



# Exploring the impact of parental engagement on academic achievement in South African primary schools: A qualitative case study



Valesa Moshibudi Letswalo <sup>(a)</sup> Seshoka Joseph Rapeta <sup>(b)</sup> \*

<sup>(a)</sup> Student (MED), College of Education, University of South Africa, South Africa, Preller Street, Muckleneuk, Pretoria, South Africa.

<sup>(b)</sup> PhD, College of Education, University of South Africa, South Africa, Preller Street, Muckleneuk, Pretoria, South Africa.

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 17 April 2025

Received in rev. form 28 May 2025

Accepted 17 June 2025

### Keywords:

Parental Involvement, Effective Communication, Parental Engagement, Parent-Teacher Partnership.

### JEL Classification:

O15, E41, L4

## ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to explore the impact of parental engagement on learner achievement in primary schools. A case study was used as a qualitative research design. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The data collected through interviews was systematically analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method that involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within the data. The key findings of the study highlight the concept of parental engagement, the role of parents in helping children with homework, parent-teacher communications, and parent-teacher partnership as aspects of the impact of parental engagement. The findings further indicate that working parents are less interested in their children's education due to work responsibilities and a lack of time, which proved to be a difficulty for parental engagement. The findings suggest that effective parental engagement can be positively impacted by a strong parent-teacher relationship. However, implementing parental engagement presents several difficulties that, if specifically handled, could enhance parental engagement for the benefit of the learners.

© 2025 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## Introduction

Parental engagement in primary schools in South Africa is a multifaceted issue that has gained increasing attention due to its significant impact on learners' academic and social development (Marongwe, & Mutesasira, 2024). It is imperative for parents to prioritize the education of their children by getting involved as early as in the elementary school. Parental engagement encompasses a variety of learning-related activities that parents undertake with their children, including helping with homework, participating in educational programs, attending school events, and serving on school boards (Kamau, 2024; Motshusi et al., 2024; Salac & Florida, 2022). The level of parental engagement is determined by how much the parents are involved in their children's education at home and how frequent their contact is with the school or the child's educator. As indicated by Chavez et al. (2023), parents and teachers are the two people who have the biggest impact on children's lives from a young age. This brings us to the point that the partnership between parents and teachers plays a vital role in children's education, especially in their academics. According to Geduld (2024), parental engagement will be more effective if it is not viewed as a partnership between the teacher and parents, with parents participating in and supporting learning activities at home and school. Children whose parents are more involved perform academically better than those whose parents are not involved.

In the United States, parental engagement laws have been affected by federal laws such as the No Child Left Behind Act, as well as state policies and events in the past, according to Akpuokwe et al. (2024). These statutes demonstrate a deliberate initiative to improve parental engagement in education and ensure responsibility for student achievement. In African nations, different legal systems and

\* Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5600-7151

© 2025 by the authors. Hosting by SSBFNET. Peer review under responsibility of Center for Strategic Studies in Business and Finance.

<https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v14i5.4109>

cultural quirks have an impact on parental engagement legislation. It is not possible to use standards to decide if parental involvement is enough in sub-Saharan Africa because national laws are based on western ideas about children (Akpuokwe et al., 2024).

Like any other country, South Africa also has policies regarding parents or guardians of children. The South African School Act (SASA) defines a learner's biological or adoptive parents or legal guardian as the person who has been granted legal custody of the learner, the person who agrees to take on the duty of supervising the learner's education at school, or any combination of these (No. 84 of 1996). It is also supported by the Department of Basic Education (2016) as it was stipulated that any person in charge of taking care of and supporting a student is considered their parent. For parental involvement to be effective, parents should be in partnership with their children's teachers. The SASA states that close cooperation between teachers and parents is necessary for effective education.

Parental engagement is a tool that can be used to increase educational outcomes and school performance (Özdemir et al., 2023). The necessity of looking at the impact of parental engagement on learner achievement is supported by the fact that the absence of parental engagement is a significant issue in the educational system. The problem of dissimilar discernment among engaged parents can be resolved if parents and teachers at the school level can work simultaneously to support parental engagement (Zhou et al., 2024). Communication connecting parents and teachers is necessary to steer children in the relevant direction and encourage quality education. The lack of common understanding between parents and teachers on what is expected of them to encourage parental engagement in primary schools is the gap on which this study focuses. The findings of the study could help create policies in schools, especially underprivileged ones, to pinpoint issues that impact children's academic performance.

This study endeavors to address this main question "What is the impact of parental engagement on learner achievement in primary schools". The study intends to achieve the following research objectives:

- i. To identify and describe the diverse ways in which parents support their children's learning
- ii. To examine the impact of parental involvement on students' academic outcomes
- iii. To assess the significance of collaborative relationships between parents and educators in supporting student learning.

This research study used a qualitative methodology, conducting in-depth, face-to-face interviews to gather rich, detailed data, which was then systematically analyzed using thematic analysis.

This paper is organized as follows: following the introduction part, a second part is a literature review of theoretical and empirical studies that shed a light on linkage between theory and practice. The third part introduces the background information on research and methodology. After analysis and findings of the study, authors provide discussions and implications. Finally, this paper concludes with key points, recommendations, future research directions and limitations.

## **Literature Review**

This literature review on parental engagement aims to identify gaps in knowledge and to ground the research in existing knowledge. An extensive and continually expanding body of scholarly work has explored the concept of parental engagement, reflecting its growing importance in educational research and practice.

### **Parental engagement**

Parental engagement is defined as active participation in all facets of their child's development, including their emotional and social development in addition to their academic development, particularly in the area of reading support (Pinneo & Nolen, 2024). Parents have always recognized parental engagement as a crucial determinant in their children's character development. This engagement includes various forms of assistance, interaction, and comprehension that parents offer during their children's developmental stages in primary education (Sipahutar et al., 2024). According to Zhang et al. (2024), parental engagement is a process in which teachers and parents collaborate and accept co-responsibility for their children's education. Through collaboration with educators and school staff, parents can enhance their children's academic success by actively engaging in the educational process. Furthermore, Salac and Florida (2022) defined parental engagement as a range of activities parents participate in with their children to boost learning, like assisting the children with their homework. Additionally, parental engagement encompasses various activities parents undertake with their children related to learning, including discussing school assignments, assisting with homework, monitoring progress, participating in educational initiatives, attending academic events, and serving on the school board (Muthusi et al., 2024). A study by Iftikhar et al. (2022) states that parental engagement as parental encouragement and support, affirmative responses to challenges, and confidence in children's capabilities and motivation, which are crucial to their school sports activities and academic performance. Nonetheless, instead of emphasizing the active engagement of parents in their child's sports endeavors, alternative research indicates that parental attitudes, such as praise or empathy, significantly influence children's acceptance of their parents' sporting values (Kovács et al., 2024).

### **The crucial role of parental engagement**

Parents' approaches to their children's schooling are frequently interrelated, and they frequently share a feeling of confidentiality about their children's capabilities and general learning capacity. Their parents greatly impact children's lives since they play a critical

role in enhancing their expectations, beliefs, and learning processes (Okello, 2023). To do this, parents must engage in the curriculum to understand changes and stay current. According to SASA (1996) Section 18, parents must participate in discussions on curriculum-related issues, which requires parents to help their children by creating a positive learning environment and showing an interest in their education. Also supported by Wilder (2023), parents should create a positive working environment for their children. Szász (2023) emphasized that one of the main ways parents interact with the curriculum is by helping their children with their homework. In addition, Zheng (2023) stated that homework can be a useful tool for parents and adults to understand how their children are learning. Parents should communicate with their children's teacher. According to Abdullah et al. (2023), good communication in school relationships benefits children, parents, and teachers.

Parental involvement in children's learning at home has a strong effect on their academic success; in fact, it has a greater influence than the support provided by the school and enables teachers to have a deeper understanding of the children's history and other traits (Sianturi et al., 2023). By actively participating, parents can gain a deeper understanding of their children's educational needs, develop strong connections with schools, and collaborate successfully with educators to attain optimal educational outcomes for their children (Sunarso et al., 2024). Parental engagement influences not only children's academic success but also cultivates enduring behavioral habits and favorable attitudes toward learning. Musengamana (2023) supported the opinion that parental engagement in children's educational matters and the quality of the school-home interaction are the two main factors that influence their academic success.

### **The importance of the teacher-parent partnership**

Establishing partnerships between parents and teachers may be challenging and necessitates commitment from both parties. Collaboration between parents and teachers often helps monitor children's academic progress and benefits the school. It has been shown that early parental support and engagement, together with ongoing engagement, considerably increase a child's performance, particularly during the early stages of their educational experience (Akpuokwe et al., 2024) and academic progress (Musengamana, 2023; Velasco et al., 2024). Children who have interested parents outperform those whose parents are less concerned with their children's education (Ayeni, 2021). Furthermore, children whose parents are involved have a positive self-esteem and perform well in class (Sarkowi et al., 2023). As Hanif et al. (2023) indicated, self-esteem is very helpful for children's academic success and predicts academic success. One advantage of this partnership is that reading ability and attitudes toward reading and other subjects increases significantly (Liu et al., 2024).

### **Obstacles teachers encounter in their efforts to enhance parental engagement.**

According to Janius et al. (2024), parents with low levels of education find it difficult to assist their children with their homework and believe they lack the necessary skills to help them succeed academically, which discourages them from participating in school-related activities. Secondly, lack of time is problematic as most school programs and events are arranged at times that are convenient for the school and rarely take the parent's situation into account because some parents work long, unpredictable hours (Mkhize, 2023). May et al. (2023) agree that parents work long, erratic hours, and they do not have time to attend meetings. Thirdly, teacher's attitudes, as stated by Mann et al. (2024) and parents' unfavorable school (teacher) experiences may also act as a barrier to their communication with educators. Manilal and Jairam (2023) and Terzi et al. (2023) claim that educators frequently harbor prejudices due to misconceptions about the poor, namely, that the less fortunate are illiterate, and do not value education.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Epstein's framework has had an impact on research on parental engagement. Epstein et al. (2018) created six types of parental engagement for use by teachers and families in primary and secondary schools. This framework helps educators create a more thorough program for school and family partnerships (Epstein et al., 2018). Parenting, communication, volunteering, children learning at home, decision-making, and community collaboration are the six types of parental involvement. Furthermore, Epstein developed a model that prioritizes the child and outlines the overlapping spheres of influence that have an impact on a child's development, such as family, school, and community. In addition, Epstein and Jansorn (2004) provide a list of the areas of influence that are essential for a partnership to operate well and engage all parties in actions that improve and sustain their work over time. Epstein's framework makes it clear that parental engagement is a diverse concept that includes parents' activities at home, school, and interactions with teachers and the community.

### **Research and Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research approach within the framework of an interpretive paradigm. The qualitative methodology was chosen to enable the collection of rich, descriptive data that captures the different perspectives of participants, in this case, teachers, regarding their experiences with parental involvement in education. As noted by MacMillan and Schumacher (2010), qualitative research is particularly effective for exploring complex social phenomena through direct engagement with participants, allowing researchers to uncover meanings and interpretations that might not emerge through quantitative methods.

By focusing on participants' lived experiences and subjective viewpoints, this approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the dynamics and challenges associated with parental involvement from the educators' standpoint. The interpretive paradigm further

supported this aim by emphasizing the importance of context and the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participants.

To structure the inquiry, a case study design was adopted. According to Bacon-Shone (2020), case studies are well-suited for in-depth exploration of a limited number of cases, offering detailed insights into processes, relationships, and contextual factors. This design allowed the researcher to investigate the phenomenon of parental involvement within a specific educational setting, thereby generating findings that, while not broadly generalizable, offer valuable implications and a comprehensive understanding of the issue under study.

### **Sampling**

The study employed purposive sampling to select a total of 10 teachers from four carefully chosen primary schools. This non-probability sampling technique was intentionally used to identify participants who possessed specific characteristics deemed essential for the study, namely, relevant teaching experience, appropriate professional qualifications, and a demonstrated willingness to participate. As Cohen et al. (2018) explain, purposive sampling is particularly effective for selecting individuals who are considered knowledgeable and experienced in relation to the research topic, often due to their roles, expertise, or direct involvement in the subject matter.

Teachers were selected as the primary participants because they were directly engaged in the educational process and were well-positioned to observe and assess the nature and extent of parental involvement in their schools. Their professional insights and day-to-day interactions with both learners and parents provided a valuable perspective for understanding the dynamics of parental engagement in the educational context. By focusing on this group, the study aimed to gather informed, experience-based data that could contribute meaningfully to the broader discourse on parental involvement in primary education.

### **Instruments**

To gather rich and meaningful data, the study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection. In-depth interviews are designed to explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences in detail, allowing the researcher to probe beneath surface-level responses and uncover deeper insights (Newby, 2010). This method was particularly well-suited to the study's aim of understanding teachers' perspectives on parental involvement, as it enabled participants to articulate their views in their own words and at their own pace.

The decision to use in-depth interviews was informed by the method's strength in capturing how individuals interpret and make sense of a particular issue, in this case, the nature and impact of parental involvement in education (Mack et al., 2005). Interviews were conducted face-to-face to facilitate rapport and allow for the observation of nonverbal cues, which can enrich the interpretation of verbal responses.

A set of carefully crafted open-ended questions guided the interviews, encouraging participants to share their experiences and opinions freely (Creswell, 2009). This approach also allowed for flexibility, enabling the interviewers to follow up on interesting or unexpected responses and explore emerging themes in greater depth. As Cohen et al. (2018) emphasize, open-ended questioning is essential in qualitative research for eliciting authentic and detailed narratives from participants. To ensure participants felt comfortable and secure during the interviews, sessions were held in neutral, private, and easily accessible locations. These venues were chosen to be free from distractions and conducive to open and honest communication, thereby supporting the collection of high-quality data.

### **Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, establishing trustworthiness is essential to ensure the integrity and rigor of the study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1994), trustworthiness serves as a basis for evaluating the quality and credibility of qualitative inquiries. It encompasses four key components: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Yulianti & Sulistyawati, 2021). These criteria collectively provide a framework for assessing the authenticity and reliability of the research process and its findings. To enhance the credibility of this study, deliberate and thoughtful measures were taken throughout the research process. This included the purposeful selection of participants based on relevant experience and qualifications, as well as the careful choice of research sites that were contextually appropriate for exploring the phenomenon of parental involvement. Additionally, the use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews allowed for the collection of rich, detailed data that accurately reflected participants' perspectives. Confirmability was addressed by ensuring that the findings were grounded in the data collected, rather than influenced by researcher bias or assumptions. This was achieved through transparent documentation of the research process and the use of direct quotations from participants to support interpretations. To establish dependability, the study maintained consistency in data collection procedures and interview protocols, allowing for the research process to be clearly traced and potentially replicated in similar contexts. Finally, transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research setting, participants, and context, enabling readers to determine the extent to which the findings may be applicable to other settings or populations.

## **Ethical considerations**

This study was carried out after obtaining the necessary consent from the various parties. Permission to conduct the research was sought from the University of South Africa's College of Education's Ethics Committee. A formal letter was sent to the Limpopo Province Department of Education requesting permission to conduct research in the Capricorn South district. We then asked the principals of the selected primary schools in the Capricorn South district, Limpopo province, for permission to conduct the study at their schools. Participants' privacy was ensured by the researchers, who agreed to respect their right to privacy by not disclosing any information that could be used to locate or identify them (Cohen et al., 2018). Participants were guaranteed anonymity; neither their names nor the name of the schools would be revealed in the study report (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Confidentiality was ensured when participants signed a consent form to participate in the interview before it started. The participants were given enough information about the study to allow them to decide whether or not to participate after learning about it and indicating their willingness to do so voluntarily.

## **Data analysis**

The data collected through semi-structured interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely recognized method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. This approach was guided by the six-phase framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which provides a systematic yet flexible process for interpreting rich textual data. The first phase involved familiarization with the data, where the researchers immersed themselves in the interview transcripts by reading and re-reading them to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content. This step also included making preliminary notes and observations about potential patterns or significant points (Ravindran, 2019). In the second phase, initial codes were generated. This involved systematically identifying and labeling meaningful segments of the data that appeared relevant to the research questions. These codes served as the building blocks for developing broader themes. The third phase focused on searching for themes, where the researchers examined the coded data to identify recurring patterns or central ideas that could be grouped into potential themes. These themes represented significant aspects of the participants' experiences and perceptions. Next, in the fourth phase, the identified themes were reviewed and refined. This step involved checking the coherence of each theme in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, ensuring that the themes accurately reflected the data. In the fifth phase, the themes were defined and named. Here, the researchers clearly articulated what each theme represented and how it related to the overall research objectives. Each theme was given a concise and descriptive name to capture its essence. Finally, in the sixth phase, the researchers produced the final report, weaving together the themes into a coherent narrative. This report included illustrative quotes from participants to support the analysis and provided insights into the teachers' perspectives on parental involvement.

## **Findings and Discussions**

### **Findings**

This part explains the results, which were carefully put together into four sub-themes that came up when the data and research questions were analyzed. The study used pseudonyms to refer to the selected participants to conceal their real identities. Participants were chosen for the study due to their role as primary school teachers, as the study considers their experience to be relevant to parents' engagement in their children's education. From the findings, the following themes emerged: the concept of parental engagement, the role of parental engagement in helping children with homework, parent-teacher communication, and parent-teacher partnership.

### **The concept of parental engagement**

Participants discussed the concept of parental engagement from a variety of angles. Most participants described it as actively or fully participating in every facet of a child's education.

"Parental engagement is when a parent is fully involved in their children's education. Making sure that the child has school uniform, writing material, knowing who the class teacher of your child, helping the child with schoolwork, and making sure that the child knows the importance of doing homework and encouraging them to perform better in class. In simple term is what parents are doing at home to promote learning". (P2)

Some participants defined parental engagement as a way for parents to support their children's academic achievement and assist them with their academics. They were more concerned with what parents could do at home to encourage learning.

"Parental engagement it is when parents fully supervise their children's school work. It actually means a regular supervision of learner's homework by their parents". (P10)

The results showed that participants' opinions on parental engagement varied. It was clear that most participants understood parental engagement, while others had a cursory understanding because they defined it as simply checking on the children's schoolwork. As a result, teachers would be limited in their ability to completely involve parents in their children's education if they do not fully grasp this concept. This means that a teacher's knowledge of parental engagement is the first step toward engaging parents. The aforementioned is supported by Wildmon et al. (2024) – being actively engaged as a parent implies being engaged in all facets of

your child's academic, social, and emotional development. In addition, Salac and Florida (2022) defined parental engagement as a range of activities parents participate in with their children to boost learning, like assisting the children with their homework.

### **The role of parental engagement in helping children with homework.**

What role does parental engagement serve in children's academic performance? Was the question posed to the participants, whereby purpose of the inquiry was to see whether participants truly understood the role that parents should play in their children's education.

"The role of parents in a child's education is to be engaged in all areas of the child's education and academic process, ensuring that their children do all the work the teachers gave them at school. Then again, I think their role is to create an environment that is conducive to children for them to write the homework. Children should sit on a chair when doing their homework." (P1)

Parents' encouragement and motivation are crucial for children to succeed academically, which was the general opinion of the participants. When helping children with their homework, parents should be sure to check their children's books to make sure they have completed their homework and that their teachers have not left any comments.

"The role of parental engagement is for parents to support their children's education process; parents must give their children the courage and motivation that is needed for them to achieve more academically. I think it's their responsibility, or their role, to make sure that learners complete the work that the teachers gave them at school. Their role is to check their children's books to see if they do the work they are given and if their work is neat; there are no bad comments from teachers, like work not done or work not completed. By checking the books, they will be able to see if their child is doing the right thing or not. I think that's their role." (P9)

The results indicate that parents should participate in their children's education by encouraging a healthy learning atmosphere that is suitable for children to complete their homework without being distracted. As supported by Wilder (2023), parents should encourage their children by making a suitable learning environment available for them. It is evident that parents may help and support their children in achieving academic success by encouraging and motivating them to finish their homework or any other schoolwork assigned to them. According to the study's findings, participants also agreed that parents who do not help their children with their homework are not fulfilling their parental responsibility toward their children's educational development. This is supported by Section 3.4 of the National Executive Policy Act of 1996, which mandates that parents participate actively in their children's educational process by supervising their work, assisting with homework, and encouraging and motivating them to achieve academic success.

### **Parent-teacher communication**

Parent-teacher communication improves children's learning and involves parental engagement. How important is communicating with parents, and how often is it done with parents regarding their children's education? When the transcripts were carefully examined, it became clear that schools use a variety of communication techniques with parents. Both verbal and nonverbal communication methods provide important information to parents. Verbal communication approaches include parent meetings, parent consultations, and telephone discussions. Examples of nonverbal communication techniques include writing a letter in a communication book and sending it with children to their parents. Teachers also reply to letters if they have an important message for the parents to hear. Other participants rely on communication books, which are exercise books in which teachers send notes to parents outlining pertinent information or asking for specific assistance.

"I communicate with parents anytime during the term or the school year by using a communication book whereby I write to learners in an exercise book and I send the message via learners for their parents to reply to me in that communication book. The communication book is effective even though I experience challenges because some parents do not reply to the communication book, so learners come back with a book without a reply from parents. But I believe if parents are responsible for the well-being and the education of their children, they should respond to the letters in the communication book but in my class, I find it hard for them to respond but other parents do respond." (P6)

Teachers communicate with parents over the phone, though participants in the research claimed that this method of interaction was frequently problematic for them. Most of the time, they were unable to contact the parents, or contact information was incomplete or outdated. Usually, parents who were unable to attend the parent meetings used it. P9 gave her perspective, stating that it is important for teachers to keep in touch with parents.

"I also communicate with parents using the school telephone if they were not able to attend a meeting and they did not send any apology but some I can't find them on their cell phones so due to the absence of the parents and their failure to contact me, I am unable to schedule a telephone conference with the parents." (P9)

Participants also wrote letters to their parents as a means of communicating with them. Unfortunately, participants acknowledged that letters between parents and teachers were equally ineffective because most parents ignored them, particularly when the letters complained about the child's performance.

"I communicate with parents a few times every quarter by using letters, it is unfortunate that some parents here at school ignore letters saying their child isn't doing well or invitations and don't check the learners' books even though they do receive letters". (P8)

It is clear that all the teachers at the participating school used various verbal or nonverbal communication techniques with parents. Graham-Clay (2024) reinforces this by citing the use of communication books as another common form of written communication. Many teachers use daily communication books to communicate with parents. Despite the difficulties associated with parents who were not actively involved, participants affirmed that communication was the mutual understanding between two people that leads to beneficial communication; without mutual understanding, the relationship will not be successful. Graham-Clay (2024) encouraged telephone communication because it was stated that teachers and parents had interactive dialogues as part of two-way communication, similar to conversations that might occur over the phone. It was also clear that there was excellent communication between the home and school, which is corroborated by Epstein et al (2018). As long as the teacher and parent are in continuous communication, parents will be informed about their child's well-being and the teacher will be able to learn more about the child.

"How often do you meet with the parents of your children?" was the next communication-related question posed to participants. Diverse responses came from the participants. Most participants concurred that parents and teachers met once a quarter and that parents were only called into school if their child was struggling in reading and writing, which might require several meetings.

"I meet with parents every term when they come to collect their children's end of the term report. Sometimes I meet with them anytime if the child has a problem in reading and writing or their behavior its bad in order to find the solution on how we can work together to help such children". (P5)

Some participants had two parent meetings during the quarter in addition to the final meeting. This occurred during the parents' consultations and the collection of reports. Consultation is a meeting where the learner's work is discussed by the parent, teacher, and child.

"I meet with parents twice in a term when they come for parents' consultation and when they come to collect the reports. It is only in special cases when I can meet with parents more than twice in a quarter maybe when the child is sick or when they come to take him or her to the doctor." (P3)

Considering that parents only met with their children's teachers in person once a term to receive their reports, it appears that there is a lack of face-to-face communication with parents, as indicated by the interview comments above. Other participants met parents twice throughout the term. Thus, most teachers would only see their learners' parents once if there were no unexpected situations for the child. Meeting with parents only once a term is insufficient although teachers are time-constrained and cannot address every issue that has arisen or concern that the child has. This supports Epstein et al (2018) assertion that a variety of activities can be arranged to ensure good two-way communication. A child's intellectual development may be impacted by engagement in school, such as regular attendance at school meetings and events. In order to disseminate permanent, written evaluations of children's development, Graham-Clay (2024) states that parents usually collect their children's progress reports in person. However, this should not be the only occasion when the teacher meets with the parents.

### **Parents-teacher partnership**

Knowing that parents support teachers in advancing children's education makes parent-teacher collaboration simple. The following question was posed to participants: "How important is parent-teacher partnership?"

Most participants expressed a desire for parents to encourage their children, assist with schoolwork, and foster positive relationships with their parents. Despite their inability to understand the assigned work, parents must maintain effective communication.

"To be honest with you I would like parents to be 100 percent there like be actively involved in helping their children with homework and other school projects. I would like to have a good relationship with them and talk to them anytime when their child has a problem because it will be easy for us both to come up with some solution to help the child. But to tell you the truth I have tried to establish relationships with some parents but have been unsuccessful so far." (P7)

The comments made by participants show how a positive working relationship between parents and teachers can increase parental engagement. Some participants found it satisfying to see parents helping their children with their studies and developing a positive relationship with their parents. Although it can be challenging for teachers to maintain this partnership, having a solid relationship with parents makes it easier for them to ascertain whether something is wrong with the child. It was also evident that parents will find it simpler to communicate with their child's teacher if they have a strong relationship. According to the Department of Basic Education (2016), although homework encourages independent learning, parental monitoring is still essential. Goodall and Montgomery (2023) argue that the school has a major impact on how involved parents are with their children. According to Zhou et al. (2024), a parent-teacher partnership that monitors children's academic progress is advantageous for the school. Furthermore, Epstein and Jansorn (2004) bolster the idea of a successful partnership by stating that participation from both parents and teachers is essential for the partnership to be successful.

In contrast, children whose parents are not active in their education do not behave or perform better in the classroom. "How does lack of parental engagement affect children?" was the follow-up question that participants were asked regarding working in partnership with parents.

If children knew someone was trying to motivate them, they were more motivated at home and school, said participants. It appears that the learner's self-esteem is impacted emotionally and mentally by the absence of parental participation.

"It affects the learner's self-esteem because when other children are happy that their parents are coming to school those children. They don't have anything to share about their parents, you know how kids are they brag about every little thing. It also affects the learner's psychology concerning their view on the importance of education. This kind of learners they don't take school seriously because they see their parents don't take school seriously." (P4)

In essence, this means that primary school teachers face a fundamental challenge due to a lack of parental engagement in their children's education. Because it affects the child's lower self-esteem emotionally and psychologically, it is apparent that it should not be taken for granted. As Hanif et al. (2023) indicated, self-esteem is very helpful for children's academic success and predicts academic success. Many times, afflicted children do not value or recognize the importance of education in their lives, according to participants. They consequently grow up to be aggressive, bullies, and robbers, which calls into question their academic success. When parents do not assist their children with their homework, do not show up to meetings, or do not collect end-of-term reports, it has been noted that children feel abandoned and uncared for. As reported by Sarkowi et al. (2023), children's behavior and self-confidence improve when they perceive that their parents are concerned about them. Teachers need to develop techniques to assist children whose parents are not involved because doing so will motivate them to do better in school. This makes it clear that parents should be encouraged to actively engage in their children's education because their presence will help the children succeed academically and have a better future.

Participants mentioned that parents worked long hours, which prevented them from helping children with homework or attending school meetings.

"In my experience, my challenge was parents don't attend meeting at school due to lack of time because we call meetings during the day and they will be at work. Again, concerning time parents who work long hours, they come back home tired and they don't have time to help their children with homework." (P3)

Participants generally agreed that a lack of time prevented parents from adequately supervising their children's schoolwork. The results show that working parents are less interested in their children's education due to work responsibilities and a lack of time, which proved to be a difficulty for parental engagement. Participants brought up the challenge of parents missing parent-teacher meetings held during workdays, making it difficult for working parents to attend. The results show that some parents worked night shift; when teachers called them to pick up their children from school or to attend a meeting, they were either at work or exhausted. Additionally, according to May et al. (2023), parents worked long, erratic hours, and they did not have time to attend meetings. Since the majority of school events were scheduled at times that were convenient for the school, and infrequently took the parents' situation into account, to allow parents to plan, schools should schedule meetings at convenient times or notify them in advance.

## **Discussion**

According to the study's findings, most participants knew the concept of parental engagement but had different understandings of the concept. Academic success in school depends on parents creating a supportive environment for learning at home. It was found that parents should be involved in their children's education by encouraging them, and creating a good learning atmosphere that allows children to complete their assignments, as supported by Epstein's type 1 parenting (Epstein et al, 2018). The communication between parents and teachers would encourage and empower teachers. The study found that schools use a variety of ways to communicate with parents, namely, parent meetings, parent consultations, telephone calls, and letters. Despite the problems that participants experienced, it was clear that their communication between school and home and home and school was vital, which aligns with Epstein et al (2018) Type 2 of parental involvement (Communication).

The findings suggest that parental engagement can be positively impacted by a strong parent-teacher relationship. This is supported by Epstein and Janson (2004) who stated that the areas of influence identified in Epstein's framework as part of the partnership would work effectively only if all parties were actively involved. The findings indicate that effective parental engagement has an impact on children's academic success. As suggested by the DBE (2016), children become more focused on their academics when parents are actively engaged in their education. A study conducted in Limpopo Palala by Seleka and Masoabi (2024) demonstrated that the parents of the rural primary school in Palala District, where the study was conducted, were not as engaged in their children's academic pursuits as the school expected. In comparison to South African parents, Jucson (2023) indicated that Singaporean parents exhibited significant involvement in the education of their children by assisting with schoolwork, facilitating extracurricular activities, and establishing an optimal learning atmosphere at home.

There are still challenges that teachers experience with regard to parental engagement; for example, parents who lack education often struggle to comprehend the curriculum or have time constraints. According to Terzi et al. (2024), parents with poor levels of education find it difficult to help their children with their schoolwork. Working parents are less involved in their children's education due to working long hours. Furthermore, Terzi et al. (2024) found that parents often missed parent-teacher meetings on weekdays due to their work commitments. The research suggests that schools should establish a flexible schedule that will allow parents to attend meetings.

Parental engagement is hampered by teachers' negative attitudes. Furthermore, a lack of teacher training on parental engagement hampers parental engagement; hence, some teachers find it difficult to involve parents.

The study revealed the importance of programs and workshops in boosting parental engagement. The DBE could learn from Singapore where educational institutions and governmental organizations provide seminars and training sessions to empower parents to acquire the expertise and understanding necessary to enhance their children's education and growth, particularly evidence-based strategies to increase parenting competencies (Jockson, 2023). Given that neither parents nor teachers are fully informed about parental engagement and how it should function in schools, training in this area should be included in university curricula to educate teachers while they are training. Once they start teaching at a school, the DBE should provide professional development workshops and programs on parental engagement. The School Governing Body (SGB) and the School Management Team should schedule a parental workshop on the school year calendar to inform parents about the importance of parental involvement and the role they play in their children's education. It also emerged that schools have not developed policies on parental involvement that could guide the process.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of parental engagement on learner achievement in primary schools. The results clearly show how beneficial involved parents can be for raising academic standards. Both the learners and the school community benefit when parents play an active role in their children's education. However, there are a number of obstacles to this engagement, from time limits and socioeconomic barriers to parents' ignorance or incapacity. Structured family participation techniques should be given more weight in South African education policy in order to solve these issues. Policies that provide for community outreach programs, parent education programs, and flexible engagement models that take into account a range of household situations should help schools create long-lasting home-school partnerships. Furthermore, the DBE should think about adding measures of parental engagement. By establishing inclusive and regular communication channels and creating welcoming environments for parents, educators can play a crucial role in supporting student learning and strengthening home-school partnerships. Schools should provide support groups, workshops, and after-hours parent-teacher conferences so that parents can actively participate in their child's academic path.

In order to formalize and reinforce culturally and contextually appropriate parent engagement practices, teachers and school administration teams must also work with SGBs. Workshops, after-hours parent-teacher conferences, and support groups should be provided by schools to enable parents to make significant contributions to their children's academic careers. Future research is suggested to examine the perspectives and experiences of high school teachers regarding parental involvement, and also investigate the responsibilities and initiatives of the Department of Education in fostering and supporting meaningful engagement between parents and schools.

## Acknowledgement

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, S.J. and V.M.; methodology, S.J. and V.M.; validation, V.M.; formal analysis, S.J. and V.M.; investigation, V.M.; resources, S.J.; writing—original draft preparation, S.J.; writing—review and editing, S.J. and V.M.

**Funding:** The authors declare that this research study was not funded.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to restrictions.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

- Abdullah, D., Poetri, A. L., Saputra, N., & Al Haddar, G. (2023). The role of parent-teacher communication for improving children's achievement. *Cendikia: Media Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan*, 13(3), 482–488. <https://doi.org/10.35335/cendikia.v13i3.3463>
- Akpuokwe, C. U., Bakare, S. S., Eneh, N. E., & Adeniyi, A. O. (2024). Parental involvement laws in child education: A USA and African review. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences*, 6(3), 185–197. <https://doi.org/10.51594/ijarss.v6i3.849>
- Ayeni, A. (2021). The impact of parental involvement on adolescents' academic achievement in Nigeria [Doctoral dissertation, St. John's University].
- Babbie, E., & Mouton, J. (2005). *The practice of social research* (pp. 1–523). Oxford University Press.
- Bacon-Shone, J. (2020). *Introduction to quantitative research methods*. University of Hong Kong.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Chavez, J. V., Adalia, H. G., & Alberto, J. P. (2023). Parental support strategies and motivation in aiding their children learn the English language. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 5(2), 1541. <https://doi.org/10.59400/FLS.v5i2.1541>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203224342>
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

- Department of Basic Education. (2016). Northwest Department of Education and Sports Development. Government Printers.
- Epstein, J. L., & Jansorn, N. R. (2004). School, family, & community partnerships link the plan. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review*, 69(6), 19–23.
- Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S. B., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Williams, K. J. (2018). *School, family, & community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. Corwin Press.
- Geduld, B. (2024). Parental involvement in homework to foster self-regulated learning skills: A qualitative study with parents from selected higher quintile schools. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2343526>
- Goodall, J., & Montgomery, C. (2023). Parental involvement to parental engagement: A continuum. *Mapping the Field*, 158–169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2013.781576>
- Graham-Clay, S. (2024). Communicating with parents 2.0: Strategies for teachers. *School Community Journal*, 34(1), 9–60. <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>
- Hanif, S., Bibi, S., & Gul, F. (2023). Effect of academic self-efficacy and self-esteem on students' academic achievement in low-income families in Pakistan. *Journal of Contemporary Trends and Issues in Education*, 2(3), 23–38. <https://doi.org/10.55628/jctie.v3i1.73>
- Iftikhar, M. T., Ali, H. S., & Nazeer, M. T. (2022). Parents and student-athletes: The propensity to underestimate the importance of social factors for sports performance. *Global Educational Studies Review*, VII, 296–305.
- Janius, N., Aniq, S. K. B. J. M., & Amdan, B. (2024). Parenting style on academic performance among secondary students at Kota Belud, Sabah. *International Journal of Science and Research Archive*, 12(2), 907–929. <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.12.2.1294>
- Kovács, K., Oláh, Á. J., & Pusztai, G. (2024). The role of parental involvement in academic and sports achievement. *Heliyon*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e24290>
- Liu, A., Heath, M., & Grzywacz, J. G. (2024). Cultural meaning of education and parents' involvement in education: Perspectives of immigrant Latinos. *Family Relations*, 73(1), 262–281. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12940>
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., & MacQueen, K. M. (2005). *Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide*. Family Health International.
- MacMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Manilal, R., & Jairam, V. (2023). Experiences of parental involvement in privileged and underprivileged schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 43(3), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v43n3a2201>
- Mann, G., Gilmore, L., Robertson, A., Kennedy-Wood, L., & Maia-Pike, L. (2024). Little things mean a lot: Parent perspectives on positive teacher-parent communication when students have disability. *Teacher and Teacher*, 30(1), 102–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2023.2241020>
- Marongwe, N., & Mutesasira, G. (2024). Harnessing parental involvement and educational equity for sustainable development in South African schools. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Sociality Studies*, 4, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.38140/ijss-2024.vol4.24>
- May, I., Awad, S., May, M. S., & Ziegler, A. (2023). Parental stress provoked by short-term school closures during the second COVID-19 lockdown. *Journal of Family Issues*, 44(1), 25–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X211041987>
- Mkhize, K. Z. (2023). *The challenges of parental involvement in rural secondary schools of Umvoti Circuit in KwaZulu-Natal* [Master's dissertation, University of South Africa]. <https://uir.unisa.ac.za>
- Motshusi, M. C., Ngobeni, E. T., & Sepeng, P. (2024). Lack of parental involvement in the education of their children in the foundation phase: Case of selected schools in the Thabazimbi Circuit. *Research in Educational Policy and Management*, 6(2), 21–41.
- Musengamana, I. (2023). A systematic review of literature on parental involvement and its impact on children learning outcomes. *Open Access Library Journal*, 10(10), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1110755>
- Newby, P. (2010). *Research methods for education*. Pearson Education.
- Okello, M. (2023). The role of parents in their children's education. *African Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(1), 27–37.
- Özdemir, N., Gün, F., & Yirmibeş, A. (2023). Learning-centred leadership and student achievement: Understanding the mediating effect of the teacher professional community and parental involvement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 51(6), 1301–1321. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432211034167>
- Pinneo, L., & Nolen, A. (2024). Parent involvement and student academic motivation towards science in 9th grade. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02707-0>
- Ravindran, V. (2019). Data analysis in qualitative research. *Indian Journal of Continuing Nursing Education*, 20(1), 40–45.
- 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.
- Sarkowi, S., Widat, F., Wadifah, N. I. A., & Rohmatika, D. (2023). Increasing children's self-confidence through parenting: Management perspective. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 7(3), 3097–3106.
- Seleka, H. A., & Masoabi, C. S. (2024). Educators' perspective on parental involvement in homework at a rural primary school in Palala. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 14(1), 1–9.

- Sianturi, M., Lee, J. S., & Cumming, T. M. (2023). Shifting the belief of the “hard-to-reach parents” to “reachable parents”: Parent-teacher collaboration within schools in a post-colonial country. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 97, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2023.101892>
- Sipahutar, F., Sihite, I. R., & Syahrial, S. (2024). Analysis of parental involvement in the formation of children’s character at primary school age. *Journal of Digital Learning and Education*, 4(1), 73–84. <https://doi.org/10.52562/jdle.v4i1.1001>
- Sunarso, B., Mahardhani, A. J., & Ausat, A. M. A. (2024). Analysis of social media usage in enhancing parental participation in child education. *Jurnal Terobosan Peduli Masyarakat (TIRAKAT)*, 1(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.61100/j.tirakat.v1i1.100>
- Szász, M. M. (2023). Parental assistance with assignments – Types of parental involvement in homework. *Central European Journal of Educational Research*, 5(2), 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.37441/cejert/2023/5/2/13274>
- Terzi, L., Unterhalter, E., & Suissa, J. (2023). Philosophical reflections on child poverty and education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 42(1), 49–63. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-022-09865-1>
- Velasco, M. N., Torres, A. A., Manarin, J. A., Baldeo, G. D. C., Garcia, M. A. T., Velasco, C. R. T., & Pajavera, R. M. (2024, July). Enhancing parent-teacher collaboration in early childhood education through a web-based app. In *2024 7th International Conference on Informatics and Computational Sciences (ICICoS)* (pp. 131–136). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICICoS62600.2024.10636878>
- Wilder, S. (2023). Effects of parental involvement on academic achievement: A meta-synthesis. In *Mapping the Field* (pp. 137–157). Routledge. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2013.780009>
- Wildmon, M., Anthony, K., & Kamau, Z. (2024). Identifying and navigating the barriers of parental involvement in early childhood education. *Current Issues in Education*, 25(1). <https://doi.org/10.14507/cie.vol25iss1.2146>
- Yulianti, T., & Sulistyawati, A. (2021). Enhancing public speaking ability through focus group discussion. *JURNAL PAJAR (Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran)*, 5(2), 287–295.
- Zhang, J., Boone, B. J., & Anderman, E. M. (2024). Students at the center: Student voice in parental involvement and school-family partnerships. *School Community Journal*, 34(1), 109–126.
- Zheng, L. (2023). A study on students’ perspectives on homework and its role in their learning at Chinese schools [Student essay, Gothenburg University Library]. <https://hdl.handle.net/2077/77245>
- Zhou, X., He, Q., Zhang, X., & Bian, Y. (2024). Parent–teacher relationship and students’ learning engagement in China: A longitudinal study considering urban–suburban differences. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12698>

**Publisher’s Note:** SSBFNET stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



© 2025 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

*International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* (2147-4478) by SSBFNET is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.