

Illuminating the Path: Parents' Challenges and Coping Mechanisms in Teaching Their Visually Impaired Children

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Abstract. One of the most challenging roles that parents play is to teach their visually impaired children. This undertaking requires considerable effort, expertise, and resources to facilitate learning. As such, this study aimed to explore the lived experiences of parents in teaching their visually impaired children at home, with a particular focus on understanding their challenges and coping mechanisms. Eight parents of visually impaired learners enrolled in blended learning programs participated in this study, conducted at a SPED Center. Data were gathered through structured interviews, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of their experiences. Findings revealed two overarching themes as the challenges faced by parents: (1) a lack of capability to teach, and (2) a disruptive teaching process. With these challenges, parents employed two major themes as coping mechanisms: (1) active participation in online classes and (2) seeking help from others. The study emphasizes the importance of structured parental training programs, behavioral intervention strategies, and enhanced collaboration between teachers and parents in strengthening home-based education for visually impaired children.

Keywords: Challenges; Coping; Inclusion; Special education; Visual impairment

1.0 Introduction

The role of parents in rearing their children is a challenging job. This role becomes more difficult when their children are visually impaired and have special and unique needs to address. Moreover, when parents need to act as teachers, they face a unique set of challenges. Compared to children with typical vision, visually impaired children require the use of specialized tools (Nurhanisa et al., 2024), modified interactions (Eccles et al., 2024), assistive technology (Chanana et al., 2022), and active parental involvement in educational activities at home (Abbas et al., 2024a; Sivabalan et al., 2024) to facilitate effective learning. Parents, as primary caregivers, often serve as educators at home, ensuring their children receive the guidance and support they need. However, this responsibility can be overwhelming due to poor communication with schools (Bogale, 2024a), limited knowledge of their conditions (Oliver et al., 2023; Dewi & Aprilia, 2024), and limited understanding of educational resources and techniques (Bogale, 2024b). Understanding the experiences of parents who teach their visually impaired children is crucial in shaping better educational policies and intervention programs that cater to their needs.

Existing studies have explored the broader challenges faced by visually impaired students such as

administrative, academic, environmental, and social difficulties (Tahiri, 2023), financial, and social stigma, accessibility, peer acceptance, language, and lack of clear policies on inclusive education (Selepe & Molelemane, 2022) and difficulty in learning (Amin et al., 2021; Badri & Amin, 2018). However, research specifically focusing on parental experiences in directly teaching their visually impaired children remains limited. While previous studies acknowledge the necessity of parental involvement, there remains a need for in-depth exploration of the personal struggles, coping mechanisms, and support systems that these parents rely on.

Research on the role of parents in the education of visually impaired children underscores the significance of parental involvement in academic success. According to Anthony (2017), parents of children with visual impairments serve as the child's first and lifelong role models and teachers. This dual role as caregivers and educators requires them to master specialized instructional techniques. Adaptive learning methods, such as braille literacy, tactile graphics, and assistive technology, are crucial in this context (Hoskin et al., 2022; Santos et al., 2024; Senjam et al., 2019). However, parents may face difficulties in accessing these resources due to financial crises (Abbas et al., 2024b) and a lack of skills to teach and advocate for their children (Columna, 2019). In addition, the emotional and psychological impact on parents should not be overlooked. Studies indicate that parents of children with disabilities, particularly visual impairment, often experience stress, stigma, and mental trauma (Mandal et al., 2020) and depression (Abbas et al., 2024b).

While research has acknowledged these challenges, a qualitative exploration of how parents navigate and cope with them across diverse socioeconomic and cultural contexts remains necessary. Thus, this study aimed to explore the challenges parents face in teaching their visually impaired children and the coping mechanisms they use to overcome these difficulties. The findings of this study will provide valuable feedback and insights to parents facing similar situations, special needs education teachers, and school heads, who can use them to mitigate this challenging phenomenon. Further, this study contributes to academic discourse in special education, parent-child pedagogy, and disability studies.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a basic qualitative research design to explore parents' experiences in teaching their children with visual impairments. The shared unique experiences of parents provided relevant and substantial insights into their challenges and coping mechanisms as they served as teachers to their children with visual impairment.

2.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

The research was conducted in a Special Education (SpEd) Center School in the Cagayan Valley Region, Philippines. There were eight (8) parents of visually impaired learners who served as participants in this study; seven (7) of them are biological mothers, and the other one (1) is a grandmother. All of them had children aged 1-6 years old who underwent blended learning. All the visually impaired learners are totally blind.

2.3 Research Instrument/Interview Protocol

The research instrument used in this study was a self-designed, structured interview guide comprising questions and a protocol. This was validated by three experts in the field of research and special education. The interview guide consisted of one central question and two sub-questions, designed to elicit parents' overall experiences with visually impaired learners, as well as their struggles and coping mechanisms. The interview protocol includes the opening script, sequence questions, allowable probes, time allotment, and procedures for closing the session and addressing participants' queries. The guide and protocol were written in both English and Filipino and administered in the language preferred by the participants.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Data were gathered face-to-face using an interview protocol that lasted 9-10 minutes. Responses to the interview questions were documented through written notes and audio recordings, with the participants' permission and consent. The structured interview format ensured consistent data collection, and responses were reported in written notes and audio recordings. This systematic approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of parents' experiences in facilitating blended learning for visually impaired learners. Data collection took place over three months during the 2024 academic year.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, anonymized, and analyzed via reflexive thematic analysis. Two analysts independently open-coded the transcripts, reconciled discrepancies into a shared codebook, and iteratively clustered codes into categories and overarching themes using constant comparison. Negative cases were examined until thematic sufficiency was achieved. Trustworthiness was enhanced through an audit trail and reflexive journaling, brief member checking of theme summaries, peer debriefing, and triangulation with field notes.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

In consideration of ethical research guidelines, the protection of participants' rights, privacy, and welfare was ensured through the following measures, such as: (1) administering informed consent and voluntary participation, to which the participants were fully informed about the nature of the study, its procedure, risk, benefits, and their right to withdraw at any stage of the study without consequences. Before the interview session, written informed consent was sought from each participant; (2) adhering to confidentiality and anonymity, to which the identity of the participants, including their children with visual impairment, was strictly protected. Their names and other identifiable information were omitted from the results and other parts of this study; (3) compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) of the Philippines, to which all collected data were fully safeguarded. Nondisclosure of such data was observed; it was only used for academic and research purposes.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Challenges Experienced by Parents

The challenges experienced by parents in teaching their children with visual impairment revealed two (2) overarching themes presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Significant Themes and De	scription of the Challenge	es Experienced by Parents in	ı Teaching Their Visua	lly Impaired Children

		Description		
1.	Lack of Capability to Teach	Parents struggled due to insufficient education, unfamiliarity with		
2.	Disruptive Teaching Process	specialized learning tools (e.g., Braille), and the lack of structured training. Teaching was further hindered by children's frustration, hyperactivity, and disruptive behaviors, which impeded effective learning.		

Lack of Capability to Teach

Parents believed that they could not teach their children with visual impairment. In their experience teaching their children, they found they lacked adequate knowledge and skills to facilitate the teaching-learning process. They were not prepared to take on the role of a teacher because they lacked formal training in teaching, and they were not experts in teaching visually impaired children. The adoption of blended learning in the school where their children are enrolled requires them to take the teaching responsibilities without adequate support. Parents claimed that their educational attainment and background are insufficient in providing their children with visual impairment the learning support they need:

Similarly, other parents reported that a lack of knowledge about Braille was a significant obstacle. As shared by parent 8, "I do not know how to write in Braille; that is why it was tough."

The parents' verbatim statements indicate the prevailing concern about parents' ability to teach their children with visual impairments. Insufficient formal training, limited familiarity with specialized teaching techniques, and insufficient knowledge of Braille emerged as primary factors preventing parents from supporting their children's educational needs and challenges. Despite their eagerness to teach their children with visual impairments, their educational attainment and background limit their capacity to teach their children, which results in emotional distress and frustration as parents.

When teaching visually impaired children, specialized skills are required, including adaptive techniques, tactile

[&]quot;I was not able to finish my studies, and I do not know their lessons. There was a time when I almost gave up because I could not take it anymore." – Parent 1

[&]quot;It is hard for a parent like me to teach my child because I did not graduate from college." – Parent 5

methods, and assistive technology. Parents have limited experience or have not even acquired the necessary training in handling visually impaired children. The lack of Braille knowledge exacerbates the prevailing concern, as it is necessary for language development among visually impaired children. Parents of children with special needs were often not involved in special education training, which limited their ability to support their children effectively (Ntinda & Hlanze, 2015). Special educational training is significantly essential for parents. Sahu et al. (2018) acknowledged the key role of this approach in enabling parents to acquire a conceptual understanding of specific disabilities, as it guides them in addressing their children's academic challenges.

Like the current findings, Grenier et al. (2023) reported that parents' effectiveness in teaching visually impaired children is due to inadequate training in the use of assistive technologies and adaptive teaching methods. As such, Kumata et al. (2013) acknowledged that insufficient programs for parents of children with special needs escalate these challenges, leaving them without essential resources.

The current study suggests that parents need to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to support their children's education through effective parental training programs. Collaboration among institutions, including schools, plays a crucial role by providing parents with workshops on Braille literacy, adaptive teaching methods, and the use of assistive technology. In fact, Catama et al. (2024) suggested that collaborative efforts among institutions in providing training programs are necessary, as they will increase parents' knowledge through educational resources. Moreover, parental training programs foster supportive social networks and resilience among parents of children with special needs, helping them cope with challenges in raising their children.

One collaboration found to be effective is teacher-parent collaboration. This type of collaboration enables parents to effectively address the challenges they face in teaching their children with special needs. Parents of children with special needs facilitate learning for their children through regular virtual check-ins, instructional guides, and recorded lessons from the teacher, which is easier than independent teaching.

In addition to training parents, another approach to effectively teaching students with visual impairment is to provide learning materials accessible, specifically tailored to their needs. The challenges faced by parents of children with visual impairments can be lessened when their children are provided with Braille books, audio lessons, and digital resources. Santos et al. (2024) found that the use of tactile materials, Braille books, and educational software is among the adequate educational resources that facilitate literacy education and encourage learning among children with visual impairments.

Other areas of concern aside from academic concerns faced by parents in rearing their children with visual impairment are their psychosocial well-being. The responsibility of parents in educating their children is rigorous, compounded by their perceived incompetence, which can lead to stress that escalates into burnout. As a result, this will cripple parents' ability to provide the necessary support to their children.

To help parents of children with visual impairments who are experiencing stress due to assuming the teacher's role and other contributory factors in rearing their children, it is necessary to provide counseling services, stress management programs, and establish support groups. Providing these interventions enables parents to address these challenges and create a positive learning environment. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the need for systemic interventions to ensure that visually impaired children receive quality education, even in home-based learning settings through their parents.

Disruptive Teaching Process

Another central theme that emerged from the parents' responses is the disruptive nature of the teaching process. This means that parents also face difficulties due to their children's behavioral responses to learning challenges. Many visually impaired children exhibited frustration, restlessness, and tantrums. As parent 7 revealed: "It is tough teaching persons with disabilities like them." Similarly, parent 4 mentioned that her child's restlessness disrupts her learning. In contrast, another parent acknowledges that if her child does not want to, he resorts to tantrums and insists on getting what he wants.

In addition, parents reiterated that tantrums and short-tempered behavior were recurrent issues: "In less than a year, he destroyed five cellphones during online classes because he would get frustrated and throw them." – Parent 1

"He is ill-tempered, especially if I cannot immediately do what we need to do in his assignments; he easily gets angry." - Parent 6

These findings align with previous research indicating that behavioral challenges are a common concern among parents of children with disabilities. As stated in the study of Ogundele (2018), disruptive behavioral problems such as temper tantrums, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and oppositional, defiant, or conduct disorders are the most common behavioral problems in preschool and school-age children, more so among children with disabilities. However, it could also be attributed to their condition. In the recent study of McDowell et al. (2024), it was highlighted that frustration and disruptive behaviors in visually impaired children often stem from visual perceptual difficulties (VPD) associated with cerebral visual impairment (CVI), which can lead to challenges in motion perception, recognition, and visuospatial processing, impacting learning and development.

One critical consequence is that the parents encounter stress and burnout. Research studies have shown that the daily emotional and behavioral challenges faced by parents of children with visual impairments heighten their stress levels (Huurneman, 2018; Ghafoor & Sattar, 2022; Levterova-Gadjalova & Fyodorova-Radicheva, 2024). This could be one reason why they struggle to implement effective teaching strategies for their children. As such, they need to be at least trained in implementing behavioral intervention programs that meet their children's needs. Studies by Bakar and Zainal (2020) and Rafi et al. (2020) suggest that implementing positive reinforcement strategies effectively manages disruptive behavior and increases pupil concentration in classrooms.

Additionally, the school may provide support to parents to better manage their children's educational challenges, leading to a more effective, less stressful learning environment. Manitsa and Doikou (2020) suggest that social support from staff and peers in educational institutions has a positive impact on students' academic learning and socioemotional development with visual impairments.

3.2 Coping Mechanisms of Parents

To mitigate these challenges, parents employed two (2) primary coping mechanisms as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Significant Themes and Description of the Coping Mechanisms Employed by Parents			
Major Themes	Description		
Active Participation in Online Classes	Parents actively engaged in their children's online lessons to better understand		
	instructional techniques and Braille literacy.		
Seeking Help from Others	Parents relied on relatives, teachers, and online resources to support their		
	children's education.		

Active Participation in Online Classes

Parents demonstrated resilience by immersing themselves in their children's online education, allowing them to replicate effective teaching strategies. As mentioned by parent 5: "I listened to the teacher's explanations so I could teach the same way. I even studied Braille."

The same scenario was shared by parent two and other parents; they said that sometimes, they sat with their children during their online class and listened to what the teacher was saying, so that when they would ask, they would have something to answer.

This theme highlights the role of parental involvement in facilitating online education for visually impaired learners. This is also emphasized in the study by Smith et al. (2016), who stated that parents must play a significant role in supporting their children with special needs in their online learning. Related studies have provided benefits of parental participation and engagement in online and digital learning of their children, such as lowering student attrition rates (Borup et al., 2019), supporting students' learning (Gonzales-DeHass et al., 2022), and mitigating challenges and difficulties faced by visually impaired learners (Ryan et al., 2019)

Through participation, involvement, and engagement, parents have become more resilient, helping them adapt to the challenging situation of assisting their children with online classes. As evidenced in the statements from parents 5, 2, and other parents, they actively engaged in their children's education by listening to teachers' instructions and even learning Braille to better support their children's learning experience. This finding corroborates previous studies linking improved academic outcomes to parental involvement (Olivar & Naparan,

2023; Rohmatillah et al., 2024). Additionally, this proactive approach aligns with Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interactions in learning (Taber, 2020). In this case, parents serve as facilitators, bridging the gap between students and teachers and reinforcing pedagogical strategies at home.

Looking into the importance of parental involvement, it can be said that parents' role is not only about taking care of their children but also extends to helping and assisting teachers in the teaching and learning process. To achieve this, schools may strengthen their partnerships with parents by providing parents with capacity-building to enhance their skills in effectively supporting their children. Additionally, schools may develop and deliver teaching and learning resources on online platforms that are easily accessible and user-friendly for parents. In this way, there is an assurance that remote education is conducted efficiently and effectively.

Seeking Help from Others

Recognizing their limitations, parents sought external assistance. Relatives, siblings, and teachers played an integral role: "I did not know what to answer in the lessons, so I asked my child's cousins and teachers for help." – Parent 7

In some cases, wherein the parent is working, they still try to help their visually impaired children by asking for assistance from relatives or any family member: "Actually, because I am a teacher, I got my sister to assist my child, the one guiding him if ever he has online class since I am not around at home." – Parent 2

The findings underscore the crucial role of external support in educating visually impaired children. Parents, recognizing their limitations, actively sought help from relatives, siblings, and teachers to ensure their children's learning needs were met. This reliance on a support network underscores the collaborative nature of inclusive education, in which multiple stakeholders contribute to a child's academic development. According to the study by Taderera and Hall (2017), strong social networks among parents of children with special needs can significantly enhance educational outcomes. Likewise, Estojero et al. (2022) emphasized that seeking assistance from others may provide a more dynamic learning environment for their children. This implies that social support networks from teachers, relatives, and friends can compensate for parents' limitations in guiding and assisting their children in their schooling. This involvement fosters a sense of shared responsibility, ensuring that children with visual impairments receive ongoing support, even when their parents are absent.

This finding contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive education by highlighting the necessity of external assistance in overcoming barriers to learning. Hence, schools may provide a more structured and formalized support system for parents of visually impaired children. They must recognize the indispensable role of extended family members and educators in a child's learning process. They must provide programs that facilitate their training, peer mentoring, and community engagement, further strengthening these support networks. Seeking help from others is not merely a compensatory strategy but a vital mechanism for fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment.

4.0 Conclusion

This study highlights the profound challenges parents face in educating their visually impaired children at home, primarily stemming from a lack of capability to teach and the disruptive teaching process. Parents often lack knowledge of Braille, adaptive teaching techniques, and specialized learning tools, making it difficult for them to support their children's education effectively. Additionally, behavioral challenges such as frustration and restlessness among visually impaired children further disrupt the learning process, increasing parental stress and emotional burden. While parents demonstrate resilience through active engagement in online learning and resource-seeking, the findings reveal a critical need for systemic intervention. The overarching inference is that successful home-based education for visually impaired children requires a multifaceted approach encompassing comprehensive parental training, accessible specialized resources, and targeted support for managing behavioral challenges. Such interventions will not only enhance the quality of education but also empower parents to fulfill their vital educational roles effectively, ultimately improving outcomes for children who are visually impaired. Future researchers may adopt longitudinal designs to track parental challenges and coping strategies across key educational transitions, from basic education to higher education.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Author 1: Conceptualization, proposal writing, data gathering. Author 2: Data analysis, editing, recalibration, and finalization of the paper.

6.0 Funding

This study was self-funded research.

7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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