

**EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT DURING  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MAMELODI  
EAST, GAUTENG PROVINCE**

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**DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I Tshegofatso Portia Motsumi (61519588), declare that this research study: **Exploring the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic in selected primary schools in Mamelodi East, Gauteng province** is my own work, and that I have acknowledged all the sources used in this study by means of clear citations and a detailed reference list.

**Signature:**A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Motsumi'.**Date:**

21.09.2023

**DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my loving husband and my pillar of strength Innocent Bhekumuzi Zulu who played a vital role throughout my studies by encouraging and supporting me to reach my goals. I also dedicate this to my daughter Amahle Olerato Zulu, whom I hope will follow in my footsteps and reach her goals no matter what circumstances she may face in life.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic in selected primary schools in Mamelodi East, Gauteng Province. The educational development of children was adversely affected by the hard lockdowns and stringent restrictions that were associated with the outbreak of the pandemic. The role that parents had to play in the education of their children needed to evolve to meet especially the demands brought by rotational learning and virtual learning. It is for this reason that this educational research study aimed to explore the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic. To realise this aim, the study was rooted on three established theories that have been at the forefront of advocacy for the involvement of parents in the education of their children. These were namely, the ecological systems theory (Harkonen 2007:3), Coleman's socio capital theory (Bhandari & Yasunobu 2009:488), as well as Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres (Epstein 1995: 702).

This study followed a qualitative approach. The researcher explored the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of the participants concerning the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of participants' responses. The findings of this entire research have shown that parental involvement is crucial not only during times of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic but also during periods of normal schooling.

Findings of this study showed that participants' understanding and belief about what parental involvement entails during a pandemic such as the COVID-19 had a bearing on the level of support that especially the parents provided to their children during the period of rotational attendance. The findings ascertained that all the participants spoke in unison of the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 which disrupted normal schooling. Views of this study's participants agreed with that revealed in past scholarly studies in that, proper involvement leads to better learner achievement. The study found that absenteeism was rampant during the period of staggered attendance because often, changes in the timetable were not communicated timeously with the parents leading to confusion and frustration. Moreover, the participants of this study felt strongly about the adoption of modern technological approaches to improve the relationship between the school and the home.

Following these findings, the researcher recommend that schools should make their expectations of what they require from parents in supporting their children clear, and ensure that prior to enrolling learners in their institutions, parents agree and commit that they will meet

those expectations. In addition to that, schools' ought to develop a policy that is specifically meant to cater for parental involvement during normal schooling and have a section that speaks to the strategies that schools can employ to ensure involvement during future disruptive pandemics. There is a need for continuous development of teachers who are already in the system with regards to what they can do to improve teacher-parent relations which could result in improved parental engagement and better learner achievement. The researcher further suggests that there be an urgent development of a common technological communication system that public schools in South Africa use to reach out to parents and that the government avails funding to ensure that even parents and schools from previously disadvantaged backgrounds have access to it. Lastly, Schools need to re-evaluate the effectiveness of large-scale parents' meetings in discussing learners' progress as opposed to regular personalised one on one sessions in which individual learners' needs are discussed to improve teacher-parent relations which will be vital during future disruptive pandemics.

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**ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
SMT	School Management Team

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# CHAPTER 1

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Scholarly research shows that low student success and engagement are partly a result of inadequate or non-existent parental participation (Jafarov 2015:36). Parents have a significant impact on their children's aspirations and accomplishments. The role parents play in the lives of their children cannot be overemphasised. There is no one way of defining parental involvement, although not limited to, it includes parents coming into schools informally to bring their child lunch or to pay for a school trip. The term “parent” includes a legal guardian such as an aunt, grandparent or a person who is lawfully accountable for the wellbeing of the child to whom the child lives with (Goodall & Montgomery 2014:399). Goodall and Montgomery (2014:400) define parental involvement as the participation of parents in the upbringing and academic needs of their children. This includes continued communication about learners’ academic progress and other additional school activities. Moreover, parent involvement can occur more formally such as when parents meet with teachers or help their children with other activities such as school projects.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how grossly under prepared schools were to deal with disruptions in their normal functioning. There have been several studies on the importance of parental involvement, however, most of the studies were conducted during the times of normal schooling, and as such offer little insight of the significance of parental involvement during times where the schools were hindered (Novianti, Puspitasari & Maria 2021). In contrast this study explored the significance of parental involvement during the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic subsequent lockdown. Regardless of the definition, parental involvement, especially during a pandemic can build and mould the future of the child and result in school improvement, that is why parental involvement should take place at home and become evident at school (Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel 2018:4).

In 2020, South Africa experienced the outbreak of a pandemic called COVID-19 which affected the education system (Hedding, Greve, Breetzke, Nel & Van Vuuren 2020:1). COVID-19 has greatly affected school functioning. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, learners were unable to attend school on calendar school days, social distancing in the classrooms and

at school was the order of the day. Learners and teaching staff needed to wear face masks and sanitize hands regularly (Goniewicz & Manesh 2021). If a teacher, or a learner tested positive for COVID-19, they needed to isolate for fourteen days before returning to school (Department of Basic Education 2020:14). This was unfortunate because it meant if a learner tested positive, they needed to stay at home until she/he fully recovered, and obviously, that learner would be left behind with schoolwork. Parental involvement ought to have heightened during COVID-19, because when a learner missed school, the parent needed to communicate with the school, and get all the activities that the learner missed in the classroom. In fact, despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, a learner could advance to the next grade with the support of parents' active participation at the school level, participation in educational activities at home, and effective communication between the school and parents. According to research, concerns related to parental involvement in many schools existed long before the COVID-19 pandemic (Munje & Mncube 2018:81).

Maluleke (2014:4) highlights an important fact that schools thrive when working well together with parents, students, and other stakeholders to forge positive relationships in which they will assist one another in achieving a shared objective, namely successful teaching, and learning. When parents are involved in their children's education, they can realize their own potential and use it to their children's and the school's advantage. There are occasions when parents may not know how to assist their kids with schoolwork, for example, in case where they are illiterate. Some researchers suggest that in cases where parents cannot help their children with certain academic tasks, they can provide emotional support for them and serve as immediate role models for the learners (Roy & Giraldo-Garcia 2018:40). The benefits of parental involvement make a more significant impact when started earlier in the educational process of a child (Boonk et al. 2018:4). Therefore, the key to a child's success at school is parental involvement as it also directly contributes to the improvement of the child's school experience.

Poor management of parental involvement during a pandemic can lead to undesired consequences. Firstly, research vastly show that parental involvement in their children's education is favourably associated to achievement. In particular, evidence demonstrates that parental involvement in their children's education has a positive impact on academic attainment (Durisic & Bunijevac 2017:138). Therefore, when parents lack interest in the academic activities of their children or when parental involvement is managed poorly, these may demotivate learners, leading to low self-esteem. Also, such learners may view education as

unimportant, and not work hard. Owing to that, schools with significant number of demotivated and unsupported learners tend to produce poor results especially at the end of the final term (Durisic & Bunijevac 2017:138). Overall, most children look up to their parents, therefore when the parents do not participate in their children's educational activities, the children most likely think education is not important.

A pandemic is an epidemic of an infectious illness that spread across a vast area, such as several continents or the entire world and affect a significant number of people. While there are various factors that determine how far a disease spreads; two of the most important are how quickly the disease spreads from one person to the next and the movement of individuals (Grennan 2019:332). Considering this, it is not difficult to conclude that pandemics have a direct influence on schooling and learner achievement. It is therefore pivotal that research also focus on assessing the role and significance of parent involvement in a learners' academic life especially during a pandemic to assist learners reach their full potential even during challenging times.

In truth, pandemics always cause disruptions and delays in many social activities. The sad reality is that schools are hit the most (Berg & Spaul 2020). It is therefore vital that countries have a plan and strategies that would be used to ensure successful and undisrupted learning and teaching. During the outbreak of the COVID-19, principals, teachers, and staff needed to make sure that schools were a safe environment for the learners and that learning and teaching occurred successfully (Maree 2022:252). Parental involvement was also crucial, parents needed to make sure that their children attended school safely, meaning, they wore face masks, were aware of the importance of social distancing and were provided with hand sanitizers (Berg & Spaul 2020). Parents needed to make sure that their child did his/her homework during the days the child was at home. It is evident that during the outbreak of a pandemic, schools and parents really need to work together for the betterment of the future of learners (Maree 2022:251). The purpose of this study was to show the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in primary schools in Mamelodi East. It was also to help schools to find approaches and meaningful ways that they can use to actively involve parents during a pandemic in Mamelodi East.

## **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

No one anticipated the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the South African schooling system (Hedding, Greve, Breetzke, Nel & Van Vuuren 2020:1). This was not only the South African problem but was also a global phenomenon. This assertion is confirmed that



the pandemic hit countries like China (where it reportedly started), United Kingdom, and the United States of America to name a few (United Nations 2020: 2). As a result of outbreak of COVID-19, schools in South Africa were closed for prolonged periods this is in line with what Berg and Spaul (2020) argued regarding the disruptions caused by pandemics in schools. and they were reopened through a staggered approach. Due to school staff and learners frequently interacting closely and frequently using the same area, resources, and equipment during school hours, the new staggered approach was necessary. This revised staggered approach was intended to reduce an increased risk of spreading the virus like it did during the Spanish flu (United States 2017:3). Due to the risks, to avoid spreading of the disease during a pandemic, schools were forced to come up with models that would promote social distancing and minimize the risks of an uncontrollable transmission (Goniewicz & Manesh 2021).

In some primary schools in Mamelodi East, learners were grouped into three groups (group A, B & C) and each group attended school only for two days per cycle. COVID-19 spread faster in large groups; therefore, the approach of grouping learners was intended, aimed at ensuring that classrooms accommodated smaller and manageable groups that could social distance and thereby, reduce risks of spreading COVID-19. This meant, instead of learners attending school for five days in a week, they only attended school for two days and missed three days. The three days were spent at home often with only their parents as their source of academic assistance. In other instances, learners only attended once in a week resulting in a much greater loss of teaching and learning time.

As Durisic and Bunijevac (2017:138) said, parental involvement in the education of their children is directly and positively associated with higher accomplishment. This is more beneficial to learners when the involvement occurs during the learner's basic education phase. Despite the known benefits, there exist a plethora of literature showing that in South African public schools, parental involvement is inadequate (Manilal 2014:3; Munje & Mncube 2018:81; Okeke 2014:1). The attitude of parents towards the school activities of their children rarely changes and it is to be expected that even during major events such as a pandemic, the approach remains the same. For example, this was demonstrated in the school where I am employed during the outbreak of the COVID-19, when parents were called for a general parent meeting, only a handful attended. Also, even in cases when a teacher called a parent to discuss the academic performance of their children, most parents seldom came. Most learners came to school with undone or unfinished homework while some learners would come to school without a pen or a pencil, however, a handful received parental assistance. Overall, majority of

parents do not assist their children with homework, and it is apparent that they do not discuss the value of education with their children.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **1.3.1 Main research question:**

- How significant was parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in selected primary schools in Mamelodi East, Gauteng Province?

#### **1.3.2 Sub-questions:**

- What were the attitudes of parents towards the education of their children in Mamelodi East during COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during hard lock down when school attendance was staggered?
- What role did parents play during the staggered school attendance to assist schools?
- What were challenges of parental involvement during the staggered period of school attendance during COVID-19 in selected schools in Mamelodi East?
- What strategies can primary schools in Mamelodi East implement to enhance parental involvement in future disruptive pandemics?

#### **1.3.3 Research aim**

- To explore the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in selected schools in Mamelodi East, Gauteng Province.

#### **1.3.4 Research objectives**

- To determine the attitudes of parents towards education of their children in Mamelodi East during COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during hard lock down when school attendance was staggered.
- To investigate the involvement of parents during COVID-19 pandemic, especially during the staggered school attendance.
- To explore the challenges of parental involvement during the staggered period of school attendance during COVID-19 pandemic in selected schools in Mamelodi East.
- To investigate strategies that primary schools in Mamelodi East could implement to enhance parental involvement in future disruptive pandemics.

#### **1.4 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

The role played by parents in being involved in the education of their children has been shown by research to be of crucial significance (Maluleke 2014:4). After consulting several sources, I was able to find a theoretical perspective into what might be the reason of poor management of parents being involved at schools during COVID-19 pandemic. Below follows a brief review of some of the sources I consulted. Moreover, there is also a brief discussion of what effective parental involvement during a pandemic entail, theories that support its use, problems experienced with parent involvement during a pandemic, and the educational benefits linked to effective participation of parents has on the education of the child.

According to Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen, and Brand-Gruwel (2018:4), parental involvement encompasses a wide range of activities, making it impossible to provide a single mainstream definition. The difficulties in defining parental involvement are similar to the difficulties in defining other abstract philosophical and ideological educational entities such as curriculum and education itself. However, the complexities associated with establishing a clear definition of parent involvement should not demotivate one from trying to understand what it is. In fact, it should motivate us to explore all the dimensions of the range of definitions that other scholars have proposed.

I agree with Boonk et al. (2018:4), because there is no list of precise number of activities, and we cannot label them as being responsibilities of parents. Parents have countless responsibilities towards their children including ensuring that their children are well cared for at home as well as ensuring that they are well emotionally, physically, and psychologically. During the outbreak of COVID-19, parents were responsible for ensuring that their children attended school, wearing school uniforms and face masks, that they ate before going to school, that their children's books were well looked after, and that they did their schoolwork correctly. The activities and responsibilities mentioned above are just few of many that parents need to do to ensure that their children positively succeed at school, especially during a pandemic. Durisic and Bunijevac (2017:140) also support the findings that parental involvement is very important in academic performance of children.

Jafarov (2015:36), defines parental involvement as the active and willing participation of parents in a wide range of school-based and home-based activities, ranging from supporting and sustaining the school ethos to overseeing children's homework at home. When a parent is not forced to participate in their child's life, but rather volunteers or do it whole heartedly, normally, the results are positive. When a parent makes a child's education top priority, helps

the child at home with homework, and visit the school regularly to monitor the progress of the child, it boosts the attitude of the learner. In addition to that, such parental care and involvement benefited schools since learning and teaching during the outbreak of a pandemic like COVID-19 bring challenges.

On the other hand, Sapungan (2014:43) mentions that parental involvement does not only improve the child's morale, attitude, and academic performance, but it also improves and promotes better behaviour and social adjustment. This could be explained by the fact that parental involvement helps children see that he/she is valued at home. Other benefits of parental involvement are that it forges a close relationship between children and parents, leading to the child being free to express himself/herself because the parents would have created a safe environment at home (Maluleke 2014:4). In fact, even in cases where such children are bullied at school, or experience certain problems, he/she become free to tell their parents. As a result of that, parents that are hands-on on the academic activities and general lives of children normally notify teachers and most challenges get solved timeously (Boonk et al. 2018:4). The learner-parent-teacher positive interaction create school environment that is safe and conducive for learning, thereby allowing children to reach their full potential (Durisic & Bunijevac 2017:140)

Sapungan (2014:43) further elaborates that parental participation includes the fundamental responsibility of parents at home as well as the fundamental obligation of schools to connect with parents. Parents' active involvement at school, involvement in learning activities at home, and decisions made by parents at parents' forums all have an impact on their children's formal education. Therefore, there should always be regular and respectful contact between schools and the parents, and parents should attend and partake in parent meetings where important decisions that affect learners are taken. There are many challenges that parents face in trying to be actively involved in the formal learning of their children. According to Nunez, Suarez, Rosario, Vallejo, Valle, and Epstein (2015:381), the nature of parental participation, as well as the degree of control and support, may vary based on children's educational abilities and developmental phases. Broadus (2017:8) further state that many low-earning parents are willing to be more involved with schools, but they are unable to do so due to matters involving their jobs, child-care responsibilities, transport problems, low educational levels, low socioeconomic status, and language problems.

Looking at all these challenges associated with parent involvement, one can easily fail to see its fruitful benefits on the formal education of children. Maluleke (2014:4) concluded that there

is undisputable evidence that children tend to successfully make it throughout life when schools and parents work well together to support their children's learning. Moreover, other benefits for learners include decreased absence, improved attitudes, improved conduct, and a low rate in dropping out. Maluleke (2014:4) further emphasize that these benefits occur irrespective of the socioeconomic groupings to which the family belongs.

Parental involvement is very crucial, particularly during a pandemic. Chu, Mao, Qiu, and Rutherford (2016:3) show that "pandemics are, for the most part, disease epidemics that spread due to human-to-human transmission". In the past, the world experienced many outbreaks and pandemics including the Spanish flu, AIDS, Cholera and Ebola. In particular, the Spanish flu, Cholera and Ebola caused a huge stress and strain on educational systems such that schools had to be closed for a certain period to deal with them. As mentioned in the introduction, a pandemic affects the whole world, therefore the education system all over the world was negatively affected.

We recently faced another pandemic, Coronavirus disease, which is also known as COVID-19. The disease is infectious, and it was first reported in Wuhan, China, in 2019. It was later classified "COVID-19" by the World Health Organization (WHO), which stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019. The Coronavirus epidemic is still considered one of the worst global pandemics in decades (Onyema, Obafemi, Sen, & Sharma 2020:108). It affected schools, learners, and parents all around the world. According to Mekonnen and Muluye (2020:161), the COVID-19 crisis added to social disparity in schools. For example, learners who had access to digital infrastructure engaged in online learning, while those without access to digital facilities could not partake in online learning. This has had a very negative impact on learners that attend school in rural areas (Mekonnen & Muluye 2020:161). It has meant that they were being left behind by their peers from more affluent communities. In terms of technology and instructional resources, there is a significant difference between private and public schools. Private schools are more effective and efficient than public schools in most countries (Mekonnen & Muluye 2020:161).

I agree with Mekonnen and Muluye (2020:161), that it is very difficult for teaching and learning to occur in rural areas or semi-rural areas during a pandemic, worse even at government schools. Mamelodi East is an area that is semi-rural. In most areas including Mamelodi East during the Corona Virus pandemic, teachers were not able to communicate with the learners, learners stayed at home for months doing nothing, because there are no technological resources for communication. By contrast, the same cannot be said for private schools as teachers and

learners were able to communicate, using social media tools and video calls (Suleiman 2021). Teachers were able to teach and assign school work to learners. Learners were able to complete their schoolwork while at home and were able to submit the work for grading.

Onyema et al. (2020:110) has highlighted that “school closure refers to the closure of schools due to a pandemic, emergencies, labour strikes, disasters, or purposeful measures to reposition a school or reduce crime on a specific campus or location”. Even while school closures can be justified in some cases, the Coronavirus school closures harmed numerous educational systems throughout the world. Over 1.3 billion learners did not have regular school attendance as of March 23, 2020, because of school closures in reaction to COVID-19 (Onyema et al. 2020:111). This meant that learners had to stay at home, not knowing what would happen. In this case parents had to step in and educate their children.

To sum up, the preliminary literature I consulted for my research provided me with a theoretical lens through which to view the problem of poor management of parent involvement at schools especially during COVID-19. Moreover, they enabled me to comprehend that parental involvement is significant during COVID-19 pandemic. Schools also have a vital role to play in encouraging parents to get more active in their children's formal education during a pandemic like COVID-19, and teachers must be sensitive to the parents' various contexts to enable them to become more involved.

## **1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Parental involvement can be described as ranging from a basic level in which parents cooperate with schools, to a moderate level in which they participate in the activities taking place in schools, to a high level in which they are partners in formal schooling of their children. For our understanding of parent involvement to improve and likewise its practice in education, it is crucial that we examine some of the educational theories that advocate for its use. One such theory is the Ecological systems theory, which assumes that parental involvement stems from the belief that school and home are inseparably linked and impact each other (Martinez 2015:8). This conveys the idea that schools are a component of society. They are inseparably linked to the environment in which they exist, this according to Martinez (2015:8) makes schools an open system that relies heavily on interactions with environmental components to survive. This theory's essentiality cannot be underestimated, it forms the backbone to the problems associated with poor parent involvement at my school, as will be discussed later in the study.

The ecological theory's basic implication is that tackling educational challenges such as poor discipline can only be successful if the school, home, and community all work together to solve problems. This theory focuses on systems outside of the child, and does not fully demonstrate the achievement levels of the child when all systems work efficiently, it is for this reason that this study also incorporated ideas from Coleman's social capital theory which places the child at the centre of all interactions and argues that his or her success depends vastly on the social resources made available to them.

Another theory is the Social Capital theory which was first advocated for by Coleman in 1988. He referred to all the social resources in their various forms which are available to children to aid them in their educational growth as social capital. He also distinguished between the social capital provided by the home and the social capital provided by school. Schools provide one type of inputs, which are described as opportunities, demands, and incentives, whereas the social environment of the home provides the second category of inputs, which include attitudes, effort, and self-concept (Durisic & Bunijevac 2017:138).

Again here, one sees the centrality and interrelation between the school, home, and community. As Martinez (2015:1) puts it, poor families, living in poor areas suffer from a double disadvantage, first their own poverty and second the poverty of their neighbourhood. This community effect is made evident by the poor performance of children from such families in science, maths and reading. This is also especially true in the Mamelodi East area.

This interrelation between the school and the home, though advocated for by the first two theories is only fully explored by Joyce Epstein in her theory of overlapping spheres which in many ways provided an essential framework towards realising the goals of this inquiry. While the ecological system's theory and social capital theories are far reaching and explore factors way beyond the school, parent and child, the theory of overlapping spheres strives to explore in depth the overlapping interactions between the school and home.

Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres advocates strongly for parent involvement. It emphasizes that, while certain family and school practices are undertaken independently, others reflect shared obligations of parents and teachers (Epstein, 1995: 702). Furthermore, the theory emphasizes that when the involvement between schools and parents is well managed, it develops school-like families and family-like schools, whereas communities create family-like conditions for the nurturing of learners.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study will benefit parents by making them aware of the significance of parental involvement during a pandemic like COVID-19. This study will also benefit the schools (school management team and teachers) by recommending strategies they can use to involve parents actively in their children's education. Jafarov (2015:40) found that parents are likely to respond better to schools' demands that are stated clearly and they have a good understanding of what is expected from them. It will help teachers and parents build a positive relationship that will benefit the learners, given the positive relationship that would have been built between teachers and parents. Boonk et al. (2018) identifies 'three parental participation indicators that show promise in terms of their relationships with academic achievement'. Effective communication between parents and schools is one of the variables. This study will therefore explore how good communication between parents and schools can be improved to encourage better achievement from learners during a pandemic like COVID-19 in primary schools in Mamelodi East.

One cannot say for certain when the next pandemic will hit. The theories and findings of this study will prove vital for schools and parents to be better prepared to help learners continue learning even when they cannot physically be at school due to restrictions imposed by a pandemic. It will help school, teachers, parents, and learners understand that experiencing a pandemic does not mean children cannot study. This study will highlight the challenges and experiences of different schools, teachers, learners, and parents. It will help develop better methods where parents can successfully participate in their learners' education. COVID-19 has shown that parents spend lot of time with their children at home during a pandemic, therefore this study will assist parents on how to assist teachers with schoolwork.

## **1.7 METHODOLOGICAL ACCOUNT**

### **1.7.1 Research paradigm**

Studies have shown that researchers cannot be separated from the social reality of the research they are conducting (Al-Saadi 2014:1). Because of this, one researcher's interpretation of a social phenomenon may differ from that of others but that may not mean either is erroneous. According to Aspers and Corte (2019:142), qualitative research is a set of interpretative practices used by the researcher to emphasize the value and meaning of social experiences rather than the measurements and analysis of casual relationships between variables used by positivism to generate quantitative data. This research adopted the use of the interpretive methodology as I studied the attitudes that different education stakeholders have on the



significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic in selected township schools in Mamelodi East. An interpretivist approach enabled me not to detach the socio-cultural backgrounds of the participants in question whilst conducting the study.

### **1.7.2 Research approach**

This research study followed a qualitative research approach. This approach was applied to acquire a better grasp of the underlying reasons, viewpoints, and motivations. The research approach provided insights into the problem and aided in the development of research ideas (Norman & Yvonna 2005). I applied this research approach because it involved interviewing teachers about parental involvement. The approach also helped in comprehending a social situation from the views of the participants. Flexible, changing strategies; design emerged as data was gathered (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:12).

The major feature of qualitative research is that it is best suited for small samples, while its outcomes are not measurable and calculable. Its primary advantage, which also serves as its primary distinction from quantitative research, is that it provides a comprehensive description and analysis of a research issue without limiting the scope of the investigation or the nature of participant replies (Bhasin 2020). The rationale for employing a qualitative technique in this study was to investigate and describe participants' perspectives on the issue of parental involvement in schools during COVID-19. To capture teachers' perspectives on parental participation and how it influenced learner achievement and school improvement, a qualitative approach was appropriate.

### **1.7.3 Research design**

According to Boru (2018), research design is the process of gathering, analysing, and interpreting data in research studies. Akhtar (2016:68) further describes research design as arrangements of settings for gathering and analysing data in a way that tries to associate relevance to the research, for the purpose of this study, a case study research design was utilised with the aim of exploring and explaining the phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2014). A case study allowed me as the researcher to collect data that entails lot of detail and that has greater depth. According to Krusenvik (2014) a case study research design is said to be an intensive study to get as complete a picture as possible of a situation or event. Therefore, a case study helped me explain and understand different events that have a direct impact on my study.

### **1.7.4 Data collection instruments**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected principals, teachers, and parents. According to Adams (2015:492) "semi structured interviews employ a blend of closed- and

open-ended questions, frequently accompanied by follow-up why or how questions”. The purpose of interviewing principals, teachers, and parents was to establish the extent to which parents are involved in their children’s education during COVID-19. Interviewees were asked open-ended questions to access their perspectives. To explore participants’ thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic, I chose to use semi-structured interviews as one of my data collection tools because it allowed me to collect qualitative, open-ended data. I also used the observation method; I chose this method because it helped me observe behaviour during interviews to establish how the participants viewed the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19.

### **1.7.5 Sampling**

A purposeful sampling method was used. According to Suri (2011:63) purposeful sampling is a sampling approach used by qualitative researchers to find individuals who can provide in-depth and extensive information on the topic under study. I selected participants who were able to enrich the study and who had knowledge about the subject. I did not allow everyone to take part, only the school principals, teachers, parents, and learners took part. Three schools in Mamelodi East were selected where the research was based.

I selected one principal in each school, one teacher in each school, two parents and two learners in each school. I conducted semi-structured interviews, observations to understand the reasons behind poor parental involvement and how we can all come up with solutions. Using this sampling, I hoped to get clear and helpful strategies that can benefit all schools.

### **1.7.6 Data analysis**

Ntsoane (2017:47) describes data analysis as techniques, approaches, and procedures by which a researcher extracts some sort of explanation, understanding, or interpretation from qualitative data collected about the people or situations under investigation. Therefore, to take out form of explanation, understanding and interpretation, I used thematic data analysis to analyse data. Thematic analysis is a method for detecting, organizing, and providing insight into meaning patterns across a database and is an appropriate method for understanding experiences, thoughts, or behaviours (Kiger & Varpio 2020:2). I used it by identifying patterns of themes in the interview data. I respected and represented the interviews honestly as possible. I firstly familiarised myself with the data collected, then assigned codes to the data which is a brief description of what is being said in the interview. To analyse my data, I transcribed all the answers from the interviews on paper in-order to compare the answers and find patterns. I did

this remembering what was said by Mortensen (2020) that “a code is a description not an interpretation. I then sorted the codes into themes and defined those themes.

## **1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THIS STUDY**

A study's trustworthiness relates to the level of confidence in the data, analysis, and methods employed to ensure its quality (Connelly 2016).

### **1.8.1 Credibility**

The part of the truth-value technique associated with credibility is to ensure that the study tests what is intended. Prolonged involvement, constant observation, and member checks are all strategies for confirming credibility (Korstjens & Moser 2017:121). I invested enough time to become acquainted with the setting and the environment, to build trust and get to know the participants to get rich data. I observed participants during interviews to find characteristics and elements that were most related to the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic and engaged with the participants. I also applied the triangulation method whereby I used multiple data sources over time (collecting data at various periods of the day) and from various persons.

### **1.8.2 Dependability and Confirmability**

According to Korstjens and Moser (2017:122) dependability contains the aspect of consistency while confirmability contains the aspect of neutrality. Therefore, I ensured consistency and neutrality by avoiding basing the interpretations on my preferences and viewpoints but grounded it in the data collected. I remained neutral, by not influencing or adding on the participants responses. I also wrote down all the observations and analysed the responses of the participants. I applied the strategy known as the audit trail (Korstjens & Moser 2017:122). I clearly detailed the research steps performed from the start of the research project to the development and reporting of the findings, and I retained research records and notes throughout the study.

### **1.8.3 Transferability**

Transferability involves the aspect of applicability (Korstjens & Moser 2017:122). I discussed not only the participants' behaviour and experiences, but also their context, so that the findings can be transferred to other similar contexts. I ensured that this study is able to help other people or schools that experience poor parental involvement during a pandemic and help parents know the significance of parental involvement during a pandemic. As a result, I employed purposeful sampling to maximize specific data in relation to the context in which it was obtained.

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Dooly, Moore, and Vallejo (2017:351) define ethics as pertaining to do good and avoiding harm. The researchers further state that it is critical for a researcher to consider any potentially detrimental consequences a study may have on any participant. The researchers also highlight that the researcher should also consider how they will ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

Therefore, before the research commenced as the researcher, I requested ethical clearance from the University of South Africa. Then, a permission from the Department of Basic Education was requested to conduct the study. Further, individual request was done for selected participants to give consent of their involvement in the study. All the participants were well informed about the study, and everyone was let known of the aims and objectives. I did not oppress nor forced anyone to take part, they freely decided for themselves if they wanted to participate, and all the participants were well informed that if they did not feel comfortable, they could withdraw anytime. I respected them and their rights. I did not deceive any participants or tricked them to answer in a specific way, and I allowed them to ask me questions where they did not understand. I accommodated the participants by explaining difficult terms in their language.

The responsibility was mine as the researcher to ensure that the ethical standards were adhered to. I did not use the participants' real names to protect their identity, they always remained anonymous. I used alphabets to identify them, for example, the principals are referred to as principal A, B, C; teachers as: teacher A, B, C, D; learners as A, B, C, D, E, F; and parents as A, B, C, D, E, F. I did not publish my notes or interviews for people to watch or see, but all the recordings and notes are kept confidential. During interviews, I did not allow spectators, the rooms were always away from people. I assured the participants that their details would not be published.

## **1.10 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

**1. 10.1 COVID-19-** Coronavirus disease is an infectious disease that first appeared in 2019 in Wuhan, China. It was later classified "COVID-19" by the World Health Organization (WHO), which stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019. The Coronavirus epidemic is still considered one of the worst global pandemics in decades (Onyema et al. 2020:108). Coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) is a highly contagious and infectious virus-related infection that causes severe respiratory symptoms. For the virus to be named 'coronavirus' it is because the virus represents crown-like spikes on the outside (Shereen, Khan, Kazmi, Bashir & Siddique 2020:92). The

coronavirus disease 2019 was labelled the new world health crisis threatening the public. Patients of COVID-19 show various symptoms, symptoms like the influenza virus. Those symptoms include fever, tiredness, coughing, sore throat, difficulty breathing, tiredness, loss of appetite, blocked nose, and sore throat (Hafeez, Ahmad, Siddqui, Ahmad & Mishra 2020:116). Recommended measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 include wearing of a face mask, regularly washing of hands with soap, avoiding touching of face, maintaining one metre distance and self-isolation of fourteen days for people who are infected (Hafeez et al 2020:117).

**1.10.2 Pandemic-** An infectious illness epidemic that spreads throughout a vast territory, such as multiple continents or globally, impacting a huge number of people. Many elements determine how far a disease spreads; two of the most important are how quickly the disease spreads from one person to the next and the movement of individuals (Grennan 2019:332).

**1.10.3 Parental involvement-** is defined by Goodall and Montgomery (2014:400) as parents' participation in their children's upbringing and education. This includes parents coming into schools informally to bring their child lunch or to pay for a school trip. The term “parent” includes a legal guardian such as an aunt, grandparent or a person who is lawfully accountable for the child’s wellbeing to whom the child lives with (Goodall & Montgomery 2014: 399). It also involves meaningful communication concerning learners’ academic learning and other school activities. Moreover, parent involvement can occur more formally such as when parents meet with teachers or take part in their children’s education through classroom participation. Parental involvement is also a role played by parents at home, when helping their children with school related activities, and merely encouraging their children to study hard because that becomes evident at school (Boonk et al 2018:4).

**1.10.4 Learner-** a person, especially a child at school, who is learning a subject or a skill (Stevenson 2015). This includes learning basic concepts about a subject to learning in detail about a subject or a skill. A learner can learn the theory of a subject and practice that skill at the outside world (Stevenson 2015). From Oxford English dictionary (2021) a learner is a human who is discovering and learning about something and how to do it. A learner acquires knowledge through study, experience or being taught (Stevenson 2015). Children officially become learners in Grade R, they move from unstructured learning to structured learning where they are taught how to write their names, count numbers, sit quietly and have formal lessons (Palmer 2016).

**1.10.5 School Management Team (SMT)**- the principal, deputy principal, and departmental heads comprise the school management team. They are responsible for the day-to-day management of the school (Ntsoane 2017:2). The responsibilities include guiding and managing the work of other teachers and staff, they need to ensure that teaching and learning successfully takes place without any disturbances (Ntsoane 2017:2). The SMT is also responsible for developing and empowering other teachers and other staff, while playing a leading role in formulation and implementation of policies of the school and conducting staff meetings with teachers and other staff (Ntsoane 2017:2).

**1.10.6 Staggered approach** – a strategy that involves progressing or taking steps gradually, with intervals in between (Stevenson 2015).

## **1.11 PROPOSED CHAPTERS**

### Chapter one

Chapter one contains the introduction, background to the study, the delimitation of the study, the research problems, the aims of the study, and brief explanation of research methodology. The chapter further explains the importance of the research study, seeking to understand the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 outbreak in selected primary schools in Mamelodi East, as well as strategies that schools could initiate to ensure effective involvement during future pandemics. Lastly, the chapter shows how this research aims to determine the attitudes of parents towards the education of their children in Mamelodi East.

### Chapter two

Chapter two provides the theoretical background to the study. In this chapter, a literature review is given on the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 in primary schools. This chapter uses evidence-based research to discuss what effective parental involvement during a pandemic entails. Scholarly studies that discuss the impact pandemics have had on schooling in the past are consulted and analysed in this chapter. In addition to all this, theories that discuss how learner achievement improves when all the stake holders in education; namely teachers, school management team and parents work together are consulted and reviewed in this chapter. Factors outside of the school environment which have an influence on the attitudes and the extent of parental involvement are discussed, as well as what can be done to mitigate and ensure that learners reach their full potential despite their circumstances.

### Chapter three

Chapter three discusses and explains the research design and the methodological approach in conducting this study. A discussion of the theoretical framework that has been adopted in the study is done in this chapter as well as the rationale behind its use. Chapter three also discusses the methods undertaken to ensure trustworthiness and validity of the study as well as possible limitations of the study. Furthermore, attention is paid to purposeful sampling, data gathering techniques and the manner in which data is analysed and interpreted.

#### Chapter four

Chapter four focuses on data presentation, analysis, and discussion of the results. This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the results. The transcripts of interviews and other data collected is provided in this chapter.

#### Chapter five

Chapter five is the concluding chapter. This chapter discusses the summary of the research results, this is followed by carefully drawn conclusions to determine whether the research objectives have been attained. The benefits of the research study as well as recommendations for future research are made in the chapter.

### **1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided an introduction, background to the study, study limitations, study objectives, and a brief description of research methodology. The chapter goes on to explain the significance of the research study, which sought to understand the importance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 outbreak in selected primary schools in Mamelodi East, as well as strategies that schools could implement to ensure effective involvement during future pandemics. The next chapter presents a literature review and theoretical frameworks that underpin the study.

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## CHAPTER 2

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### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews several studies which have been carried out to have a theoretical understanding of the significance of parental involvement in the educational development of a child. Such involvement or the lack thereof was proven to be critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. A literature review was carried out to examine historical background to parental involvement, reflections on COVID -19 and its ramifications on the education system. In addition to that, scholarly studies which have evaluated the responses of various countries to the COVID-19 pandemic with regards to schooling are analysed and brought under scrutiny from a South African perspective in this review. This chapter also discusses the importance of parental involvement during COVID-19 and its benefits, roles of teachers and the school management team, apparent barriers to parental involvement during COVID-19 and possible measures in encouraging parental involvement during COVID-19. Later, this chapter discusses several theories that have shown the relationship that exists between learner achievement, and the role played by all stake holders in a child's education. Finally, studies which have shown the extent to which external influences support or hinder the degree to which a parent or guardian is involved in the education of a child especially during crisis times such as the COVID-19 pandemic are analysed and used to form the basis of this research in the South African context.

#### **2.2 CONCEPTUALISING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

According to research, parental involvement is critical in the life of a child. At school, it helps improve learners' performance and reduce the number of times the learner misses school (Castro & Gaviria 2015:33; Garcia & Thornton 2014:1; Magwa & Mugari 2017:74. According to South African School Act (1996), a parent includes a person that gave birth to that child or taking care of that child legally or any other individual standing in loco parentis (stand-in a place of a parent that has entrusted the custody of their child wellbeing with another person).

According to Goodall and Montgomery (2014:400), parental involvement is the participation of parents in their children's education and development. This includes significant communication about learners' academic progress and other additional school activities.



(Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel 2018:4). No matter the definition, parental involvement, especially during a pandemic can build and mould the future of the child and result in school improvement. A parent's participation in a learner's education at home is self-evident in the learner's behaviour at school.

It is emphasized by Maluleka (2014: 4) that schools thrive when they collaborate well with parents, learners, and other stakeholders to develop strong ties in which they can help one another reach a similar goal, namely good teaching and learning. When parents participate in their children's education, they can discover their own potential and use it to benefit their children and the school. Kurtulmus (2016:1149) views parental involvement as the parent's engagement in the child's educational growth in both the sphere of the home and school. As a result of this, it is imperative that the parent ensures that the child is at school, on time, in appropriate apparel and has all the materials needed for learning. At home parents should ensure that the child completes the tasks and projects given to them at school.

According to Ireland (2017) it is not easy for parents to be fully involved if the school does not have appropriate strategies to involve them in the education of their children. However, that does not shift the burden of responsibility that each parent has towards the education of his/her child. Ireland (2017) maintains that despite the challenges posed by a pandemic such as COVID-19, the honours still rest with parents to go above and beyond what they would normally do to guarantee that their children's education is prioritized. Schools have a code of conduct; it is the responsibility of both the parent and the school to ensure that the child's always abide by it.

For this study, parental involvement is defined as the engagement and contribution of parents consistently in a child's schooling, keeping communication lines with the school open concerning the child's formal learning and other school extra mural activities (Ntekane 2018:2). A child's academic achievement is closely tied to his or her parents' perspective of education and the degree to which they value it. Such involvement and support go beyond helping the child at school but also giving them confidence to confront the outside world. A study by Kwatubana and Makhalemele (2015: 317) found that parental involvement is very crucial especially during the child's early phases of growth. They argued that children whose parents were interested in their education from the onset displayed a higher level of academic aspirations compared to their peers. In addition to this, they also hold the view that such

involvement equipped the child with the psychological tools required to flourish in the world outside the school.

### **2.3 REFLECTIONS ON COVID -19 AND ITS RAMIFICATIONS ON THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Coronavirus disease is an infectious disease that first surfaced in Wuhan, China, in 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) eventually labelled it "COVID-19" which stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019. The Coronavirus epidemic is still considered one of the worst global pandemics in decades (Onyema et al. 2020:108). Coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) is an extremely contagious and infectious virus-related infection that causes respiratory symptoms that are severe. Patients of COVID-19 showed various symptoms, like those of the influenza virus. Those symptoms included fever, tiredness, coughing, sore throat, difficulty breathing, tiredness, loss of appetite, blocked nose, and sore throat (Hafeez, Ahmad, Siddqui, Ahmad & Mishra 2020:116). The recommended measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 included wearing of a face mask, regularly washing of hands with soap, avoiding touching of your face, maintaining one metre distance from people and self-isolation of fourteen days for people who were infected (Hafeez et al. 2020:117). Clearly, these measures as well as other restrictions imposed by the authorities affected the education system globally and South Africa included.

COVID-19 was declared a pandemic because it was an infectious disease epidemic that spread throughout a significant portion of the world, impacting a huge number of people. Many elements determine how far a disease spreads; two of the most important are how quickly the disease spreads from one person to the next and the movement of individuals. (Grennan 2019:332). According to research done by Vasireddy, Vanaparthi, Mohan, Malayala and Atluri (2021:317) COVID-19 has multiple variants. This is because viruses regularly change through mutation and in many cases this mutation results in new strands of the virus (United Nations 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly hindered the school's ability to carry out its functions.

In South Africa, all the schools were closed during the hard lockdowns which were imposed in order to control the spread of the virus and protect the civilians. Valuable teaching-learning time was lost, and the curriculum had to be trimmed to compensate for the lost time. Most public schools could not swiftly switch to e-learning due to the lack of resources and that meant

it again became the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children continued learning from home (Mhlanga & Moloji 2020:7). For many parents this was an impossible task because studies have shown that parental participation has been a difficult in many schools even prior to the pandemic (Munje & Mncube 2018:81). Research conducted by Almaiah, Al-Khasawneh and Althunibat (2020:5261) found that when schooling resumed after June 2020 in Saudi Arabia, of which it was a case in South Africa, there was a clear gap between children who had been supported at home to continue learning and those who had not been.

Wills, Kotze and Kika-Mistry (2020) emphasize that when learners returned to school it took a long time for things to return to normal. Parker, Morris and Hofmeyr (2020:1) shows that learners in South Africa had to return partially to school, for instance Grades 7 and 12 were the first grades to return to school after lockdown. Teachers had to use catch up methods to help learners with the curriculum, and in some subjects the curriculum was revised, meaning some topics were omitted or trimmed to allow for coverage (Hoadley 2020:10). It is acknowledged by Morris et al. (2020:9) that since learners spent more than two months at home, most did not engage in any form of formal education, therefore when formal schooling resumed, many learners especially in primary schools had forgotten to even read simple sentences. At the onset of school resumption, Xiang, Zhang and Kuwahara (2020) articulate that learner attendance was very poor, learners struggled to adjust to the new normal as a result poor academic performance was evident.

#### **2.4 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE AND HOW PARENTS RESPONDED TO COVID-19 IN SUPPORTING THEIR CHILDREN**

The whole world was affected by COVID-19 (Onyema et al. 2020:108). According to UNICEF (2021), in March 2020 schools were closed and more than 168 million children globally were affected. The report further states that from March 2020 to February 2021, fourteen countries kept schools closed. The countries that kept schools closed for the longest time include Panama, Bangladesh, and Philippines (Jain & Singh 2020). Panama is a country of central America. It experienced great devastation during COVID-19, it had more COVID-19 cases than other countries in Central America (Jain & Singh 2020). On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, Panama went under lockdown where schools and other establishments had to close except pharmacies and supermarkets, schools closed for 18 months (Loaiza, Rao, Eskildsen, Ortega-Barria, Miller & Rolando 2020). As the country went under lockdown, parents had to play their parts in educating their children.

Closure of schools caused learners to be left behind academically, this caused an educational crisis as learners without technological resources could not study from home. According to the parental involvement policy of Panama public schools report (2021), few parents played their part in being involved during the closure of schools due to the surge of COVID-19 cases (Jaramillo 2020:167). This highlights that parental involvement during COVID-19 was a problem in Panama, as was the case in South Africa as well.

Bangladesh is a country located in the south of Asia, and the Philippines is an island country located in the south-east of Asia (Al-Zaman 2020:1357). The two countries were also greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools in these countries were closed from mid-March 2020 to September 12, 2021 (Jain & Singh 2020). This meant valuable teaching time was lost. During the difficult times, distance learning was highly recommended (Islam, Talukdar, Siddiqui & Islam 2020), but a study by UNICEF (2020) highlights that many children could not be reached by the teachers for online learning, the study shows that only one out of three children were reached through distance learning, and only a quarter could actively participate academically. These numbers suggest that during school closure caused by COVID-19 there was little evidence of parental involvement in Bangladesh and the Philippines. Similarly, most learners from disadvantaged areas in South Africa could not be reached for online classes, as a result they fell behind their peers from more affluent communities.

## **2.5 PARENTS ACCESS TO DIGITAL TOOLS DURING COVID-19**

According to Blau and Hameiri (2017:1231), for the process of involving parents in the education of their children to succeed, there is a need for technology to play a vital role. Owing to that, it is important for parents to own and be able to use digital tools. Digital tools are online resources including programs or applications that can allow a person to complete a task easily and efficiently (Mucundanyi & Woodley 2021: 96). According Blau and Hameiri (2017:1231) for that to happen, an individual needs a device that would allow them to access such programs, for example, a smart phone or a computer.

Daniela, Rubene and Rudolfa (2021:2) argue that many parents find it difficult to access digital tools partly due to their lack of education and therefore, making it challenging for them to understand how gadgets work. The second reason is financial constraints, most unemployed or low-income earning parents cannot afford digital devices like smart phones and computers and in cases they have access to them, they cannot afford data to connect to the internet (Cepa & Kao 2019:1705). These among other factors made it hard for schools to engage and teach learners through digital platforms especially in primary schools during COVID-19.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions were introduced to control the spread of the virus and save lives. For example, schools, libraries, internet booths and other services which were deemed offering non-essential services had to close, only pharmacies, supermarkets and other services that were seen as offering essential services remained operational. (Loaiza et al. 2020). As the country went under lockdown parents had to play their part in educating their children (Lee, Ward, Chang & Downing 2021). Loaiza et al. (2020) states that parents who struggled to use digital tools could not get assistance from places like internet cafes or libraries since they were closed, therefore that meant they could not access the internet to help their children.

Papadakis, Zaranis and Kalogiannakis (2019:144) agree that in general, younger parents especially from more developed places find it very easy to access the internet, and that few from developing places can access it. Papadakis et al. (2019:144) further states that majority of parents from under-developed places do not have access to digital tools, and during COVID-19, it became worse. This is very concerning because according to Blau and Hameiri (2017:1231), for parental involvement to be a success, technology plays an important role, therefore it is important for parents to have own and be able to digital tools especially during a pandemic.

## **2.6 PARENTS DIGITAL PROFICIENCY IN ENHANCING LEARNER PERFORMANCE**

Bulger, Mayer and Metzger (2014:1567) define digital proficiency as the potential of being able to read and write through the use of online tools, this includes being able to select digital tools that assist with the task required. Stolba and Kay (2021:24) supports Bulger et al. by defining digital proficiency as a skill that enable a person to choose digital tools that can successfully assist with completing an activity and being able to communicate it with other people. Parents who are digitally proficient are able to use smartphones, to access the internet and be able to assist their children with schoolwork. Such parents can assist their children attend classes online using online video tools (Nikken & Oprea 2018:1844). Digital tools make access to information easier, enabling parents to assist their children with schoolwork and projects. For example, a digitally proficient parent can be able to assist a learner find information on South African history and write a detailed essay or it using sources found online.

It is agreed by Kirkwood and Price (2014:3) that technology can enhance learner performance. Learners in primary schools need assistance from parents to successfully gather information from digital tools. As a result of this, parents' digital proficiency is very crucial. Saeedi and

Biri (2016:18) found that digital tools allow learners to make discoveries outside the classroom, and learners show positive attitude towards the tools thus it is important that parents themselves are digitally literate to assist learners to make those discoveries.

Nikken and Oprea (2018:1844) collaborates what is said by Saeedi and Biri (2016:18) by mentioning the advantages of digital knowledge of parents by saying digital tools can make it easier for parents when helping their children with schoolwork. Nikken and Oprea (2018:1845) further states that when parents are digitally literate, they can help their children, read, write, and speak using digital tools as a result the child can excel academically. During COVID-19, many schools suggested online learning but unfortunately only few parents of public primary school children could assist by connecting their children to the classes and downloading learning resources including activities.

Most parents could not assist their children due to poor digital proficiency. This is due to reasons like age. Older parents normally find it hard to use digital tools to help their learners with school work using the internet or a computer (Saeedi & Biri 2016:18). Preradovic, Lesin and Sagud (2016:127) supports Daniela, Rubene and Rudolfa (2021:5) by highlighting that most parents are anxious and find it difficult to utilise digital tools, therefore they do not see the reason to have them. Now this made it hard for schools to engage and teach learners through digital platforms especially in primary schools during COVID-19.

Agaton and Cueto (2021:901) states another reason explaining inability of parents to enhance children's proficiency, that parents from rural or under developed areas do not have access to digital tools, this makes it hard for them to become digitally proficient. Agaton and Cueto (2021:901) further highlights that parent who are affluent own different digital tools as they are able to afford them, therefore becoming highly digitally proficient. Batubara (2021:450) supports Agaton and Cueto (2021:901) by adding that educated parents also own different digital tools, making it easier for them to understand the digital world. Agaton and Cueto (2021:901) and Batubara (2021:450) agree that when parents have access to digital tools which they own, it is easier for them to become digital proficient. When they are digital proficient, they can assist their children with schoolwork enhancing learner performance.

## **2.7 DIGITAL BENEFICIATION TO THE EDUCATION OF THE LEARNERS**

Digital learning played a vital role during COVID-19. The only way teachers could be able to teach learners during a lockdown was through digital services (Shenoy, Mahendra & Vijay 2020:702). For instance, in South Africa, schools had to be closed for several months, during which there was no physical contact between teachers and learners. Mhlanga and Moloji

(2020:3) argue that availability of digital tools to learners and parents especially during lockdown allowed remote learning to take place successfully.

According to Apoki, Al-Chalabi and Crisan (2019:18) digital learning is the future for the education sector as it prepares learners to fully function in the digital world. Blake, Bermingham, Johnson and Tabner (2020:2997) supports Apoki et al. (2019:18) by highlighting that digital learning is an important factor in assisting learners comprehend what they learn, because other learners learn better with pictures or videos. Technology can help teachers present their lessons in a creative and informative way helping learners to fully understand the lesson.

Teachers can use technology even during school holidays to communicate and teach learners without having to be present physically (Pokhrel & Chhrettri 2021:133). Learners who are sick can successfully attend classes at home and participate using technology to listen and see the teacher when teaching. Bubb and Jones (2020:209) mention that digital learning allows people who are at different places communicate effectively, therefore teachers can use it to communicate with learners and parents regarding schoolwork.

By using digital learning Pokhrel and Chhrettri (2021:133) approves that school could be successful in teaching. Bubb and Jones (2020:213) argue that digital learning is a very creative way of teaching, he further states that digital learning allows different ways of teaching and learning, therefore it can accommodate all types of learners. According to Morgan (2013:51) primary school learners learn best with pictures, videos, or games, therefore with digital technology it is all possible to ensure that they have fun while they learn. This type of learning made it easier for parents to help their children with schoolwork not only during COVID-19, even after. According to Pokhrel and Chhrettri (2021:133) in this digital age, it is important for schools to fully incorporate digital lessons in their practice, in preparation for future pandemics.

## **2.8 IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT DURING COVID-19**

Research done on parental involvement has proven that the participation and contribution of parents in the children's schooling is very vital (Kurtulmus 2016:1149; Lara & Saracosti 2019:1464). It has also shown how insufficient or non-existent parental involvement contributes to low student success and engagement (Jafarov 2015:36). Parents play a crucial role in influencing the aspirations and achievements of their children. The role played by parents in their children's lives cannot be overemphasised. The suggestion from literature studied is that there is a high relation between parental involvement and learner's academic progress, emotional stability, and high problem-solving skills (Garcia & Thornton 2014:1). In

a study conducted by Kwatubana and Makhalemele (2015:317) it was concluded that there is a very clear link between the high levels of discipline, academic achievement and the participation and support of parents in schools.

Maluleke (2014:4) highlights an important outcome of parental involvement that when schools, parents, children, and the community work together to develop positive relationships in which they support one another in order to achieve a common objective, namely excellent teaching and learning, then the school flourishes. A parent does not need to be formally educated to successfully help their child get ready for school, or to instil good behaviour in their child. Research suggests that parents can do more than help their children with academic tasks, they can provide emotional support for them and serve as immediate role models for their children (Roy & Giraldo-Garcia 2018:40). During a pandemic it is more crucial for parents to be involved in the formal education of the children (Lara & Saracosti 2019:1464). A pandemic like COVID-19 has caused many disturbances in the education sector, therefore during times like this parental involvement is very important. By being involved in their children's education especially during COVID-19, parents do not only help the school but the child as well. With this involvement of parents, children tend to become well mannered, and highly likely to progress academically and in life, even after COVID-19. Moreover, they learn to be able to carry themselves with confidence in serving the community.

## **2.9 THE BENEFITS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT DURING COVID-19**

Every parent wants their child to succeed and reach their full academic potential. Since COVID-19 disrupted the normal functioning of schools, the importance of parental involvement was crucially tested. A study conducted by Manamela (2015:28) lists five benefits of parental involvement which can be summarised as follows:

- Better performance during assessments

Children become academically successful when their parents are fully involved in their education during formative and summative assessments. When a child comes back from school with homework, an involved parent will ask about the homework and help the child. It is not easy for a child to hide their homework when they have parents who check their books.

- A greater desire to learn

Children enjoy learning when they are doing well academically. When parents help learners with their schoolwork, the learner enjoy going to school. That encourages them to focus and perform better in the classroom.

- Less inclined to drop-out of school



Educational support from home discourages a child from having a desire to drop-out of school when faced with challenges. Children whose parents are involved in volunteering at school, are highly unlikely to hate school, because they receive proper support at home both academically and emotionally.

- Good conduct

Children who receive support at home behave better at school and they know that if they misbehave, their parents will be notified, and they may get punished at home.

- Promotes and encourages good school attendance

It is hard for a learner to miss school or be late for lessons when they have involved parents. Involved parents make sure that their children have clean clothing, ensure that their children arrive on time and do not miss school. If the child is sick, they take the child to the clinic or doctor.

The benefits outlined above are crucial for the success of learners especially during times of disrupted schooling as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, a lot of changes had to be effected in the education sector to accommodate country's response to the crisis. Unfortunately, it is schools with sufficient resources that were able to swiftly switch to online learning whereas the disadvantaged schools experienced a total shut down of all educational structures. As expected, Primary schools in Mamelodi East could not have lessons for the learners. Parents were supposed to take the initiative and teach their children at home, this meant parents needed to be more involved in their children's education.

## **2.10 ROLES OF TEACHERS AND THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **2.10.1 TEACHERS**

According to Xhemajli (2016: 33) teachers play a vital role in the formal education of learners, they are designers, researchers, innovators, and advisors in education. Kapur (2019:2) agrees that teachers are entrusted with many responsibilities that result in developing learners to become responsible adults. Teachers' responsibilities are endless, but they include being a resource provider, meaning they provide learners with resources like books, articles or notes that may assist them to academically succeed (Kapur 2019:3). Teachers are classroom supporters; they motivate learners in the classroom and ensure that learners' overall wellbeing is taken care off.

Teachers are mentors, they guide and give advice to learners in terms of providing them with solutions to different problems they are facing, they furthermore encourage positive behaviour

in all aspects of life (Kapur 2019:3). The role that teachers should play to ensure sufficient parental involvement is vital. It therefore comes as no surprise that the teachers had a big role to play to ensure the continuity of education during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are many approaches that teachers can employ to involve parents, these are not limited to but include inviting parents for one-on-one sessions where they discuss the child's progress and providing parents with resources that will make it easier for them to assist their children. Teachers can also create WhatsApp groups for parents where they inform parents of homework and other important school activities, in this way parents will stay informed and that can promote positive parental involvement.

### **2.10.2 SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM**

The principal, deputy principal and the departmental heads make up the school management team (Kalavani 2016: 22). Their responsibilities include guiding and managing the work of teachers and other support staff. They are in charge for making sure that teaching and learning successfully takes place without any disturbances (Pitsoe & Isingoma 2014:138). The school management team is also responsible for developing and empowering other teachers and other staff, while playing a leading role in the formulation and implementation of policies of the school and conducting staff meetings with teachers, other staff, and parents (Pitsoe & Isingoma 2014:138). The school management team was expected to play its role in encouraging parental involvement during COVID-19 by constantly communicating with the parents and encouraging teachers to do the same. The school management team also needs to have a policy that talks to the school's strategies for ensuring sufficient involvement from the parents. During the outbreak of the COVID-19, they had to update parents regularly about the condition of the school and reassure them about safety of their children by observing all COVID-19 regulations.

The school management team can regularly invite parents for parents meeting where they discuss with parents the importance of helping their children with schoolwork, the importance of discipline and cleanliness. A study conducted by Chen, Jiang and Liu (2021) highlights how a parent's socio-economic class can influence the extent to which that parent is involved in a child's education. The time that a parent spends at work, the living conditions of the household often determines whether the parent avail themselves when called for one on one or even group parents' meetings to discuss children's progress. The school management team should try varied means of reaching parents, such as using the SMS system whereby they send text messages to parents regarding a meeting that was held.

## **2.11 APPARENT BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT DURING COVID-19**

### **2.11.1 Lack of parent education to assist with schoolwork.**

Costa and Faria (2017:28) argue that parents' lack of education contributes to the poor parental involvement experienced by many schools. A study conducted by Wang, Deng and Yang (2016:536) found that parents' level of education is aligned to their attitude towards assisting their children. A parent who lacks the knowledge on how to assist a child often also lacks the confidence to even attempt to assist. Furthermore, parents who lack formal education may find it pointless to attend parental meetings and other school activities because they feel like they do not have anything meaningful to contribute.

Owing to this, it is important that school managers ask themselves, how can we inclusively encourage both educated and lay parents to actively participate in the education of their children? (Kalaivani 2016:23). Upon the recommencement of contact classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools adopted a rotational learning system whereby only half of the learners would attend whilst the other half would be at home, the groups were often rotated on a weekly basis. The expectation was that the group that would be at home would be assisted by parents to continue learning and doing the work given to them (Boyd, Inglesby, Corey, Greene, Harrington, Johnson, King, Rais-Bahrani & Tavana 2020:96). Daniela, Rubene and Rudolfa (2021:2) have argued that due to some parents' lack of formal education, many children would return to school without having done the work and try to copy work from their peers. Clearly, parents' lack of formal education is a serious barrier to involvement.

### **2.11.2 Socio-economic differences**

According to research, lower socioeconomic level parents are less interested in their children's formal education (Hemmerechts, Agirdag & Kavadias 2016: 85). This may be due to various reasons; those reasons include not having enough time to assist the child with homework and being unavailable during school meetings. In a different study Durisic and Bunijevac (2017:145) infer that parents from lower socio-economic classes often work multiple jobs to keep up with the economic demands, and often work very long hours which leaves them with very little if any time to check their children's educational progress. Schools need to be sensitive to this and device means to enable a greater degree of involvement for such parents.

### **2.11.3 Cultural differences**

Culture also influences parental involvement (Malone 2015:14). The term cultural background is used to explain one's life experiences influenced by group of people based on ethnicity, race,

or religious beliefs (Wunder 2017:18). Parents from cultures that view education as less important are highly unlikely to play a part in their children's schooling (Hartas 2016:1145). Some cultures encourage boys to go work at an early age and girls to stay home and help with chores or do chores first before doing any school related work (Munje & Mncube 2018:85). When education is not prioritised in a child's home, it is unlikely that such a child would view education as important and strive to excel. During COVID-19 this became highly evident as learners used rotational system for attendance, absenteeism was high, and parents were often unavailable to comment as to why the learners missed school.

#### **2.11.4 Parents attitude towards education**

A child never fully reaches their academic potential unless the parent actively participates in the education of the child (Wilder 2014:377). This shows that parents' attitude about education plays a big role in the learners' academic success. Albarracin, Chan and Jiang (2018:7) define attitude as a positive or negative reaction to something or someone displayed in one's beliefs or behaviour. According to Manseur and Negadi (2019:145) parents' attitude towards formal education is closely linked to parental involvement. Parents with a favourable attitude toward education are completely involved in their children's formal education by attending school meetings, assisting their children with academics, and assisting the school with other voluntary activities.

Parents with negative attitude towards school are barely involved in their children's education (Munje & Mncube 2018:88). Jafarov (2015:35) mentions factors that can be used to measure parental involvement and parent's attitude towards education. Amongst other things, these include homework checking, attending parents' meetings and any other school events, encouraging their children to study hard, advising their children regarding studying methods, monitoring their children academic progress, discussing school related problems, and finding solutions and showing appreciation to teachers for working hard.

Jafarov (2015:35) found that it is not difficult to measure positive parental participation. Parents need to be involved in their children's education by doing what is required of them. Checking and making sure that their children do their schoolwork does not only prove that they are involved, but it also helps the child to view education as important. Attending parents' meetings and other school events encourages a child to excel and make their parents proud. In addition to that, a parent who is involved in problem solving when the school encounters challenges, can offer full support to the SMT's decisions and strategies to improve the school.

Hosseinpour, Yazdani and Yarahmadi (2015:1376) indicate that when a parent is enthusiastic about schooling, that attitude is passed on to the child. Owing to that, such positive attitude will influence different aspect of the child's schooling including punctuality, discipline, and dedication to completing tasks. In this way the daily routines of the school continue swiftly and uninterrupted. Parents with a positive attitude to formal education view academic achievement as means to obtain status, prosperity, and personal progression. As a result of this, learners are made to love education and parents get fully involved.

#### **2.11.5 Language barrier**

Language plays an important role in effective communication (Sirbu 2015:405). According to Babane (2020), township schools in South Africa admit immigrant children whose majority have difficulty in understanding English. This has a huge impact on positive parental involvement, because children and parents who find it difficult to understand English rarely understand the message from school. Such parents are not able to help their children with schoolwork, because they have difficulties in understanding the instructions. During COVID-19 parents were regularly informed about conditions of the schools, the curriculum and safety measures that are taken by the school. This is done through letters or during parental meetings.

Therefore, when the parent does not comprehend the message, it becomes difficult to contribute towards solutions, or to take part during parents' meetings. According to Ozmen, Akuzum, Zincirli and Selcuk (2016:28) parents with language barriers find it difficult to even respond to schools or even participate during school meetings or any other school activities. This can make it difficult for such parents to actively participate and get involved as they would feel embarrassed by not being able to contribute as they cannot communicate well using English.

#### **2.11.6 Teachers attitude towards parents**

Teachers' attitudes towards parents may be greatly influenced by the educational level of parents, income and culture (Mahatmya, Lohman, Brown & Turner 2016:432). A study conducted by Ineke and Glock (2018:725) found discrepancies in the conduct of teachers towards learners from different economic backgrounds. The study suggests that learners from affluent homes often get preferential treatment as opposed to their peers from poor backgrounds. Lozancic, Basta and Serbetar (2019) also conducted a study which supports Ineke and Glock (2018:725), in their study they used questionnaires to measure explicit attitudes of teachers towards parents. Teachers indicated positive attitudes towards learners with educated parents.

Ineke and Glock (2018:725) further argued that there are other elements that influence teachers' attitudes towards parents. Their findings suggests that teachers display a positive attitude towards parents of younger age who are often more formally educated than the older parents. The findings of these studies clearly show that in some instance teachers' attitude can positively or negatively affect the level of parental involvement in schools. When teachers display a negative attitude towards parents, parents likely do not see a point of interacting with the teachers because of the negative attitude, as a result, parents do not see the importance of taking part in school activities and attending parent meetings.

## **2.12 POSSIBLE MEASURES IN ENCOURAGING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT DURING COVID-19**

Schools can take measures to encourage parental involvement. Naicker (2013:29) agrees that there are many challenges that can hinder effective parental involvement, despite all the challenges Gorica, Popovski and Popovska (2021:126) believe that it is still possible for schools to reach out to parents to encourage positive parental involvement. They mention strategies that can be taken by schools to establish positive and productive communication with parents which including picking one communication tool to communicate with parents, Frequent and personalised communication, building relationships with parents by making them partners, inviting them for parents' meetings and sharing the positive outcomes of various interventions with the parents. The strategies are expanded below.

### **2.12.1 Pick different communication tools**

According to Kraft (2017:2) positive parental participation can be increased by improving communication between the school and parents. Since there are many different communication tools that are available, schools should select more than one tool to communicate with parents. A communication tool is most effective if it sends the message directly to the parents (Mayangsari & Aprianti 2017:18). Many parents are in position of a cell phone, a tool such as a SMS (short message service) commonly known as texting does not require data from parents and is able to send messages directly to the parents (Orr & King 2017:397). The use of this approach can help the schools get the message directly to parents without any disturbances or miscommunication. The second tool schools can use is WhatsApp messaging, according to Mayangsari and Aprianti (2017:18) WhatsApp is a common and very effective messaging tool used around the world.

Mayangsari and Aprianti (2017:22) continue by identifying advantages of using WhatsApp as a tool for communication, the advantages include getting the message swiftly directly to the recipient without interruptions, and being able to see if the message indeed reached the recipient. Through it, parents can be able to reply or raise their concerns using this tool (Wasserman and Zwebner 2017:3). Thirdly, schools can use phone calls to communicate with parents. According to Soong, Kurabi, Caines, Morgan and Ramsden (2014) phone calls are very effective as it is an effective way of getting a personal response. Phone calls are different from other forms of communication because if the person that is called is available, response is given during the conversation, unlike waiting hours for a response or feedback (Yu, Huang & Liu 2017:127). Lastly, schools can make use of letters and posters for parents that do not own cell phones. This can help get the message to parents through learners.

### **2.12.2 Frequent communication**

Lin, Litkowski, Schmerold, Elicker, Schmitt and Purpura (2019:756) have emphasized the importance of frequent communication with parents, by arguing that frequent communication helps parents ensure that they become aware of the state of the school and their child's education. Lin et.al (2019:756) is supported by Conus and Fahrni (2019: 235) who points out that frequent communication brings the teachers and parents closer, teachers can get help from parents when there is frequent communication and parents feel valued when they are frequently informed about their child's progress.

Lin et.al (2019:756) and Conus and Fahrni (2019: 235) further argue that frequent communication keeps parents updated of what is going on, especially with assessments and progress of their children. That way, parents will be able to assist and get clear information of what they need to do to help their children especially during difficult times such as the outbreak of a pandemic like COVID-19. Frequent communication can be done by the school informing parents about the rotational attendance, safety measures like encouraging parents to ensure that their children have masks, and mostly the school need to keep parents informed about their children's progress every week on Fridays. Schools can also personalise frequent messages, according to Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015:379) message personalisation makes an individual feel important and valued. Parents who feel that the school knows and cares about them, are more likely going be involved than those who do not.

### **2.12.3 Build relationships with parents**

Parents become active and participate when they feel valued and trusted, and schools can do that by building good relationships with parents (Cutler 2015). It is therefore imperative that

teachers put more effort on building relationships with parents to create trust. The school can create the trust by building strong relationships with parents, teachers can introduce themselves at the beginning of the year and share a little information about themselves at parent's meetings to set a tone for open exchange with the learners' parents (Pushor & Amendt 2018:202). According to Mayangsari and Aprianti (2017:18) creating WhatsApp groups for classes, can also encourage parents to express themselves and want to know more about the child's progress thus promoting parental involvement.

Sapungan (2014:43) maintains that when a positive relationship is built between parents and teachers, children's attitudes, working habits and performance improve greatly. Sapungan (2014:43) is supported by Jeynes (2018:147) that when the school, mainly teachers build a good relationship with parents, the school flourishes because learners perform better academically, fewer behavioural problems are experienced, and learners develop better social skills. Sapungan (2014:43) and Jeynes (2018:147) further argue that when parents and teachers have good relationship the learners become aware of it and gets motivated to perform better and to behave accordingly at school because if they do not their parents get to know. Therefore, as researched by Mereoiu, Abercrombie and Murray (2016:79), a good relationship make learners aware that whatever they do at school, their parents will become aware of it, in this way learners avoid getting into trouble at school, as they know that their parents are involved at school.

#### **2.12.4 Invite parents to volunteer and empower them**

Kim and Morgul (2017: 161) defines volunteering as an essential way that promotes a strong feeling of selflessness and desire to help others. When schools create an environment in which parents can volunteer for different activities taking place in the school, the parents feel empowered and feel a sense of belonging to the school. This sense of belonging and empowerment is vital when the school in turn requires support from the parents as was required during the COVID-19 pandemic. Huys, Cocker, De-Craemer, Roesbeke, Cardon and De-Lepeleere (2017:1454) maintain that schools can also allow parents to have mini gardens at the school where they can plant vegetables or allow them to coach learners for different sporting codes. This makes parents familiar with the school environment and they develop relationships with the different staff members at the school.

By inviting parents to volunteer, schools build positive relationships with parents (Hindman, Skibbe & Morrison 2013:391). As Kim and Morgul (2017: 161) have mentioned, volunteering is essential in promoting a strong feeling of selflessness and desire to help others, this is true,



and it will encourage parents to help the school. As the school might face different problems with learners especially during a pandemic like COVID-19, parents can get involved by volunteering to help with social distance, sanitizing of learners or cleaning the school. In this way parents become involved. When parents volunteer at the school, they become accessible, and teachers can talk with them any time without having to wait for hours to reach them. Coleman (2018) highlights an important point that children tend to behave well when they are around supportive parents. When parents volunteer at school, learners get motivated to attend school, behave well, and perform better academically. Coleman (2018) maintains that learners behave better when their parents are around, therefore allowing parents to volunteer during COVID-19 would have made things easier for schools as they would have parents assisting with different tasks, and the schools had fewer misbehaving learners.

### **2.12.5 Sharing the positive with parents and applying positive reinforcement**

Povey, Campbell, Willis, Haynes, Western, Bennett, Antrobus and Pedde (2016:3) argue that it is vital for schools to communicate good news with the parents regarding their children's achievement as that can create a positive school climate. In so doing the parents see that their hard work is not in vain. It encourages parents to continue helping their children with schoolwork and encourage their children to attend school regularly (Stamatis & Chatzinikola 2021:43). According to Boakes (2021:67) positive reinforcement is defined as a method of promoting and establishing a pattern of behaviour by giving reward when the behaviour is carried out. Positive reinforcement is used to strengthen behaviours it can be in praising or offering a reward (Rafi, Ansar & Sami 2020:174). This can help in getting parents involved.

Schools can hold award ceremony for learners every term and invite parents to witness. The awards can be for best academic achievement, sport achievement, best behaviour in each class, cleanliness, and hundred percent attendance (D'Ascenzo 2015:447). According to Clark (2018:172) award ceremonies that accommodates all talents motivates all learners to work harder in doing better, and it motivates parents to push their children to become better. Clark (2018:172) further argues that presenting learners with a certificate, a medal or a trophy is very encouraging, not only to learners but to parents. Parents become motivated to help their children with school activities, to assist them get ready for school, and they become motivated to encourage their children to participate in sports. In this way parental involvement became more evident especially during COVID-19.

Boakes (2021:67) mentions that positive reinforcement is one of the best ways to encourage parental involvement. Therefore, the schools can also reward parents that are more active in their child's education. For example, if a parent assists their child with schoolwork and attends hundred percent of the school meetings, they can be presented with a certificate in presence of other parents. This type of a reward can encourages other parents to participate in school activities actively, and it would motivate the parent that receive the reward to keep on being involved. DePaepe, Adamson, Kilpatrick, and Smith (2015) agree that positive reinforcement works best on people when they understand consequences of doing wrong. In this regard, parents understand that if they do not assist their learners with school work and any other related school activities, their children are most likely to fail. It is not the school's responsibility to reward parents for taking care of their children, it is a great way of promoting parental involvement.

## **2.13 THE THEORY UNDERPINNING OF THE STUDY**

For this research, the Ecological systems theory, Social Capital theory and Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres are used. All these theories are used to show why parental involvement was important especially during COVID-19.

### **2.13.1 Ecological systems theory**

Urie Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems theory in 1979. According to this theory, a child's development is influenced by different systems (Harkonen 2007:3). Firstly, Guy-Evans (2020) mentions that closest to the individual is the microsystems which includes the family, school, peers, and health services. In the second level of interaction there is the mesosystem and exosystem which incorporate social services, neighbours, and mass media. The last level of interaction is the macrosystem which explores attitudes and cultural ideologies which influence an individual.

In support of this theory, several authors held that parental participation stems from the belief that school and home cannot be separated and would impact each other reciprocally (Harkonen 2007:3; Martinez 2015:8; Burns, Warmbold-Brann & Zaslofsky 2015:249). This demonstrates that schools are a part of society and cannot be detached from the area in which they are located, this according to Martinez (2015:8) makes schools an open system, and greatly dependent on exchanges with environmental elements to survive. The ecological theory's key implication is that tackling educational challenges such as low parental involvement in their children's education can be successful only if the school, home, and community work together to solve

the problem (Guy-Evans 2020). This theory focuses on systems outside of the child, and does not fully demonstrate the achievement levels of the child when all systems work efficiently, it is for this reason that this study also incorporated ideas from Coleman's social capital theory which places the child at the centre of all interactions and argues that his or her success depends vastly on the social resources made available to them.

### **2.13.2 Social Capital theory**

To ascertain the significance of parental involvement, this study also draws from James Coleman's social capital theory. In 1988 Coleman developed this theory in which he refers to all social resources in their various forms which are available to children to aid them in their educational growth as social capital (Bhandari & Yasunobu 2009:488). These resources include a stable family environment which is essential if a child is to receive full educational support. He also distinguished between the social capital provided by the home and the social capital provided by school. Schools provide one type of inputs, which are described as opportunities, demands, and incentives, whereas the social environment of the home provides the second category of inputs, which include attitudes, effort, and self-concept (Durisic & Bunijevac 2017:138). Similar to Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, both the school (teachers) and home (parents) which are social capital for the child must work together to ensure that the child reaches their full academic potential even during times of disrupted schooling. This interrelationship between school and home, while advocated for by the first two theories, is only thoroughly addressed by Joyce Epstein in her theory of overlapping spheres, which in many respects provided a crucial framework for achieving the goals of this study. While the ecological system theory and social capital theories go well beyond the school, parent, and child, the theory of overlapping spheres seeks to delve deeply into the overlapping interactions between school and home.

### **2.13.3 Epstein's theory**

Joyce Epstein initially pioneered the theory of overlapping spheres in 1986. This theory strongly advocates for parental involvement in schools, it emphasizes that, while certain family and school practices are undertaken independently, others reflect shared obligations of parents and teachers (Epstein, 1995: 702). Furthermore, the theory emphasizes that when the involvement between schools and parents is well managed, it develops school-like families and family-like schools, whereas communities create family-like conditions for the nurturing of learners (Cano, Cape, Cardosa, Pitogo, Quinio & Merin 2016: 143). This means schools (teachers), home (parents) and the community need to work well together for the child to flourish.

The theory acknowledges that it is not only the parents' responsibility to engage with the school, but the school also needs to play a role in creating the conditions for involvement. This theory encourages good parenting, parents firstly need to develop a good and a safe space for their children, an environment which promotes educational goals. In this way, children can see the importance of education. For proper parental involvement to be achieved, communication between the school and home is essential. The burden of responsibility lays heavily on the schools, who must make sure that the parents are kept informed of their children's progress. Similarly, responsible parents ensure that the school knows of any home situations which have a direct influence on the child's learning abilities (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn & Corwin 2002:1). In this way, the sphere of the home and school overlap. This theory is important to this study as it details what it means for parents to be involved. During the COVID-19 pandemic schools needed the support provided by parents to a great extent. In schools and communities where sufficient involvement channels were already available, the challenges of learning from home were minimal if any.

## **2.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has provided the theoretical background to the study. In this chapter a literature review has been done to highlight the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 in primary schools, challenges of parental involvement and how schools can ensure effective parental involvement. This chapter used evidence-based research to discuss what effective parental involvement during a pandemic entails. Scholarly studies that discuss the impact pandemics have had on schooling in the past were consulted and analysed in this chapter. In addition to all this, theories that discuss how learner achievement improves when all the stakeholders in education; namely teachers, school management teams and parents work together were consulted and reviewed in this chapter. Factors outside of the school environment which have an influence on the attitudes and the extent of parental involvement were discussed, as well as what can be done to mitigate and ensure that learners reach their full potential despite their circumstances. The next chapter explain the methodology and research design that was followed in conducting this study.

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## CHAPTER 3

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### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter reviewed several studies which have been carried out to have a theoretical understanding of the significance of parental involvement in the educational development of a child during COVID-19. This chapter discusses and explains the research design and the methodological approach in conducting this study. Chapter three also discusses the methods undertaken to ensure trustworthiness and the ethical considerations of this inquiry. This chapter further outlines the rationale behind following the research design and methodological approaches in order to attain the objectives of this research. As highlighted earlier those objectives include determining the attitudes of parents towards education of their children in Mamelodi East, investigating the involvement of parents in the education of their children during a pandemic in Mamelodi East, exploring the challenges of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic in selected schools in Mamelodi East, as well as to investigate strategies that could enhance parental involvement in the future during disruptive pandemics. The methodological approach that will be discussed in this chapter provides an understanding into the researchers' use of the selected research methods and designs.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

An interpretive paradigm was adopted in this study. Kaushik and Walsh (2019:255) gives a description of a paradigm as a term used to discuss philosophical and set of beliefs that directs and shapes actions. Willcocks, Sauer and Lacity (2016:9) further argues that interpretive paradigm is used to understand and explain a person's pattern of experiences. In supporting Willcocks et al. (2016:9), Davis, Low, Allen and Sharma (2021:195) argue that interpretive paradigm studies the behaviour of people based on their beliefs, knowledge, and experiences. Davis et al. (2021:195) further argues that this paradigm is reinforced by observation and interpretation, therefore there is no strict formular used but it is subjective.

Studies have shown that researchers cannot be separated from the social reality of the research they are conducting (Al-Saadi 2014:1; Basini, Garavan & Cross 2017: 26; Davis, Low, Allen & Sharma 2021:195). Following this assertion, the researcher's interpretation of a social phenomenon may differ from others but that does not mean either is erroneous. According to Aspers and Corte (2019:142) qualitative research is a set of interpretative practices used by the

researcher to emphasize the value and meaning of social experiences rather than the measurements and analysis of casual relationships between variables used by positivism to generate quantitative data. In this study, the researcher adopted the use of interpretive methodology. The researcher studied the attitudes that different education stake holders have on the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic in selected township schools in Mamelodi East. An interpretivist approach enabled the researcher not to detach the socio-cultural backgrounds of the participants in question whilst conducting the study. The body of knowledge that was used in this study was informed by the experiences of principals, teachers, parents, and learners of selected primary schools.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

This research study followed a qualitative research design. Hackley (2020:2) describes qualitative research approach as organized study into social phenomena in natural conditions. This method was used to acquire a better understanding of the underlying reasons, perspectives, and motives behind positive and negative parental engagement demonstrations during COVID-19. The research method provided insights into the topic and aided in the development of potential research ideas (Roller & Lavrakas 2015:5). The researcher applied this research method because it involved multiple realities, for example, interviewing not only teachers but also principals, parents, and learners about parental involvement during COVID-19. The use of this approach helped the researcher to understand a social situation from participants' perspectives. According to Saldana (2011:4) this methodology allows flexible, changing strategies and design during data collection.

The major feature of qualitative research is that it is best suited for small samples, while its outcomes are not measurable and calculable. Its key advantage, and primary distinction from quantitative research, is that it gives a full description and analysis of a study issue without limiting the extent of the investigation or the nature of participant responses (Patton 2015:7). The rationale for employing a qualitative technique in this study was to investigate and describe participants' perspectives on the issue of parental involvement in schools during COVID-19. To capture teachers' perspectives on parental participation and how it influences learner achievement and school improvement, a qualitative method was appropriate (Mir & Jain 2018:9). As a result of this, the study was able to suggest strategies for improvement from a holistic view.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012:2) describes research design as the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data in research studies. Myers, Well and Lorch (2010:14) further describes research design as the arrangements of conditions for collecting and analysing data in order to associate relevance to the research. For the purposes of this study, a case study research design was used with the goal of exploring and explaining the phenomenon of the study (Creswell 2014: 32). A case study allowed me as the researcher to collect data that entails a lot of detail and that has greater depth. According to Yin (2017:9) a case study research design is said to be an intensive study to get as complete a picture as possible of a situation or event. Therefore, a case study research design helped the researcher to understand and explain different events that have a direct impact on the outcomes of this research.

For this study, data was collected in a natural environment which is schools. The case study focused on three primary schools from Mamelodi East. The researcher believed that the participants from different selected schools from the semi-rural location provided their own information through their unique experiences on the challenges they faced on parental participation during COVID-19 pandemic.

### **3.5 POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

According to Neumayer and Plumper (2017:86) population is a diverse group of people with similar characteristics living in one area that the researcher aims to study. Poston and Micklin (2006:17) describe population in research as set of all the units on which the results of the research are to be generalised. For this study a heterogeneous population was used. The data was collected from the experiences of principals, teachers, parents, and learners. Satishprakash (2020:4) argues that a heterogeneous population is one in which a group of people used, differ totally, or differ in a specific way. Satishprakash (2020:4) is supported by Khodygo, Swain and Mughal (2019:5) when they postulate that a heterogeneous population do not display similar characteristics, for example such population differ with mental and physical abilities.

This study used heterogeneous population because the focus was on the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19. Different stakeholders were interviewed. Principals, parents, teachers and learners of different gender, different age groups, different mental abilities, different working class, and different cultures were used for data collection.

### **3.6 SAMPLE AND SAMPLE FRAME**

Lohr (2019:4) defines sample as a portion of a research population; thus, sampling is the process of selecting a sample from a population. For this study, a purposeful sampling strategy

was adopted. According to Emmel (2013:17) purposeful sampling is a sampling approach used by qualitative researchers to identify individuals who may provide detailed information on the topic under investigation. The researcher chose individuals who could contribute to the study's success and who had knowledge about the subject. The researcher did not allow everyone to take part, only the school principal, teachers, parents, and learners took part. Three schools in Mamelodi East were selected, this is where the research was based.

The sample frame consisted of one principal in each school, with a minimum of ten years' experience in the education field. Principals are the leaders of the school institution and their extensive experience in managing and monitoring parental involvement prior and during COVID-19 was important for the study. Secondly, one teacher in each school was selected to participate, with a minimum five years' experience in the education field. This was considered important because teachers work closely with the learners and they are able to monitor learner progress on a day-to-day basis, therefore their experiences of learner achievement as a result of parental involvement prior and during COVID-19 was equally important. A parent is a caregiver, mother, and father; and the term also includes a legal guardian such as an aunt, grandparent or a person who is legally accountable for the child's wellbeing to whom the child lives with (Goodall & Montgomery 2014:399). For the purpose of this study two parents in each school were identified for participation: one being a member of the School Governing Body (SGB). Parents were selected to find out about challenges they faced during COVID-19 with regard to assisting their children with schoolwork. Moreover, the study ascertained if they are any strategies parents found useful when helping their children with schoolwork and other school activities during COVID-19. Lastly two learners in each school; one in intermediate phase and one in senior phase were selected to participate. The study attempted to ascertain the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 for learners.

The researcher selected one learner from Grade 6 and one from Grade 7 in each school as well as their parents, as they were in Grade 4 and Grade 5 respectively at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa, this is because they already have an understanding of what a normal teaching entails. According to Greathouse (2017:1) a learner comprehends and become aware of what normal teaching entails between Grade 3 and Grade 4. Therefore, the learners that the researcher selected could understand the implications brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 18 participants participated in the study from different background. There was a gender mix ensuring that both male and female participants are represented in the study and to avoid gender bias. The researcher conducted semi structured interviews and



document analysis to understand the reasons behind poor parental involvement and how meaningful solutions can be found to deal with this critical issue.

### **3.7 DATA COLLECTION**

#### **3.7.1 Semi structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principals, teachers, parents, and learners. According to Adams (2015:492) semi-structured interviews use a mix of closed- and open-ended questions, which are frequently complemented by why or how questions. The purpose of interviewing principals, teachers, and parents was to establish what they thought about the problem the schools were facing which is 'poor parental involvement during COVID-19'.

The interviewees were asked open-ended questions to access their perspectives. The semi-structured interviews were chosen as a data collecting strategy by the researcher because they let the researcher to obtain qualitative data and explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and opinions about the importance of parental engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Galletta and Cross (2013:45) argue that semi-structured interviews are important in research because they are best suited for the study of people's opinions regarding sensitive information, and they allow the researcher to probe for more information and clarity. Similarly, Edwards and Holland (2013:4) argue that semi structured interviews are effective for data collection because they explore an individual's opinions, thoughts, and personal experiences about a certain topic.

#### **3.7.2 Document Analysis**

According to Asdal and Reinertsen (2021:2) a document is a record of certain event which contain an important information, it can be written, electronic or photographic. Document analysis in research is defined by Boeije (2009:76) as a detailed examination of fundamentals of a document, experiences, or any other helpful resource. Bowen (2009:28) argue that document analysis is one of the most successful methods of data collection. He describes document analysis as a thorough examination of at least two or more sources of information in order to find convergence on a certain topic.

In this study the researcher selected two sources to analyse the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19. The first source was the attendance registers which enabled the researcher to check learners' attendance, before COVID 19 and during COVID 19. According to Arun and Boopesh-Guptha (2019:115) attendance registers are important as they allow schools to record and monitor learners' attendance and absence. Therefore, this method allowed the researcher to check and compare possible effect this could have on learners'

academic performance. A study by Ntekane (2018:3) has shown that when parents are fully involved, learners do not absent themselves from school without valid reasons. The researcher compared attendance registers for the year 2019 and the year 2021. The second source that the researcher chose was learners' books so as to see the quantity of the activities and quality of the learners' responses prior to COVID-19 and during COVID-19. This was important because according to Charlton (2011:12) learners' books and informal assessments are a record of learners' academic ability. When parents are involved, their support is evident in the quality of the work that the learners hand in. The researcher chose two books from two learners in each school for the year 2019 and year 2021. The researcher found out if there are any other tools schools used to communicate with parents such as WhatsApp messages, school's Facebook page and communication books to see if such communication tools were effective in increasing the degree of parental involvement during COVID-19.

### **3.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

Dey (2003:8) describes data analysis as steps, approaches, and procedures where a researcher takes out some type of explanation, comprehension, or interpretation from qualitative data obtained from the individuals or situations under investigation. Therefore, to take out the form of explanation, comprehension and interpretation, the researcher used thematic data analysis to analyse data. Thematic analysis, according to Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012:10) is a strategy for detecting, organizing, and providing insight into patterns of meaning across a database, and it is a suitable way for analysing experiences, thoughts, or behaviours.

The researcher used it by identifying patterns of themes in the data collected from interviews. Throughout the study, the participants were treated with respect and their contributions was represented as honestly as possible. Firstly, as the researcher I familiarised myself with the data that was collected, then assigned codes to the data which is a brief description of what is being said in the interview. The researcher did this remembering what was said by Guest et al. (2012:10) that a code is a description not an interpretation. The researcher then arranged the codes into themes and defined those themes. To analyse data, The researcher transcribed all the responses from the interviews on paper in-order to compare the answers and find patterns. No mention of participants was done during data analysis, they were referred to as participant A, B and C. No mention of schools was done, schools were referred to as school A, B and C. When a direct verbal quotation was made from the participant's responses it was specified as such, no additions were made.

To analyse data from documents the researcher used attendance registers from each school, to track learners' attendance and absenteeism records. The researcher compared attendance registers for the year 2019, term 1 prior to COVID-19 and the year 2021 term 1 during COVID-19. To analyse learners' books the researcher chose two books from learners in each school for the year 2019 and the year 2021. The researcher chose the books to see the quantity of the activities and quality of the learners' responses prior to COVID-19 and during COVID-19.

### **3.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

According to Baghranian (2020:2) trustworthiness is associated with the ability of being honest, truthful, and consistent. A study's trustworthiness relates to the level of confidence in the data, analysis, and methods employed to ensure the study's quality (Kwantes & Kuo 2021:2). Kyngas, Mikkonen and Kaariainen (2019:41) argue that trustworthiness is very vital in research, because it is when a researcher gives satisfactory descriptions in the research report during data analysis. To ensure trustworthiness the researcher used several methods to collect data, which included using different people (principals, teachers, parents and learners) for data collection. The researcher analysed data by carefully analysing the patterns of themes to ensure trustworthiness. Transcribing the participants answers and comparing answers during data analysis helped the researcher ensure trustworthiness. Methods that were undertaken to ensure trustworthiness for this study are identified by Kouzes and Posner (2011:19); De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:420) and Merriam and Tisdell, (2016:256) which are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

#### **3.9.1 Credibility**

The part of the truth-value technique associated with credibility is to ensure that the study tests what is intended. Long-term commitment, continual monitoring, and member checks are all methods for establishing credibility (Korstjens & Moser 2017:121). The researcher invested enough time to become familiar with the setting and the environment, to create trust and get to know the participants to get rich information. The researcher observed and engaged with participants during interviews to identify features and components that were most significant to the significance of parental participation during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the researcher was done with interviews, copies of the participants' responses were made available to them to verify if the researcher has correctly captured what they have said.

According to Kirk and Miller (1986) it is the researcher's responsibility to find reliable sources for research because unreliable sources can make research less credible. Therefore, to ensure credibility the researcher employed the triangulation method. Malamatidou (2017:2) and Flick

(2018:10) highlight that there are four types of triangulations, which are data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. The researcher used data triangulation. According to Flick (2018:11) data triangulation is the use of data from different spaces, times, and people. Therefore, the researcher used different people to collect data and the researcher went to the participants on different times to ensure that the results are credible.

### **3.9.2 Dependability and confirmability**

According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2011:420) dependability contains the aspect of consistency whilst confirmability contains the aspect of neutrality. Therefore, the researcher ensured consistency and neutrality by avoiding basing the interpretation of the findings on personal preferences and viewpoints but grounding it in the data collected. The researcher remained neutral, by not influencing or adding on the participants responses. The researcher also wrote down all the observations and analysed the responses of the participants as they are. Moreover, to ensure the dependability and consistency of the study the researcher applied the audit trail strategy advocated for by Mqulwana (2010:62). Lastly, the researcher transparently documented the research steps performed from the start of the research project to the progress and reporting of the findings, and research documents and notes were retained throughout the investigation.

### **3.9.3 Transferability**

Transferability involves the aspect of applicability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:256). The researcher documented not just the participants' behaviour and experiences, but also the participants' background, so that the findings might be applied to other similar contexts. The researcher ensured that this study is able to help other people or schools that experience poor parental involvement during a pandemic and help parents know the significance of parental involvement during a pandemic. As a result, the researcher employed purposeful sampling to maximize specific data in relation to the context in which it was obtained.

## **3.10 THE ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Miller, Birch, Mauthner and Jessop (2012:14) define ethics as pertaining to do good and avoiding harm. The researchers further state that it is critical for the researcher to consider any potentially detrimental consequences the study may have on any of the participants. The researchers also highlight that a researcher should also consider how they intend to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

### **3.10.1 Gaining access to the participants.**

At the onset of the research, the researcher requested ethical clearance from the University of South Africa. Then, permission from the Department of Basic Education was requested to conduct the study. Further, individual requests were also done for selected participants to give consent of their involvement in the study. The researcher also requested parental consent for learners to participate in the study. All the participants were well informed about the study, and everyone was well informed of the aims and objectives. The participants were made aware that participation in the study is voluntary and that they could willingly choose to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.

### **3.10.2 Deception**

Chiluwa and Samoilenko (2019:87) argue that deception is knowingly telling false information for personal advantage, which can be very harmful and cause great emotional damage. The researcher ensured that the individuals participated in the study voluntarily because they were not coerced or offered any incentives to influence their decision to participate. All participants were treated with the same level of respect regardless of their societal positions or class and their rights were not infringed at all times. The participants were given the opportunity to answer questions without any influence from the researcher channelling them to respond in a specific way, there was no manipulation. Participants were afforded the opportunity to answer questions when they did not understand, and difficult terminologies was explained to them to ensure that their responses are a true reflection of their individual experiences.

### **3.10.3 Privacy and Confidentiality**

Demirsoy and Kirimlioglu (2016:1437) argues that privacy is having the control over personal information, they further state that privacy is keeping something discreet, not known by certain people but only the involved individual. According to Lowrance (2012:29) confidentiality is the process of keeping something private, only known by certain individuals.

Throughout the study, the researcher ensured that ethical norms were followed. To safeguard their identities, the participants' true names were never used they always remained anonymous. Alphabets were used to identify them, for example the principals were referred to as principal A, B, C. The interview transcripts and notes made are not made public but are kept confidential. The interviews were conducted privately in the absence of third parties. Assurance was made to the participants that their details will not be published. It is also worth mentioning that the schools where the research was conducted were referred to as school A, B, and C, no mention of their real names was done.

#### **3.10.4 Informed consent**

According to Berg, Appelbaum, Lidz and Parker (2001:3) informed consent refers to giving an individual all necessary details about a certain issue and allowing that person enough time to make a decision. Individual request was done for selected participants to give consent of their involvement in the study. All the participants were well informed about the study, and everyone was informed about aims and objectives. The researcher did not oppress nor force anyone to take part, they freely decided if they want to participate, and all the participants were informed that if they do not feel comfortable, they can withdraw at any point without facing any consequences.

#### **3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter focused on the research design and methodology for this study. It explained the rationale behind the researcher's use of interpretative paradigm and the use of qualitative research approach. The chapter also highlighted that the researcher used a heterogeneous population for data collection. Moreover, this chapter discussed the sampling method that will be used for data collection and methods of data collection. Chapter three also discussed the methods undertaken to ensure trustworthiness, which include credibility, dependability, comfortability, and transferability. Lastly, chapter three has specified the ethical considerations that were made to ensure that the gaining of access to participants, the privacy and confidentiality of all the parties involved and informed consent was done throughout the study. The next chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis, and discussion.

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## CHAPTER 4

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### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In chapter 3, a detailed account of the research design and methodology that was used throughout this study was presented. The purpose of this chapter is to present the data that was collected during this study, provide an analysis of that data, and give a coherent discussion of the results. In this study, the researcher hoped to explore the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic in selected primary schools in Mamelodi East. Using evidence from other scholarly studies, this research has already shown that there is a close link between learner achievement and parental involvement (Durisic & Bunijevac 2017:138). As a result of this, this study aims to make clear how crucial it is for parents to be involved in the education of their children especially during a pandemic that disrupts normal schooling such as COVID-19.

The findings reported in this chapter are based on data acquired through individual semi-structured interviews with selected school principals, educators, parents, and learners. Because the researcher wanted to explore the participants' perspectives, feelings, and experiences about parental involvement during the COVID-19 epidemic. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the optimal data collection approach for this study (Galletta & Cross 2013:45). The interview questions for principals, teachers, parents, and learners had slight variations in order to enable the participants to give detailed responses based on their position and personal experiences. The data obtained from these interviews was then analysed in detail as part of the research process to enable the researcher to draw accurate conclusions.

Analysis of two documents, the attendance registers and learners' books was carried out in this study. The researcher aimed to see how data obtained from these documents could be used to provide an indication on the extent and impact of effective parental involvement or the lack there of during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher aimed to establish from the attendance registers of learners if there are any links between poor parental involvement and poor attendance. The learners' books provided an important tool of quantifying their performance, attendance, and degree of parental involvement.

The participants' responses provided a plethora of data which was intentionally analysed by the researcher with a purpose of identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning across the database. Moreover, an intentional effort was put into finding how data gathered for this research fits into the broad theoretical bodies of knowledge which are used widely in academia. This thematic analysis of data enabled the researcher to have a clear understanding of the experiences, thoughts and behaviours of the participants concerning the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nowhere in the study does the researcher attempt to present the views of the participants as her own. In instances where direct quotations from the participants responses is made, the researcher clearly shows this by using verbatim quotations and displaying the font in italics. No additions or omissions are made to the participants' responses throughout the study to maintain the credibility of the findings.

In an effort to make the findings of this study easier to follow, the analysis and discussion that follows herein is done in a simple, clear, and logical order. The participants' responses are presented without any alteration but are grouped according to similarities in context to highlight common emerging themes and patterns.

The researcher strived to maintain high ethical standards throughout this study. As such, keeping the identity of the participants and research settings anonymous was of utmost importance. The schools where the research was conducted are referred to as school A, School B, and School C throughout this study. Similarly, the three principals and three teachers are referred to as Principal A, B, and C while the teachers as Teacher A, B, and C. With regards to the six parents and six learners, their responses are coded as Parent A1 and parent A2 for the parents of learners from school A. Parent B1 and parent B2 are codes that were used for the parents of learners from school B, and the codes parent C1 and parent C2 were used to refer to parents of learners from school C.

Similarly, when reference is made to the learners' responses the learners are identified as Learner A1, Learner A2 for learners from school A; Learner B1 and B2 for the two learners from school B; and Learner C1 and C2 for the learners from school C. In total, there were 18 participants in this study. The parents and learners who participated in the study often code-switched to their native languages in their responses when unable to express themselves in English. In such cases, the researcher translated the responses into English, and a colleague validated the accuracy of the translation. The biographical profiles of the study's participants are broken down below.



## 4.2 THE PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

**Table 4.2.1: Biographical profile of participants from school A**

Participant	Occupational category	Experience in education	Age	Gender
Principal A	School Principal	18 years	52	Male
Teacher A	Educator	6 years	42	Female
		Highest grade passed		
Parent A1	Parent of learner in grade 7	Grade 11	38	Male
Parent A2	Parent of learner in grade 6	Grade 10	49	Female
Learner A1	Learner	Grade 6	12	Female
Learner A2	Learner	Grade 5	11	Female

Table 4.2.1 above provides a summary of the biographical profiles of the participants who were sampled from school A. In total, 6 participants were selected in the school. The sample constitute a dominance of females compared to males and in terms of age, the principal was the eldest. On the column indicating experience in education, for the teacher and principal, this indicates how long they had been working in the education sector and not necessarily in this school or in their current position. The highest grade passed by parents of learners from school A is grade 11, the parents' occupational categories were intentionally ignored as they bear no significance to the aims and objectives of this research.

**Table 4.2.2: Biographical profile of participants from school B**

Participant	Occupational category	Experience in education	Age	Gender
Principal B	School Principal	27 Years	56	Male
Teacher B	Educator	11 Years	34	Male
		Highest grade passed		
Parent B1	Parent of learner in grade 6	Grade 12	38	Female
Parent B2	Parent of learner in grade 7	Grade 12	46	Male
Learner B1	Learner	Grade 5	11	Female
Learner B2	Learner	Grade 6	13	Male

Table 4.2.2 above outlines the biographical information of the participants sampled from school B. This sample has more male participants than females. Similar to the trend shown in school A, the principal was the eldest in terms of age and had the most experience in education compared to his other two colleagues. Both the parents participating in this sample had passed grade 12. The learners were in grades 6 and 7 as was the case with also the learners from school A and those from school C.

**Table 4.2.3: Biographical profile of participants from school C**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Occupational category</b>	<b>Experience in education</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Principal C	School Principal	22 Years	49	Male
Teacher C	Educator	14 Years	42	Male
		<b>Highest grade passed</b>		
Parent C1	Parent of learner in grade 6	Grade 12	51	Female
Parent C2	Parent of learner in grade 7	Grade 11	42	Male
Learner C1	Learner	Grade 5	11	Male
Learner C2	Learner	Grade 6	12	Female

Table 4.2.3 above provides biographical information of participants from school C. This sample is male dominated as was the case with the sample from school B. Parent C1 was the eldest in terms of age in this sample. Teacher C had more experience in education than the other two teachers from schools A and B, as shown in tables 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 respectively. The highest grade passed by the parents in this sample is grade 12.

### **4.3 PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA**

The data obtained in this study was firstly recorded and transcribed using a transcription tool called 'Notta'. The data was then analysed thematically to find ideas, notions and topics that came up repeatedly as well as patterns which emerged from the various themes (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2012:10). The researcher familiarized herself with the data, it was then coded while; emerging themes were reviewed, defined, and named. The following data analysis is done under those four themes which emerged. The first theme that emerged is the conceptual understanding of what parental involvement entails from the participants point of view. The second theme articulates the attitudes of principals, teachers, and parents with regards to the

degree and extent to which parents must be involved in the education of their children especially during a pandemic such as COVID-19. The third theme speaks to the challenges that all the stake holders experienced with regards to parental involvement. It encompasses the challenges as experienced by schools, parents, and the learners themselves. The fourth and final theme explores ideas and beliefs held by the participants concerning what could be done to not only increase but also improve the degree and extent of parental involvement in primary schools in the Mamelodi area.

#### **4.3.1 Conceptualizing parental involvement from the participants point of view**

The participants held varying beliefs regarding what effective parental involvement entails, from their responses it was clear that an individual's understanding of the concepts is closely linked to their attitude towards involvement as it is discussed in the second theme. Several views were presented by the participants to conceptualize effective involvement. Teacher A said:

*“Parental involvement is whereby educator and parents work together regarding the learners...because as educators we can't be successful doing things alone, we need parents to work with us. So that when we give them homework they can help. And also support the children because the learners also need support at home”.*

As expressed, this view limits parental involvement to interactions between the teacher, the parent, and the learner. However, it acknowledges that the success of the school is closely intertwined with the intervention of the home (Maluleke 2014:4). A view echoed by Teacher C who felt that:

*“Parental involvement... according to my understanding, it starts at home, where a parent reminds the learner about the responsibility of going to school, when a learner is at the school, the parent will make a follow up, when the learner is at home the parent will remind them about the schoolwork. If the parent doesn't understand something, the parent will go ask the teachers at school”.*

Similar with the first view, this view also limits parental involvement to only three stake holders, the parent, the teacher (school), and the learner (Grady 2016:16). Contrary to this, other participants felt that parental involvement includes a wider range of activities and interactions. For instance, Principal A held that:

*“With regard to schooling? I think it is when parents want to engage and know what their learners are doing at school. When they know what we have, for example at my school we give*

*all parents the assessment plans, they must know when the learners will be writing which activities, so we want the parents to be always informed of that. They must come for parent meetings, they must be part of the SGB, and they must participate in all the activities the school is doing. They must know everything about their learners... when we call them, when we have issues of discipline, they must come... they must also give us strategies on how to deal with the learners. So, I think it is all of those things”.*

Parent A1 also shared similar sentiments expressing various activities which she felt the parent should do for the learner to succeed in school. These include activities that are not necessarily having a direct link to schooling but involve the general wellbeing of the child. She remarked that:

*“In an education sector, I think parental involvement entail uhmm... helping my children with schoolwork and...and ensuring that they go to school. So, it starts from the beginning when I have to prepare them for... for school, making sure that their school clothes are clean and then they have written all their schoolwork. did their assignments, projects and studied for tests. So, in a nutshell helping them with their schoolwork and making sure that they do go to school and giving them everything to make sure that they pay attention at school... like lunch box, or giving them pocket money, so that they can... their education can be a success”.*

This view is in line with the remarks made by learner A2 that:

*“Parental involvement is when your guardians are there when you need help and always at your side when you have problems at school or at home... help with problems like bullying and schoolwork”.*

This view links the home and school environment as overlapping and both essential in ensuring that the child succeeds. Not far from this is Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres which recognizes that although some practices of families and schools are conducted independently, others reflect shared responsibilities of parents and teachers (Epstein 1995: 702). Central to all this, is the child being able to reach their full potential owing to the parents’ participation. The views expressed by the participants regarding their conceptual understanding of involvement are in line with Goodall and Montgomery (2014:400), who define ‘parental involvement’ as the participation of parents in the upbringing and education of their children. This includes meaningful communication involving learners’ academic learning and other school activities.

It is worth noting that most of the participants did not mention specific principal activities which they believed constitute involvement, rather, they defined involvement on much broader

terms. When prompted to specify they would often give one or two activities as what involvement entails. For example, when prompted to specify, learner A2 said: *“help with problems like bullying and schoolwork.”* Whilst Teacher B said: *“whenever the parent is called, he or she must come to school”*. This lack of clarity as to which complex and varying activities constitute involvement is alarming and provides glimpses of insights as to why there is often lack active participation and engagement from the relevant stakeholders.

A common emerging conceptual understanding of involvement from the participants' responses is that involvement is limited to certain specific activities that they believe an involved parent ought to part take in. There is no theoretical source and evidence-based body of knowledge that the participants seemed to base their understanding on. This is concerning considering that the teachers and principals interviewed held bachelor's degrees and others had post degree qualifications. Their understanding of involvement seems to be no better than that of the parents and learners who had no formal university training. Owing to this, it is worth re-evaluating whether modern curricula studies in education properly prepare teachers and education managers to effectively involve parents in their children's education. Moreover, for the teachers and managers already in practice, continual development and training is of uttermost importance.

#### **4.3.2 Applied expectation and interpretation of involvement during a pandemic**

The second theme that emerged whilst analyzing the data in the study, was how the participants' attitudes and beliefs about involvement affects the extent to which they expect or render involvement. The researcher found that, although the participants felt strongly about the importance of involvement in helping the children achieve and actualize their full potential, often there was a lack of clarity as to how and whose responsibility it was to carry out certain activities between the school and the parents. According to Porumbu and Necsoi (2013) this lack of clarity not only leads to role confusion but also contributes towards lack of motivation and discouragement to be involved.

There exists a gap between the expectations that schools have regarding what parents must do at home and what parents think is enough (Jeziarski & Wall 2019: 812). At home, the parents who took part in the study felt they were doing everything they could to support the learners during the difficult time of the Pandemic whilst the teachers and some principals at schools felt they were not getting enough support from the learners' primary caregivers. Expectations and realities need to be communicated between all the stakeholders for actualization of effective involvement to be realized (Durisic & Bunijevac 2017:139). There was no doubt in any of the

participants' responses that parental involvement is crucial at any point during a child's education and even more so during a disruptive pandemic such as COVID-19. When asked whether he thought parental involvement is essential during a pandemic, Principal C exclaimed:

*"Indeed! Parental involvement has never been significant and imperative than these trying times of COVID-19".*

A view echoed by Teacher C who said:

*"Yes, I think it is very important. Parental role is what makes a learner understand the reason of being at school".*

In agreement with the two responses, Principal A made the following expression when asked whether he believed parental involvement was significant during a pandemic especially during the time of hard lockdown and staggered attendance:

*"Of course, it's important...because now, when we can't see the learners every day, who must help the learners? The curriculum doesn't stop, it continues... so I feel it is important".*

This view brings to light a very important aspect of life often overlooked during times of panic and uncertainty: continuity. Although normal schooling had been hindered, time continued to pass, children continued to grow and develop whether intentionally or by chance learning continued to take place. This is put clearly by Principal C when he said:

*"During COVID-19 learning, growth and development of children continued. As a result of that, as schools and parents we needed to find other ways and not the traditional approach. For that to happen we needed our parents to be at the forefront".*

Without a doubt, the participants felt strongly that the involvement of parents in a child's education during a pandemic such as COVID-19 is significant. As Durisic and Bunijevac (2017: 138) mention that the more actively parents participate in their children's learning, the more favourable the accomplishment consequences are. Their strong views were made evident when they mentioned endeavours that they took to make sure that the learners felt helped at home and at school. There however seem to be little to no collaboration between the two main stakeholders, namely, the parents and the schools' efforts. At home the parents did things as best they thought with very little and often no guidelines of the school's expectations. In highlighting some of the means the parents used to ensure that they were supported during the hard lockdown and subsequent staggered school attendance, the learners expressed the various

activities that their parents did to ensure support. From the learners' responses one can see that the parents were invested in ensuring that they protect their young from contracting the virus whilst at school and in the home. For instance, Learner A2 recalled:

*“The beginning of Corona Virus my mom bought five big soaps, two boxes of masks, and two big bottles of sanitizers. But the boring part is that we had to skip days not coming to school, in a week we would come to school two or three times. When I was at home I studied. My mother was helping me”.*

In the same breath Learners B1, C1 and C2 respectively shared a similar experience:

B1: *“they were telling me every time to wear mask when I go play and when I go to school. My mother was buying me sanitisers and helping with homeworks”.*

C1: *“they take care of us, buy us masks and sanitisers”.*

Asked whether she felt the support of her parents upon returning to school Learner C2 in harmony with the other learners replied:

*“Yes... because they bought me masks and sanitiser”.*

The devotion of the parents in ensuring that their children remained healthy during the peak of the pandemic is unquestionable. The buying of masks and sanitisers to protect the learners from contracting the virus seem to have been at the top of the parents' priority lists. Also, two out of the four participants made mention of having been assisted with their homework by their parents during the time of the pandemic. One cannot say with certainty whether the other learners who did not mention this did so because they forgot to mention or because they had not received academic assistance at home. In any case, without a doubt the children appreciated their parents' invested efforts in supporting them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The researcher initially attempted to establish the value that the participating parents placed in the education of their children. In so doing, the researcher was able to establish a link between the parents' attitudes and beliefs about the education of their young and the amount and extent to which they involved themselves in the education of their children during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent hard lockdowns. The parents deliberated on their timeous efforts to ensure that their children continue to learn and develop during the peak of the pandemic. They not only made mention of their efforts to ensure that the children did not miss out on any school activities but also of their attempts to gain access to information from the school which one could argue should have been made public to the parents in the first place. All the parents

interviewed expressed that they believed it was through education that their young would succeed and as such had a duty to ensure that their children appreciate school. Asked about his attitude towards the education of his children Parent C2 sincerely exclaimed:

*“My attitude is very positive... I never got a chance to complete school, due to poor parental involvement, I was forced to leave school and work at a very young age. So, I don't want that to happen to my kids that is why I always encourage them to take education very seriously”.*

A view he shares with Parent A1 who said:

*“Uhm, I value education very much, so that is why I encourage my kids to study very hard. So, my attitude is positive as I see education as a better way to the future”.*

It seems that the value that parents placed in the education of their children was the driving force that pushed them to, within their abilities, support their children and encourage them to strive to succeed during the time of disrupted schooling. The parents took it upon themselves to find out information concerning the when and how their children would attend school and encouraged them to do so. Despite the challenges posed by the hard lockdowns the parents wanted their children to progress and move forward in their studies. Parent A1 had this to say on the significance of being involved during disrupted schooling:

*“I think it's very significant... very, very much because during a pandemic like COVID-19 we saw that it was very hard, so parental involvement... as a parent I had to make sure that during COVID-19 they get their homework, and they write their work, because it was very difficult since they were not attending every day. I had to work with teachers to make sure that my children can learn and pass... go to the next Grade”.*

Parents B1 and C2 had this to say on the same matter:

B1: *“Because COVID-19 was a very hard time when children did not understand why they had to stay at home, and what they attended school on given dates, so us parents had to make them understand to help them understand the situation and be able to pass”.*

C2: *“it is very significant because COVID was very hard on all of us. Therefore, as a parent I had to be strong for my children and help them see that COVID or no COVID education is important. So, I had to keep them studying so that they can go to the next grade even during COVID”.*

It is worth noting that, despite challenges that came with the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns it was the parents' wish that their children progressed and move forward



in their classes. Sentiments such as “*go to the next Grade*”, “*be able to pass*” and “*go to the next grade even during COVID-19*” signify the great need for continuity and progress even during times of crisis and belief that given sufficient support, the learners had the potential to succeed in their future studies despite gaps in content knowledge which might have been incurred.

It seems the desire to help the children attain the outcomes of the grade and move forward was present, however, not enough was done to equip parents and put them in a position to be able to help their children. The expectation that parents would be instant-teachers at the time of the pandemic, with limited and often no proper guidance and communication from the school resulted in the frustrations that the teachers and some principals shared concerning the level and extent of parental involvement they received during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown. Whereas parents felt they were doing all they could to assist and support their children at home. This is in harmony with the findings of Porumbu and Necsoi (2013) who held that sometimes parents may feel like they are doing everything to help their children, but due to lack of communication between the parents and the school, the school may feel as though involvement is lacking. The following are the sentiments that were shared by the teachers concerning the amount and extent to which they felt the parents were involved.

Commenting on the attitudes of parents towards the education of their children in the school where he works especially during the COVID-19 pandemic Teacher A had this to say:

*“Actually, I can say... it is negative, there only few parents that are actively involved in their learners’ education. Some they don’t even come to attend the child’s issues. Where I am teaching it is really quite a problem with parents because they are not involved in most cases, it is only few of them”.*

Echoing these words, Teacher B, C and Principal A, B respectively said:

Teacher B: *“Ehhh, to mention some of the parents are negative about education. And some are positive. Mostly they are less involved”.*

Teacher C: *“The attitudes of the parents differs, there are those parents that are involved in the education of their children. They do come to school and ask about their children’s progress. There are also those parents that shy away, and dedicate their responsibilities to the teachers, sometimes they don’t avail themselves to come to meetings. They don’t care if their children pass or fail, they don’t even come to school to ask why their children are failing”.*

Principal A: *“As you can see the community here, most of these parents are not educated themselves, you can see we have squatter camps, so the parents, most of them they don’t care. We call meetings, they don’t come. We call them when the learners have been ill discipline, they don’t come, so we try to communicate with parents, but often we don’t get any response. Sometimes the learner is here from Grade 1 to 7 without seeing the parent, throughout the schooling. So, we don’t know... its hard”.*

Principal B: *“In my school... since it’s a middle-class school, quantile 5 type of school, many of the parents, they don’t... they lack that involvement, they lack interest because many of them they work, if we call them, they are always not available. So, I would say they lack interest in their children’s education”.*

Contrary to the views expressed above, Principal C had this to say on the attitudes of parents in his school:

*“It has gradually changed from negative to positive attitude. Initially parents used to regard school as a centre that only cares for their children during the course of the day. Through robust and purposeful engagements, it gradually changed to promising and positive attitude”.*

When asked to elaborate on the robust and purposeful engagements he mentioned, and to comment on the level and extent of parental involvement in his school, he further articulated:

*“It is not bad; it is kind of good... most of parents in my school are involved. This is precisely due to alluded purposeful engagements with parents. Time devoted to deal precisely with parental involvement with relevant stakeholders and personnel assigned to drive the school’s engagement campaigns. A school takes the form of its management”.*

The views of Principal C bare an obvious contrast to those of his counterparts mentioned earlier. Whilst Teachers A, B, and C together with Principals A and B were in unison of the lack of involvement and poor support from parents and made mention of several examples to support their view, Principal C explained how the school had endeavoured to encourage involvement and the results that they enjoyed due to intentional efforts put in place to ensure that the school and parents had the same understanding of the expectations on each. Findings of the study suggest that, for schools to truly benefit from the parents’ desire to see their children grow and continue to learn and develop despite hard times such as were experienced during the pandemic, an intentional, deliberate, and purposeful effort needs to be made to involve parents.

It is worth noting that both the school and the home shared similar sentiments concerning the successes that can be enjoyed if both the home and schoolwork together to mould a child (Perriell 2015: 75). It was the perception of the participants that when parents are involved in the education of their children the general behaviour and overall achievement levels of a child improve. Parent A1 associated poor parental involvement with learner ill-discipline and lack of respect towards teachers when he said:

*“Parental involvement is very important because if you check the kids of nowadays, they are very disrespectful to their teachers, if as parent we become more involved, they become more submissive”.*

A view which bares resemblance to that was made by Teacher B:

*“it’s sad that the learners who do well, we know the parents they attend meetings and participate, the troubled ones are the ones we don’t know. Even when collecting reports, a different person comes every time. One does not know who cares for the child”.*

This is in unison with (Jafarov 2015:36) who highlighted how inadequate or no parental involvement contributes to low student achievement and engagement. Without a doubt, one can safely affirm that all the stakeholders agreed of the significance of parental involvement during a pandemic. However, it seems a common ground is yet to be reached to establish what constitutes effective parental involvement and a scale to be developed to measure involvement. The teachers felt that parents who did not attend meetings and whose children did not complete activities which were given to them during the pandemic, were not involved.

Parents on the other hand believed they did everything within their might to support their children during the difficult time of the pandemic. Common ground is yet to be reached. Schools who feel they enjoy a high level of involvement and engagement with the parents have taken steps and put in place means to make the relationship between the school and the home as conducive as possible. For an example, principal C had this to say when asked how the school managed to get the assistance of parents with homework during rotational learning:

*“During staggered attendance, we compiled what was termed ‘homework booklet’ for each week. This was a booklet with all home-activities for the week. Learners will collect it on their day of attendance. Parents were able to collect for their affected/infected children without compromising the safety of other children. Teachers’ alternative number were safely shared with parents to assist in case clarity seeking questions”.*

This theme has discussed the findings made by the researcher concerning the attitudes and beliefs about the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has highlighted the appreciation that the learners had with the efforts that the parents made to ensure that they were able to continue schooling safely during the challenging times of the pandemic. In addition to that, it has shown that the parents were concerned with the continuation of learning and development for their children as well as how they tried to support their young during the trying times. Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that some teachers and Principals felt let down by parents during the time of the pandemic and did not enjoy support and engagement as they would have liked. However, in schools where there was a deliberate effort made to engage parents and various engagement strategies employed, a certain level of achievement of parental involvement was attained. All the schools that participated in the study used similar methods to communicate with parents during the hard lockdown but not all were equally successful. The next theme discusses some of the challenges that were encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic with regards to parental involvement.

#### **4.3.3 Challenges that stakeholders namely parents, teachers and principals experienced with regards to parental involvement**

The third theme speaks to the challenges that parents, teachers, and principals experienced with regards to parental involvement during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher found that parents experienced similar challenges though often in different context, it was clear that the underlying issues leading to the challenges were often shared amongst the participants. Poor communication of expectations swiftly led to the breakdown of the relationship between the school and the home. The most common challenge expressed was concerning the rotational timetable. Apart from the challenge of understanding the days in which a learner had to attend, there was also the issue of changes which were often not communicated timeously leading to further confusions. Parent A1 recalls his experience during the period of staggered attendance and expressed his frustrations as follows:

*“The problem was with the rotational attendance... yoooooh it was very hard, because sometimes you would find that there are holidays in between, and the school did not count them, and when the children go to school, they would call me to fetch my children because they went on wrong days. Sometimes, learners would not go to school, only to find out that they missed their days. It was complicated. What really helped me is that I would go to school and ask”.*

It is interesting to note that despite his efforts in ensuring that he went to the school to find out when his child was expected to attend, parent A1 felt frustrated by the whole ordeal. As will be discussed later, it is worth asking whether schools used all resources in their disposal to ensure that parents stayed abreast of any developments or changes in the attendance of learners. Parent C2's view is that a communication breakdown between the school and parents is what lead to confusion. She points out:

*“There was lack of communication during hard lockdown between the school and parents... In most cases, children would be confused about their attending days, because the school would not update their timetables, sometimes there would be clashes”.*

Parent C1 shared same sentiments as Parent C2 by highlighting lack of communication from the school as a challenge that lead to confusion when it came to understanding learners' timetables, he said *“Attendance schedules were very hard to understand. Because the school would change them without informing us”*. Parent B1 highlights the same challenge that *“Sometimes SMSs would be sent late, so it would make it hard to understand the days when my child has to attend, because the SMS was confusing”*.

From the parents' challenges, the researcher gathers that the biggest was lack of communication between the school and the parents. Genc (2017: 512) highlights the importance of communication by pointing out that communication between parents and the school play a vital role in ensuring good parental involvement at schools. For most parents to have confusions with regard to timetable, the schools did not ensure that the messages reached parents on time. The researcher made this conclusion of lack of communication looking at the parents' responses, for instance, Parent C2 mentioned lack of communication and Parent B1 mentioned that *“Sometimes SMSs would be sent late...”*. This shows that the schools should work hard in coming up with better ways to communicate with parents, they should ensure that the tools they use to communicate with parents delivers their message instantly.

Teachers also had their challenges, most teachers highlighted that the biggest challenge was absenteeism, learners not writing their schoolwork and parents not attending parents' meetings. Teacher A expressed her frustrations by mentioning the following challenges: *“Uhhmm... Most learners were not doing their homework, even when we wrote letters to parents, they were not responding... they would not assist. At some point, the value of work in the classroom was low... it would take time due to lack of parental involvement at home...Learners did not attend in full capacity. Most learners were always absent. Some parents were not even aware of which days their children must attend, when you call them, they would say they are not aware.*

*Parental involvement was poor... because we would call the parents to attend to their children's work at home, they would not respond, or come to school. The learners would still come to school with undone work, without any remorse”.*

Teacher B shared the same sentiments, especially by emphasizing that learners were not assisted at home with school work, school attendance and that most parents did not avail themselves to come to school: *“I would say learners were less assisted at home, because you would find that the learners miss their days, and most did not complete their home works...Parental involvement was inconsistent because when the school would call parents meetings...and Ehhh... the parents did not pitch for meetings, they were lot of drop outs, since learners attended for few days. As a result, the pass percentage dropped, and more learners failed during COVID-19”.*

Teacher B highlighted that because of poor attendance, their school had *“lot of dropouts”*, this is very concerning because it could have been avoided very easily if there was good communication between the school and parents, and most importantly if parents of those children were more involved in their children's education.

Teacher C also shared the same challenges as Teacher A and Teacher B. Teacher C mentions that *“In my school...uhm, there were few parents that were actively involved, Most would complain about lot of work teachers give their children... when the school calls a meeting, most parent didn't come... and remember in a meeting that is where crucial things are discussed regarding learners and issues that parents encounter at home. When they don't attend, we can't communicate with them. Most learners missed school. Some would spend days without letting the school know. It was hard for teachers to track some learners as they were attending in groups, it was later where the attendance register helped us track such learners”.*

Teachers expressed their challenge which could have been avoided if there was positive parental involvement. For instance, with challenge one, which is high number absenteeism, that could have been avoided if the school and parents had good communication methods, and if parents of those children attended parents' meetings, or regularly visited the school to check on the progress of their children. As Allen, Diamond-Myrsten and Rollins (2018:738) point out that school absenteeism has a long-term negative effect on learners as it can lead to high number of learners dropping out of school, therefore it is very crucial for parents to participate in their children's education. When it came to the challenge of most learners not doing their schoolwork, Learner B1 mentioned that his parents helped him with schoolwork in a different manner, they hired someone to help. He said *“my mother was busy working... My mother hired*

*another person to help me with schoolwork, I was not only one attending extra classes... we were 4". With Learner B2 it was not the same, but since her parents were working, she was assisted with schoolwork by her sister. She says: "my mother was always at work, my father used to work night shifts, so my sister who was at University was helping me with schoolwork". This shows that parents can make arrangements, even pay someone to assist their children with schoolwork.*

Principal A showed lack of response from parents as the biggest challenge they face as the school. He said: *"As you can see the community here, most of these parents are not educated themselves, you can see we have squatter camps, so the parents, most of them they don't care. We call meetings, they don't come. We call them when the learners have been ill discipline, they don't come, so we try to communicate with parents, but often we don't get any response. Sometimes the learner is here Grade 1 to 7 without seeing the parent, throughout the schooling. So, we don't know... its hard, it is very tough, you see at this school we have the community Facebook page, we post things there, we have a school Facebook page we use to post things also there. We have a WhatsApp group that has all parents' numbers, but they keep changing numbers. Now this one is using this number and the next day they change numbers... we can't get hold of them, but we... we use those WhatsApp groups, we call. We try to get their information using reports cards, but still they don't come to school or send that information".*

Principal A showed that the school used different methods to communicate with parents, but most parents did not respond to those different methods, which is very concerning. Principal B also shared his challenges by mentioning that *"During Staggered attendance... parents were not helping much. We encouraged parents to come collect their child's home works, but most never came. They did not care. We tried our best...some parents kept their children at home, some never came to school to collect homework. What we are facing right now... learners have huge gaps. Some learners fail normal things that they would pass if their parents were more involved".* Principal B shows that if parents were more involved, especially during staggered attendance, the school would have positive results and good pass percentage. According to Ntekane (2018:1) when there is lack of parental involvement, learner absenteeism can become high and pass percentage drops.

Principal C highlighted the challenges faced by his school as the following: *"Parents changing contact numbers without informing the school...Parents writing activities for their children and Reporting contact (COVID contacts) late.*

The biggest challenge the researcher picked up is the non-responsiveness of parents when the schools communicated with them. The schools had adopted modern ways to communicate with parents, like the use of SMSs and calls, but the biggest problem was that parents changed numbers and did not update the schools, in that case, it became hard for the school to reach such parents. Another challenge is that most parents did not attend parents' meetings, which is where most important information was shared. Jafarov (2015:35) supports that when parents attend school meetings and other school activities, it encourages the child to excel and make their parents proud.

#### **4.3.4 Strategies to improve the degree and extent of parental involvement in primary schools in Mamelodi East.**

The fourth and final theme explores ideas and beliefs held by the participants concerning what could be done to not only increase but also improve the degree and extent of parental involvement in primary schools in the Mamelodi east area. Having expressed the challenges that they experienced, the researcher wanted the participants to reflect on what they thought could be done to improve the relationship between the school and the home. What stood out from the parents' responses were the methods of communication that schools used to share information with them.

When asked to comment on what could be done to improve parental involvement during future disruptive pandemics, Parent A1 summed his thoughts as follows: *“I think the school can come up with other ways to communicate with parents, yes previously during the pandemic they used SMSs, but they can go beyond that. For instance, now parents, use technology very much, even our kids have cell phones, therefore they can use social platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp... because WhatsApp we all have it, and use it to communicate. They can even monitor if the parent has read that message. Because at my kids' school they don't even have a Facebook page... I think teachers must have one on one interaction with parents, maybe once a month to discuss learner performance and behavioural problems of learners, that would be very helpful for parental involvement”*.

From this, one can tell that the parents wanted to have information concerning the daily functions and activities of their children at school. Parent A1 would have liked the school to widen out with regards to the communication methods they used. Adopting modern communication mediums seems to be the parents' 'first choice. However there remains a need to study the effectiveness of modern communication mediums in bolstering parental involvement in public schools. The feasibility of teachers having monthly one-on-one sessions



with parents to discuss individual learner performance is also an interesting thought which studies could explore. Parents B2 and C2 also agreed with the thoughts of Parent A1 with regards to schools adopting and utilising social media to reach more parents. They summed their thoughts as follows:

Parent B2: *“Uhm... schools can use more social platforms like Facebook because many parents and learners have access to it”*.

Parent C2: added *“The school is trying but I think they should use technology fully to communicate with us parents... update their Facebook page every day and record important information and post it on the Facebook rather than calling parental meetings”*.

The views mentioned above come out under one breath concerning the adoption and expanded use of technology to reach parents (Gauvreau & Sandall 2019: 116). However, one would not be wrong to question whether such communications could suitably substitute face-to-face interactions between parents and teachers as Parent C2 suggest. Whilst agreeing that the role of social media and technology in strengthening school-home relations is certainly one to be explored, Teacher B had an interesting perspective on the matter, one which could be seen as easily aligned with that of Parent A1. He said:

*“I think the school must have a strategic plan whereby they involve the parents regularly, like calling parents for weekly parents meetings, and having WhatsApp groups for parents where progress of learners and other issues concerning learners is shared so that they get used to helping their children... even when we experience a pandemic, we would know that the parents are already involved, therefore we won't have problems”*.

Asked to elaborate on whether he really thought weekly meetings between parents and teachers were feasible given both parties' busy schedules and the unwavering demands of circular work and the home, Teacher B laughed and remarked:

*“Not weekly, but as needed. Especially with the parents of learners who are troubled and not coping or keeping up with other children”*.

Teachers C shares similar sentiments with regards to the full utilisation of ICT resources to improve parent-teacher relations. Moreover, Teacher C also mentioned the responsibilities that parents and the school should assume to ensure the success of using technology to communicate by saying:

*“The school, should ensure that the parents phone numbers are correct, update the contact details...Parents should be involved at all times. They should go to school and update their contact details so that it can be easy for the school to communicate with parents”.*

From this, it is clear that Teacher C believed it is the responsibility of both parties to ensure that they had up-to-date records of the contact details of parents. Schools have a responsibility to periodically ensure that the parents’ details on record are the latest and parents have a responsibility to inform the schools of any changes in their contact details. According to Kraft and Rogers (2015:50) failure by either part could lead to a break in the chain of involvement and consequently the blame game of who was supposed to do what would ensue.

Asked whether he believed there were other strategies his school could employ with regards to improving the extent of parental involvement in his school, Principal B sincerely said:

*“We try you know...With everything we are trying I don’t know what we can do anymore. We can’t educate the parents, we are trying, I really don’t know what the school can do better to involve them. We are doing everything... like I said we have a Facebook page, so they can’t expect us to buy data for them. But with the little that we have, we are trying. We call meetings, but some parents don’t come, so I... I feel that the school is doing its best”.*

His response suggests that there are often factors beyond schools’s control which limit the success of modern technological means of improving involvement. For example, uneducated parents who are not technologically literate as well as, parents who are unable to buy data to access information shared on the school’s social page. The responses of Principal B and Parent B with regards to strategies that could help improve parental involvement in the future unearth another element which though mentioned in theme 3 was discussed under a different light. In her response, Parent B suggested that the school could perhaps utilise social platforms such as Facebook to communicate with parents. However, it is clear from Principal’s B response that the particular school did indeed have a Facebook page. Does this mean the Parent forgot that the school has a social media presence on Facebook or is it that the page is so underused that Parents were unaware of it? Upon accessing the page, the researcher found that it had last been used in 2020 and there were no posts made on the page during the time of COVID -19 pandemic and subsequent hard lockdowns. As Olmstead (2013:28) pointed out the plague of underutilisation of available resources continues to be of great concern in some public schools in South Africa. Therefore, for schools to succeed in using social media platforms such as Facebook, there needs to be regular updates so that parents can be encouraged to check for

updates knowing that such pages are an important source of most recent communications from the schools.

Seeing that the Principal C was content with the level of parental involvement in his school, the researcher asked him if there was any advice; he could give to schools which struggled with parental involvement and what such schools could do in the future to ensure better involvement. Confidently, he responded:

*“I would advise all managers at schools to continue to learn, grow and develop themselves and their skills. During disruptions of any kind, all methods of teaching and learning must be explored to form hybrid methods. Everyone needs to do their part, think outside the box. When unsure of the best course of action, consult... consult... consult to make the best possible decision”.*

#### **4.3.5 Relating findings to theories**

The ecological systems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, states that the child’s development is influenced by different systems (Harkonen 2007:3). Firstly, Guy-Evans (2020) mentions that closest to the individual is the microsystems, which includes the family, school, peers, and health services, all these systems influence each other reciprocally. This gives an understanding that schools are part of society, they cannot be separated from the environment in which they are situated. Teacher A and C expressed parental involvement as interactions between the teacher, the parent, and the learner. They also acknowledge that the success of the school is closely intertwined with the intervention of the home (Maluleke 2014:4). According to Grady (2016: 16) parental involvement involves three stakeholders, the parent, the teacher (school), and the learner. Contrary to this, other participants felt that parental involvement includes a wider range of activities and interactions.

The views expressed by Parent A1 and Learner A2 links the home and school environment as overlapping and both essential in ensuring that the child succeeds. Not far from this is Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres which recognizes that although some practices of families and schools are conducted independently, others reflect shared responsibilities of parents and teachers (Epstein 1995: 702). Central to all this; is the child being able to reach their full potential owing to the parents’ participation. The parents’ attitude towards their children’s education is as such vital in ensuring success.

James Coleman’s social capital theory developed in 1988 refers to all social resources in their various forms which are available to children to aid them in their educational growth as social

capital (Bhandari & Yasunobu 2009:488). These resources include a stable family environment which is essential if a child is to receive full educational support.

Without a doubt, the participants felt strongly that the involvement of parents in a child's education during a pandemic such as COVID-19 is significant. As Durisic and Bunijevac (2017: 138) mention that the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning; the more beneficial are the achievement effects. Their strong views were made evident when they mentioned endeavours that they took to ensure that the learners felt supported at home and at school. There however seem to be little to no collaboration between the school and the home in ensuring that their common goal of seeing the child succeed is achieved. This is in harmony with the findings of Porumbu and Necsoi (2013) who held that sometimes parents may feel like they are doing everything to help their children, but due to lack of communication between the parents and the school, the school may feel as though involvement is lacking.

Genc (2017: 512) highlights the importance of communication by pointing out that communication between parents and the school play a vital role in ensuring good parental involvement at schools. This study found that parents were often left confused by the rotational timetable that was adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown period. The findings of this study were that schools did not do enough to ensure open and timeous communication with parents to avoid such confusions.

As Allen, Diamond-Myrsten and Rollins (2018:738) point out that learner absenteeism has long had negative effects on the learners and can lead to high number of learners dropping out of school, therefore it is very crucial for parents to participate in their children's education. This study found that absenteeism was rampant during the pandemic and that led to notable declines in learner performance. Another challenge is that most parents do not attend parents meetings, which is where most important information is shared. Jafarov (2015:35) supports that when parents attend school meetings and other school activities it encourages children to do well and make their parents proud.

Schools have a responsibility to periodically ensure that details of parents on record are the latest and parents have a responsibility to inform the schools of any changes in their contact details. According to Kraft and Rogers (2015:50) failure by either part could lead to a break in the chain of involvement and consequently the blame game of who was supposed to do what would ensue. As Olmstead (2013:28) points out, the plague of underutilisation of available resources continues to be of great concern in some public schools in South Africa. This was evident in this study when the researcher found that in one school parents thought there was no

school Facebook page, but the researcher found that, there was a school Facebook page, but it had not been updated by the school in a very long time.

#### **4.4 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

##### **4.4.1 Attendance Registers**

As indicated in Chapter 2, document is described by Asdal and Reinertsen (2021:2) as a record of certain event which contains important information, it can be written, electronic or photographic. The researcher selected two document sources to analyse the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19. Firstly, the researcher chose attendance registers to check learner attendance, prior to COVID-19 and during the Pandemic and subsequent hard lockdown which resulted in staggered attendance. The researcher selected attendance registers as an important document tool for this study because as Arun and Boopesh-Guptha (2019:115) ascertain, attendance registers allow schools to record and monitor learners' attendance and absence and track patterns if any in the absenteeism of learners. Making use of the attendance registers allowed the researcher to check and compare a possible effect that attendance may have had on learners' academic performance to confirm or contradict some of the views of the participants.

The researcher compared attendance registers for the year 2019 term 1 prior to COVID-19 and the year 2021 term 1 during COVID-19. The registers revealed that during 2019 term 1 (prior to COVID-19), School A's attendance average was 98% in term 1, and School B's attendance average was 96% in term 1 and for School C, the average attendance in term 1 was also just over 98%. For the year 2021 (during COVID-19), the averages dropped slightly to the following figures, School A average attendance dropped to 96% in term 1, a decrease of just 2%. School B's average attendance dropped to 92% in 2021 term 1, and that of school C decreased slightly to 97%. It is worth noting however that 2 out of the 3 administrative assistants who provided this information to the researcher said that it was very difficult to keep accurate records of learner attendance during the period of staggered attendance because of the rotational timetable and the confusions that were often experienced.

The attendance averages of the three schools show that learner attendance dropped during COVID-19. This comes as no surprise; this study has already ascertained that there was a lack of communication between parents and schools during the pandemic and subsequent hard lockdown resulting in confusion as to when a certain group is supposed to attend. Owing to that, the absenteeism rate increased during the 2021 school year. Whether it is only the confusion on attendance days or there were other factors such as reluctance from the parents'

side to send their children to school during a devastating pandemic one cannot say with absolute certainty. However, the researcher agrees with Ntekane (2018:3) that when parents are fully involved in the education of their children, learners do not absent themselves from school without valid reasons.

#### **4.4.2 Learners' Books**

To check and compare possible effect that learner attendance had on learners' academic performance, the researcher chose two books from learners in each school for the year 2019 and the year 2021. The researcher chose the books to see the quantity of the activities and quality of the learners' responses prior to COVID-19 and during COVID-19. The researcher believes that books can assist during the study to see if the parents are helping their children with schoolwork. Charlton (2011:12) argues that learners' books and informal assessments are a record of learners' academic ability. When parents are involved, their support is evident in the quality of the work that the learner hands in. Parents are also encouraged to regularly attach their signature in the learners' work to show that they have checked it.

The activities in the learners' books prior to COVID-19, in 2019 were more than the activities during COVID-19, in 2021. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (2011:6) states that for Mathematics (Grade 4-6) the instructional time per week is 6 hours, and it is encouraged that 1 activity should be given to learners per session of an hour, this means 6 activities per week. The researcher took learners' books in School A and counted learners' activities for Term 1 for both years and discovered that the work in Grade 4 and Grade 5 for Mathematics in 2019 Term 1 averaged five activities per week, meaning there was at least an activity written every day during school days. In 2021 Term 1, the researcher found that the activities dropped significantly. On average, the learners completed three activities per week. In School B, the average of activities in 2019 was five per week and in 2021 the average dropped to 4 activities per week. In School C, the average of activities in 2019 was just over 6 activities per week and in 2021 term 1 that average was maintained at 6 activities per week. This constituted mostly of home rather than class-based activities. This comes as no surprise, due to the reduced contact time because of rotational timetables, teachers spent more time teaching in class rather than assessing. The belief was that learners would complete activities at home under the guidance of their parents. However, the significant reduction in the number of activities indicates that such a belief was not realized. As was indicated in the fourth theme, most parents did not fetch their children's homework booklets, and those who did often had a challenge with regards to understanding the homework requirements, leading to most learners not doing the work.

Another challenge that the researcher came across whilst investigating the learners' books was that, due to the social distancing requirements, most activities were not marked. It is only in school C where some activities were stamped to indicate that the teacher has seen the learners' work. It is a generally accepted and encouraged practice in most schools in South Africa that parents sign their children's schoolbooks to indicate that they have checked their work. The lack of parents' signatures or comments in the children's books, and the reduced quality and quantity of activities that the learners submitted is a strong indication of the lack of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has provided data that was collected during the study, it was analysed, and the discussion of the results was provided. This chapter made clear how crucial it is for parents to be involved in the education of their children, especially during a pandemic that disrupts normal schooling such as COVID-19. In this chapter the researcher used data which was collected using individual semi-structured interviews which were conducted with the principals, teachers, parents, and learners of selected schools. The researcher explored the opinions, thoughts and experiences of the participants concerning parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic (Galletta & Cross 2013:45). The interview questions for principals, teachers, parents, and learners were slightly different in order to enable the participants to give detailed responses based on their position and personal experiences. The data obtained from these interviews were analysed in detail as part of the research process which assisted the researcher to draw accurate conclusions, with concern to the conceptual understanding of what parental involvement entails from the participants point of view.

The chapter also discussed the attitudes of principals, teachers, and parents with regards to the degree and extent to which parents must be involved in the education of their children especially during a pandemic such as COVID-19. It also discussed the challenges that all the stakeholders experienced with regards to parental involvement and provided solutions to not only increase but also improve the degree and extent of parental involvement in primary schools in the Mamelodi area. Chapter 4 also analysed two documents, the attendance registers, and learners' books. They were analysed to assist the researcher gather data, the data provided indication on the extent and impact of effective parental involvement or the lack thereof during the COVID-19 pandemic. The two documents showed a link between poor parental involvement and poor attendance. The next chapter discusses the summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

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## CHAPTER 5

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### **SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter four has presented the data which was obtained in this study. It provided an analysis and an interpretation of findings and attempted to present them coherently and logically to show how they address the objectives of this study. The main aim of this study was to explore the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic in selected primary schools in Mamelodi East.

The goal of this chapter is to firstly provide a review of all the processes that were followed to make this study feasible. From the initial introduction of the research problem, background to the study and what this research aimed to achieve, to the in-depth review of literature that relates to the study, following which the research methodology and research design were discussed. The analysis and interpretation of results which was done in chapter four, are followed by a summary of the results obtained in this study. Recommendations are made based on the findings as well as suggestions for future research related to this study. The summary of results that follows herein are done according to the four themes that emerged whilst analysing and interpreting the results shown in the previous chapter.

#### **5.2 SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDY CHAPTERS**

In chapter one, the researcher introduced this inquiry and provided a background to the study. The research problem aims and objectives of the study as well as questions that this study intended to answer were posed. The chapter also provided a preliminary literature review to show how knowledge obtained from this inquiry would relate to the broader bodies of knowledge already available. In addition to that, a brief discussion of the research methods and research design that the researcher aimed to use was done. The significance of the research was discussed as well as the delimitations of this inquiry.

Chapter two provided the theoretical background to the study. The review of literature was also done in chapter two. The chapter provided scholarly understanding of what parental involvement entails. Reflections on COVID-19 and its ramifications on the education system were discussed. It was in chapter two that the international response of parents globally to the pandemic was discussed with an emphasis on how they provided academic support to their



children. The parents' digital proficiency in enhancing learner performance was also evaluated in chapter two. Apparent barriers to involvement as well as possible measures to encourage parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic were also among the issues discussed in chapter two.

Chapter three discussed the research design and the methodological approach followed in conducting this study. A discussion of the theoretical framework that was adopted in the study was done as well as the rationale behind its use. Chapter three also discussed the methods undertaken to ensure trustworthiness, validity as well as possible limitations of the study that arise due to the methodological approach. Furthermore, attention was paid to purposeful sampling, data gathering techniques and the way data would be analysed and interpreted.

Chapter four focused on data presentation, analysis, and discussion of the results. The transcripts of interviews and other data collected was provided in chapter four. This chapter, as already indicated provides the findings in a summative form and further provide conclusions, recommendations, limitation of the study, suggestions for further research and the contributions of the study.

### **5.3 SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS**

In this section, the following themes are briefly discussed:

- Conceptualizing parental involvement.
- Applied expectation and interpretation of involvement during a pandemic.
- Challenges with regards to parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Strategies to improve the degree and extent of parental involvement.

#### **5.3.1 Conceptualizing parental involvement**

The study discovered that the individuals held a wide range of beliefs pertaining to what constitutes parental involvement especially during a pandemic such as COVID-19. For some participants, their understanding of involvement was limited to the parent, teacher, and learner relations. Rather than explain involvement in totality, participants limited involvement to certain activities that they believed when carried out constitute effective parental involvement. Whilst some participants extended the activities to much more than just teacher-parent relations often the participants ideas about involvement were only limited to their immediate social context. It is worth mentioning that the study discovered that teachers' and principals' perceptions of parental participation were no clearer nor more detailed than that of lay parents and learners. This is cause for concern as teachers and principals have had post school tertiary

education yet did not seem to draw from any recognizable school of thought when conceptualising parental involvement.

This study also found that one's understanding and belief about what parental involvement entails during a pandemic such as COVID-19 could have had a bearing on the level of support that the parents were expected to deliver to their children during the period of rotational attendance. Moreover, the teachers and school principals who contributed to the study were quick to conclude that parents were not fully involved in the education of their children during the pandemic when certain activities which they believed constituted effective involvement were not satisfactory done by parents. This hindered their ability to self-introspect and come up with ways to ensure that the learners benefited fully from the reciprocal relationship between the school and the home.

### **5.3.2 Applied expectation and interpretation of involvement during a pandemic.**

This study ascertained that all the participants spoke in unison of the significance of parental involvement during a pandemic that disrupts normal schooling such as COVID-19. This study's participants agreed with previous research' conclusions that proper engagement leads to improved learner accomplishment. However, it was obvious from the comments of the participants that there still existed confusion as to how and whose responsibility it was to carry out certain activities that facilitated better involvement. It was established by this study that whilst parents believed they were doing everything reasonably possible to assist their children during the pandemic, teachers and principals felt that they were not receiving sufficient support for the children from the home.

The study found that in instances where there was no intentional effort to collaborate the efforts of the school and home during the pandemic, everyone did things as best they thought which resulted in discouragement and lack of motivation when those efforts were not recognized as involvement by the other. Only one of the schools which participated in the study had set guidelines of what they expected from parents during the COVID-19 pandemic and communicated those expectations with the parents which resulted in the school experiencing higher levels of engagement and involvement from the parents. In schools where expectations were not timeously communicated with the parents during the rotational learning period, many of the participants were left disgruntled and confused. This study found that in some schools, parents were expected to take up many roles that are normally carried out by the teacher with little or no proper guidelines on how to assist the learners, this resulted in frustrations for both the parents and the school. On the contrary, in schools where there was a deliberate effort made

to engage parents and various engagement strategies employed, a certain level of achievement of parental involvement was attained and enjoyed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **5.3.3 Challenges with regards to parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic**

This study discovered that the plethora of challenges that the participants experienced with regards to parental involvement during the pandemic could all be linked to one fundamental element, poor communication. During the pandemic, this study found that there was a breakdown in the relationship that the school and the home enjoyed prior to the era of the lockdown. Owing to the restrictions, schools could not have face-to-face meetings with parents and even after some restrictions were lifted, the teachers and principals who participated in the study agreed that attendance by parents was often very poor. This led to schools not being able to communicate their expectations with the parents concerning staggered attendance and lost teaching and learning time recovery strategies.

The study found that absenteeism was rampant during the period of staggered attendance because often changes in the timetable were not communicated timeously with the parents leading to confusion and frustration. It was established by this research that schools that employed various strategies including embracing social media and technology during the peak of the pandemic, enjoyed a greater response from parents and there were less instances of learners being confused about their attendance days. One other factor that made communication between the school and the home difficult was the changing of numbers by parents without informing the school, this led to crucial information not reaching its intended recipients.

### **5.3.4 Strategies to improve the degree and extent of parental involvement.**

Findings of this study revealed that the participants felt strongly about the adoption of modern technological approaches to improve the relationship between the school and the home. It is worth noting that much of the means that the participants felt could improve parental involvement with regards to communication had already been adopted by schools with little success. This study found that for schools to succeed in using social media platforms such as Facebook, there needs to be regular updates so that parents can be encouraged to check for updates knowing that such pages are an important source of most recent communications from the schools.

The study found that interaction between teachers and parents in the schools that participated was often limited to large scale parents' meetings and there was little said to suggest that one on one sessions are conducted by parents and teachers to discuss the learners' progress. It is for this reason that some of the participants of this study felt that parent-teacher meetings

needed to be more regular and personalised than follow a one size fits all approach. It was further established by this study that a good school-home relationship could involve either party making a habit of keeping communication channels open by regularly updating the contact details of parents captured on the school's database.

### **5.3.5 Document analysis, attendance registers and learner books.**

This inquiry found that there was a decline in the attendance statistics of learners during the hard lock down and staggered attendance period in all the schools that took part in the study. It has already been established by this study that there was often confusion with regards to attendance days during the period of rotational attendance. It is worth noting that, in schools that utilised a variety of communication methods to reach out to parents, the decline in attendance was not as great as in schools that continued to rely on traditional communication means. The researcher found that school administrative staff also had a challenge maintaining accurate attendance records during the pandemic and subsequent rotational attendance, even more so the parents and learners were left confused on which were their attendance days.

The learners' books which were analysed showed a decline in the quantity of activities that the learners completed weekly in 2019 term 1 prior to the pandemic to those they completed in 2021 during the period of hard lockdown and rotational attendance. The researcher acknowledges that it is difficult to comment on the quality of the learners' responses for the period of the pandemic as most of the activities were not marked by the teacher due to social distancing requirements. In essence, the analysis of the documents the researcher chose for this study revealed a possible devastating impact that the pandemic had on the schooling system in South Africa. Activities which are normally done routinely and accurately such as monitoring attendance statistics became difficult to carry out. It became challenging for teachers and learners to keep up with the demands of subject policies concerning quantity of activities given weekly. Teachers could not monitor the quality of learner responses due to social distancing restrictions.

## **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study's findings have led the researcher to make the following recommendations regarding the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic and any future disruptive pandemics.

**Recommendation 1**

Schools should make their expectations of what they require from parents in supporting their children clear and ensure that prior to enrolling learners in their institutions parents agree and commit that they will meet those expectations.

**Recommendation 2**

There is a need for the continuous development of teachers who are already in the system with regards to what they can do to improve teacher-parent relations which would result in improved parental engagement and better learner achievement.

**Recommendation 3**

Schools ought to develop a policy that is specifically meant to cater for parental involvement during normal schooling and have a section that speaks to the strategies that the school would employ to ensure involvement during future disruptive pandemics.

**Recommendation 4**

Following the challenges identified by this inquiry with regards to communication, the researcher suggests that there be an urgent development of a common technological communication system that public schools in South Africa use to reach out to parents and that the government avails funding to ensure that even parents and schools from previously disadvantaged backgrounds have access to.

**Recommendation 5**

Schools need to re-evaluate the effectiveness of large-scale parents' meetings in discussing learner progress as opposed to regular personalised one-on-one sessions in which individual learners' needs are discussed to improve teacher-parent relations which would be vital during future disruptive pandemics.

**5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The qualitative approach used in conducting this inquiry gave rise to several limitations to the study which were often beyond the researchers control. However, the researcher put in every effort to ensure that the findings of this study are trustworthy and relevant. Below follows a summary of some of the limitations encountered whilst conducting this study.

There were financial constraints associated with conducting this study. Although the researcher would have loved to include more primary schools in the Gauteng province of South Africa

and perhaps even secondary schools in this research, due to the insufficient financial resources the study is limited to only three primary schools in the Mamelodi East area. However, the researcher made every effort to ensure that perspectives are obtained from participants of different socio-cultural, educational, and economic background to enrich the data obtained. The participants of this study were limited to six per school, one principal, one teacher, two parents and two learners resulting in a total of 18 participants. This was due to the method of data collection used, namely, individual semi-structured interviews with the participants.

The discoveries of this research cannot be generalised to a wider context in the South African education system, yet they provide a clear picture of the challenges facing schools with regards to parental involvement during normal schooling and how those challenges are exacerbated during crisis times such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic could be explored in a wider range of schools in South Africa and not limited selected to public primary schools as was done in this inquiry. This research could be conducted in secondary schools as well in a broader context and wider setting. Other data collection methods can be used other than interviews such as questionnaires, observation, and surveys to obtain a greater sample size. A study that evaluates how ready university-leaving teacher graduates in the field of education are to become practitioners who value the role that parents play in ensuring their children's academic success can be conducted. Such a study can show if there are gaps in the curriculum in terms of preparing teachers to serve the various communities in which levels of parental involvement are different.

A study that explores the communication method preferences of the school and the home can be conducted to create a technologically advanced method of communication for schools and parents that would not only function during normal schooling but also be able to effectively connect the school and the home during times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. A system that would be accessible to all and not just a privileged few. An inquiry into how the relationship between the school and the home can be improved could be conducted to make parental involvement a norm at all levels of a child's school career.

## **5.7 Contribution of the study to the body of knowledge**

Several studies have been conducted, on what parental involvement involves (Castro & Gaviaria 2015:33; Garcia & Thornton 2014:1; Magwa & Mugari 2017:74) and its role in improving learner achievement (Kurtulmus 2016:1149), however no studies had explored the significant

of parental involvement during crisis times such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This study has shown why parental involvement is crucial during times of normal schooling and even more so when crisis arises. The study has further demonstrated that the expectations of the school and the home regarding what effective parental involvement entails are often not properly communicated, this hinders the school's and the home's ability to act as overlapping spheres advocated for by Epstein for the benefit of the child (Epstein 1995: 702). Whilst there have been studies conducted on the effects of pandemics on education systems around the world (Onyema, Obafemi, Sen, & Sharma 2020:108), many of these studies did not explore teacher-parent relations during a pandemic as this research has done. The study's findings can be utilized as a framework for future research on how to enhance the link between the school and the home so that when a crisis occurs, the child's learning and development continue uninterrupted.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

Several studies have established the vital role that parents play in their children's educational development (Castro & Gavidia 2015:33; Garcia & Thornton 2014:1; Magwa & Mugari 2017:74). Most such studies have revealed the link that exist between parental involvement and learner achievement (Maluleka 2014:4). During the COVID-19 pandemic the educational development of children was adversely affected and the role that parents had to play needed to evolve to meet the new demands. It is for this reason that this inquiry aimed to determine the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in selected schools in Mamelodi East, Gauteng Province. To realise this aim, this inquiry was rooted on established theories that have been at the forefront of advocacy for the participation of parents in the education of their children.

One such theory is the ecological systems theory, first advocated for by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979 which acknowledges different systems that influence the development of an individual (Harkonen 2007:3). The parent and school both being in the microsystem exert a great influence on the child. As the findings of this inquiry have established, when there is a deliberate effort to align the efforts of the parents and the school especially during crisis times such as COVID-19 pandemic the child benefits the most. Coleman's socio capital theory as well as Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres were also of great significance in driving this inquiry towards realising its aims. Drawing from all these theories the researcher was able to develop a methodological approach that drove this inquiry towards realising its objectives.

This inquiry followed a qualitative approach. As such, the researcher was able to explore the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of the participants concerning the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of participant's responses (Mir & Jain 2018:9). Although the sample size was limited to only 18 participants, their insights sufficiently addressed the research questions and thus realise the study objective. The findings of this entire research have shown that parental involvement is crucial not only during times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic but also during periods of normal schooling. Particularly for the schools that participated, a lot needs to be done to improve and nurture the relationship between the school and the home now, to ensure that when crisis arrives, the school and the home function effectively as a unit in ensuring that teaching and learning continues as best as possible. It is the researcher's belief that the findings of this study can serve as a guideline for future researchers on how the devastating effects of pandemics can be mitigated to ensure that education systems are not adversely affected.



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## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2022/10/12

Ref: **2022/10/12/61519588/23/AM**

Dear Mrs TP Motsumi

Name: Mrs TP Motsumi

Student No.:61519588

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2022/10/12 to 2025/10/12

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mrs TP Motsumi  
E-mail address: 61519588@mylife.unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: 0609770140

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Prof SS Khumalo  
E-mail address: ekhumass@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: 0124296839

**Title of research:**

**The significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic in selected primary schools in Mamelodi East, Gauteng Province.**

**Qualification:** MEd Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2022/10/12 to 2025/10/12.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2022/10/12 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2025/10/12**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

**Note:**

The reference number **2022/10/12/61519588/23/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



**Prof AT Motlhabane**  
**CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC**  
 motlhat@unisa.ac.za



**Prof Mpine Makoe**  
**ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN**  
 qakisme@unisa.ac.za

## APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



### GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

R/4/4/1/2

#### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	17 November 2022
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2023– 30 September 2023 2022/512
Name of Researcher:	Motsumi T
Address of Researcher:	Section B Ekangala
Telephone Number:	0609770140
Email address:	<a href="mailto:motsumi.tshegofatso@gmail.com">motsumi.tshegofatso@gmail.com</a>
Research Topic:	The significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic in select primary schools in Mamelodi East, Gauteng Province.
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	3 Primary Schools
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

#### **Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1  
Making education a societal priority

#### Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001  
Tel: (011) 365 0488  
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za  
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. The letter would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of the relaxation of COVID 19 regulations researchers can collect data online, telephonically, physically access schools, or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to wear a mask at all times, Social distance at all times, Provide a vaccination certificate or negative COVID-19 test, not older than 72 hours, and Sanitise frequently.**
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s has been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs, and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and cooperation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers, and learners involved. Persons who offer their cooperation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school program is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes, and telephones, and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers, and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study, the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings, and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a summary of the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

.....  
  
 Mr. Gurnani Mukatuni  
 Acting CES, Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: ..... 15/11/2022 .....

**APPENDIX C:**  
**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE SCHOOLS**

Ms TP Motsumi  
PO BOX 511  
MAMELODI WEST  
0122  
23 FEBRUARY 2023

**ATTENTION: THE PRINCIPAL**

**DEAR SIR/MADAM**

**RE: request to conduct research at your school**

I Tshgofatso Portia Motsumi, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) studying towards a Master's degree in the college of Education Management. For my dissertation, I am doing a study on the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic in selected primary schools in Mamelodi east, Gauteng province. I am humbly asking for permission to carry out research at your school.

This research is aimed at determining the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in selected schools in Mamelodi East. The study will use semi-structured interviews with the principal, one teacher, two parents and two learners, as well as document analysis to gather data. Attendance registers will be required to check learner attendance, prior to COVID-19 and during COVID-19, and also learners' books to see the quantity of the activities and quality of the learners' responses prior to COVID-19 and during COVID-19. The interviews will take 20 to 30 minutes with each participant in the afternoon or during weekends at the place convenient to them.

Please take note:

There will be no financial reward that participants will receive by taking part in this research, participation in the study is voluntary and participants can willingly choose to withdraw from

the study at any point without any consequences. The participants real names will not be used to protect their identity, they will always remain anonymous, also no mention of schools will be done, schools will be referred to as school A, B and C. Interview transcripts and notes made will not be made public, but will be kept confidential. The interviews will be conducted privately in the absence of third parties. Assurance will be made to the participants that their details will not be published, copies of the participants' responses will be made available to them to verify if the researcher has correctly captured what they have said. As the researcher I will remain neutral, by not influencing or adding on the participants responses.

For more information on this research, please feel free to contact the following:

Tshegofatso Portia Motsumi (Student)

0609770140

Supervisor Prof SS Khumalo

0124296839

I thank you for your willingness to participate.

Yours Sincerely

Tshegofatso Portia Motsumi

## **APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT**

### **RESEARCH TITLE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MAMELODI EAST, GAUTENG PROVINCE.**

I Tshegofatso Portia Motsumi, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) studying towards a Master's degree in the college of Education Management under the supervision of Professor SS Khumalo Tel 0124296839, I am doing a study on the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic in selected primary schools in Mamelodi east, Gauteng province. For the exercise of this research, three schools have been selected, and the principals of the schools, one teacher, two parents and two learners from each school will participate in the study. Therefore, you are humbly invited to participate in this research aimed to determine the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in selected schools in Mamelodi East, Gauteng Province.

Please take note:

- There will be no financial reward that participants will receive by taking part in this research.
- Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can willingly choose to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.
- The participants real names will not be used to protect their identity, they will always remain anonymous.
- No mention of schools will be done, schools will be referred to as school A, B and C.
- Interview transcripts and notes made will not be made public, but will be kept confidential.
- The interviews will be conducted privately in the absence of third parties. Copies of the participants' responses will be made available to them to verify if the researcher has correctly captured what they have said.
- The researcher will remain neutral, by not influencing or adding on the participants responses.
- The interviews will be voice recorded to help the researcher during data analysis.

I, the participants in this study have been well informed that:

- There will be no financial reward that I will receive by taking part in this research.
- Participation in the study is voluntary and I can willingly choose to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.
- My name will not be used, I will always remain anonymous.
- Interview transcripts and notes made will not be made public, but will be kept confidential.
- The interviews will be conducted privately in the absence of third parties. Copies of my responses will be made available for me to verify if the researcher has correctly captured what I have said.

By signing below, I indicate that: I agree to take part in this research exercise.

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX E: REQUESTING PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS TO  
PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH**

**RESEARCH TITLE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT  
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN  
MAMELODI EAST, GAUTENG PROVINCE.**

I Tshegofatso Portia Motsumi, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) studying towards a Master's degree in the college of Education Management under the supervision of Professor SS Khumalo Tel 0124296839, I am doing a study on the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic in selected primary schools in Mamelodi east, Gauteng province. For the exercise of this research, three schools have been selected, and the principals of the schools, one teacher, two parents and two learners from each school will participate in the study. Therefore, your child is invited to participate in this research aimed to determine the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in selected primary schools in Mamelodi East, Gauteng Province.

Please take note:

- There will be no financial reward that the child will receive by taking part in this research.
- Participation in the study is voluntary and the child can willingly choose to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.
- The child's real names will not be used to protect their identity, they will always remain anonymous.
- Interview transcripts and notes made will not be made public, but will be kept confidential.
- The interviews will be conducted privately in the absence of third parties. If you as the parent wish to be present during the interview, you are welcome.
- The researcher will remain neutral, by not influencing or adding to the child's responses.
- The interviews will be voice recorded to help the researcher during data analysis.

I, the parent in this study have been well informed that:

- There will be no financial reward that my child will receive by taking part in this research.
- Participation in the study is voluntary and my child can willingly choose to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.
- My child's name will not be used.
- Interview transcripts and notes made will not be made public, but will be kept confidential.
- The interviews will be conducted privately in the absence of third parties.

By signing below, I indicate that as the parent, agree that my child can take part in this research exercise.

Parent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX F: A LETTER REQUESTING ASSENT FROM LEARNERS TO  
PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH**

**RESEARCH TITLE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT  
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN  
MAMELODI EAST, GAUTENG PROVINCE.**

My name is Tshegofatso Portia Motsumi, a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA) studying towards a Master's degree in the college of Education Management under the supervision of Professor SS Khumalo Tel 0124296839. I am doing a study on the significance of parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic in selected primary schools in Mamelodi east, Gauteng province. I would like to invite you to participate in this research. This research is aimed to determine the significance of parental involvement during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in selected schools in Mamelodi East, Gauteng Province.

There may be some terms you do not understand in this letter, feel free to ask me any questions, or ask any teacher or your parent to explain them to you. You will be asked ten questions about the support you received from your parents before COVID-19, especially with regard to school attendance and school work, and the support you received from your parents during the beginning of COVID-19 and during staggered attendance period especially with regard to school attendance and school work, and lastly the support you are receiving now, especially with regard to school attendance and school work.



Please take note:

- You will not be paid by taking part in this research.
- Participation in the study is voluntary and you can willingly choose to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.
- Your real names will not be used to protect your identity, you will always remain anonymous.
- The interviews will be conducted privately in the absence of third parties. If you want your parents to be present during the interview, they are welcome.
- I will remain neutral by not adding to your responses.
- The interviews will be voice recorded to help the researcher during data analysis.
- If there are words you do not understand, I will explain them.

I, the participant in this study have been well informed that:

- There will be no financial reward that I will receive by taking part in this research.
- Participation in the study is voluntary and I can willingly choose to withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences.
- My name will not be used.
- Interview transcripts and notes made will not be made public, but will be kept confidential.
- The interviews will be conducted privately in the absence of third parties, my parents can be present if I want them to be.

By ticking below, I indicate that: I agree to take part in this research exercise.

Yes, I will take part	No, I do not want to take part
 <input data-bbox="515 824 608 904" type="checkbox"/>	 <input data-bbox="1185 824 1278 904" type="checkbox"/>

Witness's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed).

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS**

1. Please give a short introduction of yourself and the number of years you have been a principal in the school.
2. How many learners does the school have?
3. How do you understand the term parental involvement?
4. What are the attitudes of parents towards the education of their children in your school?
5. Do you think parental involvement is significant, especially during a pandemic like COVID-19? Please elaborate.
6. Which methods did the school use to communicate with parents during hard lockdown, especially during the period of staggered attendance, were there digital or technological methods used to communicate, and if so which ones? How did you ensure that the message reaches parents?
7. Which digital tools do you use to communicate with parents now during COVID-19, and how do you ensure that the message reaches parents?
8. During the period of staggered attendance, how were parents involved in the education of their children? Elaborate on your answers in terms of helping with learner assessment (such as homework).
9. What challenges did the school encounter with parents during COVID-19, especially during the staggered attendance?
10. What are the drawbacks of poor parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic?
11. How would you rate parental involvement in your school during COVID-19? Do you think it's good, poor or incontinent? Please elaborate.
12. How could the school ensure that parents are effectively involved in the education of their children during future disruptive pandemics?

**APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

1. Please give a short introduction of yourself and the number of years you have been a teacher in this school.
2. What are the attitudes of parents towards the education of their children in your school?
3. How do you understand the term parental involvement?
4. Do you think parental involvement is significant especially during a pandemic like COVID-19?
5. During the period of staggered attendance, how were parents involved in the education of their children? Elaborate on your answers in terms of helping with learner assessment (such as homework).
6. What challenges did the school encounter with parents during COVID-19, especially during the staggered attendance?
7. How would you rate parental involvement in your school during COVID-19? Do you think it's good, poor or incontinent? Please elaborate.
8. What are the drawbacks of poor parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic?
9. How could the school ensure that parents are effectively involved in the education of their children during future disruptive pandemics?

**APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS**

1. Please give a short introduction of yourself and how many children do you have in this school?
2. What is your attitude towards the education of your children?
3. How do you understand the term parental involvement?
4. Do you think parental involvement is significant especially during a pandemic like COVID-19?
5. Which technological method did the school use to communicate with you during hard lockdown, especially during staggered periods?
6. Was the method helpful, did you understand the message, for example homework?
7. Are you technologically literate, are you able to help your child with school work using modern technology?
8. What did you do to show that you are actively involved in your child/children's education during staggered attendance and now during COVID-COVID-19?
9. What challenges did you encounter with the school especially during staggered attendance?
10. What improvements and changes can you do to ensure good involvement with the school now during COVID-19?
11. What can the school do to encourage good parental involvement during pandemics like COVID-19?

**APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LEARNERS**

1. How old are you this year, 2023?
2. How old were you in 2020?
3. In which grade are you this year, 2023?
4. What grade were you doing in 2020?
5. Who do you live with/who plays a parental role in your life?
6. According to your understanding what is parental involvement?
7. Do you think parental involvement is significant, especially during COVID-19? Why?
8. What support did you receive from your parents before COVID-19, especially with regard to school attendance and schoolwork?
9. What support did you receive from your parents during the beginning of COVID-19 and during staggered attendance period especially with regard to school attendance and schoolwork?
10. What support are you receiving now, especially with regard to school attendance and schoolwork?



**APPENDIX K: DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDITING**



**STMbondvo editing services (Pty) Ltd**

148 Aramburg (Mpumalanga)

Cell: 060 346 7091

email:mhlekazist@gmail.com

**Proof of editing**

STMbondvo editing services  
148 Aramburg  
Mpumalanga  
South Africa  
Cell.: 0603467091

Date: 16 October 2023

This is to certify that I have edited the dissertation of the following candidate:

**Names and Surname:** Tshegofatso Portia Motsumi

**Student number:** 61519588

**Title:** Exploring the significance of parental involvement during Covid-19 pandemic in selected primary schools in Mamelodi east, Gauteng province.

**Dr ST Maseko**  
**Director**  
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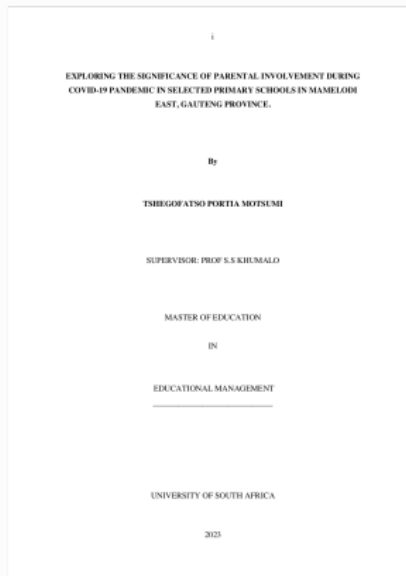


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