attitude pod.* (As a mother, I can only help him right now. I will personally teach him. I need to focus on my child, not just on his learning but also on his attitude.)

Also, Participant 2:

> *Nga unta makahuman siya ug elementary dili pareho namo unya high school pod. Lisod ning walay kinaadman dali ra mailad. Dili moasenso bisan unsaon ug paningkamot. Cge lang mi ug pangahoy o maghugas ug empty gallon para ibaligya.* (Unlike us, I hope he finishes elementary school and then goes to high school. It's difficult to be uneducated; it's easy to be deceived. You will only progress if you try hard. We just keep gathering firewood or washing empty gallons for sell.)

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Furthermore, Participant 3 can afford to have a tutor. She said:

> *Dapat naay tutor kada gabii akong anak aron mafucosan. Unya mahatagan ug time aron matudloan.* ("My child should have a tutor every evening to focus on his studies. Then he should be given time to learn.)

Participant 5 narrated her experiences regarding her child's condition relevant to his academic journey. She narrated:

> *Tapulan gyod kaayo motuon sakit daw iyang likod. Sa akong bana mahadlok pod siya. Focusan lang gyod siya namo.* (He is really very lazy to study, saying his back hurts. My husband is also scared. We just need to focus on him.)

Participant 6 added:

> *Dapat naay linya ilang board unya ipakita sa bata unsaon pag sulat kada letters dili tanan digital. Dapat makakita sila unsaon.* (There should be lines on their board, and they should be shown how to write each letter, not everything digitally. They need to see how it's done.)

Also, Participant 7 disclosed that:

> *Kami wala na time kay busy sa work ug sa church. Dapat mag bonding sad mi sa mga bata unya hatagan ug time nga mo sit down gyod siya aron magsulat.* (Due of our hectic schedules at work and church, we don't have time. We should also bond with the kids and give them time to sit down and write.)

However, Participant 10 is worried her child's future. She said:

> *Support sa skwelahan nga unta makahuman akong mga anak sa pag skwela kay looy kaayo sila labina ug wala na ko simbako.* (Support from the school is needed so that my children can finish their education because they are really pitiful, especially since I no longer have any help.)

These data highlights crucial implications for educational practices and policies. Research indicates that positive attitudes toward learning significantly enhance student engagement and achievement, with findings suggesting that learners who feel supported and encouraged perform better academically.

Data also show that fostering a growth mindset among students increases resilience and a willingness to tackle challenges. Consequently, educational institutions should prioritize training teachers in nurturing strategies and creating inclusive environments that promote positive attitudes and lifelong learning.

The research by Aceves and Black's (2024) investigates the emotional strain that parents of children with SEN endure. It identifies common challenges, such as navigating educational systems, advocating for services, and managing their child's behavior while exploring coping mechanisms parents employ to manage these stresses.

Johnson (2024) focuses on the barriers parents face when striving to be involved in their youngsters' education. It examines issues such as lack of information, communication gaps with teachers, and feelings of inadequacy, which hinder effective parental participation.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role of parents in managing the educational and developmental needs of children with special educational needs (SENs), highlighting both their resilience and the obstacles they face. Parents described efforts to limit screen time, encourage healthy routines, and teach foundational academic skills like writing and basic numeracy. These parental practices reflect a growing

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awareness of the importance of balancing physical wellness and cognitive development. However, many parents also revealed emotional distress due to limited time, lack of formal training, and fatigue from daily responsibilities. These align with findings from Aceves and Black (2024), who note that the emotional burden and stress levels among SEN caregivers are high, especially when support systems are limited. Furthermore, nurturing communication and emotional bonding were seen as vital to addressing behavioral issues and promoting learning echoing the research of Sultana and Purdy (2024), who emphasized the significance of parental education in building communication skills and fostering development.

The study also emphasizes the urgent need for structured institutional support to complement parental efforts. While some parents were able to afford tutoring or modify learning methods at home, others struggled due to economic pressures and a lack of professional guidance. These disparities illustrate the necessity for inclusive, well-resourced education policies and teacher-parent collaboration. According to Johnson (2024), barriers such as limited school support and poor communication can hinder parental involvement, particularly in under-resourced areas. Similarly, Qorib et al. (2024) argue that effective communication between parents and educators leads to improved learning outcomes and emotional well-being for children with intellectual disabilities. Therefore, fostering school-home partnerships and providing accessible support services are essential strategies for empowering families and ensuring SEN children reach their full potential.

5. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the lived experiences of parents in managing the educational and developmental needs of children with special educational needs (SENs). Through in-depth interviews, it becomes clear that while parents show tremendous dedication, love, and resilience, they also face numerous challenges ranging from emotional stress and time constraints to a lack of educational support and formal training. Many parents expressed concern about their children's future, especially regarding their academic progress, safety, and ability to become independent. Despite these hardships, parents continue to strive to provide healthy routines, build communication skills, and nurture their children's learning in any way they can. The findings emphasize the urgent need for stronger collaboration between parents, educators, and support systems. Schools must provide inclusive learning environments and ensure teachers are well-prepared to engage with families of SEN learners. Most importantly, the emotional and practical struggles of these parents must be recognized and addressed through targeted support, continuous training, and policies that empower both the learners and their caregivers. With the right partnerships and systems in place, children with SENs can be given a fair chance to thrive, and their families can be better equipped to guide them toward success.

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*Corresponding Author: Delia Cercado

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