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KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**An exploration of parental support during the Coronavirus pandemic
lockdown: Learning from the nature, form, possibilities and constraints in
supporting their child's education.**

By

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Declaration

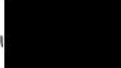
This dissertation has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in the discipline of Teacher Development Studies, School of Education, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

I, Unathi Ntshobo, student number: 222124204, declare that:

1. This dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted for any degree or examination at the University of KwaZulu-Natal or any university.
2. This dissertation does not contain data, images, graphs or any other information belonging to other people without proper acknowledgement or citation.
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 - a) The original words have been paraphrased but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
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Dedication

“Imfundo iqala ekhaya. Asikufundiseli thina sodwa siyi family yakho, sikufundisela wonke umntu ozodibana naye. If uyingxaki kuthi ekhaya, uzobayingxaki ko teacher eskolweni, ekuhlaleni, emntwini ozotshata naye, nawo wonke umntu ozophila nawe”. “Education starts at home. We are not just raising and teaching you for our own benefit as a family, but for everyone who will interact with you throughout your life. If you cause problems at home, you will likely cause problems for your teachers at school, your future spouse, your community, and everyone else you will meet and interact with”.

To my late aunt, these were your daily words when you taught us about the value of home education by parents. Your lessons on life, respect, Ubuntu, perseverance, and how to live well with others have not only shaped me into the person I am today but have also kept me going to complete this dissertation despite all the challenges I encountered on this journey. May your spirit and teachings be reflected in my daily interactions with others and in how I approach life's challenges.

To my late grandfather, it was your encouragement that made me further my studies, the love you have always shown me, the faith you had in me and your love for education that carried me through to start and finish this dissertation. You never missed the chance to reassure me of how intelligent I am and how educated I will be.

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved late grandfather and aunt. It deeply saddens me that I cannot express my gratitude to you in person, as you are no longer with us in the physical world. However, I take comfort in knowing that you are both watching over me from the spirit world. I promise to carry on your legacy of love for education and continue to make you proud.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted and led to major disruptions in South Africa and worldwide. In the context of education, the pandemic altered the methods of learning for learners, as educational institutions had to transition to emergency remote learning as a substitute for traditional face-to-face learning methods. With this transition, parental support became crucial, as learners were now required to continue with their education from home. However, many parents faced new challenges stemming from both the pandemic and existing socioeconomic factors, heightening their support for their children's education.

A total of eleven people were chosen as participants through purposive sampling and maximum variation. The data was generated through semi-structured interviews using a multiple-case study design and analysed using thematic analysis. The study was guided by Epstein's (1995) Framework of Six Types of Parental Involvement and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model of parental involvement process. The study's findings indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic created unique challenges, which challenged pre-existing school practices and led to the emergence of new norms and educational processes that redefined teaching and learning environments, as well as parental support. Parents would benefit from this study as it provides an expanded notion of parental involvement and would then be able to better understand the needs of their child in supporting their education. They would also be able to plan ahead and make provisions for the things needed to support their child's education.

Key words: Parental support, Parental involvement, Coronavirus, Emergency remote learning.

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List of Acronyms

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
WHO	World Health Organisation
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
DBE	Department of Basic Education
SASA	South African Schools Act
SES	Socio-Economic Status

Chapter 1: Introduction and overview of the study

1.1 Introduction

Parental support in children's education has been an ongoing discourse as part of learner and school support, but in the context of COVID-19, parental roles in supporting learning have been heightened due to school closures. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by substantially expanding the notion of parental support to move beyond its traditional focus on school education. In the home, which this study will illuminate, this support includes providing proper nutrition, instilling strong moral values and discipline, teaching social skills, guiding career choices and offering encouragement and motivation, amongst others. The lessons learned from COVID-19 have broadened parental support to include more than just academic assistance. It now also considers the overall well-being of the child, as well as the teachers and schools. In addition, the responsibility of support has been extended to the community and family. This dissertation, therefore, focuses on parental support post-COVID-19 to explore how this concept (parental support) is conceptualised and actioned by parents learning from COVID-19 schooling. This chapter presents the background of the study and argues for its relevance, despite the vast amount of literature on this focus area. In addition, the chapter presents the rationale of the study, purpose and the research questions that guide the study process. Furthermore, the chapter provides a brief overview of the research design, the theoretical framework guiding the study, as well as the significance of the study to the broader community in supporting school education.

1.2 Background of the study

The COVID-19 pandemic compelled educational institutions to change their approach to learning and adopt alternative methods, such as online education for teaching and learning. This involved technical application. Countries and governments around the world took measures to help stop the spread of the virus. According to Ramrathan (2020), lockdowns, social distancing measures and the frequent use of hand sanitisers quickly became common topics of conversation worldwide as the initial response to the coronavirus pandemic. Almost 13 million South African learners who were enrolled in public schools were compelled to stay at home as of March 2020 (Department of Education, 2020), and 1.6

billion young people worldwide had their contact schooling suspended (UNESCO, 2020). School closures were important to minimise the spread of the virus since schools are potentially dangerous settings where many children gather and interact, a danger for the rapid transmission of the virus. As such, school closures were one way of attempting to curb the spread of the coronavirus. However, extended school closure would compromise the integrity of the academic school year and as such, alternate ways of continuing with school education were sought. Parental support, in this alternate way of continuing with schooling, became essential and parents had to assume greater responsibilities for their children's education. Emergency remote teaching and learning processes became the means by which school education continued during school closures (Du Preez and Le Grange, 2020). The nature and form of the emergency remote teaching and learning processes varied substantially and included, amongst others, the use of digital platforms for teaching and learning, digital communication processes for communication between teachers and learners, and mass broadcasting (through radio and television), all of which required parent support beyond just monitoring school work and supporting school funding initiatives.

While these alternatives to schooling during lockdown were plausible and seemed to be the only way to continue with school education, the known substantial variance in the ability of parents to provide such needed support (Radebe, 2022; Rousoulioti et al. 2022) was a major stumbling block in facilitating emergency remote teaching and learning processes. The vast amount of literature on parental support has suggested a highly unequal reality between parents who can support school education and those who cannot (Dube, 2020; Dube et al. 2022; Khowa et al. 2022). The COVID-19 school closure demanded more from parents across the board, further highlighting the ingrained inequities within societies. This study attempts to conceptualise these additional demands from parents in the form of parental support during COVID-19 that could be harnessed for post-COVID-19 parental support. Hence, the focus of this study is on the nature and form of parental support as perceived by teachers and parents, drawing on their experiences during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. To retain the manageability of scope, however, I adopted a 'case-study' delimitation to a school in a low-income township community in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa.

1.3 Rationale of the study

The rationale for conducting this study comes from my personal experience of being raised by my late aunt, who taught me the value of education by our parents at home. Her favourite phrase was 'Imfundo iqalekhaya', which means 'Education starts at home'. I have witnessed the positive impact of the support and education I received at home, which has not only positively influenced my academic journey but also shaped my character, career, relationships with others and my ability to handle life's challenges. Growing up in a rural area, Qumbu, in the Eastern Cape province, I have observed that some children in this community are raised by their grandparents or parents who are illiterate and face economic challenges, such as unemployment. These circumstances can make it difficult for them to provide their children with essential items, such as school uniforms, books and transport to school. In South Africa, Radebe (2022) notes that most rural parents struggled to provide their children with essential learning resources, such as laptops, smartphones, and internet access, during emergency remote learning due to financial constraints. I decided to conduct this study because I was interested in documenting how parents in low socioeconomic communities adjusted their routines, their perceptions of parental support and the resources that were available to support their children's learning during lockdown.

1.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the parents' narratives of parental support during the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown in its nature and form. In addition, it sought to understand the challenges and opportunities experienced by parents and teachers on their journey to support learners during this difficult time.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What is the nature and form of parental support provided by parents to the child during the Coronavirus pandemic?
2. What challenges did parents experience in providing learning support to their children during the Coronavirus pandemic?
3. What opportunities did parents experience in providing learning support to their children during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.6 Brief Literature Review

1.6.1 Discourse on Parental Support

Although various terminologies have been used in scholarly literature regarding the collaboration between parents and schools for the benefit of the child, this research refers to this collaboration as parental support. Research indicates that the level of parental support varies among parents. Some scholars focus exclusively on support related to schoolwork (Hasan, 2019), which includes helping with homework, attending parent-teacher meetings and participating in extracurricular activities (Magwa and Mugari, 2017; Ntekane, 2018). Others expand the definition of parental support to include emotional assistance and other forms of support beyond academic help (Hernández-Padilla, 2023; Alhaji et al. 2024). Parental support, as defined by Alhaji et al. (2024), includes emotional, financial and informational aspects. The authors note that the emotional aspect involves showing love, empathy, warmth and genuine concern for children. Informational support refers to the guidance and knowledge that parents provide to their children regarding lectures and career paths (Amalia and Latifah, 2019). Motsumi and Khumalo (2024) assert that irrespective of how it is defined, parental involvement became increasingly essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the notion of involvement rather than support received greater attention, suggesting a more active participation of parents in school education of their child/ren. Arising from this study, the notion of parental involvement is also put under erasure, and family support and involvement emerge as contributing to the discourse on parental support during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The responsibility of supporting children's education has now extended beyond parents and caregivers to include other family members of the household, as well as peers, friends and neighbourly support. Hence, while taking the common conception of parental support as the entry point into the study, the notion of parental support within this study has been expanded to include other forms and nature of support. This also includes an exploration of the complexities of inequalities and access to resources both within the family and the community, as well as relevant factors that extend beyond the community.

1.6.2 Parental involvement in South African rural areas

The education system in South Africa has undergone significant changes since the country transitioned to democracy in 1994. A primary focus of these changes has been to promote

active involvement of parents in school activities and to engage them in their children's education. The South African Constitution of 1996 emphasises the importance of collaboration between parents and teachers in education by outlining the roles of the government and parents in ensuring access to basic education as a human right. The South African Schools Act of 1996 encourages parental participation in school affairs by introducing the democratic election of school governing bodies. Despite the government's efforts to establish school governing bodies as a means of connecting schools with parents, the lack of parental involvement in South Africa, particularly in rural areas, remains a persistent issue (Mavuso, 2022). According to Motshusi et al (2024), this lack of involvement can hinder academic success and limit the expected achievements of the learners. Parental involvement in children's education in South Africa is well-documented in the academic literature (Selolo, 2018; Ntekane, 2018), with researchers associating it with higher academic achievement (Sibanda, 2021).

A number of factors have been linked a lack of parental involvement in rural schools. According to Chauke et al (2025), many parents in rural South Africa work low-paying jobs, have limited education, and often do not prioritise schooling. Munje and Ncube (2018) posit that poverty acts as a barrier preventing parents from actively participating in their children's education. Davids (2020) claims that limited parental involvement stems from economic disadvantage, single-parent households, language barriers, HIV effects, and cultural isolation, rather than a lack of concern. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) note that rural teachers often struggle with limited access to support services and have fewer opportunities to participate in professional development courses. As a result of a lack of professional development, teachers in rural schools may not have the capacity to involve parents in their schools (Njiva, 2023). Therefore, it is important to document how parents in rural areas and low income areas supported their children's education during a COVID-19 pandemic.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The experiences of parents with their children during distance learning should be investigated to guide future policy decisions (Garbe et al. 2020). While it is generally expected that all parents should support their child's education, this perspective overlooks the significant economic limitations faced by some households, particularly in low-income areas. This study intends to highlight the reality of parental support in low-income and rural communities through the experiences and perspectives of parents and teachers. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge by adding to the ongoing discourse on parental support in children's education, with a particular focus on the evolving roles of parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the study will provide a deeper understanding of parental involvement and support in crisis situations. In addition, the study broadens and decolonises the traditional view of parental support in education, which limits the involvement of parents to biological parents or family units, and focuses on schooling for the academic performance of learners. Jacobs (2024) argues that it is essential to acknowledge that contemporary models of parent involvement often originate from Western assumptions about the nuclear family, potentially leading to the unfair categorisation of various family structures as dysfunctional. By not limiting involvement to schooling, the study acknowledges that education comes in various forms and settings, including informal ones, which occur at home within the family unit and community. South Africa's dominant Western education system ignores and even negates important aspects of the learning processes of its traditionally based communities (Botha, 2010). New parental roles in supporting children's education have emerged in this study, including instilling moral values and discipline at home, providing proper nutrition, offering financial help by providing resources, and providing emotional support through encouragement and motivation. It also considers the overall well-being of the child, which includes their mental and physical health. Booyse et al. (2011) contend that learning should prioritise fulfilling essential human needs, such as nutrition and security, while also imparting the values of adult society. As noted by Adesemowo and Sotonade (2022), education can also involve both character training and applying discipline, which can take place at home, school, church or in the community. Lastly, the study will highlight how the shift to online learning due to the pandemic created collaboration between schools and families, as well as

enhanced professional development opportunities for teachers when access to the physical school environment was limited. Hadebe et al. (2024) posit that the pandemic accelerated the adoption of technology in education, leading institutions to invest in online learning platforms for continued access to quality education.

1.8 Methodology

The study used a qualitative research approach and was located within an interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm recognises that reality is subjective and can vary from person to person. It helped me understand how different family dynamics influenced parental support during the crisis. One of the characteristics of qualitative research, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), is the participants' multiple perspectives and meanings. The study aimed to explore the nature of support provided and the challenges and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 lockdown when physical classes were restricted. Through qualitative research, I had the opportunity to learn more about how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted parental support from sources who experienced it first-hand.

The study employed a case study design, using interviews as the primary method for gathering data from participants. This approach allowed me to delve into the participants' lived experiences, giving them the opportunity to share their personal stories and perspectives in their own voices. I used purposive and maximum variation sampling to select participants. Schools in this area frequently lack basic educational resources, such as sufficient facilities, adequate classroom space, textbooks and other essential supplies. The data was analysed using thematic analysis, and four key themes emerged from the data, which are discussed in the data presentation and analysis chapter.

1.9 Definition of key terms used in the study

1.9.1 Parent

South African Schools Act (SASA) defined a parent as: (a) the person who is the legal guardian or biological parent of a learner, (b) the individual who has legal custody of the learner, or (c) the individual who assumes the responsibilities of those mentioned in (a) and (b) concerning the learner's education while enrolled in school. The definition of a parent for this study extends beyond the biological or legal relationship between a parent and a child

or anyone living in the child's household. A parent refers to any individual responsible for caring for a child and overseeing their education, whether at home, school or in the community.

1.9.2 Parental support

Shahzad et al. (2020) defined parental support as the various ways in which parents and other family members at home provide assistance to their children in financial, emotional and academic aspects.

1.9.3 Coronavirus Pandemic

The term 'COVID-19 pandemic' is used in this study to refer to a situation that necessitated a shift to home learning, increasing the effort required from parents to support their children's education in South Africa. According to Gumede and Badriparsad (2021), COVID-19 is a highly contagious illness caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which emerged in Wuhan, China.

1.9.4 Online learning

Moore (2019) defines online learning as a method that occurs outside traditional school settings, which allows teaching and learning without the need for teachers and students to be physically present.

1.10 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview of the Study

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the study. It includes the background, purpose statement, research questions, rationale and significance of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section includes a review of existing literature along with a discussion of the two theoretical frameworks that guided the study. The chapter starts with the literature review, which begins by conceptualising parental support and parental involvement through the perspectives of various scholars. In addressing the research questions introduced in chapter one, this chapter also explores insights from other scholars regarding parental support during the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on learning.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) theory along with its key constructs and Epstein's (1995) Model for parental involvement, which serves as theoretical frameworks for the research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology and paradigm of the study. It covered the research design, methods for data generation, sampling techniques and data analysis using thematic analysis. Additionally, the chapter covers the ethical guidelines followed and the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 5: Data Presentation and Analysis

In this chapter, I present an analysis of narratives gathered from interviews with parents and teachers, illustrating the various ways in which they assisted children's learning and how the nature of parental support evolved during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 6: Findings and Conclusion

This final chapter summarises the key findings of the research study. It also includes the conclusions and recommendations for parental support based on this study's findings

1.11 Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the study's background and outlines the research questions that guided the study. The next Chapter, will explore a discussion of the relevant literature concerning parental support during the COVID-19 pandemic. This discussion will also address the socioeconomic challenges and rurality issues that comprise parents' ability to support their children during remote learning.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The concepts 'parental support' and 'parental involvement' are constantly used in this chapter and throughout this study. Parental support and involvement in children's academic lives have been a topic of great interest to many scholars; hence, an enormous amount of literature exists in this area of work (Zuma, 2020). However, there exists a gap in the literature in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on parental support during the COVID-19 pandemic in rural areas.

This chapter begins with the conceptualisation of the two terms, namely 'parental support and parental involvement'. It explores what it means to be actively involved and supportive in a child's education, and considers how these two concepts are similar yet distinct. In the scientific literature, researchers have employed various terms to denote the collaboration that occurs among parents, teachers and educational institutions. Driessen (2021) cites the following as examples: parental engagement, parental participation, parental involvement, school-family-community partnerships, school-family relations and educational partnerships.

Parental involvement and parental support are distinct concepts, as indicated in the literature. Parental support means that families support their children's education, with or without the school requesting parents to assist the students (Hernández-Padilla et al. 2023). It is not limited to the facilitation of the child in academic work, which includes tasks such as assisting with homework, attending school meetings and collaborating alongside educators, but also incorporates the provision of psychological, emotional, financial and social support (Ruholt et al. 2015; Waters et al. 2014). In the case of parental involvement, parents get involved in a variety of activities promoted by schools, as mentioned by Hernández-Padilla (2023). It involves helping children with their schoolwork to support their academic success. This includes working with teachers, assisting with homework and participating in parent-teacher conferences, among other responsibilities (Ntekane, 2018; Roy and Giraldo-García, 2018).

I will present a critical analysis of the literature on parental support in general, COVID-19, and its implications for learning, teaching, and parental support during the COVID-19 pandemic. These three areas frame the intent of my study. Understanding parental support discourses will inform my data presentation and analysis, while literature on COVID-19 will highlight how this global phenomenon has impacted parental support in education. A review of the literature, specifically on parental support during the COVID-19 pandemic, will provide an understanding of the affordances, challenges and opportunities that this pandemic has created in relation to parental support. Lastly, the chapter will explore the impact of COVID-19 on schooling and how the shift to emergency remote learning, due to the pandemic, created opportunities for teachers, parents and learners when access to the physical school environment was limited.

2.2 Conceptions of Parental Support

Parental support is a multifaceted concept (Fan, 2001), and as such, no universally agreed-upon definition has been established. Various interpretations have been provided to elucidate the concept of parental support. As such, the concept of parental support is relative to the vantage point one takes and the context in which it is conceptualised. For example, Ruholt et al. (2015) conceptualise parental support as being emotionally available and continuously reliable for the child in times of need. Hasan (2016) defines parental support as the assistance parents provide to their children concerning their schoolwork. Parental support is not limited to biological parents; it also includes guardians and other family members, broadening the responsibility to the extended family. A different conceptualisation of parental support that extends to family was provided by Waters et al. (2014), who defined it as the term used to describe all types of help given to school-age children by parents, guardians or other caregivers to ensure the accomplishment of a particular academic goal. The definitions provided by Shadzad et al. (2020) and Hernández-Padilla et al. (2023) expanded the concept of parental support beyond just assisting with school work to encompass other forms of support, including emotional assistance. According to Hernández-Padilla et al. (2023), parental support may be regarded as the proactive assistance provided by parents or guardians in fostering their children's emotional, social and academic growth. Shahzad et al. (2020) provided a similar interpretation and defined parental support as a term used to describe how parents and

other family members at home support their children financially, emotionally and academically. In addition, Hernández-Padilla et al. (2023) pointed out that the term “parental support” refers to the support from family in their children's educational journey, with or without the need for the school to invite parents to support the students.

Henderson and Mapp (2002) emphasise that parental support is voluntary.

Drawing from existing literature, it is evident that parental support comes in many forms, such as helping the child succeed in their academic work, providing resources for studying, or simply being there to offer guidance and encouragement. However, it extends beyond strictly schoolwork and encompasses emotional, financial and social support. Extending on this deduction, Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) contend that parental support can also be regarded as involving and emphasising the psychological aspects of parental participation, such as parents’ aspirations and expectations for their children's academic success and professional aspirations. Parental support extends beyond academics to include health and safety issues as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, parental support includes supporting a diverse set of needs that extend beyond who provides these needs, what the school wants, what the learner needs and what the parents want. Hence, the concept of parental support is relative to these vantage points and purposes and may include concepts such as parental involvement, parental participation and caregiving. This study will employ the conception proposed by Shahzad et al. (2020) and Hernández-Padilla et al. (2023), which encompasses not just support from parents but also from other family members. These definitions incorporate several forms of support, including emotional and financial assistance provided to children.

2.2.1 Actions that constitute Parental Support

There is extensive research on parental support. However, there is no consensus on what parental support entails, as various researchers have identified different activities that parents engage in to provide support. Parents can show support for their children's education in different ways, as explored by researchers (Sheldon, 2019; Đurišić and Bunijevac, 2017). In this part, I will discuss what parental support entails and extend it to the educational context.

Parental support, as defined by Yahya et al. (2024), refers to a wide range of activities designed to cultivate an enriching learning environment and promote a child's holistic development. Wang et al. (2024) contend that parental support for a child's well-being includes offering essential support for their physical well-being, such as guaranteeing access to healthy and nutritious meals. This active role in providing nutrition is a critical component of parental nurturing and plays a significant role in a child's overall health and development. According to Ule and Živoder (2023), parental support is not just about supporting the learning process, but also about supporting the entire educational path, upon which parents use their economic, social and cultural capital to help their children. This support, as noted by Wang et al. (2024), includes providing necessary resources, such as books, educational tools, and technology, both at home and within educational institutions, to establish a conducive atmosphere for continuous learning and growth. Lase et al. (2022) mentioned that parental support for children's education and learning includes providing devices such as mobile phones, tablets and laptops. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) argue that parental support in a student's education extends beyond the physical school buildings. It involves creating a nurturing and safe learning environment, providing appropriate learning opportunities, and promoting a positive attitude towards education.

2.3 Conceptions of Parental Involvement

To explore parental involvement, it is essential to investigate its definition and how it is perceived in the literature. The term "parental involvement" is a broad and comprehensive concept that recognises the various ways parents can assist in their child's academic advancement, both at home and in school, while also fostering effective communication between the two environments. Among these ways are helping with homework, encouraging children and praising their efforts, providing supervision, attending parent-teacher meetings and communicating with teachers (Humphrey-Taylor, 2015; Magwa and Mugari, 2017; Madzinga, 2021). In this part of the literature, I will provide the various ways in which researchers have defined parental involvement. I will also explain what it means for parents to be actively involved in their children's education. This will help provide a distinction between parental involvement and parental support.

The definition of parental involvement lacks consensus and there exist various types and dimensions of parental involvement. Researchers have provided multiple definitions of the concept of parental involvement, which will be discussed below. Erdem and Kaya (2021) pointed out that the varied definitions of parental involvement may be a reason for the conflicting findings in the literature. These definitions, as noted by Schmid and Garrels (2021), illustrate the complex nature of parent involvement, suggesting that the concept encompasses a diverse range of home–school activities and parenting practices.

Lowe and Dotterer (2018) define parental involvement as a multidimensional construct consisting of three distinct involvement strategies: parental support giving, parent-student contact and parental academic engagement. This includes supporting children by providing tangible (e.g., financial or practical assistance) and intangible support (e.g., advice, emotional support and active listening). It also involves maintaining parent-student contact through the use of technology, such as smartphones and email, to ensure communication despite geographical distance, and fostering academic engagement by discussing course material and taking an interest in the child's academic progress. Ntekane (2018) elucidates the concept of parental involvement as the proactive engagement of parents in their children's academic pursuits. This encompasses collaboration with educational institutions and educators to facilitate their children's acquisition of knowledge, alongside carrying out their parental duties to foster their children's learning to the utmost extent of their capabilities. According to Foulidi and Papakitsos (2022), parental involvement in children's education involves communicating with the school about their progress and curriculum while being physically present at the institution. It also includes the approach parents take to help their children with homework and how they keep track of their daily school activities. Parental involvement, as defined by Amponsah et al. (2018), refers to parents' commitment to fulfilling their parental duties and taking an active role in promoting their child's optimal growth and development.

Based on the scholarly sources, it can be inferred that a uniform conceptualisation of parental involvement does not exist due to varying definitions provided by diverse researchers. The interpretation of this construct appears to depend on the research focus, thus demonstrating a significant amount of variability.

2.3.1 Actions that constitute parental involvement

There is no universal agreement on how parents can be involved in their children's education. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) point out that parents, educators and family members may hold different views on what constitutes effective involvement actions and how each can contribute to the educational process. However, some researchers have identified two ways in which parents can get involved in the education of their children: home-based involvement and school-based involvement (Darko-Asumadu and Sika-Bright, 2021; Humphrey-Taylor, 2015).

2.3.1.1 Home-based involvement

Thuba et al. (2017) describe home-based involvement as the type of interaction that parents engage in with their children at home, with the intention of improving their education and, consequently, their school performance. This aspect of parental involvement, as outlined by Crosnoe and Ressler (2019), encompasses social and psychological support, such as motivating children to face and overcome academic hurdles, discussing challenges and sources of stress, and praising their efforts and achievements. Magwa and Mugari (2017) identified key areas of parental involvement at home, such as discussing school activities, sharing parental aspirations and expectations, checking homework, parenting style, home roles and providing supervision. Home-based involvement can also include parents providing a conducive environment at home for their children to study. Mugumya et al. (2022) posit that parents have a pivotal role to play in their children's education at home. They can facilitate an ideal learning environment and provide relevant educational resources to support their children's learning. Research has shown that home-based involvement is linked with positive educational outcomes. For example, a systemic review conducted by Boonk et al. (2018) discovered that numerous elements of home-based involvement were consistently and positively associated with academic success. Parent-child conversations about education, the support and encouragement parents provide for learning, and the appreciation for academic achievements and reinforcement of learning at home were all discovered to have a positive correlation with children's academic success in middle school and beyond. Another study by Amposah et al. (2018) also revealed that students achieve higher academic success in learning environments that foster meaningful

mathematical experiences. Additionally, the study revealed that when schools and families collaborate genuinely, children's academic performance can see a significant improvement.

2.3.1.2 School-based involvement

Being involved in school activities is an essential aspect of parents' involvement in their children's education. The other type of parental involvement is referred to as school-based involvement. Parental involvement in schools entails various activities such as volunteering, participating in school events, joining school organizations and maintaining open communication with the teachers and staff (Lechuga-Peña and Brisson, 2018; Darko-Asumadu and Sika-Bright, 2021; Madzinga, 2021). According to Sapungan and Sapungan (2014), parents become active in assisting their child with school work by communicating regularly with teachers, participating in school projects and discussing the child's academic weaknesses and strengths with the teachers. In South Africa, the South African Schools Act permits parents to be part of the school governing bodies (SGBs) to help develop policies concerning various matters, including language, religious instruction, school fees and a code of conduct for learners. Ntekane (2018) asserts that parents can get involved in their children's learning by joining school boards, taking an interest in academic performance and attending meetings to better understand their children's progress.

2.4 Parental Support in South Africa

Research has been carried out on the topic of parental support in education, particularly in the South African context. Sibanda (2021) posits that the quality of parent-teacher collaboration influences children's educational outcomes within the school setting and helps in understanding the necessary measures to enhance the teaching and learning experience for all. Active parental involvement not only benefits learners but also has a positive impact on teachers (Sibanda, 2021), and demonstrates support, appreciation, and awareness towards school management (Gibbs et al, 2021). Naite (2020) contends that parents who do not participate in their children's education process may demotivate and demoralise them through neglect.

Although many studies have investigated the positive influence of parental support on education (Cole, 2017; Đurišić and Bunijevac, 2017; Choge and Odabu, 2023), the extent and effectiveness of parental assistance can differ depending on different factors. These factors

have been attributed to parents' socioeconomic status and their willingness to support their children in learning (Choan and Khan, 2010; Senugul, 2022; Bonilla et al. 2022). A study by Bonilla et al. (2022) discovered a significant relationship between family income, parents' educational level and parental involvement in a child's education. According to the study, the higher the family income, the more involved the parents are, which leads to a positive relationship. Additionally, the study found that educational attainment plays a crucial role in facilitating learning and academic success. The ethnicity of the parents, household income, home environment and their understanding of the value of education were noted by Chohan and Khan (2010). Similarly, Desforges and Abouchar (2003) found that a family's social class, maternal education, level of material deprivation, maternal psychological health, single-parent status, and family ethnicity all play a significant role in determining the level and type of parental participation. Drawing from the literature of these various studies, it is clear that parents' socioeconomic status plays a significant role in their level of involvement, or lack thereof, in their children's lives. Therefore, this study will examine how socioeconomic factors influenced parental support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, a review of the existing literature regarding the effects of parents' socioeconomic status on their support and involvement will also be included in this chapter.

2.5 The influence of parental support on learners' academic performance.

The influence of parental support on children's academic success has been a long-standing topic of research in the education field. Educational researchers have, over time, analytically deliberated on whether parental involvement and learners' academic performance are positively related (Fan, 2001; Fan and Chen, 2001). Collaboration between parents and educators is becoming increasingly crucial in conversations about quality education and academic success in school. The primary motivation for research in this field largely stems from evolving societal needs and the ongoing pursuit of improved educational systems that involve learners, as noted by Choge and Odabu (2023). Bonilla et al. (2020) posit that researchers and policymakers have recognised the impact of parental involvement on academic success. Similarly, Garbe et al. (2020) assert that efforts to boost parental involvement have become part of larger educational policy initiatives. To inform future policy-making, it is crucial to explore the experiences of parents as they engage with their

children during emergency remote learning. This literature section will examine the impact of parental support and involvement on a learner's academic performance.

Dresar and Lipovec (2017) outline that parent and family involvement in children's academics and school is a multifaceted concept that has grown in importance in recent years. Studies by Cutrona et al. (1994) are among the earliest pieces of research literature that indicate the impact of parental support and involvement on children's academic progress and achievement. Their study examined the degree to which parental social support could predict the college grade point average of undergraduate students. Their findings showed that receiving support from parents had significantly predicted the students' grade point average.

Yieng et al. (2019) have defined academic performance as the measure of a student's performance in school. Shahzad et al. (2020) contend that parental support is one of the most important and influential aspects of a child's education and positively correlates with academic performance. Sibanda (2021) corroborates Shahzad et al. (2020) by asserting that a child's academic success is determined by the quality of the partnership between parents and teachers. Amponsah et al. (2018) highlighted that when parents actively participate in their child's education, it leads to several benefits. These benefits are improved cognitive and socio-emotional development, increased academic achievement, greater self-regulation skills, fewer disciplinary issues, positive attitudes, a stronger work ethic and higher educational aspirations. Similarly, Cole (2017) points out that parental involvement in education significantly boosts the chances of their children achieving both academic and professional success.

A study by Choge and Odabu (2023) in Kenya revealed that parents who had effective communication with their children tended to have better academic outcomes. These parents used modern means of communication, such as social media and virtual interaction through the internet, to support their children when they were away from them. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) conducted a study that revealed the positive impact of parental involvement in a child's education on their academic performance and overall school success. Similarly, as noted by Bonilla et al. (2022), children whose parents are actively involved in their education tend to achieve better results than their peers who experience less parental support.

In South Africa, a study conducted by Nkosi and Adebayo (2021) found that when parents are excluded from their children's school activities, it typically leads to a decrease in academic performance. This lack of involvement is commonly linked to ineffective communication between teachers and parents, limited time availability, work obligations and some parents' inability to communicate effectively in English. Nkosi and Adebayo (2021) suggest that regular communication between teachers and parents can positively impact students' daily school routines. The authors propose that educators should hold meetings with parents every term to provide updates on students' academic progress.

These findings from the literature underscore the significance of parental involvement and support in education, as well as their positive impact on a child's overall educational achievement. It can be inferred from the literature that the academic success of children is closely tied to the level of support they receive from their parents.

2.6 COVID-19 in South Africa and its impact on schooling

The impact of COVID-19 on school education has been extensively researched, and the scholarship suggests that there has been a colossal loss to learning (UNESCO, 2020; Mhlanga and Moloj, 2020; Alharti, 2022). In this section, I do not delve into COVID-19 and its severe impact on school education. Rather, I take a more focused engagement that relates to how COVID-19 impacted schooling.

The impact of COVID-19 on the educational sector has been enormous, considering the many apparent policy responses adopted since the emergence of the disease (Patrick et al. 2021). Alharti (2022) states that the COVID-19 pandemic led to worldwide lockdowns, forcing many governments to suspend in-person schooling. This prompted the rapid adoption of emergency remote learning to ensure learners could continue their learning. Hodges et al. (2020) assert that, unlike well-planned online methods, emergency remote learning is a temporal shift to alternative ways of delivering instruction due to unforeseen circumstances or crises. According to Barrot (2021), schools integrated suitable technologies, equipped learning and staff resources, organised systems and infrastructure, implemented new teaching protocols and adapted their curricula. South African schools, including institutions of higher learning, were no exception. Teaching and learning in South Africa's education system experienced a significant setback during the COVID-19 pandemic,

especially in rural schools (Dlomo and Ajani, 2020). Stats SA (2022) reported that the lockdown regulations in 2020 had a significant impact on the number of children who were out of school. The disruptions caused by school closures and the introduction of rotational attendance led to lower levels of overall attendance. As a result, nearly one million children aged 5 to 18 found themselves out of school. New educational policies and regulations, including the adjustment of the academic timetable, new teaching programmes, mode of delivery, catch-up of the curriculum, health and safety measures, as well as financial relief packages, were designed for the education sector (StatsSA, 2022). Wolhuter and Jacobs (2021) mentioned that this approach has led to teaching and learning in South Africa being conducted remotely through digital mediums like in other parts of the world. However, learners were expected to work in online learning environments without receiving any digital coaching in these new educational settings as noted by Rousoulioti et al. (2022). This meant that learners had to rely on their parents for support. According to a Mistra Report (2020), the shift to home and online learning had both social and educational implications, raising political debates about the state's management of education during national crises.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to unforeseen transformations in educational systems globally, including South Africa. Drawing from the literature, the disruptions caused by the pandemic affected South African schools and introduced emergency remote teaching, which created a new and unfamiliar approach to learning for learners and teachers. This transition required increased involvement and support from parents. Teachers and parents needed to work together to make sure that learners did not fall behind in their academic year, as noted by Radebe (2022). A more detailed discussion on parental support during the COVID-19 pandemic will follow.

2.7 Parental Support during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In literature produced before the COVID-19 pandemic, parental support and involvement in their children's education are well-documented (Ntekane, 2018; Hasan, 2019; Zuma, 2020). The literature identified four parental responsibilities that were helpful for children learning virtually: (a) organising and managing children's schedules, (b) nurturing relationships and interactions, (c) monitoring and motivating child engagement and (d) instructing children when needed (Borup, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic compelled learners to continue their education at home and this shift made parental support essential. However, the way in

which parents supported their children's education changed due to lockdown restrictions. Within these new educational environments, Rousoulioti et al. (2022) alluded that students were expected to work in new online environments without any training on digital use. On the other hand, teachers had to adapt to new alternative methods of teaching, including online teaching environments, with many having little to no prior experience. Alharthi (2022) posits that during the lockdowns, learners and teachers did not physically meet at school sites; instead, they used several learning platforms. These new platforms, as noted by Burgess and Sievertsen (2020), were online learning, virtual methods and assessments. Therefore, learners became more dependent on their parents to provide them with support in learning. This means that parents abruptly became the sole source of guidance for their children, as other sources of influence and educational figures were no longer accessible. According to Bonilla et al. (2022), parents are expected to be able to guide children to learn from home and replace the role of teachers at school. However, they had to adjust to new roles and obligations, resulting in increased participation in their children's education, to which they were previously unaccustomed. Their role in distance learning is notably distinct from that of their involvement in traditional learning environments. Zedan (2024) argues that, unlike traditional learning, distance learning occurs at home, which provides parents with the opportunity to have immediate access to lessons, intervene during explanations and develop a comprehensive understanding of the content and teaching methods used by teachers.

Research conducted by Panaoura (2021) in Cyprus found that, in light of the exceptional situations, teachers and parents had to work closely together to ensure the provision of high-quality educational materials, various learning experiences and favourable academic results. As a result, parents took on a more active role in their children's assignments and participated in informal teaching methods to accommodate their children's individual needs and help.

Garbe et al. (2020) revealed that 122 parents were surveyed during the first month of school closures in the United States. They found that more than 62% of these parents reported spending over an hour each day helping their children with educational activities at home. However, the study did not specify the exact actions parents took in helping children with educational activities. According to Lase et al. (2022), parents supported their

children's learning at home by providing internet packages, helping children master the material and participating in completing assignments or tests given by the teacher. Findings by Bonilla et al. (2022) indicate that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents supported their children's learning by bringing home learning materials for the child, revising the child's school work and maintaining rules for the child that they should obey. In addition, parents also supported their children through praise and rewards for accomplishing their schoolwork. However, Tzavara et al. (2023) reported that numerous parents felt overwhelmed by their role in their children's learning journey, as they had to act as intermediaries between their children and teachers who were hesitant to use the available communication channels. This include explaining various worksheets and tasks to their children. Research conducted by Tan et al. (2022) revealed that primary school learners with parents who emphasise Home Monitoring and Support demonstrated the greatest levels of confidence in online learning during the period of school suspension compared to their peers with parents reflecting other latent profiles. These findings indicate that parental supervision and assistance play a safeguarding role in students' remote learning amidst the pandemic. However, despite the efforts to assist parents in this daunting task of educating their children at home, struggles are inevitable (Garbe et al. 2020). Parents experienced a number of challenges, which will be discussed in their separate section.

Based on the literature, local and international research has been done on parental support and involvement in children's education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Garbe et al. 2020; Radebe, 2022; Rousoulioti et al. 2022; Bonilla et al. 2022). However, there is a gap in the form and nature of support from parents in rural areas and low-income communities in the South African context. Literature in the South African context focuses mostly on the challenges faced by rural and low-income community parents (Myende and Nhlumayo, 2020; Magwa and Mugari, 2017; Oluka et al. 2021). Thus, this study is important to explore the nature of the various ways in which parents supported their children's education during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the South African context.

2.7.1 Socio-economic challenges experienced by parents in supporting the child

For effective learning to occur, both parents and schools require access to the necessary resources to support their children's education. This section will explore the challenges that parents and schools encounter in providing sufficient support for children, emphasising how

a parent's socioeconomic status can influence the level of educational support they provide. During the COVID-19 pandemic, parental support was influenced by various factors, with one significant issue being the parents' socioeconomic status (Mkhize, 2020; Govender, 2021; Scrimin, 2022). Therefore, I will discuss the socioeconomic challenges that have impacted both parents and schools in their efforts to support children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A number of studies have explored the influence of the socioeconomic status of parents and their involvement in their children's education, both in international and local contexts (Savary, 2020; Sengonul, 2022; Magwa and Mugari). Sengonul (2022) contends that parents invest their economic and psychological resources in their children's educational pursuits by allocating and dedicating time, effort and financial means to ensure their academic success.

Socioeconomic status has been defined in numerous ways, with education, social class or income being the most frequently used measures. Zhang et al. (2023) contend that the level of education, occupation and income of parents typically serve as the primary indicators of socioeconomic status. According to Sengonul (2022), the term 'socioeconomic status' encompasses economic, cultural and social resources, as well as the resulting economic and social standing, privileges and social prestige. The significance of this definition by Sengonul (2022) lies in its applicability to the South African context, as these elements are the distinguishing factors between individuals belonging to high SES groups and those belonging to low SES groups. Alhaji et al. (2024) contend that parents with high socioeconomic status give higher levels of psychological support to their children through an enriched atmosphere that promotes and encourages the development of skills required for success at school.

Researchers have identified that parents' level of involvement in their children's education can be influenced by their socioeconomic status (Poole, 2017; Nadjarian, 2017; Govender, 2021). Sengonul (2022) asserts that parents from more affluent families typically hold greater educational aspirations for their children and, as a result, dedicate additional resources towards fostering their children's cognitive, intellectual and academic growth. The statement is supported by Zhang et al. (2023), who noted that parents from high socioeconomic backgrounds tend to place a great value on education and regard it as an important aspect of both their own families and the broader community. This is due to the fact that children from families of higher socioeconomic status have access to better

educational materials and resources at home, particularly books and magazines, due to their economic advantage, as mentioned by Volodina et al. (2021). Additionally, Zhang et al. (2023) have stated that parents from high-income families have sufficient resources and time to interact with teachers through various means, such as email and face-to-face communication. Duan et al. (2018) conducted a survey involving 19,487 junior school students in China to explore how socioeconomic status (SES) influences the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. Their findings indicate that parental involvement in educational activities is highly beneficial for primary school learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

In South Africa, Magwa and Mugari (2017) conducted a study to identify the factors that contribute to the lack of parental involvement in education. The findings indicated that one major contributor was the socioeconomic status of parents, which encompassed their education level, occupation and income. The study revealed that parents with limited literacy often struggled to help their children with schoolwork, as they lacked the necessary knowledge and skills. In contrast, those with higher education tended to be more actively engaged in supporting their children's academic endeavours compared to parents with lower literacy levels. This research by Magwa and Mugari (2017) corroborates the earlier findings of Al-Matalka (2014) who asserted that socioeconomic status has a great influence on parental involvement in comparison to other factors. According to Al-Matalka (2014), parents who have a higher level of education are more likely to be actively involved in their children's education, as they possess greater knowledge and understanding of effective ways to supervise and guide their children's academic progress. In addition, they are also more likely to provide effective solutions to their children's academic difficulties, whether at school or at home. Nadjarian (2017) also acknowledged that the parent's socioeconomic status influences parental involvement. According to Nadjarian (2017), children growing up in socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances, specifically in single-parent households, are less likely to receive the same level of parental attention, engagement in activities and access to resources that foster student engagement. The study's results indicated that parental involvement and student achievement are influenced by the student's socioeconomic status. When a family has a higher income, parental involvement tends to increase, which in turn enables students to achieve higher scores in mathematics and

reading. Moreover, students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds often have parents who are constantly working to provide for their families. Schoeman (2018) notes that due to the socio-economic circumstances in South Africa, many parents are required to work longer hours. This is often necessary to support their families, and some even take on multiple jobs to make ends meet. Participants in the study by Maqoqa et al. (2023) also identified socioeconomic factors as one hindrance to parental involvement. Due to unemployment, parents lived far away from their children, so children had to live with a relative or family member. Time and finance are also factors that hinder their involvement.

Drawing from the literature, it is clear that socioeconomic factors, such as the parents' income and level of education, influence the extent to which they support and get involved in their children's education. Therefore, I argue that relying solely on parental involvement is insufficient to address the challenges affecting education in many underprivileged communities. Addressing social issues that arise from lower socioeconomic status, which influence the extent of parent involvement, must also be addressed in order to make a meaningful impact, as suggested by Savary (2020).

2.7.2 Socioeconomic Challenges experienced by parents during COVID-19

Various factors hindered parents' ability to support their children's learning during COVID-19, with socioeconomic status emerging as a key factor. Zhang et al. (2023) highlight that the socioeconomic challenges posed by COVID-19 have intensified parental anxiety and uncertainty among families from low socioeconomic backgrounds. A study by Zhang et al. (2022) found that parents with low economic status experience higher levels of anxiety, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which leads to decreased communication and engagement with teachers. Their study found that family education was the predominant element in children's education and learning during the COVID-19 period. Balayar and Langleis (2022) indicated that parents with higher levels of education tended to be more responsible and dedicated more time to educating their children throughout the pandemic. Research on the association between Socioeconomic status and parental involvement during the pandemic-induced school suspension where students have to learn at home is tentative, and results are mixed at best, thereby pointing to the second knowledge gap (Tan et al. 2022).

South Africa is often regarded as one of the most unequal countries in the world. According to Gallo (2020), a significant number of black South Africans have faced and continue to face a lack of access to education of high quality. According to Panico and Thevenon (2024), one of the main causes of unequal opportunities is the variation in parent's spending on goods and services for their children. Khowa et al. (2022) state that the COVID-19 pandemic hit South Africa while the economy was already critically challenged by slow growth and wealth inequality, making it one of the most unequal countries in the world. This means that South African learners entered the COVID-19 lockdown under unequal socioeconomic circumstances, which were exacerbated during the lockdown.

During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, a significant number of individuals lost their jobs, causing great financial strain on their families. Khowa et al. (2022) reported that some families experienced financial hardship due to the loss of their primary income earners. As a result, some individuals were compelled to take a temporary break from their jobs and remain at home without pay. Schools on the other side were closed due to lockdown measures aimed at stopping the spread of the virus. This led to the implementation of remote learning. Children had to continue their education at home with parental support, placing added responsibility on parents. However, not all citizens across the country have access to resources such as the Internet. Specifically, socially and economically underprivileged communities face a range of obstacles when it comes to obtaining fast, dependable and reasonably priced internet services, as noted by Oluka et al. (2021). Findings from Govender (2021) have indicated that socioeconomic issues that negatively affect parental involvement continue to provide difficulties for South African schools in low-income communities.

Studies have identified a number of socio-economic challenges faced by families in supporting their children's education during COVID-19. For example, Duby et al. (2022), revealed that financially constrained households found it too expensive to buy enough data for video calls. People from low socioeconomic backgrounds also faced the problem of insufficient food, which in turn impacted the learning of their children. In addition, Duby et al. (2022) revealed that the risk of reporting an educational disruption is 1.37 times higher for participants who have gone days and nights without eating due to a lack of food in their household in the past month compared to those who did not face this situation. Participants

in a study by Govender (2021) stated that their educational level negatively affected their involvement in their child's education. They asserted that their level of education plays a significant role in shaping their employment status and their capacity to secure employment.

Schools also had their unique challenges. According to Shifa et al. (2022), social distancing, isolation, and regular handwashing were effective measures in limiting the spread of the COVID-19 virus. However, this seemed to be a problem in schools that lacked resources such as infrastructure. Large class sizes have always been a feature of public schools in South Africa. According to Maree (2022), some schools that could afford it rebuilt and rearranged school desks in many classrooms to maintain social distance for learners.

From the literature, it is evident that the socioeconomic status of parents can impact their involvement in their children's education before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, with parents of high socioeconomic status showing greater involvement. The literature also highlights that parents with high socioeconomic status possess resources like financial means and educational backgrounds to help their children. Conversely, parents with low economic status are often constrained by their own level of education, time availability and resources when it comes to participating in their children's education.

2.7.3 Education within a rural context in South Africa

In this piece of literature, I will be discussing the concept of rurality and its implications on education and parental involvement. Through my exploration, I aim to shed light on the unique challenges faced in rural education and how they are intertwined with one's living conditions. The main objective of this analysis is to gain valuable insights into how teaching and are affected by the living conditions in rural areas. Moreover, I will delve into the issues of rurality that add to the hindrances in parental involvement, including those that were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teaching and learning in rural areas continue to present a difficulty in all educational sectors and levels, as noted by Myende and Hlalele (2018). The COVID-19 crisis, as described by Adetiba (2023), revealed numerous deficiencies and inequalities within South African education systems. These ranged from the lack of access to broadband and computers necessary for online education to the absence of supportive learning environments, as well as the misalignment between available resources

and actual needs. The COVID-19 lockdown presented new challenges and obstacles that have made it even more difficult for parents to be involved in their children's education. The challenges will be discussed in this literature below.

It has been thirty years since South Africa transformed into a democratic country in 1994. The newly established South African constitution ensured equal rights and opportunities for every individual, with education being recognised as a fundamental right. The Constitution, along with several education policy documents and the South African Schools Act, stipulate that all learners in South Africa should be provided with equal educational opportunities, similar facilities, and the same level of quality in teaching and learning. Despite these attempts by the South African government to address the inequalities resulting from past segregation, learners in rural areas are still facing disadvantages due to their demographic, economic and social backgrounds. Mnyende and Hlalele (2018) contend that schools in South African rural contexts face numerous challenges that significantly impact the quality of education they provide. These challenges include inadequate access to fundamental resource deprivations such as dilapidated classrooms, poor quality teaching, poorly stocked libraries, inadequate learner support material, lack of clean water, broken desks, insufficient chairs, and inappropriately qualified teachers (Maree, 2022; Mnyende and Hlalele, 2018). These issues faced by rural schools in South Africa are not new. Garder (2008) pointed out that rural areas face challenges, such as inadequate classroom facilities, limited access to essential services like water and electricity, absence of landline telephones resulting in no internet access, very few public or school libraries and similar obstacles.

Rurality is a complex concept and there is no universally accepted definition for it. Mnyende and Nhlumayo (2018) contend that varying interpretations of rurality and rural education by individuals from different backgrounds have prevented the establishment of a universally recognised definition for these concepts. Agumba et al. (2023) define rurality as a complex concept that involves demographic and social factors, which can intersect with other categories like race, gender and social class. Hlalele (2014) states that the South African government perceives "rurality" as a lifestyle, mindset and culture centred on land, crops, livestock and community. Rural areas are isolated locations situated in the countryside, forests and mountains, as described by Dube (2020). Rural areas encompass various regions such as traditional communal areas, farmland, peri-urban areas, informal settlements, and

small rural towns, offering individuals numerous opportunities to sustain themselves through agricultural means (Hlalele, 2014; Myende and Hlalele, 2018). The poorest and least-developed rural communities are those that were located in the former homelands, particularly in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu- Natal and Limpopo (Gardner, 2008).

Radebe (2022) argues that the nature of education in rural schools is shaped by various characteristics that are unique to rural areas. Foster (1977) was among the earlier researchers to highlight the importance of addressing geographical disparities as a crucial aspect of educational inequalities in developing nations. In South Africa, Agumba et al. (2023) argue that the level of inequality and rural poverty is unique due to the enduring effects of colonialism and apartheid, which were marked by institutionalised racism and the harsh exploitation of black individuals who were deprived of equal educational opportunities. De Klerk and Palmer (2022) state that South African students residing in rural areas experience financial poverty that is highly connected to limited educational access, poor well-being, and challenging physical environments. Du Plessis and Maestry (2019) have identified that several factors categorise public schools in rural areas, which have an adverse impact on the provision of quality education. Some of these factors that impede learning in rural schools include the lack of parental involvement in learners' education, insufficient funds, inadequate access to resources, and the reality of multi-grade teaching. Gardner (2017) also identified additional factors, stating that it is tough to access villages and rural communities and that there are inadequate physical conditions in schools. Furthermore, learner performance is weak in comparison to schools in other areas. Socioeconomic factors, such as financial constraints, may lead to a lack of parental involvement, which is considered a characteristic of rural public schools, according to Pierre & Raj (2019).

The school closure had significant social and economic implications for learners, teachers, and families, especially those residing in rural areas and are in already fragile schooling systems. In the context of COVID-19 and education in rural areas, Adetiba (2023) argues that access to quality education was restricted due to limited access to technology for accessing educational materials. The pandemic caused by the coronavirus has brought to light the weaknesses and fragility of underprivileged and rural communities in South Africa, highlighting the existing inequalities within their social connections and educational systems. Researchers (Dube;2020, Pillay, 2021; Mpahlele and Maphalala, 2023 and Mkhize,

2023) corroborate this statement about COVID-19 exposing disadvantages in rural areas in South Africa. Mpahlele and Maphalala (2023), for example, posited that certain academics have expressed the viewpoint that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inequitable education system in South Africa, thereby placing students residing in rural communities at a significant disadvantage. Mkhize (2023) notes that COVID-19 has affected both urban and rural schools; however, it has had a more severe impact on rural schools in terms of providing learners with continuous learning opportunities. Pillay (2021) has reported that the youth residing in poor and rural communities of South Africa have had to deal with significant difficulties, which have been further exacerbated by the coronavirus disease of COVID-19. Dube (2020) claims that rural education has not received enough attention and that "COVID-19 and the adoption of online learning have magnified the challenges rural learners and teachers face, thereby marginalising them. Furthermore, Dube (2020) raised concerns about the accessibility and availability of devices, such as televisions, laptops, and smartphones, in South Africa, particularly in rural areas.

2.7.4 Issues of rurality that compromise parental involvement

Parental involvement in education has always been a challenge, particularly in rural areas. Matshe (2014) has observed that parents residing in rural areas have failed to meet the expectations set by the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996) regarding the improvement of public education quality. The concern that parents in rural schools react at a notably slow rate regarding educational matters has been identified by Matshe (2014) as a serious obstacle to the basic operations of the schools. Several research studies have revealed that several challenges hinder the attainment of successful parental involvement in the education of children in rural areas. For example, Davids (2020) indicated that parents of learners frequently think they have little to contribute. These parents are cognisant of their poverty and are of the opinion that teachers are more qualified to handle school matters. A study by Triegaardt and Diermen (2021) revealed that some parents tend to believe that it is solely the teacher's responsibility to ensure that their children are disciplined in terms of their schoolwork. Gibbs et al. (2021) identified another factor to take into account when understanding the low level of parental involvement. This factor pertains to parents who are absent and leave their children in the care of grandparents while they migrate to urban areas in search of employment.

Parental involvement challenges in South African rural areas during COVID-19 were uniquely impacted by their demographic circumstances. Adetiba (2023) argues that learners who receive support from their parents are more likely to discover alternative opportunities when their schools close, while those from underprivileged backgrounds continue to face barriers when their schools shut down. Radebe (2022) found that a large number of rural parents were unable to provide their children with necessary learning resources during home learning. The reason behind this was the lack of money, which prevented parents from purchasing laptops, smartphones, internet connections, textbooks, and other helpful material for their children. Stringer and Keys (2020) claim that due to limited opportunities to learn and interact with others, students have experienced a decline in their academic progress, resulting in a general loss of knowledge and skills. This decline is due to prolonged gaps or discontinuities in their education, resulting in reversals in their academic progress. Adetiba (2023) contends that learners supported by their parents easily found their way to alternative opportunities, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds remained shut out when their schools shut down.

2.7.5 Technological challenges experienced by parents during the COVID-19 pandemic

This literature study aims to explore the experiences and challenges parents faced when using technology during the COVID-19 lockdown to support their children's education and how remote schooling affected family dynamics. The terms "online and emergency remote learning" will be used to refer to the education that took place at home for learners to continue with their studies.

Online education, as argued by Agbele and Oyelade (2020), has played a crucial role in helping institutions overcome the obstacle of educational continuity during the past global crises. Pasrija and Malik (2024) state that educational institutions began to adopt online learning when traditional learning became impossible during the pandemic. According to Situmorang and Purba (2020), technology has significantly altered all facets of human existence, and the resulting changes require everyone to adopt new behaviours that were not previously practised. This crisis, caused by the pandemic, will compel institutions that were previously resistant to change to embrace modern technology, as emphasized by Dhawan (2020). Rousoulioti et al. (2022) argue that while supporting children through different levels and modes of distance learning, the challenges and difficulties associated

with increased parental involvement came to light. The World Bank (2021) has reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the divide in parental engagement and support for remote learning, particularly among households with varying education and socioeconomic backgrounds. In South Africa, Dube (2020) posits that the situation exposed the existing inequalities and brought to the forefront the difficulties faced by learners and teachers in rural areas.

According to Mukuna and Aloka (2020), online learning can be considered a form of distance education in which learners are physically or geographically separated from their teachers. Various online tools were used to continue with teaching and learning, and according to Maree (2022), these include WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts, Blackboards and YouTube. Although online learning appeared to be the best option for delivering study content during the COVID-19 lockdown, Hodges et al. (2020) suggested that the term 'emergency remote teaching' has become a widely accepted alternative used by researchers in online education as well as by practitioners in the field. Emergency remote teaching (ERT), as described by Hodges et al. (2020), is a temporary shift to remote instruction due to crises, replacing face-to-face or hybrid courses until normal conditions resume. Dube (2020) posits that the effectiveness of online education was hindered by the unavailability of a network in some rural areas. Olusola-Fadumiye and Oke (2020) argue that online learning via social media can be effectively accessed in various households with reliable internet connectivity, allowing learners to learn without interruptions and achieve better results. According to a 2021 World Bank report, poorer countries had less comprehensive remote learning measures than richer countries.

Researchers noted a number of challenges that parents faced during online learning in supporting their children. For example, the challenges highlighted by Tajuddin et al. (2022) specifically addressed the difficulties faced by working parents in balancing their jobs and caring for their children. According to Häkkinen et al. (2020), challenges involved arranging homework areas, establishing computer setups, and, for many parents, balancing their own remote work with their children's schooling schedules. The ability to access the internet and having computers or smartphones are crucial for remote learning. As a result, the lack of reliable infrastructure and devices has made it more challenging for parents to support remote learning, as reported by Garbe, et al. (2020). In a study by Dube (2020), research

participants raised the issue of not having access to devices for online learning. The devices mentioned by the participants included cell phones, computers, laptops, and smartphones that are compatible with low-tech teaching apps, such as Blackboard, as well as expensive internet. Digital problems also weakened parental commitment. Due to data issues, Grobler (2022) contends that several parents were unable to access the video recordings. According to Situmorang and Purba (2020), there are difficulties that parents confront when their children are learning online, including a lack of time, media resources, and technological proficiency. Not all parents could cooperate due to COVID. Digital challenges were also seen as playing a role in undermining parental commitment. Some parents could not view the video clips due to data problems (Grobler, 2022). It is evident from the data the demographics, which affected network connectivity and the ability of the parents to afford technological tools, played a big role in terms of parental support and children's learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.8 Emotional Support by parents during the COVID-19 Pandemic

While many studies have focused on schools, teaching and learning during the pandemic, it is essential to consider the broader context: the emotional impact that COVID-19 has had on children's lives and emotional support from parents. Emotional resilience is a crucial aspect of children's mental health, defined by Treves et al. (2023) as the ability to overcome emotional challenges. Darmody et al. (2021) suggest that the primary emphasis has been on maintaining learning continuity, while there has been comparatively less focus on the socio-emotional development and well-being of students. As indicated by Schmid and Garrels (2021), support from their parents in the social-psychological aspect seemed especially crucial when they encountered educational challenges or experienced low motivation. Additionally, Munje and Mncube (2018) contended that parental involvement should not be limited to financial support, even though monetary contributions are significant. Parents should be actively engaged in addressing their children's academic, social and emotional needs.

Preliminary research demonstrates that, during COVID-19, parents adopted two major roles: co-educators and emotional support providers (Doll et al. 2022). Pam and Ye (2024) define emotional support as the way in which a person conveys care, sympathy, understanding, respect, trust and encouragement to others through both verbal and non-verbal

communication. Treves et al. (2023) argue that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted children's education, social life and home experiences, leading to serious mental health challenges like fear of health risks and social isolation. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned that the COVID-19 pandemic may have lasting adverse effects on people's mental health, underscoring the importance of investing in mental health services and related support. Furthermore, the WHO (2020a) has noted that indicators of mental health issues have also been observed in children, indicating that children need not only academic support from their parents but also emotional assistance.

Research conducted by Gore et al. (2023) revealed that students experienced heightened emotional turmoil throughout the lockdown period. This was attributed to heightened levels of fear, stress, anxiety, uncertainty, frustration, anger and aggression during the pandemic. Similarly, in a study by Doll et al. (2022), parents raised a number of concerns regarding their children's emotional and social well-being. Parents noted increased exhaustion levels, increased anxiety, and troublesome behaviour. Despite the emotional impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on children, there is limited literature, particularly in the South African context, on the actions parents took to support their children emotionally during that challenging time. However, internationally, a study conducted by Landoni et al. (2022) focusing on Italian parents identified three key ways in which these parents supported their children's emotional well-being. They created environments that allowed them to listen to their children's stories, tailored their communication to suit the child's age by providing clear information to ease fears and uncertainties and expressed their own feelings about the pandemic to foster understanding.

Drawing from the data, the COVID-19 pandemic not only disrupted teaching but also took a toll on children's emotional well-being. Family relationships were also altered as interactions and family patterns were disrupted by the quarantine. Parents found themselves needing to assist their children with schoolwork while also providing emotional support during this challenging time. However, there seems to be limited research on this aspect of support, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the study will also explore the nature of parental support during the pandemic, related to the emotional impact the school closures had on children when they could not socialise with their peers and navigated through new routines in their daily lives. This highlights the need for Education Departments

to build the capacity of all South African schools to address the emotional and psycho-social well-being of their learners (Gore et al, 2023).

2.9 Learning opportunities emanated from COVID-19

Amid the challenges faced by learners, teachers and parents, COVID-19 also presented opportunities within the education system. According to Yaniawati et al. (2020), as cited by Lawrence & Faulkude (2021), these opportunities include digital education, which enables quicker learning, as well as offering innovative and creative options for both teachers and students. Hadebe et al. (2020) note that the pandemic accelerated the adoption of technology in education, prompting institutions to invest in online learning platforms to ensure equitable access to quality education. Joshi and Rose (2018) argue that internet usage gives teenagers the opportunity to address developmental issues and complete developmental tasks. Furthermore, learning becomes accessible from various locations, encouraging collaborative learning and task completion, ultimately enhancing learning competency. Similarly, Pasrija and Malik (2024) argue that online learning boosts marketability and competitiveness by providing opportunities to improve knowledge and skills, making education accessible anytime and anywhere, free from location constraints. Alharti et al. (2022) suggest that COVID-19 represents a unique opportunity for substantial change. Given the pandemic's far-reaching impact, it has provided a chance for educators and students to reconsider the nature of education. Furthermore, educators worldwide have consistently demonstrated their ability to adapt to new circumstances.

Lantsoght et al. (2021) highlighted that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many institutions discovered the value of effectively integrating technology, which could support and help educators in their work. Conversely, the authors pointed out that numerous parents found that transitioning to working from home provided them with new opportunities, such as being able to work more flexible hours, acquiring new digital skills, and becoming more engaged in their children's education. Dumford and Miller (2016) found that while online learning may sacrifice collaborative learning, it fosters cognitive development in learners.

Drawing on the data, the COVID-19 pandemic not only posed challenges to education but also opened up new opportunities. One of the key opportunities highlighted by many

studies is the benefit of online education, which many educational institutions adopted as a means of emergency remote learning. However, a gap remains in understanding how the pandemic opened up opportunities for increased parental support and involvement in children's education. Therefore, the study aims to explore the opportunities presented by COVID-19 to parents and families in supporting their children during that challenging time.

2.10 Summary

The literature reviewed in this study outlined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education both globally and in South Africa. It highlights how teaching became heavily dependent on technological resources for both teachers and learners. Moreover, it highlights that learners and parents in rural areas, as well as those with low socioeconomic status, faced greater challenges in comparison to urban learners. Lastly, the chapter concludes by discussing the emotional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learners while also acknowledging the opportunities it created within the education sector. In the next chapter, I will discuss the theoretical framework that guided this study, focusing on two models of parental involvement: Epstein's (1995) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) models of parental involvement.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a thorough review of the literature that contextualised the focus of this study. In this chapter, I turn my attention to the theoretical frameworks that guided my study process. In line with the intention of this chapter, I present the two theoretical frameworks that informed my study. The selection of these two theories emerged through my reading of literature within the study's focus area. Several models and theories of parent involvement have been developed and are widely recognised in the field to enhance our understanding of parental involvement in education and to improve their application in both research and practical contexts. Epstein and Hoover-Dempsey are two prominent individuals in the field, and their models for parent involvement are widely acknowledged and extensively utilised.

The chapter, therefore, presents each of the selected models, commencing with Epstein's (1995) Model of Parental Involvement and its key constructs, followed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model of the parental involvement process. After presenting these two models, a theoretical framework based on the key constructs of both models is presented, and its relevance to this study is argued, along with the rationale for their selection. The chapter concludes by engaging with the limitations and critiques of these two models presented in the literature and explaining how my study process has accounted for such limitations and critiques.

3.2 Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Parental Involvement.

Epstein created a model that focuses on the child, giving importance to the family, school and community. This model acknowledges the interdependence of these three elements in a child's life. Epstein et al. (2002) suggest that families and schools have traditionally been considered the primary institutions shaping children's development. According to Epstein's model, parents can actively get involved in their children's schooling in various ways. In this framework, Joyce Epstein developed a concept of parental involvement involving six types of collaborative relationships between parents and the school to support children.

According to Epstein, there are six ways in which parents can get involved in their children's education: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and

community collaboration. These methods can be used in any educational setting and are recognised as influential by multiple authors.

3.2.1 Type 1: Parenting

Parenting is the first type of parental involvement in Epstein's model. Epstein et al (2022) posit that the level of care that schools show towards children is directly reflected in the care and assistance they provide to the children's families. The authors note that when educators perceive children only as students, they are more likely to view the family as separate from the school. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) argue that schools should establish collaborations with parents and foster a shared responsibility for children's achievements within the educational system to comply with the integrated support framework for their students. In addition, they mentioned that parents start their involvement in their children's education at home by creating a safe and healthy environment, offering suitable learning opportunities, providing support and fostering a positive attitude toward school. According to Mkhize (2023), the involvement of parents at home centres on providing them with an opportunity to utilise their resources to enhance their children's academic achievements. Similarly, Epstein (2009) posits that schools help families establish a supportive home environment to enhance their children's learning. In return, parents offer schools valuable insights into their family background, culture and educational goals. For example, Botha (2013) suggests that schools may implement programs specifically designed for parents, addressing topics such as the various developmental stages of a child, which can assist parents in supporting their children at home during each phase. Epstein et al. (2002) recommended that home visits be conducted during the transitional periods between preschool and elementary, elementary and middle, and middle and high school. They also proposed neighbourhood meetings to foster better understanding between schools and families. During the COVID-19 lockdown, Motsumi and Khumalo (2024) contend that learners were able to progress to the next grade with the active involvement of parents in school activities and educational tasks at home. However, Bhamani et al. (2020) note that while home learning programs address needs during crises like COVID-19, they also create additional stress for parents who must balance work and ensure their children's continuous learning.

3.2.2 Type 2: Communicating

The second type of parental involvement outlined in Epstein's parental involvement model is communication. In this type, a school fosters a two-way channel of communication with parents. When communicating with parents, Myende and Hlumayo (2020) highlight that it is important for schools and teachers to consider the language and literacy barriers that often impact parents in low-income communities. Reese (2021) argues that communication not only promotes improved student achievement and parental involvement but also plays a crucial role in forming positive relationships between schools and families, which leads to the establishment of trust. The schools are responsible for communicating with families about school programs and children's progress (Epstein, 1992). Teachers and schools use a variety of methods to communicate, including newsletters, social media, apps, and weekly emails, all to ensure that parents are involved in their child's schooling (Reese, 2021). Reese (2021) points out that teachers and schools use a range of communication methods, such as newsletters, social media, apps, and weekly emails, to keep parents involved in their children's education. Botha (2013) highlights that implementing well-crafted circulars to communicate students' academic progress and providing supplementary literature tailored to specific subjects are among the suggested measures. Epstein et al. (2022) suggest that schools should maintain regular communication with parents through informative notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters and other effective forms of communication. The participants of the case study conducted by Epstein et al. (2022) included community partners and school administrators. They emphasised the importance of honest, two-way communication between schools and potential community partners. This ensures that each party is fully aware of the intentions and expectations of the other. Jensen and Minke (2017) note that it is important for events aimed at sharing this information to be available to all families and target those who need it the most. Maintaining regular communication with learners about schoolwork was a top priority throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this communication depended on the technological skills of their parents (Grobler, 2022). A study by Motsumi and Khumalo (2024) found communication to be one of the major challenges experienced by schools and parents during the COVID-19 lockdown. Many parents expressed confusion regarding the timetable due to the school's inconsistent communication and delayed messages. According to Ntitima and Mwaba (2023), parents

encountered difficulties in helping their children's education through communication due to limited internet access, a lack of smartphones, and challenges in obtaining data bundles.

3.2.3 Type 3: Volunteering

In Epstein's parental involvement model, the third type of parental involvement is volunteering. According to Mkhize (2023), parents can volunteer in several ways, such as assisting with school cleaning, participating in the school's nutritional programme, and helping teachers with sports events. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) identified three ways in which parents can volunteer for school activities. Firstly, they can actively participate in the classroom by assisting teachers and staff as tutors or assistants. Secondly, they can volunteer for school-related initiatives such as organising fundraisers or promoting the school's activities within the community. Lastly, parents can engage as part of the audience by attending school events and performances. According to Botha (2013), in this form of participation, the school enlists and coordinates parental assistance, specifically parent volunteers, to support teachers, administrators, and students at the school and contribute to school activities, such as sports events and cultural evenings. From the school's side, volunteering would involve designing school programmes aimed at parent recruitment and training (Botha, 2013). A study conducted by Kwendo and Areba (2022) in Kenya explored the influence of parental support at home and parental involvement in school activities on the math performance of ECDE learners. The study suggests that to enhance math outcomes, it is beneficial for parents to actively volunteer in school activities such as classroom sessions and field trips.

3.2.4 Type 4: Learning at Home

The fourth type of parental involvement identified in Epstein's (1995) model is learning at home. It involves providing families with information and ideas on how to support their children's learning at home. Epstein (1992) posits that schools play an important role in equipping families with the knowledge and tools to support their children's learning at home. This includes providing information about the academic requirements for each grade and guidance on how to monitor, discuss and assist with homework, as well as how to reinforce essential skills through practice. Duma (2019) notes that much of the involvement parents have in their children's education occurs at home. During the COVID-19 pandemic,

numerous learners worldwide had to shift to remote learning from home. Parental support and involvement became essential as learners were required to continue their education at home. However, research by Putri et al. (2020) highlighted that schools were unable to efficiently adapt to this new mode of teaching and learning, and parents lacked the necessary skills to facilitate home learning. Sari and Maningtyas (2020) highlighted the difficulties parents encountered while promoting home learning during the COVID lockdown. These challenges included a lack of patience when teaching children at home, time constraints due to work obligations, limited understanding of the subject matter, struggles in fostering motivation and interest in teaching, insufficient resources and difficulties in using technology and internet services. Govender (2021) posits that this situation highlights the importance of collaboration between schools and parents in enhancing at-home learning to support the learner's academic success.

3.2.5 Type 5: Decision making

Decision-making is categorised as the fifth type of parental involvement in Epstein's model. Epstein et al. (2002) recommend that schools involve parents in decision-making processes to cultivate parent leaders and representatives. According to Durisic (2017), this refers to including parents in school decisions and developing parent leaders and representatives. The South African Schools Act of 1996 requires the formation of school governing bodies (SGBs), comprising parents, educators, and non-educational staff members. Mkhize (2023) posits that parents have the opportunity to participate in SGB associations, where they can express their ideas for running the school, provided they receive proper training. According to Mugumya et al. (2022), parents play a crucial role in their children's learning at home by creating a favourable home learning environment and supplying suitable learning materials. Jacobs (2020) suggests that schools should provide parents with opportunities to participate in school decision-making and share their perspectives on issues that affect their children and the broader community. Kwendo and Areba (2022) emphasise the importance of collaborating with families to make joint decisions with schools regarding curriculum implementation, as this enhances learners' achievement in mathematics and other areas.

3.2.6 Type 6: Collaborating with communities

Collaboration with the community, according to Tekin (2011), involves recognising and incorporating resources and services from the community in order to enhance school programs. This dimension emphasises the vital role parents play in supporting children's learning in collaboration with the community. Community, as defined by Epstein (1992), refers to the child's home neighbourhood, the school neighbourhood, the school context, and the broader local community, comprising businesses, civic organisations, cultural institutions, religious groups, and other agencies. These entities play a significant role in shaping children's learning and development and have the potential to strengthen the influence of both family and school on children. According to Epstein et al. (2002), integrating community resources and services can significantly enhance school programs, foster family engagement, and improve overall student learning and development. Jansen and Minke (2017) recommend that schools should also explore collaborations with local two- and four-year institutions to educate parents about student expectations and how they can effectively support their children's success. Jacobs (2024) emphasises that engaging with the wider community, including local organisations, businesses, and other community members, enhances the educational experience and provides additional resources and support for students and families.

While the parent involvement model by Epstein (1995) is valuable and extensive, Tekin (2011) posits that it primarily caters to educators and serves as a guide for practitioners rather than offering insights into parents' perspectives for researchers. Therefore, it is important to explore the perspectives and motivations that drive parents to participate in their children's education, as well as the psychological and demographic factors that influence their level of involvement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, several factors significantly influenced how parents supported their children's education. Key among these were socioeconomic elements, such as the parents' educational background and income, as well as the lack of resources (Duby et al, 2022) and issues related to technology (Dube, 2020). For this reason, the study cannot solely rely on this model. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model is a significant addition because it places more emphasis on the parents' perspective. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) introduced a model that highlights the parental aspect of the issue and the reasons for their involvement. The model examines the

factors that influence parent involvement, as well as the factors that contribute to its absence. They examined the involvement process from the parents' perspective, focusing on the key psychological constructs that appear to influence parents' core involvement position. The model will be discussed in great detail below.

3.3 The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of parent involvement

Although parent involvement is a critical factor in children's educational lives, much less is known about the psychological factors that motivate parents' involvement practices (Green et al, 2007). As a result, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) presented a model for parental involvement in education. From a psychological perspective, it aimed to elucidate the reasons behind parents' involvement in their children's education and the impact of their involvement on student outcomes. Since then, researchers (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005) have conducted theoretical and practical studies to improve comprehension of the processes analysed in the model. The model was revised in 2005 by Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler and Hoover-Dempsey.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) provided four constructs of parental involvement. The following characteristics were included in these constructs, which were centred on parents' reasons for involvement.

1. Parents' motivational beliefs about how they should be involved in their children's education and how they can help them learn.
2. Parents' perceptions of invitations to participate: parents believe that schools, teachers, and students have invited them to do so;
3. Parents' life context variables: a look at parents' life contexts that made participation possible or encouraged it and,
4. Parents' choice of involvement forms.

Drawing on the model, the four constructs will be discussed in detail below, including their influence on the way parents support their children during the COVID-19 pandemic. These constructs explain why parents make decisions to get involved in their children's education.

3.3.1 Parents' motivational beliefs

The model proposed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) suggests that parental involvement is influenced by two belief systems: role construction for involvement and

parents' sense of efficacy, both of which are approaches to helping children succeed in school.

3.3.1.1 Parental Role Construction

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) describe parental role construction as the beliefs that parents hold regarding their responsibilities in their children's education and the behaviours they exhibit based on those beliefs. Williams-Johnson and Gonzalez-DeHass (2022) describe parental role construction as a psychological concept that underpins the motivators and objectives that develop into parental involvement. According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), the role of construction in parental involvement is influenced by parents' beliefs about child development, effective parenting practices, and actions at home to support children's success in school. It is also influenced by the expectations of individuals and groups that are significant to the parents regarding the responsibilities they have in relation to the child's education. The model suggests that a significant factor influencing parents' favourable choices regarding their involvement in their children's education is how they perceive their role as parents. Additionally, the parents' lived experiences, including their own upbringing and education, also have an impact. Therefore, it can be argued that parental role construction is socially shaped and subject to change.

Recent research on role construction provides significant evidence for its importance in influencing parents' choices regarding involvement. For example, Williams-Johnson and Gonzalez-DeHass (2022) posit that when it comes to involvement, parents make decisions and take action based on various ideas and experiences, as well as environmental demands and opportunities. Findings by Zuma (2020) suggest that parents who value education transmit these values to their children. Garbe et al. (2020) identified three barriers to parental support during COVID-19: a lack of content knowledge or teaching skills, inadequate access to technology or poor internet quality, and poor organisation of online resources. Radebe (2022) states that many rural parents struggled economically and were unable to afford digital devices or internet data for their children's online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3.1.2 Self-efficacy

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) define a personal sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school as the belief parents have in their ability to positively influence their children's educational outcomes through their personal actions. Similar to how parents shape their roles, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) state that a person's sense of self-efficacy plays a crucial role in the choices parents make regarding their level of involvement. According to Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005), parents with high efficacy tend to make favourable choices regarding active involvement in their child's education. They are also inclined to persevere in the presence of challenges or barriers and navigate through difficulties to achieve successful results. Theoretical research has provided support for anticipated relationships between parental effectiveness and various aspects of parental involvement. For example, Dixon-Elliott (2019) asserts that parents are most likely to become involved when they believe that their involvement will make a difference. A strong sense of self-efficacy can help a parent find ways to work with their children beyond the involvement opportunities provided by the school.

Research has identified parenting self-efficacy as a key factor influencing parents' contributions toward parental involvement. Mkhize (2020) asserts that parents with limited educational backgrounds often struggle to engage in their children's education. A study by Ma et al. (2024) demonstrated a positive relationship between parenting self-efficacy, parents' contributions, and the strength of the home-school partnership outcomes. The associations were stronger in education-focused parenting self-efficacy than in general parenting self-efficacy, and were stronger with home-based participation and parental expectations and aspirations than with school-based participation and parent-teacher communication/relationship. It was also found that parents' educational backgrounds influence their self-efficacy beliefs about helping their children succeed in school. Research by Zuma (2020) indicates that parents with lower levels of education and socioeconomic status tend to place less importance on higher education. Some parents did not believe that they had any knowledge that the school was interested in knowing (Duma, 2019). Tekin (2008) states that parents who have attained higher levels of education tend to possess stronger self-efficacy beliefs compared to those with lower educational backgrounds.

3.3.2 Parents' perceptions of invitations to participate

While strong role construction and self-efficacy play a crucial role in shaping parental involvement in their children's education, according to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995,1997), invitations to participate are important motivators. This is because they signal to the parent that their involvement in their children's learning is welcomed, valued and anticipated. The core inquiry explored by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) regarding this concept is whether parents believe that both the child and the school encourage their involvement. Çayak (2021) contends that schools with a positive and inclusive atmosphere allow members to express their opinions more freely and participate more actively in the educational process. Research conducted by Pourrajab et al. (2015) revealed a moderately strong correlation between school climate and parental involvement in education. Taking into account the various dimensions of school climate, the study found a strong and positive connection between each dimension and the level of parental involvement. According to Duma (2019), parents often felt unwelcome at school and believed that their potential contributions were unimportant and unappreciated. The importance of school climate is increasing, highlighting for principals, teachers and learners. During COVID-19, Zedan (2024) found that parents had negative attitudes towards distance learning during quarantine, expressing dissatisfaction and disappointment with its effectiveness in delivering comprehensive academic content. This made them not to be involved in supporting their children in their education.

3.3.3 Parents' life context variables

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) model proposes that aspects of parents' life circumstances serve as the third primary motivator of their choices regarding involvement. It is important to consider how they influence their involvement in their children's education. They suggest that the socioeconomic status (SES) of the family affects parents' knowledge, abilities, time and effort, highlighting substantial variations in the participation of parents with low SES compared to those with high SES. According to Sengonul (2022), parents dedicate their economic and psychological resources to support their children's educational endeavours. This includes investing time, energy and financial resources to guarantee their academic achievement. Udayakumar et al. (2022) describe socioeconomic factors as the combination of an individual's or a household's social and economic

attributes, determined by their educational achievements, occupation and family income within society. Researchers have found that the level of parental involvement in their children's education can be impacted by their economic status (Magwa and Mugari, 2017; Munje and Mncube, 2018; Senugul, 2022). Cook (2021) posits that when parents lack the financial resources or the expertise to do so, the task of creating a study environment and supplying essential materials for children's academic work at home becomes increasingly challenging. During the COVID-19 pandemic, DUBY et al. (2022) conducted a study that outlined different obstacles to pursuing education when schools were closed. The study found that some home environments were not suitable for studying due to distractions and responsibilities, such as household chores and childcare, and there was a lack of proper technology and internet access for online learning.

3.4 Limitations of the two models

While these models illuminate how and why parents become involved in their children's education at home and in school, limitations exist within these models. The models are two decades old and may not be applicable in the

Epstein's model does not fully address socioeconomic constraints. Research by Treviño et al. (2021) revealed that parents' socioeconomic status influences both formal and informal parental involvement practices. In addition, Bower and Griffin (2011) state that parental involvement requires investments of time and money from parents, and those who are unable to provide these resources are deemed uninvolved. Hill and Taylor (2004) assert that work schedules, a lack of transportation, and inadequate childcare may prevent families from attending school events or volunteering at the school.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) psychological model has also been critiqued for its narrow focus on internal, individual-level variables such as parental beliefs and self-efficacy, which risks reducing involvement to a matter of personal motivation while neglecting broader socio-political, cultural and institutional contexts (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011). It fails to account for systemic constraints in under-resourced communities, such as limited digital literacy and access to technology. In addition, both Models are one-sided and put more focus on school-based education. Education is a broad concept and should not be limited to formal schooling in classroom settings. A study by Bond et al. (2024) revealed that parents

valued both formal and informal learning and recognised the importance of both forms of learning in their child's overall development. These theoretical limitations point to the need to engage more with critiques that emphasise the dynamic and often contested nature of parental involvement, particularly in diverse and inequitable educational settings.

3.5 Summary

This chapter reviewed the theoretical framework using Epstein's (1995) Model of Parental Involvement and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model of parental involvement, along with their key constructs. These two models illuminate my comprehension of parental involvement and support in their children's education. They also provided the reader with a comprehensive understanding of various factors related to parental involvement.

Numerous studies have supported and reaffirmed these theories, showing that good cooperation between schools, homes, and communities can lead to academic achievement for students and to reforms in education Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017). This study aims to explore parental support during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the nature, form, challenges and opportunities it presented for parents in supporting their children's education during emergency remote learning. Using Epstein's model to research parental support for learners in low-income areas during COVID-19 clarifies the expectations for parents, families, schools, and the community. It emphasises the importance of collaboration among these groups to ensure that learners can continue their education at home. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model provides reasons behind parents' decisions to support their children's education. In the next chapter, I will discuss the research methodology used.

CHAPTER 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters comprised a review of the relevant literature, which sought to understand the distinction between parental support and parental involvement. The chapter also discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on parental support, the challenges parents faced in supporting their children, and the opportunities that arose from the pandemic. Furthermore, I discussed Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995;1997) model of parental involvement and Epstein's (1995) model for parental involvement as theoretical frameworks for this study.

In this chapter, I present the research methodology adopted for this study. The intent of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive account and rationale for the research design used. Research designs, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2018), represent categories of investigation within qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods frameworks that outline precise guidelines for the processes in a research project. Kumatongo and Muzata (2021) define a research design as a structure encompassing the techniques and approaches employed by a researcher to address a research issue.

I will elaborate on the detailed procedures and approaches used to produce, arrange, and analyse data derived from semi-structured interviews. This section will first provide a description of the research paradigm, research approach, research design and the complete research process that was followed. The sampling strategy, measurement instrument, data collection method, and analysis tools will also be discussed. Lastly, I will discuss the ethical considerations, reliability, and potential limitations of my research.

4.2 Research Paradigm

Paradigms, as described by Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), play an important role in shaping the beliefs and guidelines that influence what scholars in a particular field choose to study, how they approach their studies and how they interpret their findings. Johnson and Christensen (2014) define a paradigm as the shared worldview or perspective of a group of researchers in their research. It is based on a set of common assumptions, concepts, beliefs and procedures. Scotland (2012) outlined four elements of the research paradigm: ontology,

epistemology, methodology and methods. According to Sefotho (2018), ontology refers to the paradigmatic and philosophical viewpoint, stance or position that the researcher declares in their perception of reality. Epistemology, on the other hand, deals with how knowledge is formed, obtained and shared; in essence, it explores the nature of knowing, as described by Scotland (2012).

This study is located within an interpretive research paradigm. Dhobi (2022) asserts that interpretivism adheres to the idea that truth and knowledge are relative and influenced by one's culture and history. This truth and knowledge are based on individuals' experiences and their understanding of them. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2019), interpretive is more concerned with in-depth variables and factors related to a context. It considers humans to be distinct from physical phenomena, as they add further depth to meaning, with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in the same way as physical phenomena.

The ontological and epistemological assumptions of this paradigm influenced the choice of methodology for my study. According to Dhobi (2020), in an interpretive paradigm, each individual has a unique experience of the same phenomenon. The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic varied from person to person, particularly for parents, in terms of its effects on education and parental support. For example, Mansourzadeh (2021) posits that many families lacked the necessary resources and expertise to provide their children with education at home. This means one must recognise that there may not be a single form of reality. It is important to consider the multidimensional nature of the problem in this study. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the experiences of parents to understand how COVID-19 impacted their approach to assisting their children's education in rural areas. Applying the interpretive paradigm enabled me to engage closely with the parents of learners and teachers as the participants. I intended to gain insights into the challenges in parental support posed by the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the approaches taken to address these challenges. Furthermore, I aimed to understand the opportunities that the pandemic presented, as well as the communication between teachers and parents and their relationship in supporting the education of children.

Kumatongo and Muzata (2021) posit that interpretive researchers believe in a reality based on people's subjective experiences of the external world. It recognises that people construct

different realities in response to events in their lives, and participants share their experiences in their own words. This paradigm allowed me to understand not only the challenges but also to uncover the influence of socioeconomic background on the child's learning, parental support and various strategies that they used to ensure that children continued with learning and other school activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some parents struggled to support their children due to a lack of resources and skills to use digital tools. According to Zuma (2020), context plays a crucial role in research within this framework.

4.3 Research approach

Creswell and Creswell (2018) define research approaches as the strategies and processes used in research, covering the stages from general assumptions to specific methods of gathering, analysing and interpreting data. This study employed a qualitative research approach to gather data from participants with first-hand experience. Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that qualitative research begins with underlying beliefs and the application of interpretive or theoretical frameworks that guide the investigation of research issues related to how individuals or groups perceive the significance of social or human problems. In investigating this issue, they adopt a developing approach, gather data in natural settings while focusing on the individuals and locations being studied. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative researchers commonly employ inductive reasoning. They construct patterns, categories and themes from the ground up by progressively organising data into more abstract units of information.

A qualitative research approach was deemed suitable for this study. Since the pandemic has created unprecedented situations, qualitative research is well-suited for exploring new or poorly understood phenomena. For example, it helped me understand how different family dynamics influenced parental support during the crisis. According to Cohen et al. (2011), qualitative research views people as active creators of meaning who construct interpretations of their situations and make sense of their world based on those meanings. The study's entire focus was on discovering the meaning that participants attach to their experiences during lockdown, rather than the meaning attributed to them by the authors from the literature. Through qualitative research, I had the opportunity to learn more about

how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted parental support from sources who experienced it firsthand.

4.4 Research Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study is a case study design. A case study research involves the study of a case (or cases) within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2014). Johnson and Christensen (2014) define a case study as a type of qualitative research that aims to provide a detailed account and analysis of one or more cases. The unit of analysis in the case study may be multiple cases that occur across multiple sites (Creswell and Poth, 2018). I selected two schools as research sites, bounded by their localities. As such, this constitutes a multi-case study design. A case study approach was helpful because it utilised the participants' words to answer questions and provide a complex and detailed understanding of the problem.

The aim of this study was to provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to share their experiences about parental support in learners' education during the COVID-19 pandemic in their own voices. By situating personal accounts within a broader framework, a case study methodology helped me understand how external factors, such as socioeconomic status and demographics, impacted parental support. Thus offering a comprehensive perspective of the situation. Additionally, it allowed me to collect data and interact with parents in their natural, real-life environment. Bhattacharjee (2012) posits that case research offers a more contextualised and authentic understanding of the phenomena than many other methods due to its ability to gather extensive contextual data. These contextual details encompass descriptions of the physical, emotional, and social aspects of the situations. It enabled me, as a researcher, to investigate how parental support evolved throughout the pandemic. This exploration can uncover changes in attitudes, methods and coping strategies as the situation progresses.

4.5 Selection of Participants

Sampling, as described by Johnson and Christensen (2014), involves selecting a subset from a population to study its characteristics. The purpose of sampling is to understand the characteristics of a larger group by studying a smaller, selected subset. In this study, I used purposive and maximum variation sampling, both of which are non-probability sampling

techniques, as the criteria for selecting participants. In purposive sampling, which is also known as judgmental sampling, Johnson and Christensen (2014) argue that the researcher defines the attributes of a specific population and then seeks out individuals who possess those attributes. DeCarlo (2018) states that when creating a purposive sample, a researcher selects participants from their sampling frame according to the traits they display. A researcher identifies a specific set of characteristics she intends to examine and subsequently seeks research participants who encompass the entire spectrum of those characteristics.

For this study, purposive sampling was suitable because it permitted me to use my judgment in selecting participants who possess valuable knowledge and experience in this specific research area about parental support. The criteria for selecting parent participants included (i) being parents to secondary school learners during the COVID-19 period and post this period and (ii) that they had a child or children attending the selected secondary school. The selection criteria for selecting teachers included (i) being a qualified teacher who taught in the selected school during COVID-19 and post-COVID-19, and (ii) had engagements with parents during these periods of research.

Identifying and comprehending the extremes or outliers in parental support during the pandemic could be facilitated by maximising variation. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), maximum variation entails using diverse participant groups to illuminate various aspects of the research issue. In this sampling method, Nymbili and Nyimbili (2024) claim that the researcher selects individuals who share similar traits but have distinctive and diverse experiences. Employing a maximum variation sampling allowed for capturing the full spectrum of variation in participants' narratives and facilitated the identification of common themes or patterns present within this variation. This helped shed light on how parents with limited resources coped in comparison to those with more substantial resources, offering valuable insight into the diverse ways families dealt with the educational challenges. Having a school principal as one of the participants allowed me to select a variety of teachers as participants.

Initially, the planned sample size for this study comprised five high school teachers and eight parents. However, due to the challenges of finding volunteers to participate, I ultimately reduced the sample size to four teachers, one of whom is the school principal, as only two

participants from each school were willing to participate in the research. Radebe (2022) states that school principals are responsible for the school's operations and maintaining its connection with the community. Thus, it was important for the study to obtain the perspective of the school principal, not only as a teacher but also as someone in charge of the entire school and its operations. Out of the seven parents who participated in this study, four had their children enrolled at the two identified schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The other three parents had their children enrolled in other schools, but in the same area. The number of participants was sufficient to gather detailed information about their experiences and perspectives on parental support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.5.1 Research Sites

The study reviewed parental support in two schools located in Pinetown. The schools in Marianhill (Pinetown) fall under the jurisdiction of the national Department of Education and Training (DET). Schools in this region often lack basic educational necessities, such as adequate facilities, sufficient classroom space, textbooks and other essential supplies. This study aimed to explore the experiences of parents as they supported their children during the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, the sample population consisted of parents and high school teachers. It also aimed to explore not only the level of parental support but also the ways in which parents and teachers communicated and collaborated during the pandemic. To qualify for the study, the selected schools needed to meet specific criteria: they had to be secondary schools located in a low-income or rural area in Pinetown.

The schools are no-fee Public Secondary schools designated as Quintile 3, catering to a community with low to moderate socio-economic status. Therefore, the schools mostly accommodate learners from low socio-economic backgrounds. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the existing socioeconomic inequalities in our country, which also affected the education system. Some schools and parents lacked the necessary resources, such as gadgets and internet access, to continue learning during the pandemic.

4.6 Data Generation Methods

The study generated data through the use of in-depth semi-structured Interviews. Johnson and Christensen (2014) explain that qualitative interviews, commonly referred to as in-depth interviews, can be used to gather detailed insights into a participant's thoughts,

beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations and feelings regarding a specific topic. Ruslin et al. (2022) posit that the semi-structured interview is a versatile approach that enables interviewers to introduce new questions based on the responses of the interviewees. The aim of conducting semi-structured interviews was to create a space for participants to narrate their experiences related to providing parental support for learners' education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous studies on parental support in the South African context have often overlooked other aspects of support, such as emotional support and the extent to which socioeconomic factors affect parents' abilities to support their children. This study explored how parents offered emotional support to help their children navigate their studies during the pandemic. Additionally, it examined how socioeconomic factors, such as financial status and education level, influenced their ability to support their children's education.

The interviews were carried out both in person and via Zoom meetings. Data collection took place during a particularly busy period in schools, as teachers were occupied with exams. As a result, some participants opted to be interviewed at home through Zoom, allowing them to balance their responsibilities. I encouraged participants to share their stories in full, which allowed for more comprehensive narratives. This format enabled me to prepare questions in advance and ask each participant the same ones, steering the conversation effectively. I also included follow-up questions to deepen my understanding of their responses and to clarify any points. Participants were welcome to ask for clarification on the questions they did not understand, thus making the interview a two-way communication and gaining more in-depth information from the interviewee.

Interviews were conducted in both isiZulu and English, depending on the participants' preferred language. Some participants chose to use a mix of both languages, while others opted for just one. Generally, teachers leaned towards speaking English, while parents preferred conversing in isiZulu. All interviews, including the Zoom interviews, were audio-recorded to allow for verbatim transcription after the interview. During interviews, I noted down any impressions or insights I had, in addition to the transcript, such as contextual elements, emotions or body language.

4.7 Data Analysis

Govender (2021) states that all research must be analysed using various techniques to make sense of the data. In narrative research, McLeod (2024) asserts that researchers must interpret a story by determining what constitutes a story, collecting stories, identifying stories within the data, and discerning themes and relationships. Out of the various qualitative data analysis techniques available, thematic analysis was chosen as the most suitable method for analysing the data to uncover underlying themes and explore the connections between them. Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that thematic analysis is a flexible and valuable research tool that can provide a rich, detailed and complex account of data.

4.7.1 Thematic analysis

According to Jowsey et al. (2022), thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research method that effectively explores individuals' experiences, ideas, behaviours and perceptions regarding a specific topic (Kiger and Varpio, 2020), particularly when working with interview and focus group data (Jowsey et al, 2022). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis highlights the social, cultural and structural contexts that shape individual experiences, enabling knowledge through interactions between researchers and participants that unveil socially constructed meanings.

I began my analysis by organising my data. First, I created a new folder to keep my work organised. Under this folder, I made sub-folders for transcriptions from teachers and parents. I then familiarised myself with the data by listening to the recordings and transcribing all the interviews word for word in the language used by each participant. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), transcription is the process of taking notes and converting them into a format that facilitates analysis and interpretation. Some participants conducted their interviews in Zulu, so I translated those written transcripts into English in a separate document. For participants who spoke English, I corrected any grammatical issues and ensured that the interviews were written in clear, understandable language. The transcripts were then named Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4, and Parent 1 to Parent 7, corresponding to the parents' responses to each question, and saved to the relevant folder. I immersed myself in the data by listening to the recordings all over,

re-reading the transcriptions and taking notes. I then searched for patterns in the data to establish relationships and create themes. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), a pattern refers to the connections between different categories. Pattern seeking involves exploring the data through various perspectives to uncover these relationships. I then identified the main themes and sub-themes from the data, which I presented in chapter four.

4.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

The assurance of trustworthiness in qualitative research is necessary as the researcher claims that it is trustworthiness that provides qualitative research with a prominent place in the academic world (Kakar et al, 2023). Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that the trustworthiness of a study is one way in which a researcher can convince themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention. In qualitative research, trustworthiness is built on several key components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ahmed, 2024). Below, I will provide a concise overview of scholarly perspectives on trustworthiness and discuss how it was established in this study.

4.8.1 Credibility

Interpretive research can be considered credible if readers find its inferences to be believable (Bhattacharjee, 2012). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility refers to the trustworthiness of research findings. It determines whether the results genuinely reflect the participants' perspectives and whether they accurately interpret the original data provided by those participants. To ensure the credibility of the study, I conducted member checks during both the data collection process and the analysis phase. To do this, all participants were asked the same interview questions and I posed follow-up questions to clarify the stories they shared. After transcribing, translating and addressing language issues in the interviews, I sent the revised work back to the participants. This was done to give them a chance to confirm whether my understanding of their narratives aligned with their intended meanings and whether their translation to English was accurately captured without losing meaning. The Zoom interviews were recorded and kept to ensure that the data reported conveyed the meanings of the participants.

4.8.2 Dependability

According to Bhattacharjee (2012), interpretive research is considered dependable if two researchers independently reach the same conclusions from the same evidence, or if the same researcher arrives at similar conclusions when observing the same phenomenon at different times. The assessment of dependability, as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is based on participants' perceptions of the research outcomes, explanations and suggestions. A key factor is that all of these should be supported by data gathered from the study participants. To ensure the study's dependability, the researcher reported verbatim accounts from the participants without altering their statements.

4.8.3 Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability pertains to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be utilised in various contexts or settings involving diverse participants. Transferability is defined by Korstjens & Moser (2018) as the extent to which findings from qualitative research can be applied to different settings or contexts with different respondents. To ensure the transferability of this study, I have provided readers with a detailed description of the research settings to allow for a clearer understanding of how the findings may be utilised elsewhere. Additionally, I provided extensive information about the sample, along with a thorough account of the settings and interactions between participants. When qualitative researchers provide detailed descriptions of the setting, for example, or offer many perspectives about a theme, the results become more realistic and richer (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

4.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability, as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), ensures that data and interpretations are grounded in the findings rather than being subjective or imaginary. According to Bhattacharjee (2012), confirmability refers to the extent to which findings in interpretive research can be independently verified by others, particularly the participants. To achieve the confirmability of the study, all participants were asked the same interview questions, and I posed follow-up questions to clarify the stories they shared. After transcribing, translating and addressing language issues in the interviews, I sent the revised work back to the participants. This was done to give them a chance to confirm whether my understanding

of their narratives aligned with their intended meanings and whether their translation to English was accurately captured without losing meaning. Creswell and Creswell (2018) posit that when qualitative researchers present thorough accounts of the context or share various viewpoints on a theme, the findings become more authentic and nuanced.

4.9 Limitations of the study

The issue I experienced in this study was recruiting participants. The planned sample size for teachers was five and eight parents, but I had to reduce it to four teachers and seven parents due to the challenges of getting people to participate. My ethical clearance was approved at the end of October, so I began data collection during a busy time for teachers, as they were occupied with exams and grading learners' scripts. I purposefully recruited two teachers from other schools who met the criteria of being secondary school teachers located in a low-income area in Pinetown. Recruiting parent volunteers at the schools was also a challenge, so I took it upon myself to go door-to-door in the Marianhill neighbourhood (Pinetown) and the surrounding areas near the two schools, which I identified as my research site. I invited parents to participate in the study after sharing all the relevant details, including its purpose. Some of the parents who agreed to take part had children enrolled at the two identified schools.

4.10 Ethical guidelines

Ethics deals with moral problems related to the practice of research (Mirza et al, 2023). Johnson and Christensen (2014) posit that research ethics comprise a set of principles designed to guide researchers in conducting ethical studies. Researchers are required to submit their research plans for evaluation to an institutional review board (IRB) at their respective college or university campuses, as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018). For the current study, a proposal for ethical clearance was submitted to the University of KwaZulu-Natal's research committee, which was granted on 20 October 2024. The gatekeeper's permission was obtained from the two schools to collect data. I also sought permission to conduct this study from the Head of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, the main gatekeeper responsible for all public schools in the province, and I was granted permission to research in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education institutions.

4.10.1 Informed consent

Informed consent, as defined by Decarlo (2018), is a subject's voluntary agreement to participate in research, based on a full understanding of its risks and benefits. I informed all participants about the purpose of the study, detailing how the interviews would be conducted and outlined the ethical guidelines. I emphasised the principles of voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality and that no benefits would be provided. This information was communicated in a language that participants understood before obtaining their permission to conduct the interviews.

Participants received an informed consent letter that explained the study's topic, objectives, and ethical standards. To enhance comprehension, this letter was translated into Zulu. Additionally, participants were informed about the use of a digital recorder and they voluntarily consented to record the interviews. A portion of the informed consent document was signed by participants to indicate their agreement to be recorded.

4.10.2 Voluntary participation

I obtained informed consent from all participants and made it clear that their agreement to participate in the study did not obligate them to continue if they felt uncomfortable at any point. Participants were informed that their involvement in sharing information through interviews was entirely voluntary, and they would not receive any benefits, including monetary compensation, for participating in the study.

4.10.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Decarlo (2018) states that confidentiality means some identifying information may be kept, but only the researcher can link participants to their data and promises not to disclose it publicly. The information was kept strictly confidential, and no real names were written. Instead, codes such as "T1" were assigned to participants to report their data.

4.11 Summary

The chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the processes involved in data collection and analysis. I began by discussing the research paradigm, approach, and design, along with the justifications for their selection. Additionally, I discussed the sampling methods, research tools and analysis techniques that were suitable for this study. Towards the end of

the chapter, I addressed the trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. Lastly, ethical considerations and limitations. The next chapter will focus on data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the methodology, how data was collected, from whom it was collected, where it was collected and the ethical guidelines followed, which underpinned and guided the research process and analysis of this study. In this chapter, I provide evidence of how the nature of parental support changed during COVID-19 by presenting an analysis of the interview transcripts with parents and teachers on how they supported children's learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Six key themes emerged from the data through a coding process, which involved reading the narratives presented by parents and teachers, identifying common ideas, colour-coding them and consolidating these ideas into themes. The data is presented within these themes as direct quotes taken directly from the interview transcripts. The chapter begins by conceptualising parental support through the perspectives of the participants and outlining the forms of support and actions that parents can take to assist their children. Lastly, the chapter addresses the challenges posed by COVID-19 in supporting learners' education during the lockdown, as well as the opportunities that arose for families and teachers. The data presentation and discussion of findings are thematically organised into themes and sub-themes.

5.2 THEME 1: Conceptualising Parental Support

This theme is about conceptualising parental support and I focus on two sub-themes: teachers' and parents' perspectives of parental support. The concept of parental support in learners' education has been an ongoing discourse in academic literature, yet a definitive consensus on its meaning remains elusive. Some researchers focus on providing support to help children with their schoolwork, such as assisting with homework, expressing concern about academic performance and participating in parental meetings (e.g. Ntekane, 2018). In contrast, others argue that parental support extends beyond strictly academic issues; it includes fostering a safe and healthy home environment (e.g. Durisic and Bunijevac, 2017). This broader definition also includes emotional and social support, as well as financial assistance (Shahzad et al. 2020; Hernández-Padilla et al. 2023). In this theme, I highlight a notable shift in research on parent support, moving from traditional viewpoints to a more holistic approach. This approach to of parental support is about developing the child

holistically, not just in schooling but so that they can be good members of society. It includes emotional support, ensuring the general well-being of the child and instilling discipline for the child's moral character development. It moves away from the traditional notion of parental support by focusing not only on a child's schoolwork and academic performance, but also on other developmental aspects, such as the child's moral character. Lumadi (2019) posits that the home environment influences children's disruptive behaviour and that parental support can help reduce such behaviour. He adds that increased parental involvement in education often leads to improved academic performance and helps children develop into responsible members of society.

5.2.1 Teachers' perspectives of parental support

The literature on teachers' perspectives on parental support suggests that teachers hold varying views on what parents can do to support their child/ren within school education (Wilke, 2022). Some have positive views on parental support (e.g. Levinthal et al, 2021), some have negative views (e.g. Aslan, 2016), while others hold mixed views about parental support (e.g. Patton, 2019). Within this sub-theme, I explore teachers' perspectives on parent support post-COVID-19 because of their experiences during school lockdown during the pandemic, where their involvement in supporting the child/ren was substantial in educating them in the absence of going to school. This sub-theme, therefore, takes COVID-19 as a turning point in the discourse of parent support, more especially within the context of increasing access to digital technologies that were used substantially during this period. Drawing from the data, new imperatives emerged and these include encouragement, discipline and punishment, the need to provide a conducive home environment to support independent and guided learning and the use of digital technologies for teaching and learning.

It is evident, accordingly, that teachers share positive views on parental support in educating their child/ren and have a common understanding of what parental support is post-COVID-19. These views involve being actively involved in every aspect of a child's education and life. This support includes providing financial assistance, emotional support, encouragement and a focus on the child's overall well-being, including mental and physical health. T4, in her interview, indicated that:

“Parental support has to do with taking responsibility for your child as a parent. This means making sure that you are present for your child’s educational needs and other aspects of their development”. (Teacher 4).

However, T3 mentioned

“As a teacher, I believe that parental support refers to any form of assistance that a parent may provide or give to a child so that the child can perform better at school”. (Teacher 3)

Instilling discipline in a child and teaching them what is right or wrong also emerged as parental support from the transcripts. Lumadi (2019) highlights that schools encounter various challenges in addressing the needs of learners, with poor discipline being a key factor contributing to the decline in learning and academic achievement. His research indicates that a lack of disciplinary management skills can lead to unruly behaviour, failure to follow school rules and poor academic performance. In addressing discipline, Richard et al. (2024) contend that teachers should work with parents to address behavioural issues and consistently support students in reinforcing positive behaviours both at home and school. Teacher 2, who is also the principal of the school, shared similar sentiments as the other participants, emphasising that parental support requires active involvement in all aspects of a child's life to ensure he or she performs well in school. However, his perspective also included another aspect of parental support, which is disciplining and teaching the child about right and wrong, as well as punishment.

T2 indicated:

“Parental support, in my view, involves taking care of a child in every aspect of their life. This means ensuring the child’s well-being, in terms of their health, both mental and physical. I check to see if the child knows how to do things and for the thing they cannot do, I either teach them or demonstrate how to do it. As a child who lacks resources, I provide all the necessary support, both tangible and intangible. As a growing person, I support the child through teaching, guidance and appropriate discipline by warning about what is right, wrong, dangerous and so on. It is also about making sure that the child grows up and builds a future by

providing all the things needed, as I said: a home.....to provide a home and happiness. I also view punishment as a form of support if the child has done wrong". (Teacher 2: Principal).

The insights shared by the teachers and principal regarding parental support broadened the traditional view of parental support by highlighting the various ways parents can assist their children, which extend beyond focusing on school education. Their viewpoints are consistent with findings from researchers such as Shahzad et al. (2020) and Alhaji et al. (2024), who emphasised the broader aspects of parental support. As defined by Alhali et al. (2024), parental support is an extensive concept that includes various forms of support, such as emotional support (which involves expressions of love, empathy, warmth and concern), informational support (referring to the provision of information, guidance or advice), and tangible support (which pertains to material or financial help). Shahzad et al. (2020) emphasised that parental support is strongly connected to the financial, emotional and educational help that parents and other family members offer at home, which in some ways extends the notion of parent support to family support, involving persons within a family and not just the parents of the child. Deriving from the data, parental support also includes instilling discipline and punishment in children to develop their character. As Richard et al. (2024) noted, discipline promotes order, enhances focus and cultivates a positive school culture, all of which are essential for academic achievement and personal growth. This highlights the importance of parental support in children's education, not only for academic success but also for the development of their moral or social character to be good citizens and for creating a conducive learning environment in schools.

5.2.2 Parents' perspectives of parental support

In this part, parents were asked about their understanding of the term 'parental support' and shared many perceptions on their understanding. Understanding their perceptions of what it constitutes will help schools when implementing strategies to involve them. Based on these narratives, parental support refers to parents who are present and fully involved in assisting their children in their educational journey so that they can have a better future. Two parents in the study noted that parental support begins at home before extending to the school environment. They said it encompasses all aspects of a child's life and includes

various forms of assistance, such as financial assistance, emotional support, motivation and encouragement. For instance, P1, P2 and P3 had to say this about parental support:

“My understanding of parental support means assisting your child at all times and encouraging them when they seem too lazy to do their schoolwork. It is important to continually motivate your child and tell the child about the positive outcomes of education” (Parent 1)

“I think that, in my understanding, it is about how we, as parents, can support our children in their educational journey at school. In general, I think it covers, umm, hmm, um, hmm, what you call. I think it covers the parental support system from the parent to the child, be it at school, be it at home, be it anywhere; it covers all aspects of the child’s life as a parent just to support the child in general” (Parent 2).

“According to my understanding, parent support is whereby a parent is fully engaged in the child’s education either by providing financial or emotional and being there for everything that is needed for the child at school and being present for all the child’s needs at school. It is also about being there for the personal needs of the child and adhering to all the school’s rules and regulations”. (Parent 3).

Research on parental support within the South African context has primarily centred on assistance with school-related activities (Magwa and Mugari, 2017; Ntekane, 2018). However, drawing from the insights of parents, it becomes clear that parental support extends far beyond helping with schoolwork; it encompasses every facet of a child's life. Parents can offer various forms of support to their children. This includes being present for their personal needs, instilling discipline to ensure they follow school rules and regulations, providing financial and emotional support and motivating them about the importance of education.

5.3 THEME 2: Home- Based and School- Based Parental Support

Parental support is a topic that has been extensively studied both globally and nationally. The concept of parent support is understood in various ways and there is an ongoing conversation about what this support should entail. Participants were asked to describe what it means to support a child as a parent, with a particular focus on the specific actions that define parental support. Drawing from the works of Thuba et al. (2017) on home-based support and Lechuga-Peña and Brisson (2018) on school-based support, two distinctive discourses are revealed. One relates to parental support at the school site and the other relates to parental support at the home site. Within this theme, I present the data with two sub-themes: school-based parental support and home-based parental support.

5.3.1 Home-based Parental Support

Families are responsible for socialising children to become productive members of society. Home-based support includes actions that parents must take to support their children's education at home. Lumadi (2019) asserts that homes must be environments that promote social development and parents have a responsibility to support teachers in fostering their children's growth. Both teachers and the parents in the study noted that parental support starts at home before it goes to the school environment. This support, as mentioned by the participants, includes creating a safe space for your child to vent to you about their problems, while you intervene in the problems they encounter and monitor the media content they use. In their interviews, parents indicated that:

“By supporting the child in all aspects of their lives, I mean both at school and outside of school, at home and in the community. For example, if my child is facing a problem like bullying—whether at school, church or elsewhere—I will intervene and offer my support in any way I can to support my child. (Parent 2)

“By supporting the child, as a parent, I think support starts at home before it goes outside. When you are a parent, you need to be both a parent and a friend to a child. This way, your child will feel relaxed and comfortable around you rather than feeling freer when they are outside of your presence. There are many negative influences outside the home and children can learn things that aren't good for them. It's important to support your child in all situations—both

good and bad—so they can confide in you rather than seeking advice or comfort elsewhere”. (Parent 5)

Pokhrel and Chhetri (2020) note that increased online learning time has exposed children to harmful content and heightened the risk of cyberbullying. The interview transcripts highlighted that parental support extends beyond school work; it also includes assisting children with various non-academic matters, for example, monitoring their cell phones and TV. In line with the findings of Darmiany et al. (2022), their study revealed that several issues affecting children need to be addressed, such as supervising children's use of gadgets and social media, as well as maintaining student discipline. If these challenges are not tackled, they could negatively influence student performance and lead to a decline in the overall quality of education. The non-academic parental support aspects highlighted by parents include instilling home values in children and monitoring their social media use, TV and cell phones to help maintain good behaviour. In this regard, T3 and T4 indicated that:

“I would like to see parental support begin at home rather than relying solely on schools. Be that supportive parent at home. Ummmhm, parents need to make sure that the child is supported at home and provide guidance about life in general. When children receive support at home, they are better prepared for school. This support, in general, includes monitoring the TV programs and YouTube videos that children watch on their phones. Parental guidance is important for ensuring that parents know what their children are letting into their minds. A child's behaviour and attitudes are influenced by the content they consume at home. By the time they go to school, they may already have developed a mentality of "I know this, I know this". So parents need to provide guidance that starts at home in terms of what children watch and the people they associate themselves with. We can't expect a child to behave well at school if they are allowed to stay out late, like after 7:00 p.m., without any intervention from their parents” (Teacher, 3).

“I think many parents just give their children whatever they ask for. For instance, most learners would want a cell phone, but they do not know how much learning can actually take place when they have one. so, I think this is the only way parents try or find themselves doing, often without realizing that by

purchasing a cell phone, they are assisting the learner and providing support. Because parents do not even monitor how their children use these cell phones. They just buy them simply because they feel it's a need or a want, so there is not much effective support in that area. Parents and even the kids themselves don't actually know or understand the use of these cell phones or recognise how much power and information these smartphones can provide. These learners can do everything else with their cell phones, but when it comes to the educational aspect, they draw the line. As educators, we create online groups and host lessons for our learners, but it has been challenging to engage them effectively. They either do not attend these lessons or leave the groups before time. Hence I am saying perhaps they do not understand how much power these gadgets hold in terms of assisting them with their education". (Teacher, 4)

Drawing from the data it is evident that at home, parental support involves instilling important values by discussing what is right or wrong, creating a conducive environment for studying, ensuring that children complete their schoolwork, assisting with explanations when they struggle and setting up study schedules. Monitoring a child's cell phone is also important. Parents also support their children by monitoring social media usage and encouraging learners to use their phones for educational purposes. School closures and strict containment measures have led families to rely on technology for children's learning and entertainment. However, not all children have the skills and resources to stay safe online (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2020).

As expressed by the participants, parental support also includes expressing concern for their children's academic progress. For example, parents can show this concern by asking children about their day when they return home from school. Parent 1 and Teacher 1 expressed:

"Secondly, parental support means that there must be support at home before we even reach the school environment. At home, a parent should ensure that their child completes their homework and that there is a timetable or time allocation for school assignments. If the parent needs to sign the homework book, they should do that. Lastly, parents should also check their child's work before they go to school". (Teacher 1)

“Parental support, in general, involves raising your child and instilling values that reflect how we do things in our home to understand how things are done at home and know what they want in life. At all times, you should emphasise your home values to your child and make it clear that they should not merely watch and imitate everything they see in the world or compare their lives to those of their friends. As a mother, I always take the time to teach my child. When I notice a change in their behaviour, I sit them down to talk. I see this as part of my support role because observing how my child behaves and approaches their work allows me to identify any issues that may need to be addressed”. (Parent 1)

“I would like parents to make sure that their children wake up early in the morning and come to school all school days. Arrive early, on time, wear full school uniform, make sure that they encourage them to stay in class and when they come to class, they study. Whether they are learning or not, will be seen through writing. Sometimes, a child comes to class but doesn’t do anything. They must also teach them respect, teaching and learning goes well when there is respect”. (Teacher, 2)

Drawing on the insights gathered from the interview transcripts, home-based parental support encompasses the various actions that parents undertake at home to support their children's education. Although there is an extensive amount of literature on home-based parental support (Magwa and Mugari, 2017; Boonk et al. 2018; Crosnoe and Ressler, 2019), the relevant literature indicates that at home, parents primarily concentrate on assisting their children with schoolwork for academic success. However, the interview data revealed a broader perspective. Parents should not be only concerned with schoolwork but should also prioritise the holistic development of their children. Parents support their children's holistic development by instilling values and discipline, respect, monitoring media consumption and creating a safe space for their children to share their personal problems. Participants in a study conducted by Munje and Mncube (2018) noted that it was quite common to observe learners who appeared absentminded in class, withdrawn, isolated, unhappy and unwilling to share their problems with classmates. This highlights the need for parents to focus not only on academic work but also on the overall well-being of the child.

Parents can support their children with schoolwork at home by showing concern for their schoolwork, asking about their day at school, creating a conducive environment and ensuring that the child completes their homework and follows a timetable.

5.3.2 School-based parental support

There are a variety of school-based actions that parents can do to support their children's education. The data from the interviews reveal that school-based parental support includes attending meetings, checking the child's work, providing study resources, regularly communicating with teachers, ensuring regular school attendance and participating in extracurricular activities. These school-based activities are in alignment with Darko-Asumadu and Sika-Bright (2021) who mentioned that parents can support their children by volunteering at school, taking part in events and organisations and maintaining open communication with teachers and staff. Ntekane (2018), further, stated that parents can engage in their children's education by joining school boards, showing concern for academic performance and attending parent meetings to better understand their children's progress. This is what T3 said:

“Firstly, parents must ensure that their child attends school regularly and is equipped with the necessary materials, such as stationery and books. Today's learners need to have various tools, such as calculators and specific tools to help them in their studies, as well as study guides. All these resources play a vital role in supporting a child's education. Attending school, having the necessary equipment, checking, checking the work of a child, it's not a matter of just taking a child to school and then saying, okay, I have seen, I have dropped her at school, and then I have bought everything that she needs. When the child comes home from school, parents should ask questions like, “What did you do today?” and “Can I see your books?” and “Do you have any challenges?” Parents should also maintain regular communication and relationships with teachers to stay informed about their child's progress, behaviour and needs. In addition to academics, parents should also be involved in their child's extracurricular activities, such as sports. If the school organises meetings for parents, it's important for them to attend”. (Teacher 3).

Duma (2019) argues that parental involvement connects two key contexts in children's early development: the home and school environments. School-based support and home-based support encompass the various ways in which parents contribute to their children's educational journeys at home and in school settings. The data indicate that parental support in education should be multifaceted, rather than solely concentrated on formal academic assistance. As highlighted by Munje and Mncube (2018), parents need to actively engage in addressing their children's academic, social and emotional needs. Furthermore, the findings emphasise the importance of nurturing other aspects related to moral and social character development. This can be done by creating a safe environment where children feel comfortable confiding in their parents about their feelings and struggles.

5.4 THEME 3: Forms of Parental Support

Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) contend that educators, parents and community members often hold varying viewpoints on effective involvement practices and the different ways each group can play a role in the educational process. Following on from theme 3, teachers' and parents' perspectives on the various forms of parental support at both the site of the school and at home are presented within this theme. There are 3 sub-themes, the first focuses on tangible support for teaching and learning that includes provisioning of resources, the second on emotional support and the third on motivational (aspirational) support.

5.4.1 Tangible Support for teaching and learning

There is a range of tangible support that parents can provide both at the school site and at home. These include financial support, resource support, monitoring of school work and liaising with teachers and the school. Providing money and paying for resources that will help the child is regarded as tangible support. According to Pokhrel and Chhetri (2020), schooling requires parents to support their children's learning both academically and financially. Participants of the study noted different actions that encompass tangible support. These actions include making sure that learners are provided with the necessary resources that play an important role in their education. These include paying school fees, buying uniforms, stationery and donating to extramural activities such as outings. In this regard, this is what T2, who is the principal, said:

“As a child who lacks resources, I provide all the necessary support, both tangible and intangible. Tangible resources include the school's needs, such as uniforms and tools like stationery. Although our school is tuition-free, there are times when we need to collect money for certain activities, such as outings. In such cases, we ask for contributions from parents to cover those expenses. So we would love parents to support us financially”. (Teacher 2)

“As I mentioned before, parents must take responsibility for their children through both financial assistance and emotional presence. In terms of financial support for education, a parent has to ensure that a child attends a secured school, pays school fees, buys uniforms, stationery and all other educational expenses. Furthermore, what is more important is being emotionally present. This means you must actively engage with your child and show concern about their school performance and daily learning processes. For example, ask how their day at school was or whether they have any homework. It's important to be involved physically and emotionally, not just financially” (Teacher 4)

“Firstly, parents must ensure that their child attends school regularly and is equipped with the necessary materials, such as stationery and books. Today's learners need to have various tools, such as calculators and specific tools to help them in their studies, as well as study guides. All these resources play an important role in supporting a child's education”. (Teacher 3)

“.....Financially, as a parent, it is your responsibility to provide for your child's financial needs. This includes purchasing things like school uniforms, textbooks, food, transportation and other essentials” (Parent 3)

Tangible support also includes providing technological resources such as gadgets and data for internet accessibility and paying for extra tutorial help when the child is struggling with schoolwork.

“You can support her by providing the resources she needs. If she requires additional help, such as tutorials, you arrange those for her. Make sure to buy her textbooks whenever she needs them. Overall, I think it is to offer assistance

by supplying necessary materials and guiding her to places where she can get extra tutorial help". (Parent 7)

"I support her by paying for school trips and allowing her the opportunity to study with her friends. On weekends, I allow her to study at school. Also, whenever she needs to use a cell phone for research, I buy data for her so she can use the internet to look up her schoolwork". (Parent 6).

The information indicates that parents must provide children with essential resources, such as textbooks, school fees, extra tutoring, uniforms and other essential resources to support their education. This suggests that when it comes to parental support, we need to consider the issues that affect parents' ability to provide or not provide, such as the affordability of parents to provide tangible resources, particularly in low-income communities.

5.4.2 Emotional Support

A poor parent-child relationship may lead to rejection and neglect of the child (Duma, 2019). Emotional support, as highlighted in the interview extracts, occurs when parents create an environment that allows their children to feel comfortable sharing their problems. This encourages children to relax and allows parents to check in on their well-being. Duma (2019) emphasises that parental involvement is essential for the psychosocial development of adolescents, as children's emotions and behaviours greatly rely on their parents' support. According to Alhaji et al. (2024), parental support focuses on the child's feelings and helps by listening, providing warmth and being affectionate. Parents (P3, P5 & P6) expressed this by saying:

"Okay, let us start with emotionally. Children sometimes experience depression, and if, as a parent, you are not that close to your child, you will not be able to provide the necessary emotional support. If you are that close, you will be able to see the child's needs, as the child may be facing challenges and may not have friends to confide in. Emotional support is not about being happy all the time; there are moments when children feel drained and overwhelmed by schoolwork. Therefore, it is important for them to receive emotional support from their parents". (Parent 3)

“I support my child by encouraging her to make time for both studying and relaxing her mind. I help her with many things. Even when I notice she is unwell, it is I, the parent, who can see that my child is not well today”. (Parent 6)

“By supporting the child, as a parent, I think support starts at home before it goes outside. When you are a parent, you need to be both a parent and a friend to a child. This way, your child will feel relaxed and comfortable around you rather than feeling freer when they are outside of your presence. There are many negative influences outside the home, and children can learn things that aren't good for them. There are many negative influences outside the home that children might encounter. It's important to support your child in all situations—both good and bad—so they can confide in you rather than seeking advice or comfort elsewhere”. (Parent 5)

Teachers shared similar perspectives with parents regarding what constitutes emotional support. They believe that being emotionally present for their children by showing concern about their schoolwork is important. In a study by Zuma (2020), many students indicated that they would greatly value additional emotional support, particularly in the form of parents' showing concern for their academic performance and their ability to manage their schoolwork. During the interviews, T4 said this about emotional support:

“.....Furthermore, what is more important is being emotionally present. This means actively engaging with your child and showing concern about their school performance and daily learning processes. For example, ask how their day at school was or whether they have any homework. It's important to be involved physically and emotionally, not just financially”. (Teacher 4).

The data reveals that parents and caregivers play an important role in helping children manage their emotions and cope with life challenges and school work. The findings indicate that emotional support refers to a type of support where parents and other caregivers create a safe space for children to share their personal problems, help them relax their minds and show concern for their school work.

5.4.3 Motivation and encouragement

Ule and Zivoder (2023) note that disadvantaged families often exclude specific schools, subjects or careers for their children. Zuma (2020) found, for example, that parents' emotional support, like encouraging their children to study, motivates students to invest more effort in academics and helps them persevere during difficulties. Motivation and encouragement from parents were commonly conveyed through words of encouragement to motivate learners or encouraging them to do well in their studies and help them choose a suitable career. These parents believe that it is important for the child to pursue subjects for which they find affinity rather than pursue what is desired by the parent. Parents (P4 and P5) expressed this by saying;

“Support a child by encouraging them to follow their dreams, choose a career they love and support them as a parent. Assist them in finding a suitable school and provide help in any other areas they may need. This is how you can effectively support a child”. (Parent 4)

“Non-tangible resources are to give the child courage, build their confidence and sharpen their mind. Sharpening a child’s mind is a resource that we cannot touch etc”. (Teacher 2)

“There are many ways to support your child, such as sitting down with them and discussing what is right and what is not. Share your likes and interests so that your child can feel closer to you. Like now for example, when we were growing up, our parents often chose our careers for us. However, as a parent today, it’s important to ask your child what they would like to be in life. This way, you can support them in their chosen path instead of pushing them toward a career you desire for them”. (Parent 5)

Deducing from the transcripts, motivation and encouragement involves building their children’s confidence, supporting them in choosing a career that they love and offering words of encouragement and showing them what is right or wrong. Mkhize (2020) states that parental support is not dependent on the literacy or financial stability of the parents. Parents can support their children by creating a conducive environment for schoolwork and encouraging them to strive for success.

5.5 THEME 4: Parental support During COVID-19

In the context of COVID-19, the way parents supported their children's learning changed. The COVID-19 lockdown compelled schools to shift from traditional learning methods to emergency remote learning. According to Misirli and Ergulec (2021), emergency remote teaching serves as a temporary solution to address an urgent problem in education. Misirli and Ergulec (2021) also note that the situation differed from the well-planned traditional method to online learning, as it caught teachers, students and parents off guard in an unexpected and unprecedented manner. Mathura (2023) contends that teachers, parents and learners adapted to new ways of communicating and engaging in teaching and learning beyond the traditional classroom setting. Parents found themselves having to adapt to a new lifestyle as well as the various challenges that arose from the pandemic. Khalid and Singh (2022) state that during school closures and the shift to online learning, family members had to assist, regardless of their level of education or training. I present my analysis on this theme under three sub-themes: the nature of support that was provided by parents during the COVID-19 lockdown, communication between teachers and parents, which includes the constraints to parental support and parental support post-COVID-19 pandemic.

5.5.1 Nature of support during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic came with lots of changes in how education was delivered, as well as with the nature of parental support to cope with school closures. With most schools closed and learners having to adapt to studying at home and rely on their parents for help and guidance. Misirli and Ergulec (2021) argue that during emergency remote teaching, parents play a crucial role as key stakeholders in distance education by physically supporting their children. According to Mathura (2023), teachers, parents and learners had to navigate uncharted territory during the COVID-19 pandemic, with online education presenting one of the numerous challenges faced by the education sector. Based on the analysis of the interview transcripts, not much was done by parents to support their children in their education due to barriers such as communication, lack of resources, technological issues and the fear of contracting the virus. As noted by Govender (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reduced the level of parental involvement that schools had previously seen. Online learning was new to most people and it needed technological skills and tools for

people to be able to use it. Parents supported their children in various ways but some were constrained by their socioeconomic statuses. The data reveals that some parents, while recognising the need, could not afford the resources or know how to use technology. Based on the data from the transcripts, they assisted children with their homework and online school work, explained the study content and encouraged them to study. Two parents (P4 and P1) shared their experiences of supporting their child, and one was working from home at that time. They said:

“I cannot say that I supported my child deeply in that way because she was between grades 9 and 10, I am not sure. They only went to school during certain weeks and received assignments to complete at home. I encouraged her to do those assignments because we live in challenging times. I wanted to ensure that, despite the circumstances, she continued to work on her studies. Most of the time, we were at home and she didn’t attend school. Communication was through letters which they gave to the learners”. (Parent 4)

“I supported my child during the pandemic while I was working from home. Since we were confined to our home and unable to go out, I called him to come study next to me. This way, he could stay alert and keep up with his schoolwork, as we were informed that we would return to school once the pandemic ended. I did this to ensure his mind remained fresh and I also took the opportunity to educate him” (Parent 1).

In the above extracts, the continuation of education (ensuring his mind remained fresh) took precedence, suggesting that parents took on the role of ensuring that education continues. Some parents could only provide encouragement to support their children. Their ability to assist was limited by a lack of resources, such as technological gadgets. In her interview, P5 said:

“As a single parent, it was very challenging. I don't want to lie; I struggled to provide support for my child, especially since we didn't have access to technological gadgets or a computer. It was difficult. The only support I could

offer was encouraging him to study, as that was the only thing I felt I could do”
(Parent 5).

Parker et al. (2020) reported that the Department of Basic Education collaborated with local TV and radio stations to deliver educational content for elementary and high school students. Another form of support was paying DSTV subscriptions so that children could watch educational channels, which were aimed to help them stay informed about their academic work. P6 said:

“During that time, they had the opportunity to learn using television. There were channels dedicated to educational purposes that they were encouraged to watch. I then tried to upgrade my DSTV subscription so that she could access those channels and stay caught up with her schoolwork. This way, she wouldn't forget her study material when she returned to school” (Parent 6).

Providing nutrition for the children also emerged as a nature of support for children during COVID-19. Since families were at home, they had to buy food for the children. Hamdan and Al-Jarrah (2024) argue that the connection between humans and food centres on our body's requirement for proper nutrition to carry out essential functions effectively. They emphasise that adequate nutritional support is vital for optimising brain performance and enhancing the learning process. Noting that learners received food at schools and that during COVID-19 lockdowns they were deprived of this food, which parents now had to provide. Parents recognised that they needed to buy other things to support their child's education during this time, but were not able to do so in favour of providing food for their children. Parents could only buy food and there was no money for things like data for internet connectivity. This means some parents had to make sacrifices. In this regard, P5 said:

“It was very hard since we were not working, our salaries decreased. So the money could only afford to buy basics such as food. I don't know how I can put this, but it was a very difficult time. I was with my children at home, and they would tell me that they needed data for research and I wouldn't be able to buy it because all the money had gone to buying food. In some cases, as a parent, you would find yourself getting frustrated and taking it out on the children, not

understanding why they would ask for such when they can see that you are struggling” (Parent, 5).

However, some families could not even provide food for their families and children, which also became a barrier to their support. Due to parent’s lack of finances to provide proper food for their children, some families had problems with providing food for their families. The schools came in to assist those families in supporting their children. T1 expressed this in her interview by saying:

“Okay, I think with parents, they faced difficulties so much in supporting their kids because one, they were all at home, due to quarantine and all, so they were all at home. They had to make sure that they had food. Some families have problems with providing food due to finances, and also our school does provide food for children. So we know that other children rely so much on the food that we cook at school. So even to us as teachers, it was an issue of....., we wondered whether this certain learner, because you can identify them, that I wonder what they have eaten, how they are coping, in such a way that the principal used to take parcels because we were no longer cooking in school to those families that were struggling. So parents face a lot of difficulties with staying with children, and they, were unable to support their children to learn because how are you going to support somebody who only attends school once a week in a month? Because the whole school had to rotate” (Teacher, 1).

Deducing from the interview extracts presented above, the notion of parental support has extended into domains that were previously not considered parental support. For example, the issue of nutrition was not in the discourse of parental support, but with COVID-19 school lockdowns brought serious attention to the provision of food for the children. Something that was taken for granted within the school feeding systems. In addition, by noting that parents were not able to provide certain support material or resources because of their socio-economic situations, the parents became aware that these resources are needed to support their learners. This awareness is, perhaps, something that would become a feature of parental support post-COVID-19 school lockdowns and could prepare home

environments for future school disruptions requiring additional parental support or school support to learners when they are not in school for extended periods of time.

In addition to the parental and teachers' recognition of what parents can do to support their child's education, the type of support that took precedent during COVID-19 was encouragement, monitoring, taking more interest in the school work that their children should be engaged with and working together. Parents made sure that their children continued with their education, despite the challenges that some faced, like lack of technology. They did this by encouraging their children to do school work and study. As Mkhize (2023) pointed out, parental support is not limited to parents who are literate or financially stable. She notes that at home, parents can support their children by encouraging them to perform well at school.

5.5.2 Communication between teachers and parents

Motsumi and Khumalo (2024) emphasise that effective communication between schools and homes is crucial for proper parental involvement to be achieved. It can be inferred from the accounts that communication was a challenge during the COVID-19 lockdown, resulting in limited interaction between parents and schools. Schools communicated with parents through letters and social media but most schools did not have any communication with parents at all. Participants of this study highlighted technological issues such as poor networks and lack of data and gadgets as hindrances to effective communication and parental support. In this regard, the principal (T2) said:

"To be honest, nothing happened. Lockdown was just lockdown, as far as the relationship between the teacher and a learner is concerned. The reason was that such a relationship needed resources that we were not fortunate to have, especially considering the types of parents and society which lacks modern materials. Resources, such as technology, gadgets and data. There was no relationship or communication with the parents". (Teacher 2, principal).

"They communicated via letters. They printed out letters, gave them to the learners and they were sent to the homes of the children. Otherwise, no, there is no social media here, there's no school page, there's no school email, there's no phone, nothing. It is just the principal and his phone, basically" (Teacher 1).

The data revealed that, while recognising the need for on-going communication between schools and parents or learners, the lack of communication experienced by most parents and teachers in this study speak to the importance of parental communication with schools. Relying on traditional means of communication (e.g. letters to parents and verbal communication via learners) left parents in a lurch during COVID-19 and as such drew attention to the need for alternate means of communication between schools and parents. Some of the alternate means included WhatsApp communications, social media like Facebook platforms. In a study conducted by Sibanda (2021), an educator highlighted another issues that impacted on the ability of parents to communicate or obtain communication devices to communicate with schools and includes broken family structure in the townships as a significant factor contributing to low academic achievement. She (Sibanda) observed that many children are raised in unstable home environments, such as living with young single mothers or grandparents. This perspective aligns closely with the concerns expressed by one of the teachers. According to T4:

“Generally, at school, we write letters for learners to deliver to their parents. However, during the COVID pandemic, this became nearly impossible, so we had to resort to using other communication platforms. Unfortunately, this was not very successful, given the demographic of our area. Firstly, many parents do not have access to smartphones, laptops or other devices that would allow them to use the apps that were used for communication during COVID, such as Teams and WhatsApp. Secondly, most learners do not live with their parents but with their grandparents. As you know, many grandparents were born before the advent of modern technology and are not very familiar with how to use gadgets, making effective communication with parents even more challenging. However, now, because times are moving, it is getting there but not at the state it should be”.

The study findings indicate that, while noting limited success, various means of communication with parents were possible. These means of communication include the traditional use of letters, social media platforms such as WhatsApp and group communication digital programmes such as Teams and Zoom platforms. Hence,

communication strategies with parents expanded beyond letter writing to direct communications with parents through digital platforms. Increasing the options to communication with parents would make for more efficient exchanges between parents and schools which can be exploited and enhanced progressively. This finding while noting Globler's (2022) argument that COVID-19 placed barriers between teachers and parents, it exposed teachers, principals, parents and learners to other means of communication, with digital platforms allowing for direct contact between them rather than through learners as has been the traditional means of communicating with parents.

5.6 THEME 5: Impact of socioeconomic status on parental support

The parental involvement model developed by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) suggested that elements of parents' life situations act as the third main motivation for their decisions about involvement, highlighting the importance of understanding how these factors impact their participation in their children's education. This aspect of socioeconomic status emerged as a follow-up question for participants, which aimed to capture their views on whether they believe socioeconomic status impacts their ability to support their children effectively. In their analysis of a family's socioeconomic status, Alhaji et al. (2024) argue that factors such as household income, education levels and occupation are evaluated. In this study socioeconomic status of the parents was examined by their level of education and household income.

Many of the study participants believe that their socioeconomic status, such as their level of education and financial status, had a significant effect on their ability to provide support towards their children's education. The lockdown shifted education to online platforms, but not all parents were able to afford the data or the necessary gadgets for their children to keep up with their studies. Many parents complained about not having enough money to provide resources for their children. On the other side, parents who did not complain about having financial issues did not struggle to buy needed resources for their children, such as data for the internet

5.6.1 Financial status or income level

Finances were one of the challenges mentioned by the participants that contributed to their inability to support their children effectively. Some parents struggled to provide support for

their children due to no access to technological gadgets, some lacked data to use the internet due to affordability. This challenge of not having the necessary resources was even mentioned by teachers.

“As a single parent, it was very challenging. I don't want to lie; I struggled to provide support for my child, especially since we didn't have access to technological gadgets or a computer. It was difficult. The only support I could offer was encouraging him to study, as that was the only thing I felt I could do”. (Parent 5)

“Generally, at school, we write letters for learners to deliver to their parents. However, during the COVID pandemic, this became nearly impossible, so we had to resort to using other communication platforms. Unfortunately, this was not very successful, given the demographic of our area. Firstly, many parents do not have access to smartphones, laptops or other devices that would allow them to use the apps that were used for communication during COVID, such as Teams and WhatsApp” (Teacher,4).

Another narrative from a parent when asked if they believe socioeconomic status has an impact on how they support their children, these were some of the parents' responses.

“Money is the driving force. I was lucky to have my own laptop; imagine a parent who did not have one? Most tasks required us to use Google, so what about those who can't afford it? What about those who cannot afford essential resources like textbooks, transportation and other materials? So yeah it does have an impact”. (Parent 3)

When considering the financial status of the parents to support their children, the data indicates that parents with higher incomes were able to provide resources, such as internet data, for their children without difficulty. However, those with lower incomes expressed challenges in providing necessary resources. According to Olusegun (2024), socio-economic status (SES) plays a crucial role in education, as parents with higher SES typically have greater resources and more time to dedicate to their children's learning.

5.6.2 Level of education

Zuma (2020) suggests that parents who value education pass these values on to their children. Radebe (2022) posits that parents who have limited education might not have the skills or drive needed to effectively support their children's academic achievements through tutoring. The parents' level of education was believed to have an influence on the parents' understanding of the children's schooling experiences and the support they provided. Three parents commented that their level of education influences their choice to support their children's education. This also includes their ability to help their children with schoolwork.

“Definitely yes, I feel that education has a huge influence. I don't want to sound gender biased but I believe that when it is the mother who is educated, it becomes easier to influence that to her children. This also applies to fathers, but I think that as parents, our own education helps us to better understand and support our children because we know what education entails and what studying entails. So it becomes better to understand, unlike when you're not educated. For example, if there is a grandmother who is elderly and not very well educated, the children might play around and say things like, "I'm at school learning this and that." The grandmother may not be able to follow up and check if the child is really doing their homework because she lacks education. However, it is easy for me to see and check the books and also communicate with the child. I also think education also helps in parenting, not that those who are not educated cannot parent better. I was raised by parents who were not educated but I became a better someone”. (Parent 2)

“Parental support is important at all times because children often think differently than adults. That's why it's essential to communicate with them about the importance of education. As a graduate who has earned two degrees, I often emphasise to them that they should learn from my experiences. I explain that if they don't focus on their education, they will struggle to achieve their dreams”. (Parent 1)

“I believe that if I were someone who wasn't concerned or knowledgeable about education, I would probably not be very involved in my child's schooling. For example, older parents often didn't pay much attention to our education. In the past, parents would simply tell us to go to school and then come home, without showing any interest in what happened during the day or even visiting the school. However, times have changed. Now that we are more educated, we understand the importance of being involved in our children's education. We actively check on their progress and ensure they are doing well. Unlike earlier generations, we care about and participate in our children's learning journey. If you look at it, we are a generation that can have meetings with teachers. We also have our own cars and can pick up our children from school due to our socioeconomic status” (Parent 7)

Adding to the insights of the parents, Parent (P6) reflected on how her own education influenced her level of involvement. She expressed that her limited education hinders her ability to effectively assist her children with their homework. She attributes this to a lack of knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, which prevents her from supporting her child in her studies. P6 said:

“There were many challenges. It is challenging to educate your child, especially to us who are not educated. We do not know many things as a result, even when a child asks for help from you, it becomes difficult to help her. That is why we allow the child to go and ask other old people for help even when we do not like it. But we had to because we had to allow other people to offer the help that we could not provide because of our lack of education. We did old school subjects which are different from the current subjects being done in schools. We also believe that a child must face the child because if that shift changes and requires the child to face me, it becomes hard even when they ask, “Mom, how do I do this?” and you find that I am clueless as a mother and even scared to tell the child that I don't know to avoid disappointing her” (Parent, 6).

Parents with a low level of education find it challenging to engage themselves towards their children's education (Mkhize, 2020). The data indicates that parents' socioeconomic status, which is measured by their income and educational attainment, influences the parents' decisions to support their children's education. From the data, it can be deduced that parents with a high socioeconomic status tend to be more supportive of their children's education. This is largely because they can afford educational resources and their higher level of education allows them to understand the academic material and guide their children through the educational journey based on their own experiences. In contrast, parents with a lower socioeconomic status often face challenges in fully supporting their children's education due to financial difficulties and a lack of education, which can hinder their ability to comprehend their children's schoolwork. These findings highlight the existing inequalities in our country that perpetuate the cycle of unequal education. What, however, emerges as a key issue is that in the recognition by parents of their inability to assist their children, they do allow their children to engage with others, e.g. neighbours, friends and family, who can provide some sort of support to their children. This means that parental involvement in the education of a child may not necessarily rests only with parents, but could involve others, including other members of their household family, their neighbours, friends and extended families within the neighbourhood, an Ubuntu understanding of parental support.

5.7 THEME 6: Challenges and opportunities presented by COVID-19 pandemic for learners, families and teachers

The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges in the education sector and for families. Teachers were also traumatised by COVID-19 and showed concerns about their health. They realised that parents also felt the same kind of emotional stress. The emotional connection that parents and teachers felt towards one another highlights the importance of collaboration between both parties in the education of the learners. This means that parents and teachers must work together more effectively to enhance the education provided to learners. Within this theme, I will discuss the three sub-themes: the emotional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learners, teachers and parents. Lastly, the theme will discuss the opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic for families, including how it

strengthened the relationships between teachers and parents in supporting children's education.

5.7.1 COVID-19 pandemic as a factor and its emotional impact on learners

School closures prompted by the global outbreak of COVID-19 have impacted children's subjective well-being (Trevino, et al. 2021). Duma (2019) asserts that parental involvement is essential for the psychosocial development of adolescents, as children's emotions and behaviours greatly rely on their parents' support. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted children and families by interrupting their daily routines, altering their educational experiences and limiting recreational activities. Access to parks, libraries and other public spaces was restricted, which could have had a detrimental impact on their emotional health.

This sub-theme aimed to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected children emotionally, as perceived by their parents. Omodan (2020) argued that minors, that is, children under the age of eighteen, were more prone to stress, which came from uncertainty about their academic and social progress. This is in line with Doll et al. (2022) findings, which indicated that parents raised a number of concerns regarding their children's emotional and social well-being, which include increased exhaustion levels, increased anxiety, and troublesome behaviour. According to the interview transcripts, children experienced stress and feelings of depression coming from uncertainty about when schools would reopen and when the pandemic would come to an end. Many expressed fears for their own lives as well. For instance, P1 remarked that:

"The COVID pandemic did affect children a lot, as no one knew when it would end. Everyone was constantly stressed, wondering how long they would have to wear masks. Many children felt depressed, fearing that schools might close for good and that life would never return to normal. Even I did not have hope that it would end". (Parent 1)

"The children were affected by the confusion surrounding that time. There was so much confusion and it led her to ask many questions, as most of the information about what was happening came from the media. This confusion impacted her deeply, especially since she was also dealing with COVID-19. At one point, she seemed to have lost hope. She got sick and I was also sick, so

both of us were struggling. I was sick like everyone else, yet I had to cook and provide support, including counselling them, even while I was sick. That is when I realised my strength as a parent during that time. We cannot all be suffering from the same illness and yet have one person be strong enough to take care of the others; while we were all going through the same struggle” .(Parent 2)

COVID-19 is an airborne virus that spreads through close contact and has led to millions of infections and deaths across the globe. Some children were emotionally affected by the death of their loved ones during that time. For example, P5 said:

“Many things affected him at that time and my child is the type that does not talk a lot when something is bothering him. So there was a lot going on with him, but he didn’t speak up; as a parent, I always tried to close the gaps that were not treating him well emotionally. I also think another issue was lacking resources and not having any solution as a child for that. It broke his heart, although he couldn’t say it to me as he could see the situation at home, but I could see that he was not emotionally well. As I said, there were many things that affected him emotionally; another one was the death of his sister, who was sick. She was hospitalised for two weeks. Just when we thought she was getting well, she passed on. There were a lot of challenges. Despite that, I tried to provide my support as a parent by being strong in order for him to be also strong” . (Parent 5)

The relief from home responsibilities and household chores such as cleaning and cooking were reported to be among some of the important indicators of parental support (Zuma, 2020). Another parent brought up the shift in home routines as a reason for her child's emotional struggles and unhappiness during that period. She (P6) said:

“The truth is that what negatively impacted our children emotionally was being assigned household chores. Children generally do not enjoy doing chores. When we asked them to help out with tasks like washing dishes or cleaning, it made them unhappy. Sometimes, they even became lazy about bathing themselves because they were not going to school. As parents, we had to encourage them

to take on household responsibilities, care for themselves and maintain good hygiene". (Parent 6).

Omodan (2020) posits that since many learners could not continue with education due to lockdown, they faced a dilemma in their education. The inability to attend school and falling behind on schoolwork also affected children emotionally. Some children felt worried about their grades and were concerned about missing important information. P7 expressed this by saying:

"(Laughs). The child was happy to be at home with her family, but she was also disappointed that she wasn't receiving any information from school about her school work in her grade. It felt like a loss to her. She doesn't remember doing much during eighth grade. We were there for her as a family emotionally but not educationally due to the total shutdown". (Parent 7)

From the above, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative emotional impact on learners. The data reveal that learners were stressed and confused about when schools would close and feared for their lives. Some were affected by the death of their loved ones.

These extracts from the parents illuminate issues of emotional well-being. Parents noted that their children experienced emotional trauma, which impacted their emotional well-being. As such, parental involvement seems to be extended to include noticing their children more closely to determine whether their child is displaying low levels of well-being and, as such, whether they could intervene in several ways, including communicating with teachers and seeking appropriate counselling support or medical intervention. Emotional well-being, therefore, has emerged as a key advancement in parental support and intervention.

The findings align with those of Gore et al. (2023), which indicate that learners experienced a higher level of emotional distress during the lockdown. This was caused by increased feelings of stress, fear, anxiety, uncertainty, frustration and anger during the pandemic. Pokhrel and Chhetri (2020) note that school time enhances social skills and awareness while being enjoyable for children. Disruptions to the school schedule can have various economic, social, and psychological impacts on students. According to Radebe (2022), lockdown impacted children's emotional, psychological and academic functioning, which influenced

their overall developmental process. The emotional impact COVID-19 had on learners made parents realise that they needed to provide emotional support to their children so that they could cope with challenging times.

5.7.2 Opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic for families, teachers and learners

Although the COVID-19 pandemic posed many challenges to the education system, it also provided various opportunities for teachers, parents and learners. Based on the interview transcripts, the COVID-19 lockdown provided families with opportunities to spend quality time together, strengthen their bonds and learn more about one another. Many parents mentioned that prior to the pandemic, their jobs kept them away from home and limited their time with family. Another opportunity was that other members of the family and the children in the family were monitored together, so there was collaboration at home. So it was not about one child and parental support; all the children came together under the household. Findings by Li and Guo (2023) showed that an increased amount of time parents spend with their children correlates with improved well-being in those children. Parents (P7 and P1) indicated that:

“Okay, spending time with family. We became closer as a family and became so focused on ourselves because we were in lockdown. We worked out and lived a healthy lifestyle by watching what we ate. Those were the only opportunities”. (Parent 7)

“The opportunity I had was to be at home with him all the time; that was the only chance I got to spend time with him. Now, as I mentioned, I work shifts, so I don’t have the time to be at home or check their homework. During that time, everything was done together at home; we engaged in activities, took on challenges and played games. Everything was possible within our home environment, but now we no longer have that time. To be precise, there is no family time anymore. These opportunities are no longer there because I am busy”. (Parent 1)

These relationships have helped many parents gain a deeper understanding of their children, their personality, behaviour, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. This understanding continues to be valuable even now, after the pandemic.

“I think the opportunities presented during the pandemic were learning more about my child, as well as about myself as a parent. During the pandemic, I learned about my child's behaviour, performance, challenges, weaknesses and strengths. At the same time, I identified my own weaknesses and strengths as a parent. This reflection allowed me to work on my shortcomings while continuing to provide the support I believe is effective. If you, as a parent, understand the challenges your child faces at school, it becomes easier to support them—whether it's academically, emotionally, or psychologically. So I felt that was the advantage”. (Parent 2)

“Friendship. The friendship between me and the child grew stronger during that time because we were in isolation. Due to limited opportunities to play with their friends, I stepped in as both a friend and a parent. When a child needed to play, they had to play with their parent. At home, we played many activities, including board games and soccer, because we were now friends. This bonding experience had a positive effect on our relationship and drew us closer together. These opportunities are still available but not like before. I now understand my children better”. (Parent 3)

“It gave me an opportunity to spend time with my child and be able to support him where I can, so I think that is the good side of it. It had an impact because, as parents, we often find ourselves not having enough time due to our work, but the pandemic gave us an opportunity to be with our children, check how we are around them and see their well-being and health in general, besides school work. It helped us because ever since then, I have become closer and friendlier towards my children. It also gave them an opportunity to feel comfortable around me after getting time to bond and get to know more about me”. (Parent 5)

“The lockdown provided us with the opportunity to spend more time with our children. Our time with them is usually limited since they spend most of their time at school. During the lockdown period, we were able to get close and bond with them and also recognise their weaknesses. The only challenge was teaching them”. (Parent 6)

Learners and parents were not the only ones affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers were also traumatised by COVID-19 and showed concerns about their health. They realised that parents also felt the same kind of emotional stress. This emotional connection that parents and teachers felt towards one another presented an opportunity for them to bond over the same situation, which highlights the importance of collaboration between both parties in the education of the learners. As noted by Motsumi and Khumalo (2024), when learners returned to school on the proposed days, social distancing became the norm both in classrooms and throughout the campus. Teachers and parents also expressed their concerns about catching the virus and dying, with one teacher sharing her experience of having contracted it. The participants(T3 and T4) said:

“I was very afraid of possibly contracting COVID myself, especially since it was a disease that posed significant risks to elderly people. That was my main concern and another thing was that our children were being careless. There were rules and precautions in place outlining how we should behave and what we should or shouldn’t do. However, the learners I interacted with daily did not seem to care about those precautions. So, one issue we faced was the fear of contracting COVID-19, along with the significant increase in our workload”.
(Teacher, 3)

“Personally, I was also affected by COVID-19 as I contracted the virus. The emotional toll and the stigma associated with being part of a group that had contracted this mysterious airborne disease was another challenge”. (Teacher 4)

Even parents noted the same fears as the teachers, another parent shared her experience of contracting the virus.

“So the first challenge was having to be mentally fit as the parent. It took me time to adapt because, firstly, the COVID pandemic was scary, especially since we didn’t understand why it was there and if we were going to die. I remember how, at the beginning, I felt scared and questioned the purpose of children continuing their education if we were uncertain about our survival. However, as time went on, we received more information about the situation, we understood, and then things became easier”. (Parent 3)

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new opportunities for parents in their relationships with their children that were impossible before the pandemic. Learning from the COVID-19 pandemic, parents are now more aware of their children’s behaviour, strengths and weaknesses, both in academic work and lives in general. They now recognise that there are many issues that their children face, which are not always academically related but present emotional and psychological challenges. As such, parents can recognise the importance of family bonding that contributes to the well-being of the child, including the recognition of any social and health issues that may be affecting the child. The lockdown presented parents with opportunities to form friendships with their children, spend time together as family, play games and learn more about one another. When parents and children collaborate in learning activities, bonding increases as they are able to spend much more time together. As noted by Bhamani et al. (2020), these situations allow parents to provide comfort while reducing pain and anxiety and also facilitating discussions with their children to assist them in lessening their anxiety.

Epstein and Sanders (2006) emphasised the need for teachers and administrators to conduct school, family, and community partnerships to benefit the learner and improve the school. The sudden change in how education was delivered to emergency remote learning during the pandemic, which took place at home, has highlighted the importance of sharing responsibility for children’s learning by parents and teachers. Teachers and parents now recognise the importance of partnership in supporting the child’s education. For example, the realisation from COVID-19 is that teaching and learning is not the sole focus of parental support but rather the holistic development of the whole child and the well-being of the whole child is the focus. This means that both teachers and parents recognise that parental support goes beyond focusing on just teaching and learning to include the holistic

development of the child. There is a realisation that there are certain aspects of the holistic development of the child, such as inspirational aspects and emotional aspects, which parents can provide in profound ways to support learners; the teachers can also support that within the school through the way they teach. In the next chapter, I will present the key findings from the themes and the recommendations for parents and schools.

5.9 Summary

This chapter discussed the six key themes that emerged from the data. I started by conceptualising parental support and involvement, the actions that constitute parental support and involvement. I also discussed the socioeconomic factors that comprised parental support during Covid-19 pandemic. Lastly, the opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic for families, teachers and learners. The following chapter will theorise the key findings derived from analysing the data.

CHAPTER 6: Key findings of the study

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a detailed data analysis and presentation on the key themes and subthemes that emerged from the interview transcripts. The analysis was discussed and supported by direct quotes taken directly from the interview transcripts and literature.

Drawing from the last chapter, this chapter continues with a theoretical engagement of the key findings and other literature.

6.2 Theorisation of Key Findings

6.2.1 Expansion of the concept of “Parental Support”

The findings have shifted from the traditional view of parental support in education, which mainly focuses on children’s schooling for their academic performance. I provide a broader approach to the concept, which extends supporting children beyond schooling by acknowledging that education is a broad concept and should not be limited to strictly formal academic settings, but can also be informal and take place in other settings, such as at home and the community, for the holistic development of the children. It is, therefore, imperative that the two modes, formal and informal, of education supplement and complement each other (Booyse et al, 2011). Mosweunyane (2013) argues that pre-colonial learning in Africa was informal, driven by the needs of the community and not structured by a formal curriculum. It focused on character-building, physical development and moral values essential for adulthood, with an emphasis on Ubuntu and adapting to one's surroundings.

The study conceptualises parental support as the support given to a child/ren by parents, family members, caregivers, teachers and community members to support a child holistically in all aspects of the child/ren’s life for academic success, career success and moral and social character development. This notion of parental support extends on what Epstein (1995) considers as parenting. This support starts at home, where parents provide food for the children, teach morals and discipline by telling them right from wrong, offer resources, encouragement and emotional support. It also includes checking and ensuring the overall well-being of the children and their mental and physical health. The findings highlight the importance of continuous discourses on parental support strategies aimed at

fostering holistic child development by incorporating the well-being, behavioural and social aspects as part of support.

6.3 Forms of parental support

Emergency remote teaching processes have alluded to other forms of parental support. The COVID-19 pandemic made parents recognise that there were other ways in which they should be engaged to support their children and communicate with teachers. Arising from the data is communication support, home support and education support, which will be discussed in detail below.

6.3.1 Communication support

Communication between teachers and parents have always been crucial for children's education. According to Epstein's (1995) model, communication is the second type of parental involvement. During the COVID-19 pandemic, communication between teachers and parents became more crucial due to the closure of schools. Parents were interested to know what needed to be done and were asking questions on how to support their children to continue with school education during emergency remote learning. Although there were some limitations caused by the lack of resources in some households and schools, schools and parents did communicate with each other. Adding to Epstein's (1995) second type of parental involvement which suggests a two-way communication between teachers and parents, the study findings indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic introduced new ways in which parents and teachers communicated with each other. The traditional way in which teachers communicated with parents was through letters and writing notes on the learners' books. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents and teachers communicated using WhatsApp, Teams, Zoom and Teams Meeting. Bakon et al. (2024) points out that parent-teacher communication has improved due to technology, as tools like email, messaging apps and virtual meetings allow connections to be more frequent and easier. These findings indicate that there is a great deal to be gained from the interactions between teachers and parents throughout the pandemic, which could enhance home-school partnerships and relationships moving forward.

6.3.2 Home Support

The point of departure for each person is their family unit, which acts as a socialising agent. Drawing from Epstein's (1995) model of 'parenting' and 'learning from home' as a type of parental involvement. Epstein et al. (2002) assert that parenting activities at home increase the families' understanding of their children's growth and development. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, learners received food at school but during COVID-19, they were deprived of this food. Parents recognised that they needed to do other things, like buying food, to support their children's education at the time but were not able to do it. The study findings indicate that parental support must begin at home before extending to the school environment. At home, parents can support their children's learning by providing food and resources for learning, creating a conducive environment for the children to learn and take care of their physical and emotional well-being. Home activities, according to Epstein et al. (2002), may help parents gain information about their children's health, safety, nutrition, and other topics related to child and adolescent development, as well as home conditions that support their education.

6.3.3 Education support

In this study, education support refers to the various ways in which parents support their children's schooling. Learning from the COVID-19 pandemic, parents realised that there are many ways in which they can support their children, which are not influenced by their socioeconomic status, leading to new forms of support emerging from the data. As mentioned by Mkhize (2020), the ability of parents to support their children does not rely on their literacy levels or financial resources; instead, parents can support their children by encouraging them to succeed. The research findings reveal that motivational support, encouragement, monitoring of schoolwork and social media use, assistance in schoolwork and providing learning resources such as data for the internet are the most common ways parents assist their children. Ali and Ishak (2020) support this by asserting that parents' involvement and support, through offering appropriate resources such as devices and internet access, moral encouragement, motivation and supervision, are crucial for maximising the benefits of home-based education for children.

6.4 Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Parental Support

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model highlights how the socioeconomic status (SES) of the family impacts parental involvement in education. It notes that parents' knowledge, abilities, time, and effort to get involved, as well as substantial variations in the participation of parents with low SES, compared to those with high SES. Drawing from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) model of the parental involvement process, the study findings indicate that the socioeconomic status of the parents emerged as the key factor that played a major role in the way parents supported their children's learning. The socioeconomic status of the parents in this study was examined using the parents' level of education and household income. The study findings indicate that during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents with higher levels of education and income provided more support for their children's education. They cited their own educational experiences as a motivation for this support. Their affordability also allowed them to buy their children technological gadgets, data for the internet and other resources to continue learning. In contrast, parents with lower levels of education and lower income struggled to assist their children with schoolwork due to a lack of understanding of the study materials. These findings align with those of Garbe et al. (2020), which revealed that a lack of parents' subject knowledge and teaching strategies served as a significant barrier to parental support with remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, parents with lower incomes expressed challenges in providing necessary resources, such as data for the internet and gadgets. Mkhize (2020) supports these findings by indicating that parents with a low level of education find it challenging to engage themselves towards their children's education. Hadebe et al. (2024) argue that many homes lack sufficient water and electricity supply, as well as a stable communication infrastructure, making them unsuitable for students to study due to poor family relations and limited physical space. Moving forward, parents do see the need to contribute to that and as part of their support for the school, they are now aware that they have to make financial resources available to the school and the learners. Parents recognise that they need a level of education to be able to provide the necessary support, so being educated is something that parents have taken cognisance of in order to be able to provide this support. Socioeconomic status still continues to add demands on parents to provide support for their children, particularly in low-income communities, even after the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of

COVID-19, the upward social mobility of low-income communities is growing in precarity while inequalities are exacerbated (Soudien et al, 2021).

6.5 Summary

The study's key finding is the expansion of the notion of parental support beyond strictly traditional schooling support. The findings highlight the importance of supporting children's overall well-being, particularly their physical health and the development of their moral character, an aspect that seems to be largely overlooked by many researchers in educational literature when it comes to parental support. Drawing on Epstein's (1995) model of parental involvement, which emphasises the role that teachers, extended family members, other families and community members play in providing guidance and encouragement support to students. The key findings of the study extend the responsibility of parental support in children's education beyond strictly to parents, legal guardians and caregivers. It also includes other family members like uncles and siblings, peers and community members to support children's education. Increased support from school, family, and community helps students feel secure, understand educational goals, strive to reach their potential, develop positive attitudes and remain in school (Epstein et al. 2002).

Another key finding is the forms of support, which include communication, home support and education support. The key findings suggest that there was more than one way of communicating with parents during COVID-19. Communication evolved beyond the traditional method of sending letters, as parents and teachers have embraced alternative platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom and Teams. One of the three things is that teachers recognise the different types of parental involvement or support that are needed to enhance learner success. Furthermore, the findings indicate that various factors influenced the level of parental support during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the socioeconomic status of the parents emerging as the key factor that influenced the way parents supported their children's learning.

Chapter 7: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an interpretation and discussion of the key findings that emerged from the data analysis. In this chapter, I provide a response to the research questions focusing on the main findings highlighted in the previous chapter, the significance of the study, recommendations and areas for further research.

7.2 Responding to the Research Questions

The research questions presented in Chapter 1 guided the entire research process, and this section continues to elaborate on them with a narrative response to each of these questions. The study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What is the nature and form of parental support provided by parents to the child during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What challenges did parents experience in providing learning support to their children during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What opportunities did parents experience in providing learning support to their children during the COVID-19 pandemic?

7.2.1 What is the nature and form of parental support provided by parents to the child during the Coronavirus pandemic?

The kind of support offered by parents during COVID-19 has extended the previously held views about what teachers want parents to do and what parents could offer. Realising the lack of clear guidance from schools, parents had to pay attention to and find ways in which they could support their children with the continuation of education rather than just monitoring school work. Hence, the nature and form of parental support was substantially different from what was commonly understood. The first was a concern by parents on the continuation of educating their child noting that no substantive teaching could take place due to the closure of schools to mitigate the spread of the virus. This concern brought greater interest of parents on the education of their child and as such begun to understand the extent to which parents can and should be involved in their child's education. The range

of forms of parental involvement then included motivation and encouragement, emotional support, well-being of the child, monitoring of schoolwork, showing interest and providing proper nutrition for children and an attempt to provide resources, including digital resources, that would enable their child to continue with school education. These attempts included relooking at their priorities, changes in spending patterns and reaching out to others beyond their immediate household to support their child's education. Parents found themselves stepping in to support their children in new ways while facing new roles and challenges. For example, matters which had been taken for granted by parents that the school would provide had now become a focal point of change. Parents could no longer rely on schools to provide healthy nutrition through their feeding system. They had to ensure that there was sufficient food for their child at home, which for some parents meant additional expenses for which they had no money. Parents also supported their children's education by communicating with teachers through various platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom and Teams. They were eager to stay informed about their children's educational progress. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, schools normally communicated with parents through letters and parents had to visit the school in person to discuss their children's education. However, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced new, flexible methods of communication between teachers and parents, eliminating the need for parents to commute to school. Furthermore, parents supported their children by providing conducive environments to study at home, encouraging them to soldier on despite the challenges with which they were confronted.

These new forms of parental involvement extended beyond the COVID-19 school lockdown period and now constitute a broader notion and understanding of parental support from both the perspective of teachers as well as that of parents.

7.2.2 What challenges did parents experience in providing learning support to their children during the Coronavirus pandemic?

During COVID-19, parental support was greatly challenged by parents' socioeconomic status, with financially struggling parents and those with limited education facing more challenges. Emergency remote learning transitioned to home environments and also required resources such as devices, computers, internet access, data and the ability to use them. Many families struggled to provide food for their children due to financial difficulties,

which created barriers to their support. Some parents had to make difficult choices, such as prioritising food over purchasing data to facilitate their children's learning and communicating with teachers. The shift in priority created new challenges of communication between parents and teachers.

As it is widely known, the socio-economic status of these parents is one of the single most important challenges that these parents have in being able to provide the necessary support to the child, even outside of COVID-19 conditions. This challenge of affordability, employment focus for livelihoods and balancing priorities will continue to add demands on parental involvement in their child's education. What emerges positively from this situation is that parents and teachers are aware of what is needed for parental involvement and the realisation that some parents may be able to provide the level of support while for others it may not be possible. This notwithstanding, there is now awareness by teachers and parents of alternate ways of intervening to provide the required support; these alternative possibilities need to be exploited to the fullest.

7.2.3 What opportunities did parents experience in providing learning support to their children during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Despite the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic had on parental support, it also provided many opportunities for families. Many parents noted that before the pandemic, their jobs had kept them away from home and limited their time with family. Therefore, the COVID-19 lockdown offered families a chance to spend quality time together, play games and develop healthy lifestyles. These relationships have helped many parents know more about their children, including their behaviour, strengths and weaknesses. In turn, children are now more comfortable around their parents and can even consult them when they experience problems, whether school-related or personal.

Lastly, when the schools closed, parents did not know what to do. They were not able to contact the schools, and they had to rely on their own resources to make educational decisions for their children. In addition, some parents found ways in which they could support their children without guidance from the school. These are all positive things about how COVID-19 has created opportunities and new insights.

7.3 Significance of the Study

I acknowledge the extensive body of local and international literature on parental support and involvement in the education of children. However, I argue that many of the dominant discourses present a narrow and one-sided perspective about parental support in the education of children by reflecting and focusing on school-based involvement and perspectives while overlooking the important role of home education, where parents provide nutrition for their children, impart values, morals and discipline. This is in line with Botha (2010), who argued that South Africa's predominant Western education system overlooks and even undermines important aspects of the learning processes in its traditionally based communities. Education and schooling are two distinct concepts, with education being a broader term. Doharey et al. (2023) define education as a process through which individuals acquire knowledge, values, skills, beliefs, and habits that allow them to grow personally and contribute to the improvement of their community. It can be given at home, in school, church or community, town or village. On the other hand, schooling refers to a formal type of education that is systematically planned and structured, serving as one of the primary methods through which education is delivered (Adesemowo and Sotonade 2022). Learning from COVID-19, I argue that education at home provided by the parents holds equal importance to formal schooling. It is, therefore, imperative for these two methods of education, formal and informal, to work hand in hand and support one another, as suggested by Booyse et al. (2011). Schools in South Africa are not only experiencing issues that are related to the academic performance of learners but also issues such as lack of discipline among many learners, which negatively affects both teaching and learning

Therefore, the study contributes conceptually to existing knowledge by expanding and providing what we might call a 'decolonised' notion of parental support in education, at least, a notion appropriate to the local context in which I have based my study. This has been pursued by incorporating perspectives from parents in low-income communities in a new meaning of how to support children in education, which extends beyond traditional schooling. Drawing from the theoretical framework which I used in this study, Epstein's (1995) model focused on the child, giving importance to the family, school and community. The model acknowledges the interdependence of these three elements in a child's life. This

study also extends the responsibility of parental support in children's education beyond parents, legal guardians and caregivers and includes other family members, peers and community support. Duma (2019) argues that when learners see their community supporting their education, they should become motivated and may be less likely to engage in negative behaviours, such as smoking: behaviours in which they might otherwise have partaken.

The COVID-19 pandemic created unique challenges which challenged pre-existing school practices and led to the emergence of new norms and educational processes which redefined teaching and learning environments as well as parental support. This study presents evidence of how the pandemic has influenced the ways in which parents can support their children's education even after COVID-19. Beyond a conceptual significance that this study contributes to, others can also benefit. The study would be significant to parents, teachers, school leaders and policy makers. Parents would benefit from this study as it provides an expanded notion of parental involvement and would then be able to understand better the needs of their child in supporting their education. They would also be able to plan ahead to make provisions for the things that are needed to support their child's education. For teachers the study is significant in that it provides them with alternate ways of communicating with parents and to understand the possibilities of parents to provide such involvements in their children's education within a depressed socio-economic living conditions. For principals of schools the study is significant in that they can plan better for parental involvement and to understand the extent of parental involvement that is possible, then making appropriate provisioning to mitigate any eventualities that involves parents. For policy makers, including school based policy initiatives, this study is significant as it provides lived experiences of parental involvement and as such can develop policies that are context sensitive.

7.4 Recommendations and further research

The findings of the study have indicated that during COVID-19, the socioeconomic status of the parents influenced parental support and still continues to bedevil parental support initiatives in terms of their support for learners even after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in low-income communities. Therefore, the study recommends that the Department of Education provide resources to assist underprivileged schools and learners

with technological tools, as many parents are unable to afford these resources. Another recommendation is for teachers to provide guidelines and examples when assigning homework to children. This will help parents with a limited education to assist their children with schoolwork.

The study also recommends that both teachers and parents should not focus solely on one aspect of parental support in education, specifically schoolwork. Instead, parents should also ensure that their children receive emotional support and that their self-esteem is built through encouragement and motivation. Moreover, the study recommends that schools and teachers maintain regular communication with parents to discuss learners' progress and behaviour and not take any issues that arise lightly.

Although Ubuntu is not explicitly mentioned in the data, there is an indication that parents instilled values and morals in their children and that they were not the sole sources of support. The household and the broader community also played their roles. This suggests that Ubuntu can be used as a lens to understand the collectiveness of supporting the child. I encourage parents to teach their children important values such as Ubuntu, as well as respect for moral and social development. Therefore, the study recommends further research into the notion of Ubuntu to explore how parental support can be extended to community support, which includes neighbours, siblings, uncles and others.

7.5 Limitations and Challenges of the Study

The main challenge I experienced in this study was recruiting volunteers to participate in the study. As a result, I had to reduce the sample size to four teachers and seven parents instead of the planned five teachers and eight parents. However, I decided to include the school principal as a participant since they manage the daily operations of the school to provide rich and diverse views on the topic of parental support.

Another limitation is that my research focused on a low-income community in Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal. The study explored the experiences and perspectives of parents and teachers in this area, and findings may not represent the experiences of parents in other neighbourhoods. In addition, some participants communicated in isiZulu, so the transcripts were translated into English before analysis. This may have resulted in some loss of the original meaning of the participants' words or implications. To address this, I sent the

translated transcripts back to the participants to ensure that their views were accurately represented.

7.6 Summary

This study attempted to explore the nature and form of parental support during and after COVID-19 school closures with a view to knowing and understanding new developments on this phenomenon of parental involvement. Through the data generation process, the analytical process and the conceptualising process within this research agenda, the study illuminated new forms of parental involvement, new ways in which teachers and parents can support the education of their children and new understandings of parental involvement in times of crisis that opened up possibilities that can be exploited currently and in the future. While there were limitations noted in the study process, the impact of these limitations were not substantive and, as such, the study outcomes aim to offer several valuable and feasible insights.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



03 October 2024

Unathi Ntshobo (222124204)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear U Ntshobo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00007454/2024

Project title: Parents' narratives of parental support during the corona virus pandemic lockdown: Learning from the nature, form, possibilities and constraints in supporting their child's education.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 05 August 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 03 October 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)
/nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix B: Permission Letter DOE

KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X 9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
 Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
 Email: buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za Tel: 033 392 1051

Ref No.: 2/4/8/123

Enquiries: Mrs B. T. Ntuli

Unathi Ntshobo
 Clarence Road
 Morningside
 DURBAN
 4001

Dear Ms Ntshobo

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DōE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "PARENTS NARRATIVES OF PARENTAL SUPPORT DURING COVID-19: NATURE, FORM, POSSIBILITIES AND CONSTRAINTS IN SUPPORTING THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION:", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 13 March 2024 to 31 August 2026.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Mr G.N. Ngcobo
 Head of Department: Education
 Date: 13 March 2024

Appendix C: Gatekeeper's Letter



GATE KEEPER'S LETTER

Dear principal

My Name is Unathi Ntshobo, a student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, currently registered for the Master of Education specialising in Teacher Development Studies.

I am writing to request your permission in accessing the school for the purpose of conducting research for my Master's study. The aim of the study is to explore from the narratives of parents, the nature of parental support that was provided to their children during school closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its lockdown measures.

As a Masters student in the field of Education, I believe that your school is an ideal site for my research. I am seeking permission to interview a sample of your teachers and of parents of learners to get information for my study. The participation of these teachers and parents are voluntary and there will be no disruptions to the operations of your school. No benefits will accrue to the participants and their rights on participation in the research process will be protected at all times including the right to withdraw from the research process at any time that they feel so.

Your school's participation is also on a voluntary basis and the rights of your school will also be protected at all times, including your right to withdraw the participation of your school in this project with no implications to you or the school. The anonymity of your school and of the participants will be protected through the use of pseudonyms.

The information that participants will share will be kept confidential and anonymous, and will be used solely for academic purposes. The results will be reported in a research paper available to all participants on completion.

If permission/access is granted, I will work closely with your staff to make sure that all permissions and procedures are followed and that my presence does not interfere with ongoing school operations.

If you need any more information or supporting documents, please contact myself and my supervisor of my study:

Supervisor: Prof Labby Ramrathan, email: ramrathanp@ukzn.ac.za; mobile number

██████████

Unathi Ntshobo: ██████████

Appendix D: Consent Forms



Consent Form

Dear participant

My name is Unathi Ntshobo and I am a registered student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am doing my Masters study in Education and as part of this degree, I am required to do a research project. Hence, the topic of my research is Parents' narratives of parental support during Coronavirus pandemic lockdown: Learning from the nature, form, possibilities and constraints in supporting their child's education.

The main aim of this study is to explore, from the parents' narratives, the nature of parental support that was possible during school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. You are, therefore, requested to be a participant in this research project. You have been identified as a possible participant through a purposive sampling process. Your involvement in the project would include semi-structured interviews and these interviews will be iterative, where more than one interview session may take place. The first interview will be face-to-face and subsequent interviews may be through the use of social media platforms, like WhatsApp or Zoom sessions. The multiple interview sessions are needed to get clarity of the information provided by you. All the conversations between you and the researcher during interviews will be recorded using an audio recorder.

As a participant, your involvement in this research is voluntary. There are no explicit benefits for your participation. However, you may benefit from the research participation through exposure to the issues that may present themselves during our interviews as well as through a summary of the findings of the study when these will be made known to the school and all other participants of the research project, either through a dissemination seminar held at the school or through the submission of this dissertation in the public media platforms.

Your rights as a participant will be protected. Taking part in this study is voluntary, which means that you have the right to decide whether you want to take part or not. If you choose to volunteer, it is important to understand that you have the freedom to withdraw at any point, and there will be no negative consequences for doing so. Your decision to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the researchers or any other party involved in the study.

Your rights as a participant will be protected. Taking part in this study is voluntary, which means that you have the right to decide whether you want to take part or not. If you choose to volunteer, it is important to understand that you have the freedom to withdraw at any point, and there will be no negative consequences for doing so. Your decision to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the researchers or any other party involved in the study.

Permission for audio- recording

Do you agree to an audio-recording of our interview? YES/NO

Participant statement

I have read the above information and understand the nature and purpose of the study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty. I agree for the interviews between me and the researcher to be recorded using an audio tape.

Participant's full name:

Participant's signature:

Date :/...../.....

Supervisors and Student details

Name	Contact Number	Email address
Supervisor: Professor Labby Ramrathan	██████████	ramrathanp@ukzn.ac.za;
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION Research Office, Westville Campus Govan Mbeki Building PrivateBagX54001 Durban 4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA	Tel:27312604557- Fax:27312604609	HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za
Student: Unathi Ntshobo	██████████ / ██████████	222124204@@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Translated isiZulu Consent Form



Translated Consent Form

Igama lami ngingu-Unathi Ntshobo, ngingumfundi obhalisiwe eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal (University of KwaZulu Natal. Ngenza izifundo zami zeMasters kwezeMfundo, njengengxenye yalezi ziqu, kudingeka ngenze iphrojekthi yocwaningo. Ngakho-ke, isihloko socwaningo lwami Ukulandiswa kwabazali kokusekelwa kwabazali ngesikhathi sokuvalwa kobhubhane lwe-coronavirus: Ukufunda ngemvelo, isimo, amathuba kanye nezingqinamba ekusekeleni imfundo yengane yabo.

Inhloso enkulu yalolu cwaningo ukuhlola, ekulandiseni kwabazali, uhlobo lokusekelwa kwabazali obekwenzeka ngesikhathi kuvalwa izikole ngenxa yobhubhane lwe-COVID-19.

Ngakho-ke, uyacelwa ukuba ubambe iqhaza kulo msebenzi wocwaningo. Uhlonzwe njengomuntu okungenzeka ukuthi ubambe iqhaza ngenqubo yesampula ehlosiwe. Ukubamba iqhaza kwakho kuphrojekthi kuzobandakanya izingxoxo ezingahleliwe futhi lezi zingxoxo zizophindaphinda, lapho kungase kwenzeke khona izikhathi ezingaphezu kweyodwa. Ingxoxo yokuqala izoba ubuso nobuso futhi izingxoxo ezilandelayo kungenzeka ngokusebenzisa izinkundla zokuxhumana, njenge-WhatsApp, noma izikhathi ze-Zoom. Kudingeka izikhathi eziningi zenhlolekhono ukuze uthole ukucaciseleka kolwazi olunikezwe nguwe. Zonke izingxoxo phakathi kwakho nomcwaningi ngesikhathi senhlolekhono zizorekhodwa kusetshenziswa irekhoda yomsindo

Njengombambiqhaza ukuzibandakanya kwakho kuphrojekthi yocwaningo kungokuzithandela. Azikho izinzuzo ezisobala zokubamba kwakho iqhaza. Kodwa-ke, ungase uzuze ngokubamba iqhaza kocwaningo ngokuchayeka ezindabeni ezingase ziziveze ngesikhathi sezingxoxo zethu kanye nangokufingqwa kokutholwe ocwaningweni lapho lokhu kuzokwaziswa esikoleni nakubo bonke abanye ababambiqhaza bephrojekthi yocwaningo. , kungaba ngesemina yokusabalalisa ebanjelwe esikoleni noma ngokuthunyelwa kwalolu cwaningo ezinkundleni zokuxhumana zomphakathi.

Amalungelo akho njengomhlanganyeli azovikelwa. Ukubamba iqhaza kulolu cwaningo kungokuzithandela, okusho ukuthi unelungelo lokunquma ukuthi uyafuna ukuba yingxenye noma cha. Uma ukhetha ukuvolontiya, kubalulekile ukuqonda ukuthi unenkululeko yokuhoxa noma nini, futhi ngeke kube nemiphumela emibi ngokwenza kanjalo. Isinqumo

sakho sokuhoxa ngeke siphazamise ubudlelwano bakho nabacwaningi nanoma yimuphi omunye umuntu ohililekile ocwaningweni.

Ukuba yimfihlo (Confidentiality)

Ubumfihlo bakho bubaluleke kakhulu. Alukho ulwazi olunikezayo kulolu cwaningo oluzokwabelwa abanye abantu. Ulwazi ozokwabelana ngalo luzogcinwa luyimfihlo futhi lungaziwa futhi luzosetshenziselwa izinjongo zemfundo kuphela. Imibhalo yenhlolekhono izogcinwa endaweni ephaphile futhi evikelekile engafinyelelwa umcwaningi kuphela. Kuzodingeka iphasiwedi ukuze uthole ukufinyelela kudatha. Uma ukuhlaziya sekuqedliwe, idatha izosuswa. Ulwazi lwakho lomuntu siqu luzogcinwa luyimfihlo ngokunikeza amagama amakhodi esikhundleni sokusebenzisa amagama angempela.

Uma leli fomu lemvume liqukethe ulimi olungacacile, sicela ungangabazi ukucela umcwaningi ukuthi alichaze ngolimi oluqondayo. Umcwaningi uzophinde atholakale ukuze aphenidule noma yimiphi imibuzo noma abhekane nanoma yikuphi ukukhathazeka ongase ube nakho mayelana nenqubo yemvume noma ucwaningo nje jikelele.

Imvume yokurekhoda kwengxoxo

Ingabe uyavuma ukurekhodwa kwengxoxo yethu?

YEBO/CHA

Isitatimende sombambi qhaza (Participant statement)

Ngilufundile ulwazi olungenhla futhi ngiyaluqonda uhlobo nenjongo yocwaningo. Ngithole ithuba lokubuza imibuzo futhi ngithole izimpendulo ezigculisayo. Ngivuma ngokuzithandela ukuhlanganyela kulolu cwaningo futhi ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngingahoxa noma nini ngaphandle kwesijeziso. Ngiyavuma ukuthi izingxoxo phakathi kwami nomcwaningi ziqoshwe kusetshenziswa i-audio tape.

Igama eliphelele lomhlanganyeli:

Isiginisha yomhlanganyeli:

Usuku:/...../.....

Iminingwane yomphathi kanye neyoMfundi (Supervisors and Student details)

Name	Contact Number	Email address
Supervisor: Professor Labby Ramrathan	██████████	ramrathanp@ukzn.ac.za;

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION Research Office, Westville Campus Govan Mbeki Building PrivateBagX54001 Durban 4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA	Tel:27312604557- Fax:27312604609	HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za
Student: Unathi Ntshobo	[REDACTED] / [REDACTED]	222124204@@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Appendix E: Data Generation Instruments

Interview Questions for Parents

Title: Parents' narratives of parental support during Coronavirus pandemic lockdown: Learning from the nature, form, possibilities and constraints in supporting their child's education.

1. What is your understanding of "Parental support" in general and in education?
2. In your understanding, what does parental support entail?
3. During the COVID-19 pandemic, how did you support your child's learning?
4. Do you believe that your support to your child during the pandemic made a difference to his/her learning?
5. How did your involvement/support in your child's education change during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic times?
6. Looking back how has your parental support changed since the pandemic?
7. What challenges did you face in supporting your child's learning during COVID-19 Pandemic?
8. Do you experience the same challenges now? Or are there different challenges? If so what might these new challenges be?
9. What opportunities did the COVID 19 pandemic provide you in relation to supporting your child's schooling? Are these opportunities still available or have they changed?
10. What impact did these opportunities have on your child's schooling experiences?
11. Do you believe that parental support is still needed post the pandemic? If so, in what ways are parental support relevant?
12. How did the pandemic affect your child's emotional well-being, and what did you do?
13. What recommendations do you have for schools to support parents in providing support to your child?

Translated questions for parents

Title: Parents' narratives of parental support during Coronavirus pandemic lockdown: Learning from the nature, form, possibilities and constraints in supporting their child's education.

1. Kuyini ukuqonda kwakho “ngokwesekwa kwabazali” jikelele kanye nasemfundweni?
2. Ngokuqonda kwakho, ukusekelwa kwabazali kuhlanganisani?
3. Ngesikhathi sobhubhane lwe-COVID-19, ukusekele kanjani ukufunda kwengane yakho?
4. Uyakholwa ukuthi ukweseka kwakho ingane yakho ngesikhathi se COVID-19 kwenza umehluko ekufundeni kwayo?
5. Kushintshe kanjani ukuzibandakanya/ukwesekwa kwakho emfundweni yengane yakho ngesikhathi se pandemic uma kuqhathaniswa nezikhathi zangaphambi kwe pandemic?
6. Uma ubheka emuva kushintshe kanjani ukwesekwa kwakho kwabazali kusukela kwaqala I COVID-19 pandemic?
7. Yiziphi izinselele obhekane nazo ekusekeleni ukufunda kwengane yakho ngesikhathi Sobhubhane lwe-COVID-19?
8. Ingabe uhlangabezana nezinselele ezifanayo manje? Noma ingabe kunezinselele ezahlukene? Uma kunjalo zingaba yini lezi zinselelo ezintsha?
9. Yimaphi amathuba ubhubhane lwe-COVID 19 okunikeze wona maqondana nokuxhasa imfundo yengane yakho? Ingabe la mathuba akhona noma aseshintshile?
10. Lamathuba abe namuphi umthelela kokuhlangenwe nakho kwengane yakho esikoleni?
11. Uyakholwa ukuthi ukusekelwa kwabazali kusadingeka ngemuva kwe pandemic? Uma kunjalo, ukusekelwa kwabazali kubaluleke ngaziphi izindlela?
12. Ubhadane lwayithinta kanjani inhlalakahle engokomzwelo yengane yakho, futhi wenzeni?
13. Yiziphi izincomo onazo ukuze izikole zisekele abazali ekunikezeni uxhaso enganeni yakho?

Interview questions for teachers

Title: Parents' narratives of parental support during Coronavirus pandemic lockdown: Learning from the nature, form, possibilities and constraints in supporting their child's education.

1. What is your understanding of parental support?
2. In your understanding, what does parental support entail?
3. How would you have parent support their child/ren?
4. How did you communicate with parents regarding their child's education during remote learning?
5. Can you describe the nature of parental support during COVID-19; and now (post COVID-19)?
6. If there is a difference between the nature of support during COVID-19 and now, what do you attribute these changes to?
7. How did the level of communication and collaboration between teachers and parents change during the COVID-19 pandemic?
8. Were any changes in parental support during the pandemic compared to the time before it?
9. Were there any professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their ability to collaborate with parents?
10. Can you describe the difficulties that parents faced in supporting their children's learning during COVID-19?

Appendix F: Letter from Proof-Reader**To Whom It May Concern**

Ms Unathi Ntshobo

Student Number: 222124204

Masters Dissertation:

An exploration of parental support during the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown: Learning from the nature, form, possibilities and constraints in supporting their child's education

I have perused the above-mentioned Master's manuscript and have suggested minor 'copy-editing' corrections.

The dissertation – in my judgement – meets acceptable standards of submission for examination at the level of a Master's degree.

Michael Chapman

Professor Emeritus & Fellow

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Appendix: G Turnitin Report



Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: Labby Ramrathan
Assignment title: Unathi Masters thesis
Submission title: Unathi MEd Thesis
File name: Masters_Dissertation_Final_Feb_2025.docx
File size: 190.83K
Page count: 111
Word count: 38,571
Character count: 222,525
Submission date: 07-Feb-2025 10:23AM (UTC+0200)
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