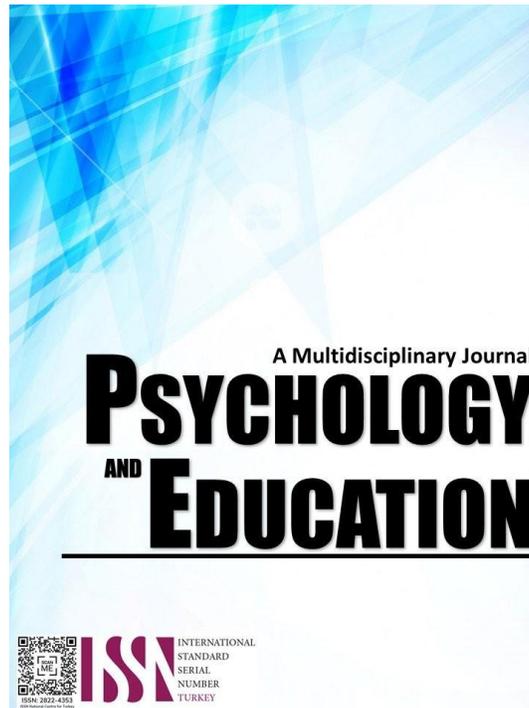


FROM CHILDHOOD TO PARENTHOOD: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY ON GENERATIONAL INFLUENCES IN MILLENNIAL FILIPINO PARENTING



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From Childhood to Parenthood: A Narrative Inquiry on Generational Influences in Millennial Filipino Parenting

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Abstract

This qualitative narrative inquiry examines how Millennial Filipino parents narrate the influence of their childhood experiences on their current parenting practices. Guided by Family Systems Theory and Social Learning Theory, it investigates how intergenerational influences, both positive and negative, shape approaches to discipline, affection, authority, and nurturing. Using narrative inquiry, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five Millennial parents aged 35–40, each raising one to three children. Thematic analysis identified five major themes: intergenerational parenting influence, discipline practices, affection and nurturing, authority and family dynamics, and contemporary context and aspirations. Participants described intentionally negotiating inherited parenting practices, retaining beneficial behaviors while adapting or rejecting punitive, fear-based methods. Emphasis was placed on private correction, relational engagement, faith-guided authority, and expressive nurturing, reflecting a blend of traditional Filipino values and contemporary child-rearing strategies. The findings highlight evolving paternal roles, the integration of faith and values in parenting decisions, and the management of modern challenges, such as technology exposure. These results contribute to understanding how intergenerational practices are reinterpreted in contemporary Filipino family life and provide insights for culturally informed parenting programs, policy development, and interventions that promote positive parenting, father involvement, and emotional well-being in children. Limitations include a small, regionally focused sample and reliance on self-reported narratives, suggesting the need for broader, longitudinal research to capture diverse experiences and long-term outcomes.

Keywords: *millennial parenting, Filipino families, intergenerational influences, discipline practices, narrative inquiry, father involvement*

Introduction

Filipino families are known to be cohesive, characterized by strong intergenerational bonds, mutual support, and collective responsibility. Parenthood in this context is not limited to individual parental duties but is shaped by cultural expectations, extended family structures, and inherited parenting practices. Generational influences, defined as the transmission of beliefs, norms, and behaviors across generations, are deeply embedded in Filipino family life (Alampay, 2024). These influences may include both positive traditions, such as respect and familism, as well as challenges such as authoritarian discipline or unresolved family trauma.

Parenting styles play a central role in children's development. Authoritative parenting, marked by warmth, consistency, and open communication, has been linked to higher social competence among Filipino youth (Banayad et al., 2024; Conwi et al., 2024). Conversely, negative childhood experiences, such as emotional abuse or neglect, can influence Millennial parents' approaches to child-rearing, sometimes manifesting in authoritarian or permissive styles as coping mechanisms for unresolved trauma (Ünüvar et al., 2025). This illustrates the cyclical nature of intergenerational influence, where family histories perpetuate both positive and negative behaviors.

The structure of Filipino households further underscores intergenerational influence. Extended households remain common, suggesting that parenting is shaped not only by immediate parents but also by grandparents and other relatives (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2024). Intergenerational influence extends beyond parenting behaviors to broader cultural and historical contexts (Ortiz, 2025). While such arrangements reinforce family cohesion and values, they may also perpetuate cycles of conflict or reinforce outdated practices.

Recent research indicates that Millennial Filipino parents are actively reconfiguring traditional practices to fit contemporary contexts, emphasizing emotionally supportive, socially oriented, and adaptive child-rearing strategies (Szymańska, 2024). At the same time, they face challenges including technology use, work demands, and mental health pressures, which can influence their choices in parenting (Denum et al., 2023). Studies also show that Millennials blend respect for traditional values with adaptive strategies to promote autonomy, empathy, and well-being in their children, balancing digital exposure with offline engagement (Paguirigan & Paguirigan, 2022; Alsagon et al., 2023).

As Millennials transition into parenthood, they reinterpret inherited practices. They may reject strictly hierarchical authority in favor of relational engagement with children, adopt permissive parenting approaches to accommodate early exposure to technology, or selectively integrate traditional practices they deem beneficial (Ramandhani et al., 2024; Naruka & Rajput, 2024). These choices demonstrate the intergenerational negotiation of discipline, affection, and authority, reflecting both continuity and adaptation within Filipino family life.

Despite growing literature on Filipino parenting styles, technology use, and child outcomes, most studies remain descriptive and variable-centered, focusing on what parents do rather than how they interpret and make meaning of their own upbringing. Existing research provides insight into Millennial parenting trends, but rarely explores parenting as a reflective, interpretive process shaped by lived childhood experiences. In particular, there is limited narrative-based, qualitative research that captures how Filipino Millennial parents consciously negotiate intergenerational influences, deciding which practices to retain, modify, or reject, as they transition into parenthood. There is a limited understanding of how cultural values, personal histories, and contemporary realities intersect in shaping parenting decisions, leaving a gap in story-centered, meaning-focused inquiry. Addressing this gap will provide deeper insights into how intergenerational experiences are interpreted, transformed, and enacted in contemporary Filipino parenting.

This study is guided by Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978) and Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977). Family Systems Theory conceptualizes the family as an interrelated system, where roles, rules, and emotional patterns are transmitted across generations. This perspective highlights how Millennials' current parenting practices may be influenced by both positive and negative experiences from their own upbringing, such as disciplinary strategies, affection patterns, and relational norms. Social Learning Theory complements this by emphasizing that children and adults acquire behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling. Applied to Millennial parenting, this theory explains how parents may consciously adopt, adapt, or reject the parenting practices they experienced, reflecting both learned behaviors and deliberate interventions to break cycles of dysfunction.

Linking these frameworks to broader societal concerns, this study also considers the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, SDG 3 Good Health and Well-Being is addressed through the investigation of how intergenerationally informed parenting practices can foster emotional resilience, secure attachments, and mental health in children. SDG 4 Quality Education is relevant through the role of parenting in promoting socio-emotional and cognitive development, which underpins school readiness and lifelong learning. By exploring how Millennials negotiate and reinterpret inherited parenting practices, the study provides insights into strategies that can enhance family functioning and contribute to these global goals.

Accordingly, this research aims to explore how Millennial Filipino parents narrate the influence of their childhood experiences on current parenting practices. In particular, it seeks to identify which aspects of discipline, affection, and authority they retain, adapt, or reject. By focusing on Millennials, the generation currently raising much of the country's children, the study provides an understanding of how Filipino family life evolves, balancing continuity of traditional practices with adaptations to modern contexts.

Research Questions

This study explored how Millennial Filipino parents narrate the influence of their childhood experiences on current parenting practices. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do Millennial Filipino parents narrate their childhood experiences and the parenting practices they received in terms of discipline, affection, and authority?
2. How do they consciously retain, adapt, or reject these intergenerational practices in raising their own children?
3. How do contemporary social, cultural, and technological contexts interact with their intergenerational experiences in shaping their parenting decisions?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed qualitative research, specifically narrative inquiry, as its primary research design. Qualitative approaches are suitable for exploring lived experiences, personal perspectives, and the meanings individuals assign to their experiences (Creswell, 2014). Narrative inquiry was particularly appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to capture intergenerational stories and personal accounts of Filipino Millennial parents, which quantitative methods, phenomenology, or case studies may have overlooked. Unlike phenomenology, which focuses on the essence of shared experiences, or case studies, which focus on a bounded system, narrative inquiry enabled the exploration of individual life stories and the meanings participants constructed from their childhood experiences and parenting practices (Clandinin, 2013).

In this study, narratives were gathered through life-story interviews that encouraged participants to reflect on their childhood experiences, transitions into parenthood, and current parenting practices. The researcher maintained a reflexive stance, acknowledging her positionality as a Filipino and a psychology student, which helped her stay sensitive to cultural meanings while setting aside personal assumptions. To ensure the accuracy and depth of the findings, data were carefully analyzed through repeated engagement with participants' stories, verbatim transcription, and an ongoing process of comparing individual narratives with emerging themes.

Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they could provide rich and relevant insights into the research phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015). The inclusion criteria were: (1) Millennials (born 1981–1996), (2) parents currently responsible for raising their child(ren), and (3) individuals raised by parents from an older generation. Five participants were recruited for the study. While the sample size may appear small, it was justified using the principle of data saturation, whereby additional interviews are

conducted until no new themes or insights emerge (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). This approach aligns with qualitative research practices, particularly narrative inquiry, where the depth and richness of individual stories are prioritized over large sample sizes.

Participants included three fathers and two mothers aged 35–40. Most were from urban or semi-urban settings and belonged to middle-income households. While regional and socioeconomic diversity was limited, variation in parental roles, family size, and childhood experiences provided comparative depth. The fifth interview reached narrative sufficiency, as participants' stories began to converge across central domains of discipline, affection, authority, and contemporary parenting challenges. While each narrative retained its uniqueness, recurring patterns indicated sufficient depth and variation to interpret shared intergenerational themes meaningfully.

Instrument

The research instrument was semi-structured, in-depth interviews guided by an interview protocol. This approach provided flexibility to probe participants' stories while maintaining consistency across interviews (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guide included open-ended questions on childhood family experiences, perceptions of parenting received, and how these experiences shaped their own parenting practices. The interviews were audio-recorded (with consent), transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically to identify patterns and meanings across generations.

Procedure

After securing ethics approval from the institution's Research Ethics Committee (REC), participants were recruited through personal networks and referrals. Interested individuals were provided with an information sheet and an informed consent form before participation. Interviews were conducted at a time and platform convenient for participants, either face-to-face or online. Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and was audio-recorded with permission. Consent was verbally reaffirmed at the start of each interview, and participants were reminded of their right to pause or withdraw at any point.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis and was primarily inductive, allowing themes to emerge from participants' narratives rather than being imposed by theory. Initial coding involved line-by-line coding of transcripts to capture meaningful units related to childhood experiences and parenting practices. Codes were then clustered into broader categories and refined into themes through constant comparison across narratives. Family Systems Theory and Social Learning Theory were used during later stages of interpretation to contextualize patterns rather than guide initial coding.

To enhance rigor, reflexive journaling was maintained to document analytic decisions and researcher assumptions. An audit trail was kept to track code development, theme refinement, and analytical shifts. Peer debriefing with a research adviser was conducted to review emerging themes and challenge interpretations, strengthening credibility and transparency.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from the institution's Research Ethics Committee (REC). Participants were provided with informed consent forms detailing the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was ensured by assigning pseudonyms and removing identifying information from transcripts and reports. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored securely with access limited to the researcher. Given the sensitivity of exploring childhood and parenting experiences, participants were informed about the availability of psychosocial support services should the interviews evoke emotional distress. These measures aligned with the ethical standards outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017).

Results

This section presents the data collected in the study, organized and analyzed to reveal how Millennial Filipino parents' childhood experiences influence their current parenting practices.

Table 1. *Demographics*

<i>Code</i>	<i>Birth date</i>	<i>Parental Role</i>	<i>How many children?</i>
JP	January 5, 1995	Father	1
Zel	May 24, 1985	Mother	2
Elli	August 25, 1985	Father	2
Han	November 16, 1989	Mother	3
Frank	October 10, 1989	Father	3

The study involved five Millennial Filipino parents, consisting of three fathers and two mothers, aged between 35 and 40 years old. Participants had between one and three children, with JP having one child, Zel and Elli having two, and Han and Frank having three. This purposive sample provided diverse insights into contemporary and traditional parenting practices across different family sizes.

Table 2. Main themes and subthemes

Main Themes	Subthemes
Intergenerational Parenting Influence	a) Parental role models and childhood experiences b) Influence of extended family on upbringing c) c. Memorable Positive Parenting Experiences
Intergenerational Parenting Influence	a) Methods of discipline in childhood b) Practices retained and rejected in their own parenting c) Private correction
Affection and Nurturing	a. Expressions of love received from parents b. Expressions of love toward their children
Affection and Nurturing	a. Establishing respect and authority in the household b. Faith-Based Parental Authority
Affection and Nurturing	a) Establishing respect and authority in the household b) Faith-Based Parental Authority

Intergenerational Parenting Influence

Participants consistently observed patterns of parenting passed down from one generation to the next, shaping both positive and negative influences in their upbringing. Many noted that the way their parents raised them reflected how their grandparents had raised their parents, suggesting a strong continuity in family practices. JP explained, “*kasi ganoon sila pinalaki, kaya ganoon din kami pinalaki*” (JP, line 15), while Zel similarly remarked, “...*sila parenting style kasi nila, it's, kung paano rin sila naman pinalaki*” (Zel, line 38). Han also recalled negative patterns from previous generations, “*bukod kay mama, tsaka dun, dun sa first generation, yung naunang generation pa sa lola ko, yung mama ni mama, ganun kasi yung style nila eh, kukwento pa sa iba*” (Han, line 103).

Parental Role Models and Childhood Experiences. Participants emphasized the influence of primary caregivers, particularly mothers, who often served as the main source of guidance, emotional support, and discipline. JP noted, “*yung mother namin, strict eh. She brought us up*” (JP, line 14), and Zel shared, “*they raised me with patience, with love...yung mama ko lalo, kasi siya talaga yung nagbabantay sa akin*” (Zel, line 12). Elli reflected, “*So, I'm like more of a mama's boy...kasi siya lang talaga yung kasama ko*” (Elli, line 14). Han emphasized that her mother became a breadwinner in the loss of his father, “*So ang na-iwan sa amin is si mommy, nag-work si mommy*” (Han, line 15), and Frank was only raised by a mother figure, “*legally adopted kasi ako ni mommy, so, lola ko, ah, siya na yung, ah, naging mommy ko*” (Frank, line 14).

Several grew up with limited paternal involvement due to work commitments, separation, or loss. JP said, “*hindi kami naging masyadong close sa father namin eh, kasi nung maliit kami, several times siya nag-cheat eh*” (JP, line 19), while Zel and Elli shared experiences of fathers being away for long periods due to work, “*si Papa naman, ang naalala ko, kasi malayo na siya nadeestino...most of the time siya wala talaga sa bahay*” (Zel, line 15) and “*For a time noong bata pa ako hindi masyadong visible ang dad kasi OFW...parang two years lang halos kaming nagkasama*” (Elli, line 13). Han experienced early parental loss, “*wala masyadong guidance ng parents, kasi early...maaga namatay yung daddy ko*” (Han, line 15), and Frank grew up without knowing his father, “*ako parang growing up kasi sabik ako sa tatay*” (Frank, line 33).

Influence of extended family on upbringing. In line with the collectivist orientation of Filipino society, participants emphasized the significant role of the extended family in their upbringing. Three out of five participants recalled having relatives actively involved in their daily care and discipline, reflecting the cultural norm of shared caregiving. JP shared, “*Si Tita... For 20 years, so kasama rin siya sa nagpalaki sa amin*” (JP, line 79), highlighting the long-term involvement of an aunt, while Zel noted, “*Tsaka yung lola ko rin dinidisciplina ako kasi siya rin yung nagbabantay sa akin noong nag wowork si mama at papa*” (Zel, line 24), illustrating how grandparents intervened when parents were absent due to work obligations.

Participants also described the variation in disciplinary approaches among extended family members. Elli observed, “*So, kapag lolo-lola, medyo lenient and bigay ang gusto...There are some tito who are strict...He's so strict, kailangan matulog, may sinturon*” (Elli, line 23), further noting, “*may guidance pero yun nga, combination ng mommy, may tito-tita, plus lolo-lola. Yung discipline are not always aligned with each other*” (Elli, line 23). Han, on the other hand, expressed a preference for limiting extended family involvement, stating, “*Pero ako hanggat, kami na lang, never, never dumating yung time na, kapag nagkamali yung mga anak ko, ikakwento ko pa sa ate ko*” (Han, line 104).

Memorable Positive Parenting Experiences. Participants reflected on childhood experiences that shaped their current parenting practices. JP recalled his mother consistently instilling gratitude and faith: “*And being thankful sa blessings, always, kay God*” (JP, line 83). Zel highlighted the importance of education and parental care: “*mag-aral ka nang mabuti kasi wala naman kaming ipapamana sayo ng mama mo kung hindi yung education mo*” (Zel, line 16), and added, “*they really care for you. Inalagaan ka talaga nila and they're always there*” (Zel, line 34). Elli described distinct parental influences: “*Kay mommy nakuha ko yung pakikisama sa tao at pagiging mapagmahal sa pamilya. Kay daddy siguro yung disiplina sa sarili at sa trabaho kasi buong buhay ko nakita kung paano siya din na buong buhay niya rin na nag provide siya*” (Elli, line 88). He also emphasized his own relational approach: “*Ang pinaka-gusto ko lang talaga sa kanina as a parent, yung time na nakaka-connect sila sa akin...Hindi yung side lang nila yung nakikita at naririnig nila*” (Elli, line 45). Frank similarly recalled maternal care: “*okay naman si mommy, love naman niya ako, meron lang*” (Frank, line 104).

syempre yung ano, syempre yung ugali na matanda” (Frank, line 22).

Discipline Practices

Discipline practices in Filipino households reflect both cultural norms and intergenerational influences, shaping children’s behavior, emotional responses, and understanding of authority. Participants’ narratives revealed a spectrum of approaches, from corporal punishment to verbal correction, which informed their own decisions as parents and highlighted patterns of continuity, adaptation, or rejection in contemporary parenting.

Methods of discipline in childhood. Participants described a range of disciplinary practices experienced during childhood, often combining corporal punishment with verbal correction, reflecting traditional Filipino parenting norms. Physical discipline was predominantly administered by mothers. JP recalled, “*Nung bata kami, madalas kaming pinapalo...so yung hanger, sinturon, tsinelas, kasi lalaki kami*” (JP, line 23), further noting, “*...hindi mo naintindihan bakit nila ginawa*” (JP, line 25), indicating both the severity and the lack of rationale accompanying such discipline. Elli also emphasized the unpredictability of physical punishment, stating, “*Napapalo, pero hindi siya yung may process, it can occur anytime...pwede akong mapalo*” (Elli, line 27). Similarly, Zel described variability in disciplinary approaches, “*Every time na may mga mali akong ginagawa, pinapalo nila ko, tapos there are times na kakausapin lang din ako, depende sa grabe pinagawa ko*” (Zel, line 12), and added, “*Si mama kahit anong makuha niyan tsinelas, hanger, ayan ipapalo niya*” (Zel, line 24).

Paternal involvement in discipline appeared inconsistent across participants’ recollections. JP shared a rare but vivid memory of being punished by his father, “*Isang beses napalo niya kami, parang tubo yata ‘yun eh*” (JP, line 47), while Zel remembered, “*Si papa, sinturon ‘yan pero minsan lang siya mamalo pero masakit kaya nakakatakot*” (Zel, line 24). In contrast, Elli described her father as lenient and indulgent, saying, “*Hindi ako napapalo ng daddy...kung anong gusto ko, bigay*” (Elli, line 29).

For some, discipline was not directly imposed by parents. Han recalled that her mother rarely punished her, “*Kasi si mama, hindi naman talaga dumating sa point na papaluin ako ni mama...Wala nga actually ako maaalala*” (Han, line 27). Instead, she experienced reprimand from her older sister, “*Pero ang naalala ko lang is yung napagalitan ako ni ate kasi high school na ako noon eh...Sinabunutan niya ako noon*” (Han, line 27).

Two participants described more severe experiences that left emotional marks. Elli shared, “*Yung pinakaayaw ko ay yung napapahiya ako sa harap ng mga kalaro ko...kinukurot niya ko, sinisipa, sinusuntok...medyo umiiwas kasi pasugod talaga tapos galit na galit*” (Elli, line 47), while Frank recalled, “*So laki ako sa gulpe, laki sa palo...tatakbo pa ako ng bahay para lumabas, tapos susunduin ako na may dalang pamalo...pagdating sa bahay, gugulpehin ako, gano’n*” (Frank, line 15). These accounts reveal how corporal punishment and public reprimand, common in traditional Filipino parenting, can evoke fear and humiliation that persist into adulthood.

Practices retained and rejected in their own parenting. Across participants, there was a clear intention to uphold the importance of discipline while transforming the manner in which it is delivered. Many acknowledged that while strict and physical discipline shaped their childhood, they now aim to approach correction through communication and guidance rather than fear or punishment. JP summarized this generational shift, stating, “*We don’t want our kids to experience the same thing... pero we want them to be disciplined*” (JP, line 29).

Some participants chose to retain aspects of the disciplinary framework they grew up with, but with deliberate improvement. Zel explained, “*Parang yung disiplina kunyari, yung rod... alam ko na pag naging magulang ako, I will express, I will mag-rod ako, kasi gano’n ako pinalaki*” (Zel, line 36), later clarifying that she maintained these practices but with a reformed, faith-based interpretation, “*Kineep ko siya but with improvements na biblical yung standpoint*” (Zel, line 62). Elli shared a similar reinterpretation of physical discipline, reframing it as a controlled, mentoring process rather than an act of anger, “*Itong rod, hindi ganun yung way... hindi to put fear, but to put a separate time where discipline, administering, mentoring happens... It’s not about the pain or the authority that hurt your child, para magtanda*” (Elli, line 58).

Other participants emphasized situational and communicative forms of discipline. Frank described a graduated response depending on the child’s behavior, “*Pag nag-disiplina kasi kami, hindi naman kami lagi si palo. So, talagang yung palo is, pag talagang may ginawa talagang medyo... may minor offense, may major offense, parang ganon*” (Frank, line 41). Han also underscored the importance of explanation and dialogue, stating, “*Hindi pwede papaluin mo lang sila nang walang explanation... kasi hindi nila matututunan paano i-correct*” (Han, line 83).

Despite these changes, participants recognized the value of structure and authority in child-rearing. JP reflected on the difference between generations, noting that “*Gusto ko lang ibalik yung mga... hindi ka tulad na sa amin. Iba kasi sa amin, extreme. Pero sa generation namin, normal yun*” (JP, line 108). However, he also acknowledged that today’s children respond better to closeness and communication, “*Mas close ka sa kanila or may affection ka binibigay... pag dumating yung time na nagalit ka, or diniscipline mo sila, not physically, but verbally, nakikinig sila*” (JP, line 76). Han further emphasized emotional balance within co-parenting, explaining, “*Kailangan kasi hindi siya pwede na parehas kami kagalit niya*” (Han, line 54), recognizing that discipline should still convey safety and emotional security.

Private correction. A notable shift among the participants was their preference for administering discipline privately, reflecting a

rejection of the public humiliation they often experienced as children. JP articulated this clearly, “*Kailangan mo kausapin yung anak mo, kung kailangan mo siya disiplinahin privately. So kayong dalawa lang. Hindi public*” (JP, line 63). Similarly, Zel described a reflective and nurturing process, “*We don’t do that in front of many people. We go to our room and explain to her bakit kailangan namin gawin yun... and after that session ilolove namin siya and then we will pray together*” (Zel, line 46). Elli echoed this sentiment, describing how “*the symbol of the rod... is not being done in public, so it’s a chance for the parent and the child to have a moment alone, intimate*” (Elli, line 58). Han reinforced this principle, stating, “*Hindi namin siya talaga papagalitan in front of, in front ng maraming tao, pero pagtinignan namin sila, at saka sasabihin lang namin, mamaya ka, mag-usap tayo mamaya, yun na yun*” (Han, line 56). Frank also highlighted that corporal punishment is done privately, “*Kapag pinapalo naman namin hindi katulad noong bata ako na sa harap ng ibang tao pero kapag kami na lang pamilya doon ko papaluin*” (Frank, line 44).

Affection and Nurturing

Affection and nurturing play a critical role in shaping children’s emotional development and their perception of family relationships. Participants highlighted how the ways they received affection from their parents, as well as the efforts they make to provide love and support to their own children, reflect a conscious balance between preserving meaningful traditions and adapting to contemporary parenting expectations.

Expressions of love received from parents. Participants reflected that expressions of love from their parents during childhood were primarily conveyed through subtle gestures and acts of service, rather than overt physical affection or verbal affirmation. Physical expressions were minimal but meaningful; Elli shared, “*Bago matulog may touch niya yung like kamot, pispis*” (Elli, line 37), indicating that even brief physical contact functioned as an important signal of care. Explicit verbal expressions of love were also rare, as Zel noted, “*Pero nung child, hindi ko maalala na more on service talaga sila...Pero hindi ko maalala na nagsasabi sila ng I love you*” (Zel, line 30). Han similarly recalled, “*Kahit ako, hindi ako lumaki na I love you kayla mama*” (Han, line 31). Frank, however, illustrated that individual child temperament could elicit more verbal expressions from parents, stating, “*Ako yung malambing...lagi ako nagano sa kanya. Love you, ma...Yung mga, ako lagi yung nag-i-love you sa kanya. Na ano naman siya, nasagot naman siya*” (Frank, line 28). Elli further emphasized that parental communication often focused on guidance and mentorship rather than affectionate language: “*Verbal, magaling na mentor si mommy noon nung childhood. Mas marami kaming time na mag talk*” (Elli, line 35).

Acts of service further exemplified parental care. JP described, “*Uh, tapos, nag-effort din sya to...teach us personally kahit nag-work na sya after work*” (JP, line 44), and “*...ine-express naman yung joy niya kapag meron kami achievements*” (JP, line 43), while Zel recalled, “*Pinagluluto ka nila, tapos gifts*” (Zel, line 27). Elli also noted shared household responsibilities as a form of nurturing, “*We get to do house chores together*” (Elli, line 35). Overall, participants’ experiences underscore that older generations in Filipino households often relied on indirect, practical forms of nurturing rather than physical or verbal demonstrations of affection.

Expressions of love toward their children. Millennial parents in this study exhibited a more expressive approach to demonstrating love and affection toward their children, in contrast to the more restrained practices of previous generations. Physical expressions of care were frequent and deliberate. JP described his daily routines with his children, noting, “*So, lagi ko siyang niyayakap, hinahalikan, kinukulit*” (JP, line 71), while Zel added, “*We hug each other*” (Zel, line 56). From a paternal perspective, Elli emphasized the intentional cultivation of physical intimacy, particularly with his daughters, “*All out sila dyan I give them all the time and the intimacy pagdating sa physical...pero I made them understand the value of physical Intimacy*” (Elli, line 65). He further explained, “*Pinapractice din sa bahay. I can touch them sa hands, I can hug them, like kung anong pwedeng gawin ng dad sa anak*” (Elli, line 66). Han recalled, “*Si kuya, kahit malaki na, bigla, bigla, yan yung yakap*” (Han, line 70). These accounts indicate that Millennial parents view physical affection as integral to nurturing, a notable change from the minimal physical expressions characteristic of older-generation Filipino parents.

Verbal expressions of love were similarly emphasized and intentionally structured. JP noted, “*Verbal ako, kahit sa asawa ko*” (JP, line 74), while Zel reflected, “*Most of the time, verbal. So, we say, I love you anytime...Mas verbal na kami ngayong parent to express the love, affection, because we understand that the words are powerful and it could really affect them*” (Zel, line 56). Elli described the creation of dedicated one-on-one time with each child to facilitate communication and emotional connection, “*We become intentional...one-to-one weekly schedule...Wins like the previous, the goals for the current week, the challenges in the previous week, yun yung kami mag-usap...bahala sila walang mali o walang tamang sagot, they can talk about anything*” (Elli, line 60). Faith also guided verbal nurturing practices, as Elli explained, “*Our parenting pagdating sa discipline is faith-based, so pagdating sa verbal aspect, mentoring, prayer, it’s also based in the Word of God*” (Elli, line 63). Daily affirmation was also a hallmark of their parenting, as Han noted, “*Lahat naman sila lagi nag-I love you sa isang araw*” (Han, line 71), while Frank emphasized that verbal openness with emotions was transmitted from the parental couple to their children, “*Nung naging mag-boyfriend pa lang kami nung asawa ko...pati sa mga anak namin, napapasa namin siya*” (Frank, line 56).

Acts of service further complemented verbal and physical expressions of care, and participants particularly observed that mothers more consistently performed these nurturing practices than fathers. Zel described, “*Yung service sa mga anak, na I make sure na okay sila, na nalalabhan ko yung damit nila...o kung ano yung kailangan nila ganoon kasi si mama...*” (Zel, line 36), while Han recalled similar routines, “*Acts of service kasi ako eh yung kapag yung sa...pagpa-plantsa lang na damit*” (Han, line 68). These examples show that

in Filipino families, mothers often take the lead in practical care and everyday support, which helps children feel cared for, while fathers are less involved in these tasks.

Authority and Family Dynamics

Parental authority in Filipino households reflects a complex interplay between generational expectations, family hierarchy, and, in many cases, faith-based guidance. Participants highlighted how authority was both established and experienced during their childhood, influencing how they now navigate discipline and leadership within their own families. This theme underscores the dual focus of maintaining respect and guidance while fostering healthy parent–child relationships.

Establishing respect and authority in the household. Participants described how authority was predominantly enforced by their parents, with maternal figures often serving as the primary enforcers of rules. Zel recalled, “*Ang alam ko lang parents ko sila, so kailangan ko silang sundin*” (Zel, line 32), reflecting a clear expectation of obedience. Elli elaborated on the nuanced experience of maternal authority, explaining, “*Ang mas nakikita ko nga na authoritarian ay si mommy...Pero yung authority talaga, na kay mommy*” (Elli, line 39), illustrating how authority was experienced both spatially and relationally. Discipline was frequently associated with fear, as Frank noted, “*Siyempre yung, pag pinapagalitan ka, babantaan ka na, patitigilin ka sa pag-aaral*” (Frank, line 30).

As Millennial parents, participants emphasized the importance of balancing authority with respect and relational connection. JP reflected, “*I think you have to get the respect, eh...to get the authority sa bahay*” (JP, line 76), while Han noted, “*Binabalanse mo yung para yung may respect, may takot sila, ay hindi naman sa takot, may respeto sila sa ‘yo...kailangan misan magagalit ka, hindi pwede sobrang gentle*” (Han, line 55). These insights suggest a conscious shift from fear-based discipline toward authoritative parenting that cultivates respect without compromising the parent–child relationship.

Faith-Based Parental Authority. Faith played a central role in shaping participants’ approach to authority. Zel explained, “*Kami yung may authority sa inyo kasi we are training you, and then we are disciplining you, because that’s what the call of our God pero hindi siya yung Ako kasi yung magulang mo*” (Zel, line 60), highlighting the integration of religious values in parental guidance. Elli reinforced this, stating, “*Pagdating sa authority, ganun pa rin, biblical pa rin yung pinapound namin sa kanila...honoring God requires honoring their parents, and honoring their season*” (Elli, line 68). Frank described how faith reinforced family hierarchy, “*Parang natural yata talaga siya na pag tatay ka...ako talaga yung head of the family na even yung mommy nila surrender siya sa akin*” (Frank, line 59), and added, “*Kapag sinunod mo talaga yung design ng Lord para sa family, parang everything will fall into place*” (Frank, line 60).

These reflections demonstrate that faith-based authority is perceived not only as a moral imperative but also as a framework for establishing structure and respect within the household. Participants’ narratives indicate that contemporary Millennial parents selectively retain these faith-based principles while adapting disciplinary strategies to foster respect, understanding, and emotional connection rather than fear.

Contemporary Context and Aspirations

Millennial parents navigate a unique parenting landscape shaped by modern challenges, technological advances, and evolving social norms, while remaining grounded in personal values and faith. Participants highlighted how their approach to raising children reflects both adaptation to contemporary contexts and intentional cultivation of family ideals, emphasizing relational connection, moral guidance, and legacy-building.

Technology and modern parenting challenges. Participants acknowledged that parenting in the digital age presents both opportunities and challenges. JP described his approach as “*effective parenting*” (JP, line 108), while Zel emphasized reliance on faith, stating, “*Our parenting is by Grace. By the mercy of Jesus, that we can parent our kids in the way that they should go*” (Zel, line 87). Elli similarly explained, “*...since our parenting is faith-based...It will be the proof of our parenting to them and follow nila doon sa faith na nakalakihan nila*” (Elli, line 106). Open communication was emphasized as a key strategy, with Han noting, “*Yan talaga open communication, kahit financially, kahit saang bagay, hanggat maaari, ini-involve namin yung mga bata, para alam nila yung nangyayari sa family*” (Han, line 104), and Frank describing his style as approachable yet authoritative, “*Yun, madali akong mag-adopt...gusto ko yung tingin nila sa akin, ano lang, yung cool dad lang...pero yung authority, nandun na yun lagi, and sumusunod naman talaga sila, pero yung open sila sa akin na may gusto sila i-share*” (Frank, line 71).

However, technology also posed challenges. Han reflected on early exposure to social media as a misstep “*Malaking part din yun sa social media. Parang feeling ko doon din nagkamali kami. Doon talaga kami nagkamali. Hindi ko feeling. Talaga nagkamali kami doon na maaga siya na-expose*” (Han, line 78), and Frank observed, “*Tapos siguro meron din effect yung technology, mga gadgets, kasi na-expose namin sila maaga sa gadgets, lalo si bunso*” (Frank, line 51). JP recommended moderation, “*Hindi siya maganda for a kid na masyadong bata...pagkatumanda ka na...as much as possible, less...screen time kami. I mean, lagi ko naman sinasabi yun...kung kaya na wala masyadong screen time, edi much better*” (JP, lines 93, 97). Zel noted that children increasingly self-educate, “*Kapag may gusto siyang malaman, nireresearch niya na. So there are times na hindi na niya kami tinatanong, nag reresearch na siya. So parang nauunahan na kami ng Google bago pa namin maexplain sa kanya...So right now, hindi sila pwede ma-phone*” (Zel, lines 70–71). Elli emphasized relational connection alongside technological exposure: “*They are lost, we connect to them. Hindi yung*

sasabihin ko lang na nung araw ay walang internet, dapat kaya niyo rin mabuhay ng wala pero hindi, we need to connect for them to understand, ah pwede pala yun” (Elli, line 96).

Parenting hopes and ideals for the next generation. Participants articulated aspirations for the legacy they wish to leave their children. JP expressed, “Wala ako gustong iwang legacy basta mapalaki lang namin ng maayos and ma-provide namin lahat ng means and i-respect kami hanggang sa tumunda yan lang” (JP, line 122). Zel emphasized spiritual formation, “To see them growing up and growing up with the fear of the Lord, yun talaga yung legacy na gusto namin maiwan sa kanila...they will honor Christ in all that they will do” (Zel, line 96). Elli envisioned modeling intentional leadership, “If I were a follower when I was alive, that would say it all. Since he's a follower, he's a good leader, a husband, loving husband, he is an intentional parent...my children will have the right spouse” (Elli, line 120). Han highlighted joyful guidance, “*Siguro pag ano, yung pagtanda nila na, sabihin nila na, si mommy, nung maliit kami, pag sinabi niya, hindi pwede, hindi pwede pero pag okay, pag pwede, alam mo yan, yung makakapagpaligaya sa kanila, doon naman talaga, umuoo ako eh*” (Han, line 95). Frank reflected a distinct parenting style, “*I think, mas maalala nila ko, or makikwento nila ko, yung parenting style ko, as someone...na, na, different from other parents*” (Frank, line 76). Zel emphasized aspirational parenting, “I think I'm not asking them to be like me. Actually, what we always tell them, that they will be better parents, better than us” (Zel, line 89). The participants' aspirations reveal that Millennial Filipino parents approach child-rearing with intentionality, focusing on moral, spiritual, and relational development alongside material provision.

Influence of faith and values on parenting choices. Faith and personal values strongly guided parenting choices, often prompting deliberate divergence from past experiences. JP reflected, “*Pero yun, basically, ako complete opposite lahat naman sa father ko. Siyempre, hindi ko na ginawa ngayon na ako na yung father*” (JP, line 61), and Frank echoed this contrast to maternal practices, “*Siguro yung tanong mo kung naging influence ba yung ganong style ni mommy sa akin before, oo, pero ano, pero kabaliktaran. Alam mo yun, parang ganito yung parenting style niya. So gagawin ko, hindi ko siya gagawin*” (Frank, line 34). Zel emphasized that biblical principles underpin their parenting, “*Kasi, our parenting right now is biblical, eh. Naka-base sa Bible*” (Zel, line 38), while Elli stressed alignment with faith rather than trends, “*Aligned kung ano rin yung faith namin, kasi hindi kami naka-base sa kung ano yung trending, sa parenting, kung ano yung mababasa o makikita kung saan*” (Elli, line 55).

Discussion

This study demonstrates how Millennial Filipino parents consciously negotiate intergenerational influences while adapting their parenting practices to contemporary contexts. Across all themes—intergenerational influence, discipline, affection and nurturing, authority and family dynamics, and contemporary context and aspirations—participants showed intentionality in retaining, modifying, or rejecting practices inherited from previous generations. Their narratives reflect Family Systems Theory, where roles, rules, and emotional patterns are transmitted across generations, and Social Learning Theory, highlighting observation, imitation, and modeling in behavior acquisition. Participants selectively modeled beneficial behaviors while reforming or discarding negative patterns from their own upbringing.

Consistent with prior studies, maternal care and guidance remained central. At the same time, fathers, often absent or minimally involved due to work or structural constraints, took on more active emotional and disciplinary roles. This reflects a movement toward egalitarian, present, and nurturing fatherhood, reconciling traditional family expectations with contemporary parental involvement (Alampay, 2024; Banayad et al., 2024). These findings support Alsagon et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of balanced parental roles in fostering social competence, yet diverged in illustrating the deliberate shift of fathers into emotionally and disciplinarily engaged roles, contrasting with prior generations' passive paternal involvement.

Discipline emerged as a primary area of transformation. Participants' childhoods involved corporal punishment, public reprimand, and inconsistent enforcement, often resulting in fear, humiliation, or anxiety. In contrast, Millennial parents preferred private, communicative, and mentoring-based strategies, preserving moral guidance while rejecting fear-based methods. This aligns with authoritative parenting models, which have been linked to social competence and emotional well-being (Banayad et al., 2024; Conwi et al., 2024), and converges with Alampay (2024) in demonstrating the continuity of nurturing and value-driven practices. Divergence is apparent in participants' active rejection of punitive and hierarchical methods, highlighting conscious adaptation rather than mere replication of traditional disciplinary norms (Ortiz, 2025; Ramandhani et al., 2024; Naruka & Rajput, 2024).

Expressions of affection and nurturing also reflect both continuity and innovation. While prior generations conveyed care through acts of service, subtle gestures, and indirect communication, Millennial parents deliberately incorporated verbal affirmation, physical touch, and quality time. This integration of traditional caregiving values with contemporary child development understanding fosters secure attachment, emotional regulation, and relational closeness (Banayad et al., 2024; Alampay, 2024). Participants emphasized that nurturing extends beyond material provision, creating opportunities for bonding, mentorship, and emotional support, thereby addressing perceived gaps in their own upbringing. These findings support Szymańska (2024), who noted Millennial Filipino parents' emphasis on emotionally rich parenting, and Paguirigan and Paguirigan (2022), who highlighted adaptive strategies for balancing relational engagement with digital exposure.

Authority and family hierarchy were similarly reinterpreted. Participants maintained respect and structure but tempered it with relational engagement, promoting obedience without fear or rigid control. Faith emerged as a guiding framework, providing ethical

direction for discipline and moral modeling. This selective retention of spiritual principles underscores the integration of cultural and religious values into contemporary parenting (Alampay, 2024; Ortiz, 2025), while reflecting a generational negotiation of authority consistent with Social Learning Theory.

Participants' management of contemporary challenges, particularly technology and social media, demonstrated innovation rooted in traditional parental responsibility. Strategies such as guided autonomy, moderated screen time, and open communication illustrate a proactive approach to fostering social-emotional development in children while mitigating potential negative effects of early digital exposure (Szymańska, 2024; Paguirigan & Paguirigan, 2022). This reflects the adaptive nature of Millennial parenting in response to modern societal pressures, blending inherited values with evidence-based practices for child well-being.

A notable distinction emerged between fathers and mothers in expressions of affection and authority. Fathers emphasized intentional emotional presence and verbal affirmation, often framing these as corrective responses to their own experiences of paternal absence. At the same time, mothers highlighted consistency in acts of service and emotional regulation within discipline. These gendered patterns reflect shifting parental roles among Millennial Filipino families and support Family Systems Theory's emphasis on role differentiation and adaptation, demonstrating how intergenerational influences are interpreted differently across parental roles.

Overall, the findings suggest a cultural evolution in Filipino parenting. Traditional values, including respect, familism, and moral guidance, are preserved, while disciplinary and relational practices are reformed to prioritize emotional well-being. By promoting secure attachment, empathy, and positive communication, Millennial parenting may mitigate mental health risks associated with authoritarian or neglectful upbringing, such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and relational insecurity (Ünüvar et al., 2025; Denum et al., 2023). These insights have implications for culturally informed parenting programs, emphasizing positive discipline, father involvement, emotional literacy, and adaptive approaches to technology, while retaining core Filipino values of intergenerational support and family cohesion.

The study is limited by its small sample size, regional focus, and reliance on self-reported narratives, which may introduce selection bias and limit generalizability to the broader population of Millennial Filipino parents. Future research should explore diverse socioeconomic and geographic contexts, employ longitudinal designs to assess the long-term impact of reinterpreted intergenerational practices, and examine father-specific roles, faith-guided parenting, and strategies for digital mediation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of evolving Filipino family dynamics.

Conclusions

This study highlights the reflective and intentional approach of Millennial Filipino parents in shaping their parenting practices, drawing from their own childhood experiences while adapting to contemporary societal and technological contexts. A recurring theme is the deliberate presence of fathers, particularly among participants who grew up with limited paternal involvement. The absence or minimal engagement of fathers in the older generation appears to have motivated Millennial fathers to actively participate in both the emotional and disciplinary aspects of child-rearing, fostering stronger parent-child relationships and modeling a balanced gender role in parenting.

Faith and spiritual values also play a significant role, serving as guiding principles rather than rigid religiosity. Participants intentionally integrate these values into everyday parenting decisions, discipline, and moral teaching, reflecting a desire to cultivate ethical, responsible, and spiritually grounded children. Moreover, Millennial parents prioritize private correction, mentoring, and open communication over public reprimands or corporal punishment, demonstrating a conscious effort to prevent fear, humiliation, or emotional harm that characterized some older-generation disciplinary practices.

Participants also demonstrate awareness of modern challenges, such as exposure to technology and social media, and deliberately create family practices that maintain connection, guidance, and meaningful interaction. By blending traditional caregiving values with contemporary approaches, such as verbal affirmation, quality time, and inclusive decision-making, Millennial parents aim to raise children who are confident, morally grounded, and relationally secure. This study contributes to understanding how Millennials negotiate traditional Filipino parenting norms in the context of modern challenges, highlighting how intergenerational practices are retained, reinterpreted, or rejected to meet the developmental needs of today's children.

Based on the findings, several directions for research, practice, and policy are recommended to strengthen contemporary Filipino parenting. First, positive parenting programs should be expanded and institutionalized at the community level. The narratives revealed that Millennial Filipino parents actively negotiate intergenerational influences by selectively adopting nurturing and emotionally responsive practices while rejecting fear-based or punitive discipline. To reinforce these emerging strengths, community-based initiatives should emphasize authoritative parenting, emotional regulation, and non-punitive discipline strategies. Local government units (LGUs), barangays, and schools may collaborate with non-government organizations to provide accessible parenting workshops and support groups, ensuring that reflective parenting intentions are translated into consistent, everyday practices.

Second, there is a need to encourage co-parenting and more equitable caregiving roles within Filipino families. Participants described a persistent gendered division of parenting responsibilities, with mothers carrying the majority of caregiving tasks. At the same time, fathers intentionally sought to address gaps in their own paternal experiences through greater involvement. Policymakers and workplaces can support more balanced engagement by promoting flexible work arrangements, extending paid parental leave for fathers,

and developing father-inclusive parenting initiatives. These interventions would address structural barriers to shared caregiving and support the adaptive, intentional participation of both parents as reflected in the study.

Third, promoting mental health literacy among families is essential. Although participants demonstrated emotional awareness, many lacked the vocabulary, coping strategies, and structured support needed to manage stress and family conflict effectively. Schools, barangay health centers, and religious institutions can play a crucial role in providing psychoeducation on emotional regulation, stress management, communication, and conflict resolution. Additionally, increasing access to free or low-cost mental health consultations would help parents sustain emotionally responsive caregiving, prevent the recurrence of authoritarian or emotionally distant patterns, and strengthen the reflective meaning-making processes observed in the findings.

Finally, broader policy reforms are necessary to support Filipino youth development through healthier intergenerational parenting. The study underscores that while intergenerational influences continue to shape parenting decisions, many parents navigate these dynamics without formal guidance. Government agencies may consider expanding the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) or developing complementary initiatives that include mandatory parenting education for all expectant parents. Integrating family relationship and parenting modules into the K–12 curriculum and increasing funding for community-based mental health workers would further institutionalize support systems. Together, these policy measures can foster sustainable, emotionally healthy family environments across generations.

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