

ROLE OF PARENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT: A PRACTICAL GUIDE

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Abstract

The parents played the most significant role in the mental, physical, social, financial and career development in early childhood. The primary purpose of this mix-method study was to determine the practices and challenges of the parents in early childhood children. The quantitative strand of the study was done through the use of researcher-made survey checklist questionnaire administered to 75 respondents from the different barangays in the Municipality of Biliran employing equal allocation. Questionnaire on parents' practices along the four developmental domains had the reliability index of .962 and the challenges which contained 14 items had obtained reliability index of .80. After the analysis of the data through the use of frequency, percentage and simple weighted mean, out of 75 respondents, only 20 were interviewed face-to-face for the validation of the results. The data obtained from the interview were analysed through the use of Groenewald's method of phenomenological analysis of data with five phases namely: bracketing, delineating elements of meaning, concept formation, encapsulate the dialogue, certify and take out common distinctive themes from the responses and makes a synopsis. The quantitative results revealed that parents were having insufficient extent of practices along with the cognitive, physical, socio-emotional and spiritual development known as the four domains in early childhood development. As to the challenges, out of fourteen, only six came out as very challenging to the parents, to wit: discipline of the child, eating habits, sleep habits, patience towards the child, child's anxiety and child's tantrums. The content analysis of the data gathered from the interview generated four themes such as responsibilities and roles, rights, realities, resourcefulness and resilience. Thus, the Practical Guide for Parenthood was designed in addressing the barriers they encounter and to guide parents with early childhood children.

Keywords: Domain, Early Childhood Practices, Mix-method, Role of Parents, Practical Guide

INTRODUCTION

Parental roles have a vital and significant contribution to the holistic development of a child. The focused should not only on the scholastic side of a child but must underscore on his or her inner perspective and character building. Everything starts at home, and so, things that a child firstly learned are a reflection of how his or her parents have ignited his or her interests in education and other several other attributes. There is no such perfect parenting for a child but, the continuous learning in dealing with a child and parenting strategies help a lot in the improvement of a child's well-being. Understanding the needs of a child in all developmental phases rely on the arduous efforts of the parents (Mowder, Rubinson & Yasik, 2009). The type of environment the child is adaptive to be part of parental influence.

It has also been highlighted that the modern parent lives in an ever changing society, which places

additional stress on their role as parents, and these, are the contexts in which parents must nurture, educate, and try to understand their children and themselves as parents. This highlights the potential value of exploring parenting, as well as the particular context in which parenting is taking place. However, the dilemma occurred when the parents were so much occupying with works for them to live the kind of life they are flaunting. Most of the present generation of parents are embodied with pleasures, vices, and pursuits of own happiness, and career.

Aside from the lifestyle, the economy is also one of the factors that contribute to why mothers nowadays are hunting for jobs and even urged to go abroad. The prices of the various commodities in the Philippines are increasing and this result in more parents who opted to work than stay at home, in fact in 2006 it reaches up to 1.5 million overseas workers. With this scenario, children live with their guardians while their parents work and went home every two or more years. This situation affects the mental and emotional well-being of children (Cohn, Livingston, & Wang, 2015). In Biliran, one of the provinces in the Philippines Region has an increasing number of parents working locally and abroad in the hope that they would be able to provide financial support for their families and to have a better life.

Hence, in a cursory observation conducted in the Municipality of Biliran, it was reported that the number of working parents were increasing, low-income families were also escalating, inadequacy of knowledge in parenting, less involvement in school activities, and unpreparedness of their role as parents affect the aim of the parenting. Parents shared common challenges in raising children who were at an early childhood stage, one of them was the financial crisis that they faced and they needed to work to other places to support the families while others were busy with their vices despite the problems they encountered. These observed circumstances prompted the researcher to work on this study for there is a dire need to assess the level of practices, and challenges of the role of parents toward the growth and development of their children. This related to the rationale of this study: the need to identify the disputes that parents are facing now. Based on the results and findings of the study, the Practical Guide for parenthood was designed.

OBJECTIVES

This study ascertained the parents' regard and understanding of their role in the child's early development.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following queries:

1. The extent of their practices along with the early childhood development domains:
 - 2.1. Cognitive,
 - 2.2. Physical,
 - 2.3. Socio-emotional and
 - 2.4. Spiritual;
2. The challenges of parents in assuming their maternal and paternal roles; and
3. The design of a practical guide for early childhood development parenthood.

Theoretical- Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study is anchored on the Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005) which stressed that it is important for the parents to understand their roles as a parent since it is through this role that

individuals perceive of what parenting involves and consequently the roles of parents to their children. This theory describes who the parents are and explains how parental roles and activities develop the well-being of a child. The theory also claimed that each people have their ideas of parenting and it depends on their own experiences of how their parents have raised them and the kind of feelings inflicted on them, their childrearing expertise and understanding, and the orientation of parent-child relationship.

It also draws attention to parenting. Parenting is the performance of a social role rather than a biological parent role requiring that individual parents recognize, assume and perform the parent role (Mowder, 2005). There is generally no consensus on what constitutes parent role responsibility and because the role is socially defined and subject to individual interpretation, adequate role performance is not spelled out except where abuse and neglect are concerned (Emery & Billings, 2004, cited in Mowder, 2005). The theory addresses parenting from a developmental outlook wherein it acknowledges that the parent role shifts and changes over time according to the changing stage of the child (Sperling & Mowder, 2006).

Practices measure the parent's involvement in the child's four developmental domains. It is important to know how often the parents of the Biliran Municipality extend the parenting roles practices in early childhood development. Child development refers to how the kid develops and learns. There are four zones or spaces of youngster improvement indeed: Cognitive, Physical, Sociological emotion and Spiritual Development.

However, parents can still have issues with children, indeed on the off chance that they have done everything. Most of the time, in any case of parent's best endeavors, parent-child social issues emerge. These issues can begin at a really youthful age of a child or begin to create as a child gets more seasoned and enters distinctive stages of development. A few issues require a small extra time and centered consideration to create them disappear, whereas others may require parents to radically alter their fashion of child-rearing and how they connected with their children by day parent-child social issue emerge.

A proposed practical guide depends on the result of the survey from the parents about their practices and challenges of early childhood development. This program would enhance the knowledge of the parents about parenting, awareness of the new policies and build up the parent-child relationship.

METHODS

This study utilized the mixed method design employing researcher-made survey checklist questionnaire, rating scales and face-to-face interview.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The quantitative data used to obtain the respondents' practices and challenges that were sourced out from the survey questionnaires. Instrument analyzing of the collected scores was used to answer research questions and to test hypothesis.

The qualitative portion of the study incorporated the textual information obtained from the face-to-face interview with parents of early childhood children. Interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents through audio recording. Responses were translated into English and were analyzed through content analyses using the five steps of Groenewald's process of data

analysis.

RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

This study was conducted respectively in the Municipality of Biliran where the dialect is waray-waray. It is a 5th class municipality in the Province of Biliran and with a population of 16, 882 and consists of 11 barangays namely: Bato, Burabod, Busali, Canila, Hugpa, Julita, San Isidro, San Roque, Sanggalang, Pinangomhan and Villa Enage. Among the 11 barangays, San Isidro is the biggest barangay with it comes to the number of population and households, while Villa Enage has the least number of population and households as well as considered as the smallest barangay.

RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

In this study, equal allocation method was used in getting the sample of the parents in each barangay since the total number of the parents in Biliran Municipality is numerous. The study involved 5 barangays from the most populated to the least populated, located in different areas such as coastal, mountainous, rural and urban. The population of this study utilized 50 parents who were living together and 25 parents, who were not living together or in the absence of one of the parents at home having children ages 0-5 years of age in the Municipality of Biliran.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Parents' practices questionnaire was a researcher-made questionnaire of which had been validated by the experts on the practices of parents of their roles in the four domains in early childhood development namely: cognitive, physical, socio-emotional and spiritual development. It contained 10 statements in each domain with the total of 40 statements to help the early childhood development. It used 4-point Likert scale using the following measures: Always (4), Often (3), Sometimes (2) and Never (1).

The instruments were reviewed and validated by the panel of experts: the Municipal Officer of the Social Welfare Department, a professor from the Biliran Province State University of the Language major in Developmental Communication and the Data Analyst of this research work and a parent who is a department head in the Department of Agrarian Reform to see and check if the contents were relevant. Translation of the questionnaire was done by the assistance of some experts of the language used by the respondents.

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

After the validation, there was a dry run for pilot testing of the instrument in order to which items were not valid for the variables using the cronbach's alpha in SPSS to make the instrument more valid and comprehensive. The reliability index for the parents' practices along the four developmental domain which contained 40 items had the reliability index of .962 and challenges which contained 14 items had obtained reliability index of .80. Revisions were made in the challenges instrument and in the child tutoring, child screen time and free time spent for their children were omitted.

Quantitative data from the survey was statistically analyzed by the frequency counts, mean, and percentage. The level of parents' practices and challenges were measured in a scale of 4-point Likert scale. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) is used in computing the quantitative data gathered to make sure the accuracy of results.

In qualitative data analysis, transcription of the data was done to determine the themes and

patterns of the statements being recorded during the interview with the assistance of data analyst. Answers from the open-ended questions in the interview were recorded, transcribed and coded to discover the themes using the Groenewald’s five phases of phenomenological analysis of data. The phases are (1) bracketing and phenomenology reduction; (2) outlining units of meaning; (3) clustering of units meaning to form themes; (4) sum up each interview, validating it and modify if it is needed; and (5) take out common and distinctive themes from all the interviews to synthesize.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the information gathered and the sequential organization of areas based upon the survey questionnaire respectively presented in tables was followed by their corresponding interpretation of the result of the study and interpretation of the collected responses from the respondents.

Table 1: Extent of Practices of Parents on the Cognitive Development of Early Childhood

Domain I. Cognitive Development a. Literacy	Parent Living Together				Parent Not Living Together	
	Father		Mother		Father/Mother	
	WM	Description	WM	Description	WM	Description
1. Helps to build a healthy communication	3.24	O	3.36	A	3.16	O
2. Teaches to pronounce the words correctly	3.72	A	3.64	A	3.40	A
3. Encourages healthy eating habits	3.60	A	3.76	A	3.68	A
4. Fostering healthy growth by providing opportunities to practice...	3.44	A	3.48	A	3.32	A
5. Teaches to identify oneself	3.60	A	3.72	A	3.44	A
Average Weighted Mean	3.52	A	3.59	A	3.40	A
b. Numeracy						
1. Teaches how to count	3.52	A	3.56	A	3.48	A
2. Teaches how to write numbers correctly	3.44	A	3.40	A	3.20	O
3. Teaches to identify the basic colors	3.52	A	3.44	A	3.72	A
4. Teaches to identify the basic shapes	3.40	A	3.44	A	3.48	A
5. Teaches to identify the numbers	3.52	A	3.44	A	3.52	A
Average Weighted Mean	3.48	A	3.46	A	3.48	A

Legend: 3.25-4.00 **A** Always 2.50-3.24 **O** Often 1.75-2.49 **S** Sometimes 1.00-1.74 **N** Never

Data revealed that early childhood cognitive development in literacy and numeracy were always taught by the parents at home. Literacy obtained an average weighted mean of 3.52, 3.59 also 3.40; while Numeracy gained the weighted mean of 3.48, 3.46 and 3.48 for both categories.

The results displayed that parents of early childhood children took the time to teach their children at home. Parents exhibited a commendable awareness of their role as first teachers. However, it

was worth noting that parents from both categories were just often helped in building healthy communication. This was shown on the weighted mean of 3.24 and 3.16. The content standard - Teaches how to write numbers correctly was observed to also just often practiced by parents not living together.

This implied that the father living together with his wife had least number of times spent to converse children due to his obligations to the family where he had to work hard to provide the basic needs of the family. While parent not living together had more difficulties to provide ample time to spend with their children in the channel of communication due the fact that there had been a physical gap of parent-child relationship and the busy schedule of work and other factors to consider.

Table 2: Extent of Practices of Parents on the Physical Development of Early Childhood

Domain II. Physical Development	Parent Living Together				Parent Not Living Together	
	Farther		Mother		Father/Mother	
	WM	Description	WM	Description	WM	Description
a. Fine Motor						
1. Teaches how to get dressed and undressed by themselves	3.56	A	3.68	A	3.60	A
2. Teaches to write	3.28	A	3.36	A	3.48	A
3. Teaches the child play musical instruments	3.04	O	3.04	O	2.56	O
4. Invites the child to participate in simple household chores	3.24	O	3.12	O	3.16	O
5. Enhancing the child's skill in arts by providing materials...	3.32	A	3.04	O	3.36	A
Average Weighted Mean	3.29	A	3.24	O	3.23	O
b. Gross Motor						
1. Sets aside family time for a hike, walk, or visit a nearby park	3.04	O	3.12	O	2.72	O
2. Allows the child play games that involve running, hopping...	3.08	O	3.12	O	2.96	O
3. Offers the age-specific stimulation exercises	2.93	O	2.88	O	3.0	O
4. Provides children with the abilities they need to explore...	3.32	A	3.28	A	3.08	O
5. Provides a play environment that encourages lots of time ...	3.04	O	2.88	O	3.08	O
Average Weighted Mean	3.08	O	3.05	O	2.97	O

Legend: 3.25-4.00 **A** Always 2.50-3.24 **O** Often 1.75-2.49 **S** Sometimes 1.00-1.74 **N** Never

On the first hand, results revealed that content standards numbers 1, 2, and 5 under Fine motor skills were always practiced at home by parents from both categories. However, content standard number 3 - Teaches the child to play musical instruments and content standard number 4 - Invites the child to participate in simple household chores were just often practiced at home stringing still for both categories.

Results revealed that content standards numbers 1, 2, 3, and 5 were often practiced by parents both from two categories. Noticeably, however, content standard number 4 -Provides children with the abilities they needed to explore and interact with the world around them was always practiced by parents who were living together as opposed to parents who were not living together who practiced such content standard just often with 3.08 weighted mean.

The abovementioned results generally implied that the fathers living together found much time teaching the children some skills in fine motor, while the mother and parents not living together often taught the children some skills in fine motor development.

Table 3: Extent of Practices of Parents of Early Childhood on the Socio-emotional Development

Domain III. Socio-Emotional Development a. Interpersonal	Parents Not Living Together				Parents Not Living Together	
	Father		Mother		Father/Mother	
	WM	Description	WM	Description	WM	Description
1. Promotes positive values and attitudes...	3.80	A	3.80	A	3.64	A
2. Exhibits awareness to the child the concept of sharing	3.72	A	3.84	A	3.44	A
3. Increases each family members sense of belonging	3.72	A	3.76	A	3.20	O
4. Teaches the child how to be patient	3.80	A	3.64	A	3.08	O
5. Provides leisure environment and activities	3.44	A	3.32	A	3.44	A
verage Weighted Mean	3.69	A	3.67	A	3.36	A
b. Intrapersonal						
1. Meets their needs, and intentionally choosing to raise...	3.60	A	3.48	A	3.04	O
2. Helps children understand that their life has purpose...	3.80	A	3.68	A	3.52	A
3. Gives them love, care, and attention	3.96	A	3.92	A	3.8	A
4. Trains the child to be independent	3.68	A	3.56	A	3.16	O
5. Allows the child acquire practical life skills	3.40	A	3.27	A	3.04	O
Average Weighted Mean	3.69	A	3.58	A	3.31	A

Legend: 3.25-4.00 **A** Always 2.50-3.24 **O** Often 1.75-2.49 **S** Sometimes 1.00-1.74 **N** Never

Conversely, the five content standards included under the sub-domain, Intrapersonal were still generally always practiced at home as shown in the numerical values for the average weighted mean for both categories. However, it is important to note that content standard 1 - 1.

Meets their needs, and intentionally choosing to raise with the weighted mean of 3.04 was just often practiced at home by parents who were not living together. Subsequently, still under the Intrapersonal sub-domain, content standard 4 – Trains the child to be independent with the weighted mean of 3.16 and the content standard 5 – Allows the child acquire practice life skills with the weighted mean of 3.04 were just often practiced at home by parents who were not living together.

Table 3 implied that both parents who were living and not living together always managed their children opportunities to develop their socio-emotional areas. By so doing, the results further implied that with the extent of practices exhibited by parents from both categories could be accorded their early childhood children the ability to handle their emotions when confronted with adverse situations. These children also exhibited independence as a by-product of a well-developed socio-emotion quotient. Furthermore, parents of early childhood children were well-trained by their off-springs to be practical in life.

Table 4: Extent of Practices of Parents on the Spiritual Development of Early Childhood

Domain Spiritual Development	Parents Living Together				Parents Not Living Together	
	Father		Mother		Father/Mother	
	WM	Description	WM	Description	WM	Description
a. Sense of Wonder and Awe						
1. Practices an apologetic-based approach	3.64	A	3.64	A	3.32	A
2. Teaches the child that there is a logical, rational and factual basis	3.68	A	3.48	A	3.36	A
3. Provides children with the abilities they need to explore and interact...	3.36	A	3.25	A	3.36	A
4. Allows the child to explore the outside world	3.32	A	3.12	O	3.12	O
5. Gives correct answers every time the child asks questions ...	3.64	A	3.40	A	3.56	A
Average Weighted Mean	3.53	A	3.38	A	3.34	A
a.Moral and Ethical Development						
1. Encourages the child to pray always	3.76	A	3.64	A	3.72	A
2. Teaches the child to respect herself/himself and others	3.72	A	3.64	A	3.92	A
3. Helps the child to understand between right and wrong	3.80	A	3.68	A	3.84	A

4. Develops a child with good manners and right conduct	3.88	A	3.80	A	3.88	A
5. Takes the child to church every Sunday	3.36	A	3.28	A	3.32	A
Average Weighted Mean	3.70	A	3.61	A	3.74	A

Legend: 3.25-4.00 **A** Always 2.50-3.24 **O** Often 1.75-2.49 **S** Sometimes 1.00-1.74 **N** Never

Without a doubt, parents always practiced the content standards identified for Sense of Wonder and Awe and for Moral and Ethical Development of early childhood children. However, it was worth mentioning that content standard 4 – Allows the child to explore the outside world with a weighted mean of 3.12 was just often practiced by parents who were not living together as well as by mothers who were living together with their husbands. This implied that mothers from both categories did not had time to let the children go outside the house because they do not have much time to monitor them.

In general, the results implied that because parents lived in rural areas where close families ties were practiced and among these practices were: sharing of common norms and all family members should dine together.

Table 6: Challenges of Parents in Assuming their Maternal and Paternal Roles

Challenges	Parents Living Together						Parents Not Living Together		
	Father			Mother			Father/Mother		
	WM	Description	Rank	WM	Description	Rank	WM	Description	Rank
1. Discipline the child	3.60	SA	1	3.72	SA	1	3.56	SA	1
2. Patience towards the child	3.32	SA	2	3.16	A	4	3.04	A	4
3. Sleep habits	3.28	SA	3	3.32	SA	2	3.12	A	3
4. Eating habits	3.08	A	4	3.24	A	3	3.36	SA	2
5. Child's anxiety	2.92	A	5	3.12	A	5	2.88	A	5.5
6. Financial constrain	2.88	A	6	2.84	A	6	2.76	A	10
7. Sibling rivalry	2.52	A	7	2.56	A	8	2.68	A	11
8. Too many households...	2.40	D	8	2.64	A	7	2.84	A	7
9. Number of Children	2.24	D	9	2.40	D	9.5	2.80	A	8.5
10. Child's Tantrums	2.20	D	10	2.08	D	11.5	2.88	A	5.5
11. Physical stress	2.12	D	11	2.40	D	9.5	2.80	A	8.5
12. Misbehavior of the child	2.08	D	12	2.08	D	11.5	2.56	A	12
13. Addiction to gadgets	2.0	D	13	1.92	D	13	2.52	A	13
14. Child Stubbornness	1.88	D	14	1.84	D	14	2.36	D	14
Average Weighted Mean	2.61	A		2.67	A		2.87	A	

Legend: 3.25-4.00 **SA** Strongly Agree 2.50-3.24 **A** Agree

1.75-2.49 **DA** Disagree

1.00 -1.74 **SD** Strongly Disagree

Among the 14 challenges, discipline the child was ranked first with the uppermost weighted mean of 3.60, 3.72 and 3.56. This challenge was strongly agreed by parents from both categories. Child stubbornness to obtain the last rank having the lowest weighted mean of 1.88, 1.84 and 2.36. Parents from both categories disagreed. This meant that parents viewed such statements as not a challenge at all. Both parents living and not living together with the early childhood children agreed that child's anxiety and financial and financial constrain were challenges for them with an average weighted mean of 2.92, 3.12, 2.88, 2.88, 2.84 and 2.76.

This meant that parents were having a hard time in disciplining their children because most of the parents used corporal punishment when children did not listen to their warnings for the reason of being short-tempered. Based on the responses of the parents regarding discipline, children would did not listen were being spanked and scolded. Parents also wanted their children to have fear on them and one reason then was to use direct physical harm. This was because the respondents were not highly aware of their prohibitions and limitations.

Commonalities of the Parents' Practices

Myriads of responses surfaced during the interview conducted by the researcher. With genuine responses coming from the state-of-affairs of parents, answers were thematically sorted. Thorough considerations, with the aid of a Groenewald's method of phenomenological analysis of data with five phases namely: bracketing, delineating elements of meaning, concept formation, encapsulate the dialogue, certify and take out common distinctive themes from the responses and makes a synopsis. The information included in Table 7 contained the four themes along with the sub-concepts.

Hence, the relevant responses inspiringly characterized the four themes. Outlined for each theme were sub-themes that categorically define each theme. To concretize the responses, the research was able to arrive at four responses which were relevant to this study.

Table 7: The 4 R's in Early Childhood Education Parents

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Responsibilities and Roles	Work hard to provide food for children/ education for the family/ teach right conduct and behavior/ know what is right and wrong/ train children for a bright future/ provide the proper care/ be strict/ very tiresome/ be responsible/ really difficult/ hardship with happiness
Rights of Children	Listen to children/ allow guided freedom/ assess behavior of children/ respect freedom/proper guidance and protection/ discipline/ understand children/ benefits and privileges/ play
Realities	Work/ communicate with one another/ good breeding/ debt/ request help from parents/ job/ early marriage / addict to gadgets/ wisdom and knowledge of children/ fast learners/imitations on what they see/ high-tech/ laziness/ poverty/ financial problems/ daily needs/ too difficult/ patience/ tiresome but enjoyable/ obligations/ happy moments
Resourcefulness and Resilience	Health conditions, weak or sick/ safeguarded from accidents/ warned and protected/ protect from danger and trouble/ diseases/ solving problems

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

When it comes to practices, the result revealed that both parents always practiced the skills in the 3 aspects of growth namely: Cognitive, Socio-emotional and Spiritual Development; while in the physical development respondents were often practice the skills in this domain. Parents from both categories had agreed that the 14 challenges mentioned on the table 11 were all challenged to them in assuming their parental roles to their early childhood children.

CONCLUSION

Parents constantly taught their children about spiritual development, socio-emotional development, and cognitive development. However, physical development was not always practiced in view of the fact that parents do not have much time to spend to teach their children at home. They were both busy earning for a living. In addition, parents always rely on the teachers to teach their children at school that is why they often taught their children at home. Children were not so exposed to the different musical instruments because parents at home do not want the children to play it because of the noise. There were no available musical instruments at home because parents do not have the skills to play musical instruments. Spiritual development was innate to the Filipino parents that were inherited from the ancestor and it was passed through generation-by-generation. Filipino parenting was in nature attached to the religious upbringing. When it comes to challenges, discipline was very challenging to the parents because children nowadays are stubborn and fear no one. Parents were not so tight in implementing rules and regulations at home. Parents do not had much time spent at home and monitor their children's daily activities. Strategies to discipline children at home were not so effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results, the subsequent commendations were made:

1. Parents have to find quality time for their children to play, explore and experience the outside world.
2. Parents need to let their children experience to play musical instruments to enhance their skills in music.
3. Parents need to be gentle to discipline their children.
4. Parents are encouraged to appreciate the work with much effort done by the children in order to appreciate the beauty of life.

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