

# Developing Early Social Studies Literacy: Parents' Point of View

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**Abstract:** The study used a qualitative phenomenological research design involving 12 parents from a public elementary school in Davao City. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion guided by semi-structured questions. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework. Trustworthiness was ensured through member checking, audit trails, and documentation of research procedures. Findings revealed four major challenges: limited subject knowledge in social studies, lack of learning resources at home, competing household and work responsibilities, and low interest of children. To cope with these challenges, parents searched online materials or asked help from others, borrowed or improvised learning resources, used flexible study schedules with shared responsibilities, and applied fun activities such as games and storytelling to motivate their children. Insights gained showed that learning with children builds parents' confidence, creativity can replace expensive materials, time management and shared support make learning easier, and enjoyable activities increase children's motivation. The study highlights the need for stronger home-school support systems that provide parents with accessible materials, practical guidance, and encouragement to become active partners in social studies learning. The findings imply that effective parental involvement does not rely on resources alone, but on collaboration, creativity, and shared responsibility among families and schools.

**Keywords:** Parental Involvement, Social Studies Literacy, Home-Based Learning, Learning Challenges, Grade 2 Learners.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement strongly influences a child's early literacy development in social studies by supporting the growth of critical thinking, civic awareness, and cultural understanding. When parents actively participate through conversations, shared reading, and interactive learning, children learn to question ideas, evaluate information, and develop their own perspectives. Parental guidance also fosters awareness of social responsibilities, community values, and cultural diversity, helping children understand geography, history, and social relationships while building empathy and global awareness. By reinforcing social studies concepts beyond the classroom, parents help children develop a deeper and more sustained understanding of these ideas and their relevance to real-life situations.

In recent years, parental involvement in children's education has declined due to work demands and socioeconomic challenges, alongside the growing marginalization of social studies in the curriculum. In the United States, increased emphasis on tested subjects such as mathematics and language arts has reduced instructional time for social studies, limiting students' development of civic

knowledge, historical understanding, and critical thinking skills. A similar pattern appears in the Philippines, where the K-12 curriculum prioritizes science, math, and English over Araling Panlipunan, particularly in the early grades. This issue is worsened by limited parental support, as many parents view social studies as less important than subjects linked to future employment. In Davao City, educators note that this lack of emphasis both at school and at home weakens students' understanding of citizenship, history, and social responsibility, underscoring the need for stronger school-family collaboration.

This study aimed to examine the lived experiences of parents of elementary learners in supporting their children's education, with particular focus on teaching social studies at home. Using a phenomenological approach, it seeks to gain in-depth understanding of how parents perceive their roles, identify the challenges they encounter, and apply strategies to address these challenges. By doing so, the study highlighted the real-life experiences of parents as they assist their children's learning in the home setting.

The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the experiences of parents in providing learning support in social studies to their children?
- What coping mechanisms do parents employ to counter these challenges?
- What insights have parents gained from the findings of the study?

The literature highlighted the crucial role of parental involvement in enhancing children's social studies literacy and overall academic achievement. The home served as the child's first learning environment, where parent child interactions fostered literacy, critical thinking, civic values, and cultural understanding. Studies showed that active parental engagement through academic support, communication with teachers, and participation in school activities positively influenced students' performance, motivation, and behavior, while teachers recognized its importance in strengthening home school partnerships. However, many parents faced challenges such as limited resources, lack of content knowledge, time constraints, and digital barriers, which hindered effective support at home.

This study was grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Development, both of which emphasized the importance of social interaction and the family environment in children's learning. Bronfenbrenner's framework explained that children's development was shaped by multiple environmental systems, with the family as the most immediate and influential context, where parental involvement directly affected children's attitudes, experiences, and understanding of concepts such as responsibility, community, and cultural identity. Similarly, Vygotsky's theory highlighted parents as more knowledgeable others who supported cognitive development through guided interaction and scaffolding within the zone of proximal development. Through everyday conversations and shared activities related to history, current issues, and social roles, parents helped children construct meaning based on their lived experiences.

## II. METHOD

The study was grounded in a qualitative assumption that viewed reality as socially constructed and understood human experience through diverse and complex individual perspectives. Guided by a constructivist paradigm, it assumed that meaning was co-created through interaction between participants and the researcher, emphasizing that parents' experiences in supporting social studies literacy at home could not be reduced to simple measurements or universal conclusions. Instead, these experiences were best understood through personal narratives shaped by context, beliefs, and lived realities. This assumption supported the use of a phenomenological approach, which allowed the study to capture the essence of parents' experiences by valuing reflection, interpretation, and dialogue in generating rich and context-specific understanding.

The study was guided by key philosophical assumptions in examining parents' experiences in supporting social studies literacy at home. Ontologically, it adopted a relativist view that recognized multiple realities shaped by parents' personal and contextual backgrounds. Epistemologically, it followed a constructivist perspective, viewing knowledge as co constructed through interactions between the researcher and participants. Axiologically, the study acknowledged the value laden nature of qualitative research by emphasizing ethical practice, reflexivity, and respect for participants. Methodologically, it used a phenomenological approach with qualitative techniques to capture parents' lived experiences, while rhetorically employing clear and culturally appropriate language to authentically present participants' perspectives.

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of parents in supporting their children's learning in social studies. Phenomenology was appropriate because it focused on understanding the essence of human experiences through participants' perceptions and interpretations, allowing the study to capture the depth, complexity, and subjectivity of parents' academic support at home. By emphasizing bracketing, the researcher set aside personal assumptions to fully engage with parents' perspectives, enabling an unbiased exploration of their challenges, strategies, and insights.

The study involved 12 parents of Grade 2 pupils from a public elementary school in Davao City, specifically Babak Elementary School. This sample size was appropriate for a phenomenological study, as it allowed for in depth exploration of parents' lived experiences in supporting social studies learning at home while remaining manageable. Six participants took part in in depth interviews, and six joined a focus group discussion. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they could provide rich and relevant insights. The inclusion criteria required that parents have a child enrolled in Grade 2 social studies, actively provide academic support at home, and willingly participate in semi structured interviews. These criteria ensured that participants had meaningful experience related to the phenomenon under study. As adult participants capable of giving informed consent, no vulnerability concerns were anticipated, and the research process promoted respectful and comfortable engagement.

The study used a semi structured interview guide to explore parents' experiences in providing academic support for Grade 2 social studies at home. The guide contained open ended questions aligned with the study's objectives, allowing participants to give detailed and reflective responses while giving the researcher flexibility to ask follow up questions and probe deeper into emerging insights. This approach supported a natural flow of conversation while ensuring that essential topics were covered, making it suitable for qualitative research. Prior to implementation, the instrument underwent expert validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research goals, thereby strengthening its credibility and appropriateness for collecting meaningful data.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings identified four primary difficulties experienced by parents while assisting their children with social studies learning. A common concern was insufficient familiarity with the subject matter, which reduced parents' confidence in guiding lessons and answering questions. This difficulty was further intensified by the scarcity of instructional materials at home, including reference books,

visual aids, and reliable internet access. In addition, parents had to balance work demands and household duties, leaving them with limited time to provide consistent academic support. Another challenge involved children's lack of enthusiasm for social studies, which affected their engagement and made it challenging for parents to maintain focus and encourage active participation during learning activities at home.

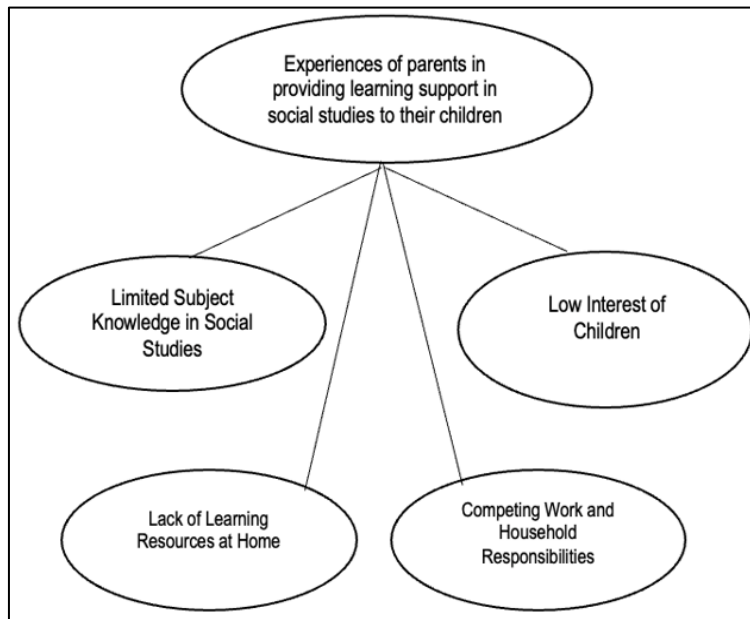


Fig 1 Experiences of parents in Providing Learning Support in Social Studied to their Children

Parents adopted a range of strategies to overcome the difficulties they faced in supporting social studies learning at home. To compensate for limited subject knowledge, many relied on digital resources or sought guidance from teachers and family members. When learning materials were scarce, parents improvised by creating or borrowing resources using readily available household items. To manage competing work and home responsibilities, they reorganized their daily routines and delegated learning support tasks to other family members. To increase children's interest and participation, parents incorporated interactive activities such as games, storytelling, and simple incentives to make learning more engaging.

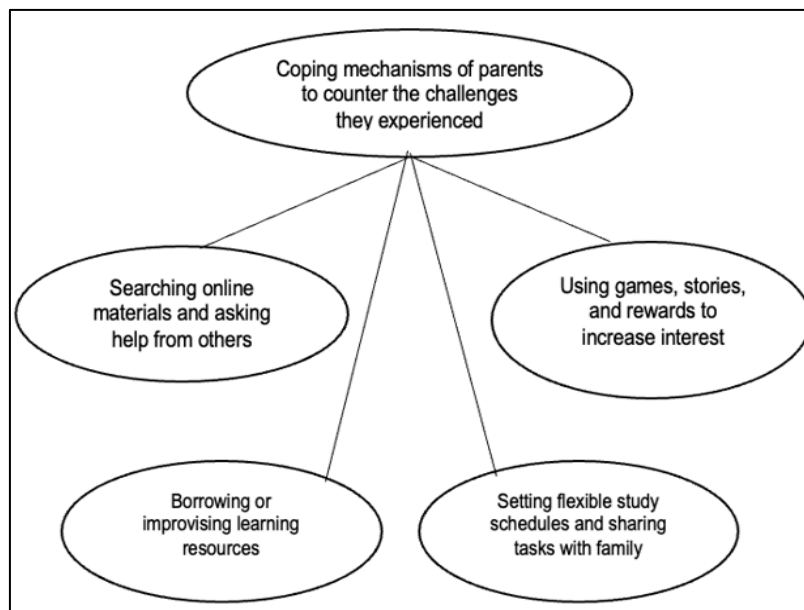


Fig 2 Coping Mechanisms of Parents to Counter the Challenges they Experienced

Parents expressed valuable realizations from their experiences in assisting their children with social studies at home. They discovered that actively participating in the learning process strengthened both their children’s understanding and their own confidence in guiding lessons. Many recognized that being creative and resourceful could effectively address the lack of expensive educational materials. They also acknowledged the significance of organizing their time wisely and sharing responsibilities within the household to better manage work and academic support. Moreover, parents observed that making lessons interactive and enjoyable significantly enhanced their children’s interest and comprehension of social studies concepts.

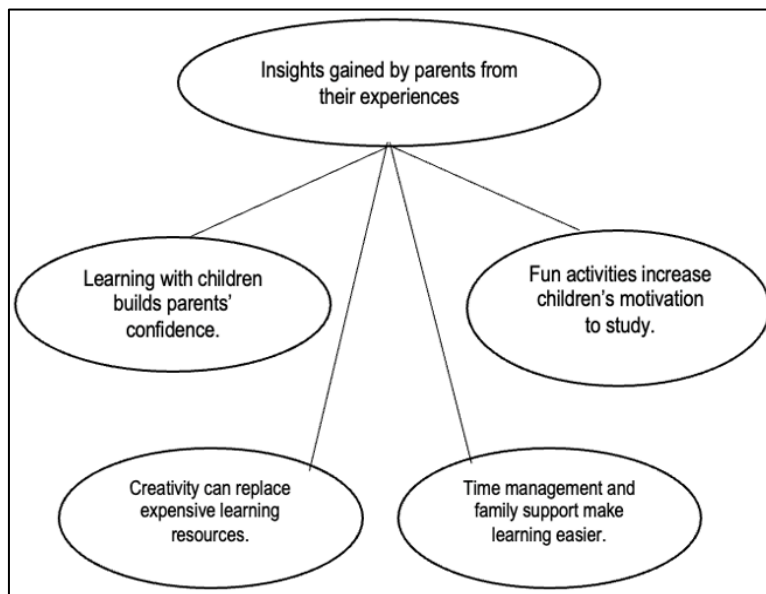


Fig 3 Insights Gained by Parents from their Experiences

The findings revealed that parents encountered various challenges while assisting their children in social studies, including limited understanding of the subject matter, insufficient learning resources, competing work and household responsibilities, and their children’s low level of interest. These factors made it difficult for parents to confidently explain lessons and consistently sustain engagement during home based learning.

Despite these difficulties, parents implemented practical strategies to continue supporting their children. They sought information from online sources or asked assistance from teachers and relatives, improvised or borrowed learning materials, reorganized their schedules, and shared responsibilities within the household. They also incorporated interactive and enjoyable activities to increase motivation. These experiences allowed the parents developed greater confidence, creativity, and time management skills, and became more aware of their significant role in their children’s educational development.

The findings implied that many parents were not fully prepared to support social studies learning at home due to limited subject knowledge, lack of learning resources, and competing work and household responsibilities. These conditions affected their ability to provide consistent and effective academic support, suggesting the need for schools to strengthen parent support systems. Providing clearer learning guides, accessible materials, and family friendly instructional tools could help parents better assist their children and prevent social studies from being undervalued at home.

Even in the presence of these challenges, parents demonstrated creativity and adaptability by using online resources, improvising or borrowing materials, adjusting study schedules, and incorporating engaging activities. Their experiences revealed that meaningful parental involvement did not depend on high level expertise or costly resources, but on willingness, resourcefulness, and shared responsibility within the family. These insights emphasized the importance of empowering parents through strong home school collaboration, with teachers supporting parents as capable partners in their children’s learning.

The study recommended strengthening parental involvement in social studies through supportive policies, accessible materials, and teacher training that promotes effective family engagement. School heads and teachers may provide structured support, clear guidance, and engaging home based activities to bridge classroom and home learning. Learners may be encouraged to take greater responsibility for their education, while parents may continue using practical and creative strategies. Future research may further explore ways to enhance home school collaboration and promote meaningful learning experiences.

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