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### Parents' Perceptions on Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education in Giyani Municipality Rural-based Schools, Limpopo Province, South Africa

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#### Abstract

The importance of parental involvement in their children's education has received considerable attention recently. This study explores parents' perceptions of their involvement in children's education in the Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province, South Africa. It follows Epstein's theory of school-parent-community partnerships to understand parents' involvement in their children's education. A qualitative approach was employed to guide the generation and analysis of the data. Fifty-eight parents were selected from the four rural-based schools. They participated in several focus group discussions that were audio-recorded. Inductive qualitative thematic analysis was used, and ethics were observed. The findings reveal parents' perceptions on parental involvement in their children's education as working with schools, homework assistance, modelling positive attitudes, emotional support, and career counselling. This study has implications for policy and practice in a parent-teacher relationship in rural-based schools. It suggests that parents should be involved in policy development, such as when the curriculum changes.

**Keywords:** *children's education, educational achievement, emotional support, parental involvement, rural-based schools.*

#### Introduction

Parental involvement in their children's educational achievement has become apparent throughout the world (Badri et al., 2014). It can be defined as the actions that parents perform to enhance their children's academic achievement in cooperation with teachers and other school staff (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020). It can refer to the parental activities performed at home or school regarding their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). This may include moral support (Shearer, 2006), purchasing school materials and uniforms for their children, developing a positive parent-child relationship, or attending school meetings (Clinton & Hattie, 2013). This

may also include emotional support (Munje & Mncube (2018). Parents' active involvement in children's education improves their academic achievement and cognitive growth (Kalaycı & Ergül, 2020; Sibanda, 2021).

Schools need the support of communities and families to satisfy the diverse needs of children. They are often regarded as formalised extensions of the family. For instance, they are responsible for increasing children's understanding of and exposure to democratic participation (Nthontho, 2017). Parents (or the family) and the school must collaborate and cooperate for a child to grow and learn effectively because none of them can do so independently (Nthontho, 2017). All support children's learning and pave the way for accomplishing educational objectives.

However, studies have shown that parents do not affect how education is delivered (Nthontho, 2017). Furthermore, studies on parental involvement from school administrators and teachers were done whereby parents' views were left out by Munje and Mncube (2018) and Yulianti et al. (2022). This gap in parental involvement is what motivated this study to concentrate on finding out how parents see their involvement in their children's education in rural schools located in Giyani Municipality. This work focuses on parents' perceptions and takes into consideration their views and opinions about what they share regarding their participation in ensuring that children succeed in their academic performance, in contrast to Thomas et al.'s study (2020), which reflected the perceptions of both students and their parents regarding parental involvement. This study explored how parents view their involvement in their children's education in the Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province in South Africa. The objective was to determine the way in which parents are involved in their children's education. The study contributes to the design and implementation of innovative programmes for parents and teachers that can foster parental involvement in rural-based schools in the Limpopo Province, South Africa. The following sections discuss the literature on parental involvement in children's education, the theoretical framework, methodology, and findings. We then move to the discussion of these findings and finally conclude.

## **Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education**

### ***Western Perspectives***

Parental involvement is an important component of quality education, which can be enhanced by parents when they spend quality time with their children at home and help them with home-schooling (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Andrew et al., 2020). For instance, in Norway, Schmid and Garrels (2021) find that it leads to improved academic performance. Furthermore, Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) assert that it allows teachers to involve parents in the education process. Teachers can invite parents to attend the meetings to endorse certain decisions taken by the school (McKenna & Millen, 2023). Parents can support their children in school events such as sports days, assemblies, and concerts. They can then get the opportunity to observe how their children relate to each other and with their educators, which is important for a child's educational development (Bromley & Yazdanpanah, 2021). Likewise, parental support influences children's decisions in career choices (Parola & Marcionetti, 2022; To et al., 2022). Indeed, children who receive parental support at home are more likely to make a good career choice compared to children who do not receive support. This is facilitated by parents who have educational skills and find it easy to motivate and help their children with schoolwork at home (Ceka & Murati, 2016; Benner et al., 2016).

Generally speaking, parents have a responsibility to provide their children with emotional support, as this will contribute to the children's educational attainment (Alzahrani et al., 2019; Bhamani et al., 2020; Collie et al., 2019). However, Sanchez (2020) shows that the community of Greenfield in California faces significant challenges due to a lack of resources and tools for parental involvement. Additionally, she contends that the lack of parental involvement may have

a negative impact on students' performance and ultimately affect their educational development and success.

### ***African Perspectives***

In the African context, education is generally understood as a three-legged pot, a proverb which means that it is the responsibility of three stakeholders (Arko-Achemfuor, 2018). The first leg represents parents in the family or community where children belong. The second and the third legs stand for the school stakeholders and the government. The latter provides significant resources and support as indicated in each country's national policy. However, the extent of the presence of parents in school education is exceptional in many African countries (Arko-Achemfuor, 2018). Children's education has practically only been taken care of by the schools and government (Nthontho, 2017).

Nevertheless, Nthontho (2017) establishes that parents are required to take part in school activities that are planned by the school administration (e.g., by attending meetings). In Lesotho this largely limits parents to mere spectators without actual involvement in what happens and is decided in those meetings. Nthontho adds that Lesotho's educational officials are not successful in keeping parents involved in their children's education, which may lead to parents' failure to make sure that their children attend school. This concurs with earlier research conducted in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) by Monadjem (2009), which discovers that Swazi teachers have little knowledge of parental involvement or their role in establishing it. Monadjem (2009) also finds that parents do not always choose to get active in schools and do not always understand the value of their involvement. In Ghana, parental involvement is influenced by parents' intrinsic motivation to provide their children with quality education while keeping an eye on the conduct of teachers, to ensure that their children are not subjected to discrimination, unfairness, or abuse at the hands of their teachers (Appiah-Kubi & Amoako, 2020). In Nigeria, Obayopo (2017) asserts that parents are involved with their children's education by delegating older siblings to assist children with homework. Additionally, parents monitor their children's homework and assignment completion. They appropriately nourish their children before they leave for school, which is essential for children's health and wellbeing (Obayopo, 2017).

### ***South African Perspectives***

In South Africa, the concept of parental involvement in children's education is important since it is fundamental in correcting historical educational disparities and enhancing children's educational outcomes. In North West Province, South Africa, Matshe (2014) examines the difficulties of parental involvement in rural public schools. He highlights the desperate situation of parents who are unable to meaningfully contribute to their children's education due to their underprivileged educational background and how their lack of involvement undermines quality public education. His conclusion is twofold. Firstly, parental involvement is a constitutional requirement that should be properly embraced by all stakeholders in maintaining high-quality public education. Secondly, parents around the rural public schools in North West Province require capacity-building intervention.

Furthermore, Sibanda (2021) notes that parental involvement in South African schools has primarily consisted of making tuition payments and showing up to school functions including attending meetings. However, this focus has shifted, as parental involvement now reflects the democratisation of education, in which parents are given the authority to participate in the decision-making process in schools. Parent-teacher collaborations are acknowledged by the government as an important pillar of the school's tripartite structure, which includes students, parents (community), and teachers. The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996) indeed states that parents should be involved in their children's education by serving on the school governing body, which is an official structure for parental involvement.

According to Sedibe and Fourie (2018), home schooling is challenging for many parents as they usually become reluctant to participate in curriculum planning, learning support provisioning and the development of individual education support plans. This lack of involvement might cause parents to have misconceptions, which would then cause many families to be excluded from the school, further exacerbating their children's learning difficulties. In addition, Maluleke (2014) found that barriers to parental involvement exist in the Vhembe District of Limpopo because of factors like parents' low educational levels, their poor socioeconomic status, the absence of a school policy, poor communication, or teachers' attitudes towards parents. His findings are supported by Munje and Mncube (2018), who associated educators' perceptions of parent non-involvement, whereby educators were not considering contextual factors that limit involvement, which could possibly alienate parents.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study uses Epstein's (1995) theory of school-parent-community partnerships to better understand the involvement of parents in their children's education. The theory has six factors, namely parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community.

The theory recognises the important role that families and the community play in supporting student learning and development. This is because children develop within multiple contexts that must connect with one another (Semke & Sheridan, 2012). By involving families and the community in meaningful ways, schools can create a more supportive and enriching learning environment for students. For instance, in the parenting aspect, parents maintain a life-long commitment to their children by providing a safe and healthy home environment as well as developing positive attitudes towards learning for children to succeed (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

According to Epstein (1995), parents should keep abreast of information pertaining to their children's education and maintain regular communication with teachers, either by attending meetings or receiving reports from schools through children. This emphasises the importance of two-way communication between schools and families. It can help to build trust and understanding between educators and families, leading to effective collaboration and support for student learning.

The volunteering factor is about seeking help and support from parents for school programmes and children's activities, which could include mobilising funds, keeping the school premises clean and getting involved in the school feeding schemes. As a result, by including parents in school activities, schools must care for both children and their parents (Epstein, 1995, 2018). However, research indicates inadequate participation of parents in the involvement of children's education (Munje & Mncube, 2018). If parents are not sufficiently involved in the school planned activities, there could be a possibility that they may become observers of their children's education without contributing meaningful ideas in what happens in schools (Nthontho, 2017). Therefore, schools should understand the context of the community and parents' histories and welcome stakeholder involvement because it influences children's attendance and their performance. If schools fail to involve parents, that could possibly lead to their neglect to ascertain that their children attend school, which may trigger children's poor performance while increasing their dropout (Bayley et al., 2023).

The learning-at-home factor provides parents with information on what children are doing in the classroom and how to help them with homework and other school-related activities (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 1995). Parents play a monitoring role. Obayopo (2017) indicates that parents ensure that their children do not suffer unfair treatment by teachers.

The sixth and last factor stresses that parents take part in the school decision making when they participate in the school governing bodies or committees as laid down by some government

policies (see for instance the Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996) in South Africa in our context). The expectation therefore is that the decision-making powers pertaining to education of children would be distributed equally between all stakeholders regardless of their status or level (Grooms & Childs, 2021).

Overall, Epstein's theory of school-parent-community partnerships is appreciated for promoting student success by fostering meaningful involvement between schools, families, and the community. However, if involvement by each stakeholder is not clearly unpacked and roles are not clarified, this could lead parents not to comprehend their significance in parental involvement (e.g., the experience in Eswatini reported by Monadjem (2009)). The theory suggests that schools should understand communities' context and parents' backgrounds and embrace them despite differing ideas, attitudes, and problems because stakeholder involvement improves children's educational success (Epstein, 1995; 2018; Munje & Mncube, 2018).

### **Methodology**

This study adopted an interpretative paradigm with the aim of understanding social members within the society (Schwant, 2009) using a qualitative research approach within a phenomenological qualitative research design (Rakotsoane, 2019). The qualitative research approach was considered essential because it gave the researchers the opportunity to interact with parents in their social setting. The sample comprised fifty-eight (n=58) purposively selected parents of learners in the four rural primary schools in the Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province. The purposive sampling technique allowed the researchers to subjectively apply their own judgment to select the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The authors had access to the participating primary schools as part of their community engagement project between the university and the selected schools. Therefore, the data were gathered during the baseline phase with the engaged schools. This study exclusively examined parents' perceptions of the involvement of their children's education.

The data were collected through the focus group discussions. This gave parents the opportunity to express themselves about their involvement in their children's education. Focus group discussions are group interviews meant to better understand how people feel or think about an issue in their own social setting (De Vos et al., 2011). For the inclusion criteria, the researchers asked teachers if they could identify parents who have children studying in the selected rural primary schools including those that were participating as members of the School Governing Body. Participants were excluded if they did not have a child studying in the selected schools in the Giyani Municipality.

One focus group discussion (De Vos et al., 2011) was conducted in each school, making a total of four focus group discussions. In the first three schools, the focus group discussions comprised 15 participants each, while there were only 13 participants in the fourth school. The discussions in each focus group were about one hour long. The participants were given the opportunity to express themselves in Xitsonga, their home language. The research assistant who understood Xitsonga helped in transcribing and translating the parents' perceptions from Xitsonga to English. The focus group discussion guide is presented in Table 1 below.



**Table 1. Questions in the Focus Group Discussion Guide**

What are your experiences in terms of your cooperation with education?
How do you encourage your children to write their homework?
How can the school help you to ensure that homework is done, especially in situations where grannies cannot read and write?
How do you address your children's emotional needs?
How do you support your children at home?
How do you advise your children regarding their future careers?

The study was granted ethical clearance by the University of South Africa (Ethics certificate no: 2016/09/14/90171969). The ethical considerations were followed to help the researchers determine the difference between what is acceptable and what is not (Rakotsoane, 2019). The four schools were visited prior to the beginning of the research. This allows the researchers to explain the purpose of the study and arrange a convenient time for conducting the focus group discussion with the parents at the school premises. Parents' informed consent was obtained from signed consent forms. Parents were informed that they could withdraw at any time during the data collection without consequences. They were ensured confidentiality and anonymity before the data collection. Pseudonyms were used to de-identify the parents' real names.

The inductive thematic data analysis was done following Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide. The data were transcribed, coded, and categorised to identify themes. All the six steps of thematic analysis were followed. The researchers read and re-read the transcribed data and identified the emerging codes. Coding was essential because it helped reduce the amount of raw data to what was necessary for responding to the research questions. Each identified code was named and the final phase which required the writing of the report was followed. The quotations were used to avoid misinterpreting the participants' views as well as to connect various themes.

## Findings

Parents reported that they faced many challenges to effectively assist their children with schoolwork. They confirmed their involvement in their children's education in aspects such as collaboration with schools, homework assistance, modelling positive attitudes, career counselling and emotional support.

### **Collaboration with Schools**

Parental involvement enhances quality education, particularly in rural schools. Thus, parents in these schools ensured that they developed strong working relationships with the schools to support teachers in strengthening teaching and learning. In this regard, parents confirmed that they cooperated with schools by getting involved in auditing of school finances, to make sure that finances were handled well to improve teaching and learning. The following excerpts highlight how the participants viewed their cooperation with the schools as prominent in their children's education:

*"We monitor the utilisation of finances accordingly"* (Sisiliya from school A). Similarly, another participant reiterated that: *"The finance committee at school is working well because it buys resources that we have agreed upon"* (Mahluri from school C). Again: *"Our school never experienced mismanagement of funds because there is the auditing of finance reports."* (Lovellini from school D).

The above extracts from the parents demonstrate that their involvement in their children's education in school finance prevents the mismanagement of funds from occurring in schools. This parental involvement enhances the strengthening of the school finances wherein this parent-school relationship sees parents and teachers agreeing on the resources that must be bought in schools to improve teaching and learning. It is noteworthy that regardless of the parents' educational background their involvement in the auditing of the school finances is important for transparency and accountability in these rural-based schools.

Another area of involvement that the parents elaborated on was maintenance of good hygienic practice. In cooperation with the school, they ensured that the school premises were kept clean. One of the participants said: *"When I come to school and find it dirty, I clean it."* (Hlopheka from school B).

The above quotation indicates parents' positive working relationship with schools. It promotes good hygiene by cleaning schools' surroundings. Their action ensured that their children learned in a conducive environment.

### **Homework Assistance**

Homework assistance is another prominent theme whereby parents indicated that when their children were given schoolwork by their teachers to complete at home, they always assisted them and made sure that their children completed it. The extract below illustrates this:

*When I see my children not writing I ask if they don't have work to do from school. Then they do that. When they ask me to do their homework with them, I tell them to do it first and I will check after they've written. I do correct where I can but where I can't due to the current system, I send them to people who can assist (Xihluke from school A).*

Homework is important for children's educational achievement since it promotes academic flexibility and progression to higher levels. Curriculum changes also frequently make it difficult for participants to support their children with homework. Therefore, some parents expressed their struggle to assist their children with content that they were not familiar with. Similarly, other participants, who had good working relationships with teachers, could visit the school and inquire about their child's homework performance. The next assertion makes this clear.

*It is my responsibility to ensure that she does her homework. My challenge is that what our children learn today differs from what we learned so to address that I make a follow-up by going to ask the teacher if what my child has written is correct (Xitsakisi from school D).*

Another parent interjected: *"I do help my child, but I don't get examples or guidance on how to help him, especially that what I learned during my school days differs from what is learned today"* (Vuthlari from school A).

These excerpts serve as examples of how curriculum changes that contradict what the participants learned in school have a negative impact on the level of assistance they could provide their children at home. To ensure parents have the skills needed to help their children at home with their schoolwork, the school education curriculum policy committees must include parents in the policy formulation process.

For parents without a formal education, assisting children with homework can be very difficult. As a result, parents without a formal education find it hard to help their children with school-related issues. For instance, one participant stated that she was unable to help her child with their schoolwork because she could not read. She said: *"I stay alone with a child, and I am not able to read and write, therefore, I cannot help my child. I am also afraid to call my neighbours to come and help my child."* (Matimu from school C).

According to the quotation above, not all parents were able to help their children with their schoolwork at home. The participant claimed that her lack of literacy was a problem that restricted her ability to be involved in her child's education at home. The participant admitted to feeling nervous when considering how to approach people who could help her child with homework. Furthermore, one of the participants addressed these problems by advocating for at least an additional hour of teachers' instruction to help their children. They stated:

*There should be extra classes, at least for 1 hour. They [children] need teachers that can help them during extra classes. For instance, if the school knocks off at 14:30. Children come back a 16:00 so that they can knock off at 17:00 (Rhulani from school A).*

The quotations above demonstrate that teachers should sacrifice their time and give these children extra lessons because some parents were unable to help their children with schoolwork at home.

### **Modelling a Positive Attitude**

One proven technique for shaping and reinforcing positive behaviours in children from an early age so that they behave in a socially acceptable manner inside the school environment is modelling a positive attitude. The participants affirmed that they supported a disciplinary strategy to mould their children's behaviour by instilling moral values that were critical to their academic success. Some of the participants hinted that: *"I encourage a child good moral, to make friends with good people, and to come back early, to not sleep out and to help him with his schoolwork"* (Solani from school D). This also came from other schools: *"My strength is in the monitoring of my child that she conducts herself well, reads the books, listens to educators, makes friends with good people"* (Nkhensani from school A). Furthermore: *"My strength is encouraging my child to wake up in the morning and to go to school. I prepare warm water for her so that she may be motivated"* (Hluvukani from school B).

According to testimonies, parents were crucial in helping their children develop moral values that aid in their education. Parents emphasised that they encouraged them to love reading books and respect their teachers at school. They also mentioned that they pushed their children to associate with good people, get up early in the morning, and get ready for school as a way of disciplining them. Parents were responsible for ensuring that children were cared for at home, as evidenced by the fact that they woke up early in the morning and prepared warm water for their children to bathe before they went to school.

### **Career Counselling**

Parents can play a significant role in fostering positive attitudes in their children by offering career counselling. This is essential in making sure that children choose wisely when it comes to their careers. Some parents clarified that, despite their limited understanding of the ongoing curriculum changes that led to the new stream of subjects, they always encouraged their children to make educated decisions when selecting a career. When asked how they helped their children choose careers, they expressed the following sentiment: *"I do, but I don't know about the required facilities and stream of subjects that he must follow for the choice that he has made"* (Kedibone from school C). The same was echoed in the following excerpts: *"I do speak to my child about his future, it's true we need doctors in our area because when you go to the hospital, they tell us that doctors are not available"* (Hluvuko from school B). Again, they said: *"My child wants to be a soccer player; I do motivate him to be a soccer player"* (Vunani from school D).

The above quotations demonstrate that parents actively participated in fulfilling their responsibility of assisting their children to know and understand the world of work so that they could choose a good career, which was crucial for making decisions about their lives. The fact that some of the participants recognised how crucial it was to inspire their children to pursue their passions is also an intriguing aspect. For instance, a participant demonstrated her support



for her child's desire to pursue a career in soccer. Fewer parents, especially in rural schools, would encourage their children to play soccer as a career. Therefore, a parent's support of her child in this decision was crucial for the growth that could aid in the child's educational success.

### **Emotional Support**

One of the important elements in fostering young children's healthy development, positive youth development, and educational achievement is the emotional support that parents can give them. The responses below serve as excellent illustrations:

*In addressing my child's emotional need, I comforted the child and then conducted some investigations. I know that children are not always innocent. They may be hurt by things that they have started. I remember one day he came back crying that his friends were calling me names. When I investigated, I found out that it was him who started calling his friend's mother a derogatory name. And then I and that mother cushioned our children from such behaviour (Voni from school A).*

On another account:

*I have two children in this school. Teachers do intervene when they see a problem with our children. They once called me about my son who was starting to befriend the wrong people. They talked to him, and I too talked to him (Thsungo from school D).*

According to the quotes mentioned above, parents could provide their children with emotional support by collaborating with teachers to prevent them from hanging out with the wrong peers at school. Some of the parents also mentioned that they talked to their children about any hurtful things that might worry them to provide emotional support for their children.

## **Discussion**

The findings reveal novel insights into the perceptions of parents in their involvement in children's education in rural-based schools in the Limpopo province, South Africa. The findings indicate that parents collaborate with schools in the auditing of the school finances. This action of taking part in the way finances were handled to improve the teaching and learning of their children's education illustrates one of the legs determined by Arko-Achemfuor (2018). This result supports Sibanda's (2021) claims that parents should be aware of how money is used in schools if they are paying tuition and purchasing school materials for their children. Similarly, parents stipulated that they voluntarily ensured that the school premises were kept clean. This supports parenting and volunteering factors of Epstein's (1995) theory that signals parents' maintenance of a clean and healthy location for their children which also communicates an optimistic standpoint towards learning (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Likewise, because parents' perspectives were not explored in Munje and Mncube's (2018) study, this finding in rural schools in Limpopo contradicts their claims about parental non-involvement in education.

The findings revealed that parents play instrumental roles in children's education by assisting them with homework. They monitored that it was well-written and completed. This supports the contentions by Obayopo (2017). While Hornby and Lafaele (2011) recommend that parents help their children with their education and spend quality time with them, parents in Limpopo Province's rural schools mentioned certain difficulties. More and more evidence emerged about the curriculum's constant modification, which makes it difficult for other parents to help their children with their homework. Both parents with no formal education and parents with formal education—albeit with a different curriculum at the time—were impacted by this. This supports the findings of Sedibe and Fourie (2018) about the difficulties parents encounter in taking part in the development and modification of curricula. Furthermore, parents from disadvantaged socioeconomic circumstances or with low educational attainment may not help their children

with their schoolwork (Matshe, 2014). This could have an impact on the quality of education that children receive.

Consequently, this finding partially confirms Epstein's theory aspect of learning at home. Parents are given information on what children are doing in schools, without necessarily indicating on how they could help them with homework (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 1995). Parents reported not getting guidance on how to assist children with homework, which further accelerated their difficulties with the curriculum that they found challenging. It can be noted that parents have a greater role to play as they support children at home as well as from the school side (by assisting in their schoolwork), but the schools should also understand that parents are involved as parents not as teachers. Therefore, teachers must provide clear explanations for parents to understand what to do when assisting in homework to avoid the possibility of alienating parents (practically excluding them) from getting involved in their children's education as well as frustrating them.

This implies the need for rural-based schools in Limpopo to organise quarterly workshops targeting parents with training regarding curriculum changes to avoid further isolating them (Nthontho, 2017; Munje & Mncube, 2018; Sedibe & Fourie, 2018; Sanchez, 2020; Bayley et al., 2023). Challenges associated with parental involvement seem to cut across all contexts, including Europe and Africa, including South Africa. This study recommends that schools and other stakeholders such as social workers, psychologists, children, and youth care workers in communities around rural-based schools in Limpopo Province should work together and identify children who stay with parents who cannot read and write and visit and assist them with schoolwork at home.

The findings outline the modelling of a positive attitude whereby parents indicated their encouragement to children not to associate with peers who might influence them negatively. Instead, parents reported that they encourage their children to focus on their studies, which is essential for their academic success. This finding confirms what Shearer (2006) found regarding parents who oversee instilling moral values, promoting social development and teaching their children the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. This further avers that, parents can impart their children with a moral character that can help them to be active citizens (Badeni et al., 2019; Bhamani, et al., 2020; Collie et al., 2019).

Parents revealed that they provided their children with career counselling. This finding is essential for learners at a young age in making an informed decision that might have a fundamental impact on their employability. The finding supports previous researchers (To et al., 2022; Parola & Marcionetti, 2022) who also established the role of parents in their children's career paths. Consequently, the research supports Epstein's theory in terms of stakeholders that must form part of the decisions made to improve children's academic achievement. Most parents who participated in the study formed part of the school governing bodies (Sibanda, 2021; Republic of South Africa, 1996), which makes them important stakeholders when decisions are made for children's education.

The findings revealed that parents provided their children with emotional support. Drawing on the principle that charity begins at home, this finding is vital for their academic success. For instance, parents indicated that they would always talk to their children to find out if there might be some other things that were affecting their psychosocial development. In this way, the parent-teacher relationship is significant in providing children with emotional support, thus affirming proclamations by Alzahrani et al. (2019) and Collie et al. (2019) who argue that emotional support is essential for learners since it enhances their educational achievement.

## Conclusion

The study concludes that parental involvement is crucial for collaboration with schools and assisting children with homework. Collaboration has the potential to improve the relationship between parents and teachers and increase children's academic achievement in Giyani Municipality, Limpopo Province's rural schools.

Parental involvement contributes to their children's academic success despite some of the difficulties parents in the Limpopo Province encounter because of the ongoing curriculum changes. Homework, where parents both help their children with their schoolwork and encourage them to learn to complete it on their own, is one of the two roles that parents play in their children's education. Career counselling is the second role that parents play in their children's education. In this role, parents encourage and counsel their children to follow their passions and make wise career decisions.

Our results have implications for parent-teacher relationships in schools in terms of practice and policy. The findings should motivate education policymakers to create strategies that build on parents' strengths to support their children. They could also encourage a program of continuous improvement that might foster parent-teacher collaboration to enhance the positive development of children in rural schools.

Our study has at least two limitations. Firstly, our results cannot be generalised to reflect parents' perceptions throughout the entire Limpopo Province in South Africa. Indeed, our participants were selected from a single rural area of Giyani Municipality. Our response to this limitation is simple. We had no intention to generalise the findings from the start. Our interest was to explore the views and opinions of selected parents regarding parental involvement in their children's education in specific rural-based schools. The second limitation is the deliberate exclusion of perceptions from students, administrators, and teachers. Note that there are plans to carry out a study that focuses on children's perceptions of their parental involvement.

Following the recommendations from parents, the first intervention workshops have been held to further empower the School Governing Body in parental involvement in the same schools in Giyani Municipality. Nevertheless, we recommend that further research on parental involvement in children's education in our digital age be carried out in other provinces of South Africa, with a particular focus on rural schools and the use of schools.

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