

Witnessing Absence: Teachers' Lived Experiences With Elementary Students of Migrant Parents in Vicente Hizon, Sr. Elementary School

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Abstract. The primary aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of teachers working with elementary students of migrant parents. The study focused on understanding the specific experiences/challenges they face, the coping strategies, and the valuable insights they gain. This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological methodology provided a robust framework for capturing the depth and nuances of these experiences. Participants were selected purposively from teachers handling students with migrant parents enrolled at Vicente Hizon, Sr. Elementary School, Bangoy District, Davao City Division, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives. Their voluntary participation ensured that the study could authentically explore and document the multifaceted dynamics of homeschooling education. The experiences were: (1) Emotional Burden, (2) Communication Struggles, and (3) Increased Responsibility. On the coping strategies of teachers were (1) Seeking Social Support, (2) Prioritization and Time Management, and (3) Engaging in Self-care. The educational management insights drawn from the findings of the study were (1) Enhancing Teacher Support Systems, (2) Strengthening Parent-Teacher Connections, and (3) Empathy and Understanding. The study highlights the need for policies that support teachers of students with migrant parents through added resources and training, improved communication with families abroad, and integrated school counseling services to support student well-being.

KEY WORDS

1. Migrant 2. experiences 3. coping strategies

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1. Introduction

The family is considered the fundamental unit of the community and significantly influences the maturation of young minds. Nonetheless, the family dynamic undergoes alterations when one or both parents opt to seek job abroad. The Philippines ranks among the world's foremost exporters of migrant laborers, with a 2021 study by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) revealing approximately 1.83 million

Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) employed abroad. Children of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are frequently entrusted to the care of grandmothers or other relatives, potentially affecting their emotional and intellectual welfare. Educators often detect indicators of worry in these students, including absenteeism, impaired concentration in class, and less engagement in academic pursuits. The lack of support from

parents at home may exacerbate these issues, necessitating that educators offer supplementary direction and emotional assistance.

Mao et al. (2020) did a study in China to examine the effects of absence from parents on the longer-term educational attainment and short-term academic performance of children left behind. The results demonstrate that the growth experienced by kids who are neglected is inversely associated to parental absence. Children who are abandoned are less inclined to pursue higher education and exhibit diminished performance on mental and academic assessments. The missing presence of a mother consistently affects children's development. Parental absence may exacerbate children's mental health issues and diminish their academic achievement, as indicated by mechanistic analyses.

Moreover, multiple research investigations in the Philippines have shown that the overall well-being of left-behind children is influenced by migration. From a positive perspective, migrant parents can offer financial support to their relatives, enabling them to attain superior education, acquire real estate, consume nutritious food, and access enhanced healthcare services. While employment abroad offers financial stability for families remaining at home, the actual absence of migratory parents adversely affects the emotional health and social development of their children (Burgos et al., 2020).

The viewpoints of educators are crucial for understanding the situations of students, particularly those from underprivileged or diverse backgrounds, such as the kids of migrant parents. Educators act as the principal responders to students' intellectual, social, and emotional needs and frequently possess extensive understanding of the issues and difficulties within the classroom. However, there is a paucity of literature concerning the ways in which educators aid and support pupils with migrant parents in Ban-

goy District, Davao City, a prominent region in the Philippines distinguished by a substantial population of migrant workers. Therefore, addressing this gap may provide useful insights on the issues faced by teachers and successful techniques, ultimately improving support systems for these pupils.

1.1. Research Questions—The study pursued answers to the following objectives: a) to explore the lived experiences of teachers handling elementary learners with migrant parents in Bangoy District, Davao City Division; b) to identify the coping mechanisms employed by these teachers in managing the challenges associated with teaching learners whose parents are migrants; and c) to uncover the insights of teachers regarding the support systems and strategies needed to effectively teach and support elementary learners with migrant parents.

1.2. Significance of the Study—The study's findings offered critical insights for various stakeholders involved in supporting elementary learners with migrant parents. Teachers gained a better understanding of the challenges these learners face and practical strategies to improve classroom support and management. Parents were encouraged to strengthen collaboration with schools, promoting shared responsibility and a more unified support system for their children. Learners benefitted from the focus on personalized interventions aimed at improving academic, social, and emotional outcomes. The Department of Education received evidence to guide policy development, teacher training, and support systems. School heads were equipped with knowledge to implement effective programs and foster a more inclusive learning environment. Future researchers were provided with a foundation for exploring similar issues and evaluating the impact of targeted interventions.

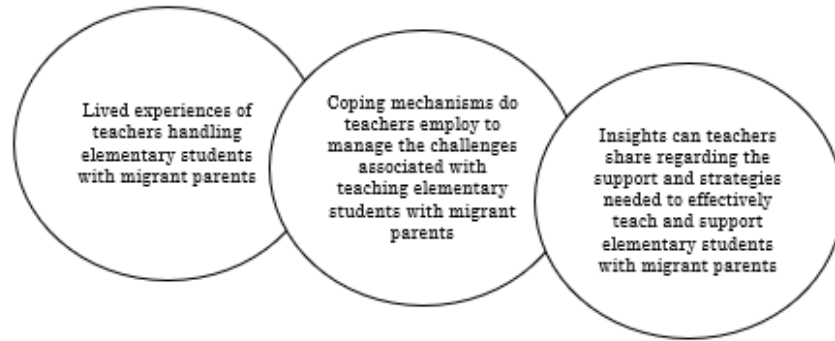


Fig. 1. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

2. Methodology

The following section outlines the procedures used by the researcher to perform this research study. It includes the population and sampling, instrumentation, data source, and data analysis.

2.1. Research Design—This study employed a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore instructors' experiences in managing primary students with migrant parents. Data were gathered in the participants' natural environments, allowing for flexible, evolving methods and inductive analysis that moved from specific experiences to broader themes. This approach emphasized understanding participants' lived experiences and acknowledged the researcher's own assumptions, aligning with the view that researchers cannot be entirely objective (Creswell Creswell, 2023). Unlike more rigid methodologies, qualitative research allowed for rich, nuanced insights that may extend beyond the immediate context of the study.

2.2. Ethical Consideration—The researcher followed RMC's ethical guidelines, focusing on informed consent, participant safety, privacy, and transparency. The study explored teachers' experiences with primary students of migrant parents in Bangoy District, offering insights to support educators and families. Written consent ensured voluntary participation, and emotional vulnerabilities were addressed with care. The qualified researcher collaborated with advisers and maintained strict data privacy under the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Conflicts of interest were managed by ensuring neutrality and confidentiality, while fairness and transparency were upheld throughout the study.

2.3. Research Respondents—Participants were purposefully selected to provide in-depth insights into the study's focus. Following Stewart et al. (2021), the researcher chose a small group to gather rich, detailed accounts of their experiences. Eight public school teachers from four schools in the Bangoy District of Davao City, each with at least two years of experience and working with students who have migrant parents, were recruited. This selection ensured that participants had relevant expertise to address the unique challenges faced by this student group and contribute meaningful perspectives to the research.

2.4. Research Instrument—In this study, the primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide used to collect data from eight purposively selected educators experienced in teaching students with migrant parents in the Bangoy District of Davao City Division. The interview questions focused on three key areas: teachers' experiences with these students, their coping strategies, and the insights gained from such interactions. A pre-designed interview form was developed and pilot-tested

to ensure clarity, consistency, and ease of data collection. To maintain reliability and validity, specific protocols were followed during the interviews, and confidentiality measures were

strictly enforced to protect participant privacy. The instrument was reviewed by experts to confirm its appropriateness and alignment with the study's objectives.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure—The researcher followed a systematic process for data collection, beginning with securing formal permission from the Dean of the Graduate School at Rizal Memorial Colleges and the Office of the Division Superintendent. Approved letters were then provided to the teacher-participants. The interview guide was subjected to expert content validation through a face-to-face review, ensuring clarity, relevance, and alignment with

the study's objectives. Face-to-face, one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted in a quiet, comfortable setting, each lasting approximately ninety minutes. Participants were fully informed about confidentiality and gave consent for audio recording, with additional field notes taken to capture non-verbal cues. All data were securely stored and analyzed using thematic content analysis combined with triangulation to ensure reliability and a comprehensive understanding of the findings.

2.6. Data Analysis—The study utilized thematic content analysis to systematically interpret interview transcripts and related documents, allowing for the identification of key themes based on participants' experiences. To enhance validity, methodological triangulation was em-

ployed, combining data from semi-structured in-depth interviews, which were recorded with consent, and secondary sources gathered through desk review. This approach ensured a comprehensive and well-rounded analysis of the research topic by integrating primary data with existing literature.

3. Results and Discussion

This section highlights the results and discussion of the study. Themes are extracted based on participants' responses to each question lived experiences of teachers handling elementary students with migrant parents, what coping mechanisms did teachers employ to manage the challenges associated with teaching elementary students with migrant parents, and determine their insights to share regarding the support and strategies needed to effectively teach and support elementary students with migrant parents in Bangoy District, Davao City Division..

3.1. Lived Experiences of Teachers Handling Elementary Students with Migrant Parents—Figure 2 illustrates the lived experiences of teachers handling elementary students with migrant parents, revealing three main themes: emotional burden, communication struggles, and increased responsibility. These themes un-

derscore the complex challenges teachers face in supporting this unique student population. Together, they highlight the need for targeted support systems that address teachers' emotional well-being, improve communication channels with families, and provide resources to manage their expanded roles effectively.

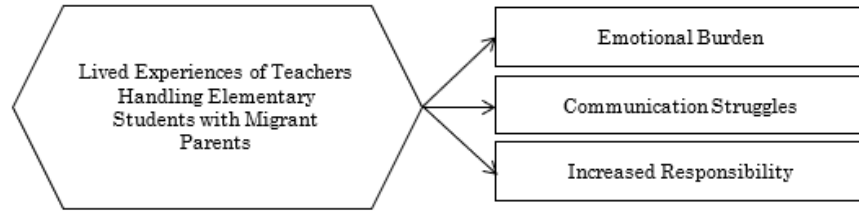


Fig. 2. Lived Experiences of Teachers Handling Elementary Students with Migrant Parents

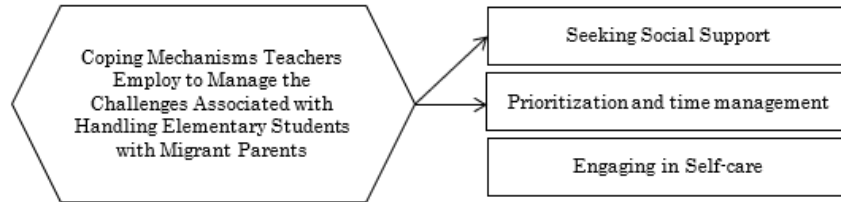


Fig. 3. Coping Mechanisms Teachers Employ to Manage the Challenges Associated with Handling Elementary Students with Migrant Parents

3.2. *Coping Mechanisms Teachers Employ to Manage the Challenges Associated with Handling Elementary Students with Migrant Parents*—Figure 3 highlights the coping mechanisms teachers employ to manage the challenges of handling elementary students with migrant parents, centered around three key themes: seeking social support, prioritization and time

management, and engaging in self-care. These themes emphasize the strategies teachers use to maintain resilience and effectiveness, balancing their professional responsibilities while addressing students' unique needs. Together, they reflect the importance of both external support and personal well-being in sustaining teachers' capacity to navigate these demanding roles.

3.3. *Insights Teachers Share Regarding the Support and Strategies Needed to Effectively Teach and Support Elementary students with Migrant Parents*—Figure 4 presents insights shared by teachers on the support and strategies needed to effectively teach and support elementary students with migrant parents. The emerging themes include enhancing teacher support

systems, strengthening parent-teacher connections, and fostering empathy and understanding. These themes highlight the critical areas where targeted efforts can improve educational outcomes by providing teachers with the necessary resources, building stronger relationships with families, and promoting a compassionate approach to address the unique challenges faced by these students.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1. *Findings*—The study pursued answers to the following objectives: (a) to explore the lived experiences of teachers handling elementary learners with migrant parents in Ban-

goy District, Davao City Division; (b) to identify the coping mechanisms employed by these teachers in managing the challenges associated with teaching learners whose parents are mi-

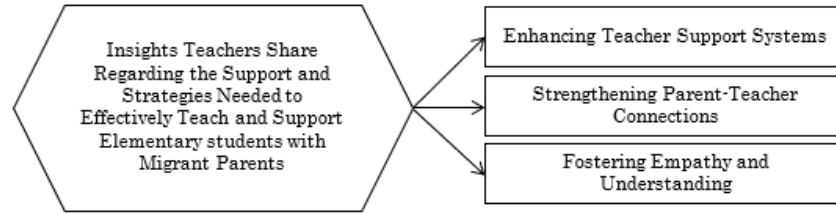


Fig. 4. Insights Teachers Share Regarding the Support and Strategies Needed to Effectively Teach and Support Elementary students with Migrant Parents

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4.3. Recommendations—Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered: Teachers should communicate openly

with colleagues and use counseling services for emotional support, while prioritizing self-care and adapting teaching to meet students' unique needs. Parents are encouraged to stay actively involved through regular communication and participation in school activities. Students should share their feelings, seek support, and engage in school to feel connected despite parental absence. The Department of Education should provide resources, training, and programs to improve teacher-parent communication and integrate counseling services. School heads need to strengthen support networks and promote professional development focused on these students' challenges. Future research should focus on interventions to enhance support systems and assess the long-term effects on students' academic and emotional well-being.

5. References

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