Exploration of Parents' Perceptions of their Roles in their Children's Learning Process in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Christopher Ndlovu[1], *Sikhumbuzo Dube[2], Nomusa Nyadza[3] and Zandile Zanamwe[3]
[1]Lupane State University, Zimbabwe
[2] West Zimbabwe Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Zimbabwe
[3]United College of Education, Zimbabwe

Abstract

Introducing a new curriculum and dynamics in the Zimbabwean education system demands parental involvement. Therefore, this study aimed to contribute to the ongoing debate exploring the perceptions of parents from the city of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. A qualitative study was conducted using 12 parents selected from stratified sampled locations in the city. In addition to determining the perceived roles of parents, this study also sought to determine whether the economic and social backgrounds of the parents influence these perceived roles. The findings of this study indicate that parents are aware of their primary roles, particularly their financial responsibilities. The study also showed that perceived roles are determined by the economic class of the parents, where parents in low-income groups tend to think that their role is limited to financial obligations. In contrast, those in the upper-income group see their roles as encompassing far more than financial obligations. The study concludes by recommending that all parents should be assisted in understanding that their roles extend far beyond financial provisions.

Keywords: Parental involvement, children's learning process, education, Zimbabwe

Introduction

The role of parents in their children's education has been debated for a long time and remains a topic of discussion to date. There are parents who believe that their role is to provide learning materials and pay school fees, while the rest is the responsibility of the school and its teachers. At the turn of the 21st century, there has been a rise in voices calling parents to do more than merely meet financial provisions in their children's education. In Zimbabwe, this has been partly necessitated by the introduction of an updated curriculum that extends learning into the home environment.

The beginning of the 21st century has brought various changes to the educational landscape, indicating a shift in how we learn. The role of schools and teachers as sole sources of knowledge has decreased significantly. Learning now extends beyond traditional classroom settings and is supported by numerous digital platforms that offer alternative educational experiences. The introduction of the internet and various assistive learning technologies has further complicated this educational landscape. In response to this complex learning environment, there is a growing need for parental involvement in children's education. An important discussion is emerging regarding the roles that parents are expected to play in this context. As key participants in the educational process, parents are increasingly called upon to assume leadership roles in the learning dynamics of the 21st century. Various perspectives have been expressed on this issue; however, these viewpoints need to be contextualized to align with specific geographical, economic, and social circumstances. This study, conducted in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, contributes to the understanding of parental roles in the educational development of children in the Zimbabwean context.

Literature Review

Parents' involvement in their children's schoolwork significantly contributes to their achievement. This influences their academic performance and overall lives (Barger et al., 2019). The academic success of learners is affected by multiple factors. Although the social background of parents, family history of academic excellence, and ethnicity may play a role, there is a positive link between parental involvement and academic achievement (Wilder, 2023). Additionally, understanding the role played in the learning process is essential. Parental perception impacts the level of involvement (Ali, 2021; Bhutto et al., 2011).

Various factors influence parents' perceptions of their role in their children's learning process. The harsh economic environment may prompt some parents to strive to improve their children's lives (Ali, 2021). A study in rural Pakistan found that parents facing hardships wished for better educational opportunities for their children, which led to increased parental involvement (Ahmed et al., 2024). In Bangladesh, a separate study found that the school's failure to communicate expectations to parents influenced their perception of the importance of parental involvement (Hasnat & Kabir, 2024).

The Home Environment and Parental Involvement

The family plays a crucial role in the development of a well-balanced child (Kumar, 2023). Furthermore, the home environment plays a central role in parents' engagement in their children's learning (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023). Most competencies are learned at home and become the foundation. The higher the quality of the home learning environment, the more likely children are to excel in their schoolwork (Niklas et al., 2021). In concurrence, Conica, Nixon, and Quigley (2023) add that non-academic activities, such as playing board games and collective reading, contribute to the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

The pandemic exposed or exacerbated existing issues within families, resulting in poor academic performance among learners (Lanozo et al., 2021). For adoptive parents, building healthy relationships was a challenge (Goldberg, McCormick & Virginia, 2021), making the home environment less conducive to parental involvement. This problem was not limited to adoptive families; family harmony was disrupted (Afifah, 2021), creating a dysfunctional pattern that persisted beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Divorced parents often find conflicts arising from co-parenting to be overwhelming, which can hinder their participation in their children's education (Goldberg, Allen & Smith, 2021).

Technology and Parental Involvement

The COVID-19 pandemic changed how parents participated in their children's learning. The difficulties parents encountered directly affected their ability to support learners (Ribeiro, 2021). One particularly challenging area was e-learning (Panaoura, 2021). Although online learning has not been fully adopted, it remains an integral part of the educational landscape in Zimbabwe. Parents need to carefully consider embracing it to assist their children's learning (Alharthi, 2023) in the post-COVID-19 era.

While many parents of school-going children were born before the widespread use of technology in learning and other issues, there is a need to encourage them to upskill themselves to keep pace with the digital revolution (Lawrence & Fakuade, 2021). Some parents have been compelled to embrace technology due to a strong push toward e-learning (Alharthi, 2023). Unfortunately, those from the lowest economic backgrounds suffer because they lack the resources to support their children (Treviño et al., 2021). During the pandemic era, teachers have demonstrated a commitment to their supportive role as coaches and interveners (Knopik et al., 2021).

Epstein Model of Parental Involvement

In their groundbreaking work, Epstein et al (2018) proposed a triangular approach that includes the school, the home, and the community as crucial for academic excellence. These three elements influence the child in numerous ways.

When these three entities cooperate, success is likely to be achieved (Epstein et al., 2018). The model suggests that effective school-family-community partnerships will create family-like schools, school-like families, and communities that resemble both schools and families (Organizing Engagement, 2025).

In this collaborative approach, Epstein emphasized the role of educators in bridging the gap between the school and the family. "The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families" (Epstein, 1995, p. 81). A report on two schools in New Zealand and Bangladesh that creatively connected with the community and the family illustrates the importance of this collaboration (Hasnat & Greenwood, 2021). Schools must be aware that parents have a desire to be involved in their children's education. This can be successfully done with the guidance of the educators (Jahan & Embong, 2023). A study by Salac and Florida (2022) found that home-school-community partnerships yielded better academic achievement. Furthermore, it substantiated the model as applicable if learners are to benefit in the new normal.

Theoretical Framework

The research focuses on the concept of parental involvement in a child's education, defining it as participation that goes beyond just sending the child to school. It involves various activities between parents and children, as well as between parents and teachers, that contribute to the child's educational outcomes. Several studies indicate that active parental involvement has a positive influence on a child's academic performance (Berkowitz et al., 2021; Chaidi & Drigas, 2020; Goodall & Montgomery, 2023; Nadya & Pustika, 2021; Novianti & Garzia, 2020; Novianti & Garzia, 2020; Tan et al., 2020). However, parents differ in their perceptions of their role, with many seeing a clear boundary between home and school responsibilities. This study is guided by Epstein's Parental Involvement Theory, which identifies six factors of parental involvement (Epstein et al., 2018),

and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (2023), emphasising the role of observational learning and the influence of parents as role models. There is a recognition of the need for further research to better understand the home-school partnership.

Methodology

Research Design

The researchers employed a qualitative method aligned with the interpretivist paradigm. Burns and Grove (2003) describe qualitative research as a subjective approach that focuses on life experiences and situational descriptions to facilitate an understanding of meaning. Consequently, qualitative studies aim to comprehend phenomena within their natural contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This study utilized this approach to investigate parents' perceptions of their children's learning outcomes.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second-largest city. The city comprises areas with low-income, middle-income, and high-income residential populations. Schools in high-density suburbs typically have many learners, whereas those in less densely populated suburbs have fewer. The challenging economic conditions make it difficult for parents to allocate time for their children. The newly introduced government curriculum necessitates parental involvement, as learners are assigned homework. Two suburbs from each residential area were selected. Parents from these diverse areas demonstrated varying parenting styles and perceived their educational roles concerning their children differently.

Sampling

In the context of Bulawayo's economically stratified landscape, which comprises over forty residential areas, both random and purposive sampling methods were employed. Initially, two residential areas were randomly selected from each of the three economic clusters: high, middle, and low. This process resulted in a

total of six residential areas. Subsequently, two parents from each of the selected residential areas were chosen using a purposive sampling procedure. The selection criteria for the parents included the following characteristics: the individual had to be a parent with a child or children currently attending school, and they needed to be willing to participate voluntarily in the study. Additionally, in certain specified residential areas, parents were required to meet specific gender, race, and age criteria, as determined by the researchers, to ensure a fully representative sample of parents in the city. Ultimately, a total of twelve parents were selected to participate in this study.

Ethical issues of the study

In this study, the researchers ensured that individual rights were protected by respecting the rights, values, and desires of participants during the research process (Creswell, 2014). We considered issues such as consent, honesty, respect for personal integrity, confidentiality of certain information, and anonymity. The nature and scope of the study were fully explained to participants before they agreed to take part, and it was emphasized that they could withdraw at any time if they felt uncomfortable continuing. Anonymity is a sensitive issue in qualitative research, and researchers should always protect the identities of all participants. In this study, the researchers used pseudonyms to conceal the identities of all participants.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Table 1 shows how the study addressed issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

Table 1: *Summary of Trustworthiness Measures in the Study*

Criteria	Strategy	Application in this study
Credibility	Triangulation	Used different data collection methods – interviews, literature review and focus group discussion Different sources of information – used different documents
Transferability	Thick descriptions	Detailed descriptions of the research process given Clear selection criteria of site and participants provided
Dependability	Audit trail	Detailed description of the research process given Detailed description of methodology provided
Conformability	Reflexivity	Constantly reflecting on personal biases and field events

Credibility enabled the researchers to establish confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. To ensure credibility, the researchers employed several checks, where participants were given their interview transcripts and research reports, allowing them to confirm whether the researchers accurately captured their responses during face-to-face and focus group interviews. In addition, the researchers sought to establish credibility through the triangulation of data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Multiple methods were employed to facilitate a deeper understanding of the roles parents play in their children's education. Thus, triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility of the study using face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. The data from these different research instruments were compared and verified to improve the credibility of the study.

Transferability entails showing the applicability of the findings to other settings or contexts. Applicability was achieved by carefully selecting residential areas that had the same characteristics as other residential areas in Bulawayo.

The concept of dependability in a qualitative study replaces the idea of reliability in a quantitative study. Dependability encourages researchers to provide an audit trail (the documentation of data, methods, and decisions

about the research) that can be open to external scrutiny. That is, dependability demonstrates that the findings are consistent and can be replicated (Cohen & Manion, 2001). Thus, regarding dependability, the researcher adhered to the established procedures for conducting the study.

Conformability, as another aspect of credibility and trustworthiness, is a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the participants and not by the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest. To achieve conformability, the researchers conducted a self-critical and reflexive analysis of the methodology used in the research, allowing the views of participants and research assistants to cross-check their findings.

Researchers' Reflexivity

All the researchers except one are parents. Their personal experience with their children may influence the data analysis process. However, personal biases were mitigated through member checking and triangulating data sources to verify the findings. The researchers also remained open-minded, recognizing that the goal of this research was not to confirm pre-existing beliefs but to uncover nuanced understandings of how parents perceived their role in their children's learning outcomes.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions to gather data. The data were transcribed and organized into meaningful analytic themes. During analysis, participants' direct words and phrases were preserved, from which themes were developed, as shown in the results and discussion section. The participants in the interviews and focus groups used both English and isiNdebele. Using the local language enhanced the participants' correct understanding of interview questions.

Results and Discussion

A key research question that this study sought to address was: "*What do parents consider to be their key role in the learning process of their children*?" Tables 2-5 present data that was generated from interviews and focus group discussions from the selected participants in Bulawayo. Although parental roles in children's education vary based on economic class and social background, all parents agree that parental involvement improves learning outcomes. In the following discussions, pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of participants.

Table 2: *Responses from Low-Income Communities—Makokoba & Lobengula*

Names	Themes	Evidence from interview responses
MaMoyo	Financial obligations, homework groups	Meeting all the school expenses, paying fees, buying books, homework assistance
Dube	Social support	Attending consultation days, social upbringing of my children, homework
MaMpofu	Financial provisions	Paying of school fees, all learning materials, creating home learning environment
Jamela	Assisting with home work	Making sure the given home work is done

To most parents in low-income areas, the financial aspects of their children's education matter most, as shown in Table 2. The parents work hard to secure the financial resources to cover school fees, uniforms, and books for their children. Once this is achieved, parents like MaMoyo from Makokoba think they can take a break and see their children succeed in school. In her own words maMoyo says, "mina njen-gomzali kufanele ngidingeimali yendleko zonke zesikolo ukwenzela ukuthi abantwana bafunde bephumelele" (As a parent I am supposed to meet all the financial obligations of the school so that the children will learn and succeed in their studies). The financial obligations are viewed as the best that parents in low-income groups can do to ensure their children's academic success. The driving force for parents in low-income groups is seeing their children live better lives than they themselves have. Parents in this group perceive education as the key to a better life; hence, they are willing to make financial sacrifices to fund their children's education. This thinking aligns with observations from a similar study in Pakistan. Ahmed et al. (2024) state that poor parents in Pakistan want better futures for their children; hence, they contribute to all the financial needs for their education.

MaMpofu, like most parents in the low-income group, hardly discuss transport and lunch expenses, as most of their children attend schools in their residential area, where they walk to school and come home for lunch. MaMpofu in a relaxed atmosphere says, "Okokudla lokugada, thina akusihluphi ngoba abantwana bafunda eduze" (As for transport and food we are not affected as our children attend schools in the neighbourhood). This emphasizes the point that the financial obligation is seen as the key role played by parents in the education of their children in the low-income group.

From the interview responses seen in Table 2, the theme of social support was raised. Dube emphasized that he attends most school activities to provide his children with social and moral support. It is believed that if children see their parents attending school activities, they are more motivated to excel in their learning. Parents in low-income groups are still very particular about their children's social upbringing, and they take deliberate actions in this regard. Religion, which is viewed as an institution for maintaining morals, is emphasized in their communities. Goodall and Montgomery (2023) also weigh in on this aspect, articulating that the home environment has a significant influence on shaping children to be better students, thereby leading to better learning outcomes.

The parents in low-income communities also raised the issue of assisting their children with their schoolwork, especially the homework aspect. While most of the consulted literature remains silent on the direct mention of homework as a parental role, this study presents it boldly. This might be due to the Zimbabwean updated curriculum, which emphasizes the role of parents in their children's learning. MaMpofu and Jamela made it clear that on a daily basis, they have set aside time to help their children with their homework. If the parent does not understand the homework they seek help from other parents. As outlined by MaMoyo, parents now have homework social media groups where they assist one another with their children's homework. Homework social media groups are not limited to low-income groups; it appears that this innovation cuts across all economic classes as parents try to assist one another in understanding the updated curriculum.

Table 3: *Responses from Middle-Income Participants—Mahatshula & Northend*

Names	Themes	Evidence from interview responses
Effie	Technological facilities	Provision of technological learning materials, provision of assistive gadgets
Mavis	Value hard work	Selection of a good school, WI-FI services at home, Study hard
George	Supporting moral development	Encourage good discipline, have quality time with my children, emphasize relationship with God.
Martin	Homework involvement	Participate in school activities like helping with homework and research work

For middle-income participants, the paramount role was the provision of home facilities to enable their children to do their homework and research work, as seen in Table 3. The participants in these communities, while not downplaying their financial obligations to their children's education, emphasized the other roles that contributed directly to the improvement of their children's learning outcomes. Martin says," My main duty as a parent is to create enabling learning conditions in the home where most of the learning now takes place, once this is done my children can improve on their learning outcomes".

The parents in this group understand that the new approach to learning is now centered in their homes; hence, their homes must be transformed into effective learning places. To them academic success is of great importance as they want their children to have a competitive edge in the employment sector. This class of parents wants their children to hold top managerial positions at workplaces to maintain the family's social status. The parents in this class also hinted that at times their contribution to their children's education is limited by the schools, which do not or delay providing the relevant items needed by the schools. Effie stated that the school sometimes discourages learners from carrying smartphones and other assistive gadgets to school, yet at the same time requires students to access the internet or do homework online.

Effie showing great concern, had this to say, "at this day of technological advancements how can schools be discouraging our children to use smartphones? We are living in a digital world, students should be allowed to explore and interact with technology for better learning outcomes". For Effie and other parents in this group, such a contradictory stance on the use of technology by schools limits their contribution to their children's education. Hasnat and Kabir (2024), basing their study in Bangladesh, allude to the fact that at times parents are discouraged from doing their best for their children because of a lack of clarity of information from schools.

Mavis spoke extensively about the value of hard work, stating that, to her, it is the key role of a parent. She says," learning goes with discipline and hard work, as a parent, I must ensure that my child is disciplined so that the school and teachers are able to concentrate on teaching and learning processes instead of working on disciplinary issues". The child should be taught the value of hard work so that they can excel in their studies and have more opportunities in life. She went on to say that she also provides unlimited Wi-Fi services at home, so the children can research for their work and have access to e-books and other online learning materials. Like Mavis, Martin was also concerned about the academic achievement of his children, hence emphasizing the importance of assisting with homework and research work as a crucial parental role in providing a solid learning foundation for the

child. George was concerned about the role of helping in the development of children's moral values. George stated that "a morally upright child makes a very good student", so to him moral development is a role that parents cannot neglect if they want their children to succeed in their academic life. Mavis also viewed the selection of a good school as a key role of the parent. The parent is expected to be familiar with the cultures of the schools on offer and, together with the child, select a school that aligns well with the family's culture and beliefs. The school should complement the efforts of the home in moulding the child to the desires and aspirations of the family. The submissions of the middle-income participants were, to a large extent, informed by Goodall and Montgomery (2023), who state that the home environment helps in building a solid learning culture for children. Therefore, parents should work on providing homes that enable academic success.

Table 4: *Responses from High-Income Participants—Burnside and Hillside*

Names	Themes	Evidence from interview responses
Johnson	Role modelling, school development	Educational tours, belief in the child, love, sports, compliments, honest, Independent learner, developing study styles, setting their own study schedules, career direction, critical thinking, involvement in the school development, attending PTA meetings
Alfred	Developing an independent learner	Allow them to select the school and the study area they want, developing their own study styles, setting their own study schedules, career direction
Hazel	Creation of a home learning environment	Providing an enabling environment for homework and research work, technological and home games that facilitate and motivate learning

The parents in the high-income group view their primary task as preparing their children for life, as evidenced by their responses in Table 4 above. They are more concerned about education for better livelihoods; hence their focus is developing independent children who can navigate the dynamics of the changing world and make the best of it. Financial obligations and the creation of an enabling home environment do matter to these parents, just as they do to parents in other income groups. The departure point of this group is that they are not primarily interested in academic success to secure better jobs, but rather in making their children independent, critical thinkers and makers of wealth, rather than workers. For their children to reach this level, parents must be role models and guides who provide direction and allow their children to navigate their own paths to success.

As elaborated by Johnson from Burnside, he has to teach his children self-belief, critical thinking, the ability to draft their own study schedules, and learning styles. Johnson says, "for my children to succeed I need to help them learn to be independent through self-directed learning; they need to in charge of their learning with teachers and parents as mere guides". These parents believe that once these are entrusted to the children, they can achieve more and be the makers of their own destinies.

The perspective of these parents aligns with what Conica, Nixon, and Quigley (2023) posit, namely that parental roles should focus more on non-academic issues, such as games, an enabling environment, and self-development support, which later contribute to literacy and numeracy skills necessary for making critical life decisions.

If a child receives such support from the home system, they can navigate their way to making a living far better than being pressured to excel in academics for a better life. Johnson further goes on to say he teaches his children to be concerned about developing the community they live in. He says he does this by role-modeling good ethics to his children, such as being involved in the PTA of the school and initiating developmental ideas for the community and the school. All this tends to produce children who are ready and willing to give to the community for the betterment of humanity.

Alfred and Hazel from Hillside also agree with Johnson that parents should help their children become critical thinkers who can make decisions and living by them. The two said they allow their children to lead in the selection of their study areas and the schools they want to attend, with parents serving as sounding boards for them. In this case, the parental roles are to ensure they build enabling home and community environments that expose their children to different career paths, various study styles, and a range of assistive technologies. The parents in this class also indicated that they help the school offer a wide curriculum that includes sporting activities, theatre, drama, music, and various clubs, exposing students to a variety of soft skills that can be developed into alternative livelihoods.

In an emphatic mood Hazel says, "l participate in the development of other learning activities that l feel can benefit my children and the school at large, l helped in the introduction of online tours in the school where my child was attending during the COVID-19 era when physical educational tours were impossible to do, it is now a school activity even after COVID-19. Such actions help my children to appreciate being game changers in the community they live in. To Hazel and other parents in the higher economic group, they view their major role as that of assisting and guiding their children to realize their full potentials and be relevant in the communities they live in. Educational tours are part of a parent's role, as they help children explore the world and learn from these experiences, enabling them to make sound and informed life decisions.

Table 5: *Responses from Combined Participants*

Names	Themes	Evidence from the focus group and interviews
Low-income group	Financial obligations, driven by the desire to escape poverty	Paying fees, getting all learning materials, uniforms.
Middle-income group	Financial obligations and good home environments driven by the desire to get better grades and better jobs	Provision of Wi-Fi, assistive technologies, help in homework and research. Financial obligations
High-income group	Self-actualization, driven by the desire to be self-sustaining	Help develop self-belief, good ethics, critical thinking, expose the children to the world. Financial obligations

Table 5 summarizes the responses from the combined participants, generated from the interviews and focus group discussions. It is evident that all parents, regardless of their economic status, recognize the significant role they play in their children's education. Financial role is common in all groups as it is the lifeline to access education. So all parents are doing this role religiously. Besides the financial obligations, parents are aware of their other roles, such as helping with homework, developing good character, and participating in various school activities.

What is interesting is probably the ranking of these roles across he different economic classes and the reasons behind performing these roles. As seen in Table 5, the low-income group ranks financial role as the most important. To them that is their main duty as parents all other roles come after. For this class, the driving force is to help their children receive an education in order to escape poverty. These parents believe that they are poor because they lack a good education; hence, they see education as the key to a better life for their children.

For the middle-income group, the motivation for participating in their children's education is to see their children achieve higher academic grades, which will enable them to secure better and higher jobs. The majority of parents in this class hold managerial positions, and they believe this is because they possess good academic qualifications; hence, they want their children to maintain or improve the family's status quo. In addition to financial obligations, they go a step further in ensuring that they obtain all the extras that can help them achieve the best academic results. They help their children with technological gadgets, Wi-Fi connectivity, extra lessons, and social discipline to achieve better learning outcomes.

Parents in the higher income bracket are not primarily concerned about the immediate benefits of academic grades. Still, instead, they are concerned with the far-reaching consequences of the education their children receive. They want an education that empowers their children to be critical thinkers, wealth generators, and gives them self-sustaining lives in the future. To these parents, their critical role is to build strong, resilient, and focused children who are able to navigate the world using skills and knowledge learned from both school and home. Hence, parents are wary of enabling homes and communities that hinder this effort. The parents in this class are informed by the thoughts from the model of Epstein et al. (2018), who argue that the school, home, and community should work together to produce responsive students who are concerned about the progress of their communities, where no one is left behind.

Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the perceptions of parents regarding the roles they play in their children's education in the city of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. As this is a qualitative study based on a small sample, the results largely apply to the studied area, although some principles can also be applied to other contexts. The study has revealed that parents in this city are aware of their roles in their children's education. The study further showed that the economic classes of the parents largely influence these roles. The low-income class of the city of Bulawayo are concerned about the immediate benefits of education for their children mainly to escape poverty and have a good start to life.

The middle-income class has a slightly broader picture of their roles, as they include the social development of their children in addition to the school provisions. They take on these roles so that their children can benefit more from the education system. The high-income class focuses on the futuristic benefits of education, perceiving that their key role is in building critical and independent children who will be able to shape their own destinies in the future years. They emphasize moulding responsible citizens who see success in the community, not merely for themselves.

The study therefore concludes by recommending that parents in Bulawayo should play

a role in the development of future citizens who are founded on sound moral values, possess unquestionable integrity, have excellent abilities, exhibit critical thinking skills, and possess a high knowledge of the world and its dynamics. It is clear that to achieve this desired end, parents in Bulawayo should view their roles not only as limited to financial obligations, but also as extending to all aspects of developing holistic individuals.

Conflicts of interest: None.

References

Afifah, Q. A. (2021). Analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family harmony: case studies on families with and without people with special needs. *Indonesian Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, *1*(2), 87-92.

Ahmed, Q. W., Rönkä, A., Perälä-Littunen, S., & Eerola, P. (2024). Parents' involvement in their children's education: narratives from rural Pakistan. *Educational Research*, *66*(1), 34-50.

Alharthi, M. (2023). Parental involvement in children's online education during COVID-19: A phenomenological study in Saudi Arabia. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *51*(2), 345-359.

Ali, I. (2021). *Understanding parental involvement in children's learning* (Doctoral dissertation, Brac University).

Bandura, A. (2023). *Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective on human nature*. John Wiley and Sons.

Barger, M. M., Kim, E. M., Kuncel, N. R., & Pomerantz, E. M. (2019). The relation between parents' involvement in children's schooling and children's adjustment: A meta-analysis. *Psychological bulletin*, *145*(9), 855.

Berkowitz, R., Astor, R. A., Pineda, D., DePedro, K. T., Weiss, E. L., & Benbenishty, R. (2021). Parental involvement and perceptions of school climate in California. *Urban Education*, *56*(3), 393-423.

Bhutto, N. A., Narejo, R. A., Butt, F., Shaikh, A. S., & Virwani, R. (2011). Parents' perception regarding children education. *Conference Proceedings from Kertas Kerja Dibentangkan Di 1st International Conference of Business Management, University of Management and Technology*.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Pearsons.

Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (2003). *The practice of nursing research: Conduct, critique, and utilization* (5th ed.). Saunders.

Cohen, L. M., & Manion, L. (2001). *Research Methods in Education*. Pearson.

Conica, M., Nixon, E., & Quigley, J. (2023). Talk outside the box: Parents' decontextualized language during preschool years relates to child numeracy and literacy skills in middle childhood. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *236*, 105746.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th ed.)*. CA Sage.

Chaidi, I., & Drigas, A. (2020). Parents' involvement in the education of their children with Autism: Related research and its results. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (Ijet)*, *15*(14), 194-203.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(9), 81-96.

Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., VanVoorhis, F. L., Martin, C. S., Thomas, B. G., Greenfield, M. D., Hutchins, D. J. & Williams, K. J. (2018). School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action. SAGE Publications.

Goldberg, A. E., Allen, K. R., & Smith, J. Z. (2021). Divorced and separated parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Family Process*, *60*(3), 866-887.

Goldberg, A. E., McCormick, N., & Virginia, H. (2021). Parenting in a pandemic: Work–family arrangements, well-being, and intimate relationships among adoptive parents. *Family Relations*, *70*(1), 7-25.

Goodall, J., & Montgomery, C. (2023). Parental involvement to parental engagement: A continuum. *Mapping the Field*, 158-169.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 105-117). Sage Publications.

Hasnat, M. A., & Greenwood, J. (2021). Schools celebrating place and community: A study of two rural schools in Bangladesh and New Zealand. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, *31*(3), 81-95.

Hasnat, M. A., & Kabir, S. A. (2024). Rural parents' engagement in secondary schools: Current practices, problems and prospects. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, *10*(1), 83-99.

Jahan, N., & Embong, A. M. (2023). Parental involvement and academic achievement among high-school children in Bangladesh: A meta-synthesis of qualitative research. *Global Mainstream Journal of Arts, Literature, History & Education*, *2*(02), 01-18.

Knopik, T., Błaszczak, A., Maksymiuk, R., & Oszwa, U. (2021). Parental involvement in remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic—Dominant approaches and their diverse implications. *European journal of education*, *56*(4), 623-640.

Kumar, P. (2023). *Families After God's Heart: A Biblical Perspective on Marriage, Family and Discipleship*. Asbury Theological Seminary.

Lanozo, J. G., Tabieros, L., Solmiano, E. L., Paras, N., & Tus, J. (2021). Buhay estudyante: The lives of students from broken families amidst the pandemic. *International Journal of Advanced Research and Innovative Ideas in Education*, *7*(1), 10-6084.

Lawrence, K. C., & Fakuade, O. V. (2021). Parental involvement, learning participation and online learning commitment of adolescent learners during the COVID-19 lockdown. *Research in Learning Technology*, *29*.

Nadya, Z., & Pustika, R. (2021). The importance of family motivation for students to study online during COVID-19. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, *2*(2), 86-89.

Niklas, F., Cohrssen, C., Lehrl, S., & Napoli, A. R. (2021). Editorial: Children's competencies in the home learning environment. *Frontiers in Psychology,* 12: 706360, DOI: 10.3389/fpsychg.2021.706360

Novianti, R., & Garzia, M. (2020). Parental engagement in children's online learning during covid-19 pandemic. *Journal of Teaching and Learning in Elementary Education*, *3*(2), 117-131.

Organizing Engagement. (2025). *Framework of six types of involvement.* https://organizingengagement.org/models/framework-of-six-types-of-involvement/

Panaoura, R. (2021). Parental involvement in children's mathematics learning before and during the period of the COVID-19. *Social Education Research*, 65-74.

Ribeiro, L. M., Cunha, R. S., Silva, M. C. A. E., Carvalho, M., & Vital, M. L. (2021). Parental involvement during pandemic times: Challenges and opportunities. *Education Sciences*, *11*(6), 1-17.

Salac, L. M., & Florida, J. U. (2022). Epstein model of parental involvement and academic performance of learners. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*, *11*(2), 379-386.

Tan, C. Y., Lyu, M., & Peng, B. (2020). Academic benefits from parental involvement are stratified by parental socioeconomic status: A meta-analysis. *Parenting*, *20*(4), 241-287.

Treviño, E., Miranda, C., Hernández, M., & Villalobos, C. (2021, November). Socioeconomic status, parental involvement and implications for subjective well-being during the global pandemic of COVID-19. In *Frontiers in Education,* 6, 762780.

Wilder, S. (2023). Effects of parental involvement on academic achievement: a meta-synthesis. In *Mapping the field* (pp. 137-157). Routledge.