

Parent Assessments of School Partnerships with Families and Communities in Supporting the Home Language Environment

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family-school-community partnerships, special needs learners, home language environment, parent engagement, inclusive education, nurturing school environment

Abstract. This study examined the partnerships established by a school with families and communities to support the quality of the home language environment of special needs learners and to provide guidance for developing a nurturing school environment. A descriptive-correlational and comparative design was used with 30 parent-respondents from School Division of Cavite. Data were gathered through a researcher-developed, expert-validated questionnaire using a four-point scale and were analyzed through frequency count, weighted mean, Spearman's rho, and the Kruskal-Wallis H test. Most respondents were aged 30–34 years (43%) and identified as parents (63%). The overall assessment of school partnership practices was 3.33, interpreted as Always True of My Child's School. Partnerships with families obtained a sub-mean of 3.23, while partnerships with communities obtained 3.56. The highest-rated community practice was the provision of after-school programs involving parents and community organizations (3.67), whereas the lowest-rated family practice concerned respect for and incorporation of the family's cultural background and language practices in the language support plan (3.10). Associations between respondent profile and partnership assessments were weak, and the reported Kruskal-Wallis results indicated no significant differences across age or family role. The findings point to the need to strengthen culturally and linguistically responsive family partnership practices.

Introduction

A quality language environment for special needs learners depends not only on classroom instruction but also on the continuity of support across home, school, and community settings. The study frames family partnership as active collaboration with parents and caregivers to provide guidance, resources, and communication that can reinforce language development and the learner's overall educational experience. Such collaboration is particularly relevant when learners require individualized support and when home language practices need to relate to school-based interventions. Within special and inclusive education, language development is closely connected with learners' ability to communicate their needs, participate in learning activities, establish relationships, and engage meaningfully with their immediate environment. Consequently, creating a supportive language environment requires attention to the different contexts in which learners communicate and acquire language experiences. The involvement of families becomes particularly significant because parents and caregivers provide continuing opportunities for communication beyond formal school hours (Otero-Mayer et al., 2025). When the language experiences provided at home complement those introduced at school, learners may encounter more consistent opportunities to use, reinforce, and develop their emerging communication and literacy skills (Finders et al., 2023). This highlights the importance of viewing family partnership as an integral component of a broader language-support system for learners with special educational needs.

Recent researches explain the importance of the home environment in language and literacy development. The home literacy environment has been associated with early literacy development and with differences in language and reading outcomes (Inoue et al., 2020). Research involving low- to middle-income Filipino families likewise identifies environmental factors associated with early language and literacy (Dulay et al., 2018). Shared storybook reading and the characteristics of adults, children, and literacy resources also shape opportunities for oral language development (Grolig, 2020). In addition, a meta-analysis reported a positive association between the home literacy environment and second-language learning (Dong & Chow, 2022). These studies demonstrate that language development is influenced by the opportunities for

meaningful interaction and literacy engagement available within learners' immediate surroundings. The home represents an especially important environment because communication occurs naturally through everyday conversations, shared activities, storytelling, reading, and other interactions between children and family members. For special needs learners, such experiences may become important extensions of school-based language support because they provide opportunities to encounter and use language in familiar and functional situations. Differences in family resources, literacy practices, adult participation, and opportunities for interaction may therefore contribute to variations in the language experiences available to learners.

The school environment provides another important layer of support. The study emphasizes inclusion, belonging, collaboration, and the adjustment of school practices to diverse learner needs. Basister et. al. (2025) highlights inclusive communities and early intervention, while the documents continuing policy and institutional attention to school environments. These perspectives support the need for school practices that connect the learner's educational experiences with the family and community context. A supportive school environment therefore involves not only the provision of appropriate instruction but also the development of practices that recognize learner diversity, encourage participation, and facilitate collaboration among individuals involved in the learner's education (Zhour & Colomer, 2024). Teachers, school administrators, support personnel, parents, and other stakeholders may contribute different forms of support that collectively shape the language experiences available to the learner (Mutangira et. al, 2026). In this context, strengthening connections between the school and the learner's home and community environments becomes important in promoting continuity in language opportunities and educational support.

The present study therefore focused on parents' assessment of the school's partnerships with families and communities in supporting the home language environment of special needs learners. It examined the respondents' profile, their assessment of partnership practices, the relationships between profile variables and those assessments, and differences in assessments when respondents were grouped according to age and family role. The findings were intended to inform guidance for developing a nurturing school environment.

Research Questions

1. What is the profile of the parent-respondents in terms of age and role in the family?
2. How do the parent-respondents assess the school's partnerships with families and communities in supporting the quality of the home language environment?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the parent-respondents' profile and their assessment of the school's partnerships with families and communities?
4. Are there significant differences in the parent-respondents' assessments when grouped according to age and role in the family?

Hypothesis of the Study

There are no significant differences in the parent-respondents' assessments when grouped according to age and role in the family.

Methodology

Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational and comparative research design. The descriptive component was used to describe the present conditions reflected in the respondents' assessments of the school's partnerships with families and communities. The correlational component determined whether relationships existed between the parent-respondents' profile and their assessments of the school's partnership practices. The comparative component examined whether significant differences existed in the respondents' assessments when grouped according to age and role in the family.

Respondents and Locale

The respondents of the study were 30 parent-respondents of special needs learners from School Division of Cavite. The respondents included parents, grandparents, and guardians who were involved in the education and support of the learners. The locale was selected because the researcher identified a need to support children's language development, academic and social needs, and active parental involvement within an inclusive community.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a researcher-developed survey questionnaire based on an extensive review of related literature and studies. Following its construction, the questionnaire underwent validation by experts and the researcher's colleagues. The researcher also sought the assistance of former graduate-school professors in revising the instrument. Further revisions were incorporated based on the comments and recommendations provided during the proposal defense.

The instrument used a four-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 to 4. It assessed the school's practices in establishing partnerships with families and communities in relation to the quality of the home language environment of special needs learners.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the conduct of the study. The respondents were provided with an informed consent form indicating their voluntary participation in the research. The consent form stated that ethical standards and confidentiality would be observed and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

Data Analysis

The collected data were subjected to appropriate statistical treatments. Frequency count and percentage were used to describe the profile of the parent-respondents. Weighted mean was used to determine the respondents' assessment of the school's partnership practices.

For inferential analysis, Spearman's rho was used to determine the relationship between the respondents' profile and their assessments of partnerships with families and communities. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was employed to determine whether significant differences existed in the assessments when respondents were grouped according to age and role in the family. The study used a 0.05 level of significance for the comparative analysis.

Results and Discussion

The largest age group was 30–34 years (43%), followed by 35–39 years (23%). Respondents aged below 40 years comprised 66% of the sample. In terms of family role, parents represented 63%, grandparents 27%, and guardians 10%. The profile therefore reflects a predominantly younger caregiver group while also showing substantial participation from extended family caregivers.

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
30–34 years	13	43
35–39 years	7	23
40–44 years	6	20
45–49 years	4	13
Parent	19	63
Grandparent	8	27
Guardian	3	10

Table No. 1. Demographic Profile of the SPED Parent Respondents

The overall mean of 3.33 indicates a positive assessment of the school's partnership practices. This finding suggests that respondents generally perceived the school as maintaining meaningful mechanisms for engaging families and communities in supporting learners, indicating that partnership initiatives were not merely present but were experienced as relatively consistent features of the educational environment. Partnerships with communities obtained the higher sub-mean of 3.56, interpreted as Always True, while partnerships with families obtained 3.23, interpreted as Often True. The higher rating for community partnerships may indicate that the school has established stronger or more visible linkages with community stakeholders, organizations, and external support systems. Such linkages can expand the resources available to learners and may provide opportunities for schools to address educational needs that cannot be adequately met through classroom instruction alone. Within family partnerships, the establishment of a parent or family center received the highest item mean (3.53). Other highly rated practices included sustaining collaboration between educators and families (3.33), working with families for consistent language exposure and practice at home (3.30), and ensuring parent involvement in education (3.30).

Community partnerships emerged as the strongest area of the school's partnership practices, obtaining a sub-mean of 3.56, interpreted as "Always True" of the school. The highest-rated practice was the provision of after-school programs involving parents and community organizations ($M = 3.67$), indicating that the school was able to extend learning and support opportunities beyond regular classroom instruction by engaging external stakeholders in activities for learners. This was followed by programs that linked families to needed health and social services ($M = 3.60$), suggesting that the school's community engagement extended beyond academic concerns to address broader needs that may affect learners' development and well-being. Likewise, good, frequent, and user-friendly communication received a high mean of 3.57, reflecting the perceived accessibility of communication between the school, families, and community partners. The consistently high ratings across these indicators suggest that the school has established functional community linkages that contribute to a more comprehensive support system for special needs learners and their families. Rather than limiting its role to classroom-based instruction, the school appears to serve as a community resource hub, connecting families with programs, services, and organizations that can complement educational support. This pattern is particularly relevant to the development of a nurturing school environment because coordinated community resources can help address the academic, social, health, and developmental needs of special needs learners while also strengthening family participation in their education.

The lowest family-partnership item was the practice of respecting the family's cultural background and language practices and incorporating them into the language support plan (3.10). Although still within the positive range, this result identifies a specific area for improvement. The finding is particularly relevant because the home language environment is shaped by family practices and contextual resources; research shows that environmental characteristics are associated with language and literacy development in Filipino families (Dulay et al., 2018), while home literacy experiences and shared reading provide important opportunities for language development (Desjardin et al., 2023; Grolig, 2020). The implication is that school-family collaboration should move beyond general communication toward more individualized, culturally responsive language support (Benediktsson & Tavares, 2024).

Partnership area / indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Partnerships with Families — sub-mean	3.23	0.65	Often True
Highest family item: parent/family center	3.53	0.63	Always True
Lowest family item: cultural/language practices in support plan	3.10	0.55	Often True
Partnerships with Communities — sub-mean	3.56	0.56	Always True
Highest community item: after-school programs	3.67	0.55	Always True
Health/social service linkages	3.60	0.50	Always True
Overall mean	3.33	0.62	Always True

Table No. 2. Assessment of the parent-respondents on the school's partnerships with families and communities in the quality of the home's language environment

All reported correlation coefficients were below the critical value of ± 0.361 . Age showed very low correlations with assessments of family partnerships ($\rho=0.118$) and community partnerships ($\rho=0.152$). Role in the family showed low correlations with family partnerships ($\rho=0.249$) and community partnerships ($\rho=0.223$). Based on the decision rule used, these results indicate that the respondents' age and family role did not significantly influence their assessments of school partnership practices. Thus, the findings indicate that age and role in the family were not significantly associated with the respondents' assessments of the school's partnerships with families and communities. This suggests that the perceived effectiveness of the school's partnership practices was generally consistent regardless of whether the respondent was a parent, grandparent, or guardian. The consistently weak correlations further imply that perceptions of partnership practices may be shaped more strongly by shared experiences with the school, the accessibility of communication, and the actual opportunities provided for family and community participation than by the demographic characteristics of the respondents. In this regard, the findings suggest that partnership practices may have been implemented in a relatively inclusive manner, allowing different types of family members to develop comparable perceptions of the school's efforts to engage them.

The finding directs attention toward the quality and consistency of partnership practices rather than demographic segmentation. Home literacy emphasizes that adult practices, literacy resources, and the home context can shape learning opportunities (Grolig, 2020; Dong & Chow, 2022). Strengthening the content and fidelity of support provided to all caregivers may therefore be more useful than designing substantially different partnership systems solely based on age or family role.

Profile variable	Partnership area	N	Spearman's ρ	Manuscript interpretation
Age	Families	30	0.118	Very low correlation
	Communities	30	0.152	Very low correlation
Role in family	Families	30	0.249	Low correlation
	Communities	30	0.223	Low correlation

Table No. 3. Relationship between partnerships with families and communities in the quality of the home's language environment

None of the reported p-values was below 0.05. For age, the p-values were 0.197 for family partnerships and 0.469 for community partnerships. For role in the family, the p-values were 0.677 and 0.879, respectively. These results indicate no statistically significant differences in assessment across the age or family-role groups. The consistency is notable because parents, grandparents, and guardians may occupy different caregiving positions, yet their evaluations of the school's partnership practices were broadly similar. The absence of statistically significant differences suggests that the school's partnership practices were perceived in a relatively consistent manner across different respondent groups. This consistency may indicate that the mechanisms used by the school to engage families and communities were sufficiently inclusive to provide comparable experiences regardless of the respondents' age or caregiving role. In practical terms, the findings suggest that partnership initiatives were not perceived as being limited to a particular type of caregiver but were generally accessible to individuals who assumed responsibility for supporting the learner.

Taken together, the results indicate a strong foundation for family and community engagement, particularly in community-based supports, while also identifying a need for deeper cultural and linguistic responsiveness in family partnership practices. The result is aligned with the recommendation to strengthen professional development for SPED staff and to incorporate families' cultural and linguistic contexts into individualized language support planning. Inclusive environments also require school systems to connect learners, families, and communities through practices that support belonging and participation (Molina Roldán et al., 2021).

Grouping	Partnership area	N	df	H	p
Age	Families	30	3	4.67	0.197
	Communities	30	3	2.53	0.469
Role in family	Families	30	2	0.781	0.677
	Communities	30	2	0.257	0.879

Table No. 4. Difference in the assessment of the parents when grouped according to profile variables

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study found that the SPED parent-respondents were predominantly aged 30–34 years and were mostly parents, with grandparents and guardians also forming a substantial part of the caregiver group. The presence of grandparents and guardians as a substantial portion of the respondents highlights the diversity of caregiving arrangements surrounding learners with special educational needs. This finding emphasizes that the school's partnership efforts should recognize the broader caregiving network involved in supporting learners rather than assuming that parents are the sole or primary educational partners. Parent assessments of school partnerships were generally positive, with an overall mean of 3.33. Community partnerships were the strongest component, while family partnerships showed comparatively greater room for improvement. The generally favorable assessment indicates that the school has established a functional foundation for collaboration with families and communities. At the same time, the difference between community and family partnership ratings suggests that strong external linkages do not necessarily translate automatically into equally strong and sustained engagement within the learner's home environment.

The most pronounced strength was the school's community linkage, particularly after-school programs and connections to health and social services. Such community linkages are particularly valuable in special education because learners may require coordinated support from professionals and service providers beyond what schools can independently provide. Maintaining these partnerships may therefore contribute to a more comprehensive support system in which educational interventions are complemented by appropriate community-based services. The principal area for improvement was the consistent integration of families' cultural backgrounds and language practices into language support. When school-based language interventions are aligned with the learner's home language and cultural context, opportunities for reinforcement and meaningful practice may become more relevant and sustainable. Conversely, limited consideration of these contexts may create discontinuity between the language support provided in school and the communication experiences available at home. The absence of significant relationships and differences across age and family role further suggests that

improvement strategies can be designed as broadly accessible supports for caregivers rather than as highly segmented programs.

The study recommends moving from broad outreach toward more individualized, culturally responsive family partnership practices. The school may strengthen professional development for SPED personnel in culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, co-create language support goals with families, and document relevant cultural and linguistic information in the learner's individualized education planning process. Existing strengths in community partnerships should be sustained while family communication, strategy-sharing, and follow-through are made more specific to each learner's home context.

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Competing Interests Statement

The author declares that she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

The author declares that data sharing is not applicable to this article, as no new data were created or analyzed for the study. All information used was obtained from previously published sources cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.