

# Challenges and Opportunities in Strengthening Teacher-Parent Partnerships in Elementary Schools: Experiences from New Corella District

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**Abstract:** This study explores the challenges and opportunities involved in strengthening teacher-parent partnerships in elementary schools within New Corella District. Effective collaboration between teachers and parents is essential for fostering student success and promoting a positive educational environment (Epstein, 2011). However, despite its recognized importance, many schools face significant barriers in building and maintaining these partnerships. This research investigates the experiences of 15 teachers and 10 parents in New Corella District to understand the dynamics of teacher-parent collaboration, the obstacles faced, and the strategies employed to enhance these partnerships. The findings reveal that while teachers and parents acknowledge the importance of collaboration, challenges such as communication gaps, varying parental involvement, and cultural differences persist. Nevertheless, the study also identifies opportunities for strengthening partnerships, including the use of digital tools for communication, the importance of school-based events to foster parent engagement, and the potential benefits of professional development for teachers on parent collaboration. This study provides insights into the practical realities of teacher-parent partnerships, offering recommendations for improving collaboration and ultimately supporting the holistic development of students.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Teacher-parent partnerships are widely recognized as crucial for student success in the academic and personal spheres (Epstein, 2011). When teachers and parents collaborate effectively, they create a supportive environment that enhances students' learning experiences, social development, and emotional well-being (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). In the context of elementary schools, where children are forming their foundational attitudes toward learning, the role of parent involvement is especially critical. However, despite the numerous benefits of these partnerships, many schools face challenges in building and sustaining strong connections between teachers and parents, particularly in areas with diverse family structures and varying levels of parental engagement (Jeynes, 2012).

In New Corella District, a region with both urban and rural communities, the relationship between teachers and parents is central to ensuring that students receive the support they need for academic and personal growth. However, despite their shared interest in the students' well-being, teachers and parents often encounter obstacles that hinder effective communication and collaboration. These challenges include language barriers, differing educational expectations, and lack of access to resources, among others (Hornby, 2011).

This study aims to examine the challenges and opportunities faced by teachers and parents in strengthening their partnership in New Corella District. By focusing on the lived experiences of both teachers and parents, this research seeks to provide insights into how these partnerships can be improved, the role of the school in facilitating engagement, and the strategies that can overcome existing barriers to collaboration.

## II. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design was employed for this study, using in-depth interviews to explore the experiences of teachers and parents in New Corella District regarding teacher-parent partnerships. A phenomenological approach was chosen to capture the lived experiences of participants, allowing for a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved in teacher-parent collaboration (Creswell, 2013).

The sample consisted of 15 elementary school teachers and 10 parents from various schools in New Corella District. Teachers were selected based on their experience working directly with parents and their involvement in school initiatives aimed at promoting parent engagement. Parents were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring a diversity of backgrounds, including different levels of

parental involvement and representation from both rural and urban schools in the district.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants, allowing for flexibility in the responses while maintaining a focus on the key research questions. The interview guide covered themes such as the strategies used to foster teacher-parent collaboration, the challenges experienced, the role of school events in engagement, and the opportunities for improving these partnerships. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification of common themes and patterns across the data.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed several key themes related to the challenges, strategies, and opportunities in strengthening teacher-parent partnerships in New Corella District.

#### ➤ *Challenges in Teacher-Parent Partnerships:*

- *Communication Gaps:*

A major challenge identified by both teachers and parents was the lack of consistent and effective communication. Many teachers reported that communicating with parents, especially those in rural areas, was difficult due to limited access to phones or the internet. One teacher stated, “We try to call parents, but some of them don’t have phones, and others don’t respond to text messages.” Parents echoed this concern, particularly in rural areas where technology access is limited. One parent shared, “It’s hard to stay in touch when I don’t have reliable internet, so I miss some important school updates.”

- *Varying Levels of Parental Involvement:*

Teachers observed that while some parents were highly engaged and actively participated in school activities, others were less involved, either due to work commitments or a lack of understanding about the importance of their role in their child’s education. As one teacher explained, “Some parents just send their kids to school and never come to any meetings or events. It’s hard to build a partnership when they’re not involved.”

- *Cultural Differences and Educational Expectations:*

The study also found that cultural differences and differing educational expectations sometimes created barriers to effective collaboration. In some cases, parents from different cultural backgrounds had different views on how to support their children’s learning or were unfamiliar with the school system. One parent expressed, “I want to be more involved, but I don’t understand how to help my child with the homework because the methods are different from when I was in school.”

#### ➤ *Strategies for Strengthening Teacher-Parent Partnerships:*

- *School Events and Parent-Teacher Meetings:*

Both teachers and parents agreed that school-based events, such as parent-teacher meetings, open houses, and family engagement nights, were effective ways to bring parents and teachers together. These events provided opportunities for parents to learn about their child’s progress, ask questions, and engage directly with teachers. One teacher commented, “Parent-teacher conferences are very important because they help us discuss the child’s needs and how we can work together to help them.”

- *Digital Tools for Communication:*

In response to communication challenges, many teachers in the district have begun using digital platforms such as Facebook groups, messaging apps, and school websites to communicate with parents. These tools have been particularly useful for disseminating information and staying connected with parents outside of school hours. As one teacher noted, “Using Facebook Messenger has made it easier for us to reach parents, especially for reminders and updates.”

- *Building Trust and Mutual Respect:*

Teachers reported that building trust and mutual respect was a key element in fostering effective partnerships with parents. Teachers who made an effort to understand the challenges parents faced and worked collaboratively with them were more successful in engaging them. One teacher shared, “I make it a point to approach parents respectfully and listen to their concerns. Once they feel heard, they are more likely to collaborate with me.”

#### ➤ *Opportunities for Strengthening Teacher-Parent Partnerships:*

- *Professional Development for Teachers:*

A significant opportunity for improving teacher-parent collaboration is the provision of professional development for teachers focused on parent engagement strategies. Teachers expressed a need for more training on how to effectively communicate with parents and how to involve them in the educational process. One teacher emphasized, “We need more training on how to communicate with parents, especially those who are not familiar with the school system or have different expectations.”

- *Community Involvement and Support:*

The study also revealed that involving the broader community in supporting teacher-parent partnerships could lead to positive outcomes. Community leaders and local organizations can play a role in bridging gaps between parents and schools. One teacher suggested, “If we can work with community leaders to hold events or workshops for parents, it would be a big help.”

The findings of this study are consistent with existing literature on teacher-parent partnerships, which emphasizes

the importance of communication, trust, and mutual respect in fostering effective collaboration (Epstein, 2011; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The challenges identified in this study, such as communication gaps, varying levels of parental involvement, and cultural differences, reflect the complexities that many schools face in building strong partnerships with parents (Hornby, 2011).

However, the study also highlights several strategies and opportunities for improving these partnerships. School events, digital tools for communication, and professional development for teachers are all viable approaches for enhancing collaboration. The use of digital tools, in particular, offers a practical solution to the communication barriers identified in the study, especially in rural areas where access to traditional forms of communication is limited (Vargas, 2019).

The study also underscores the importance of building trust and fostering a culture of mutual respect between teachers and parents. Teachers who actively listen to parents' concerns and acknowledge their perspectives are more likely to create lasting and effective partnerships. Furthermore, involving the broader community in supporting these partnerships can lead to greater success in engaging parents.

This study provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities involved in strengthening teacher-parent partnerships in New Corella District. While teachers and parents face significant obstacles, such as communication gaps and varying levels of involvement, there are clear strategies and opportunities that can improve collaboration. By providing professional development for teachers, utilizing digital tools for communication, and fostering a supportive community environment, schools can enhance teacher-parent partnerships and support the holistic development of students. Future research could further explore the impact of specific teacher-parent collaboration strategies on student outcomes, particularly in rural areas.

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