FAMILY MATTERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES IN A TITLE I SCHOOL WITH LOW PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

by

Janelle Dyanne Taylor

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

Liberty University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact that low parent involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school.

Although low parental involvement has not been clearly defined in research, for the purpose of this study, parental involvement was defined as the participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities. The theory which guided this study is Maslow’s theory of human motivation, which offered a hierarchy of needs. Using this theory helped identify and describe how teachers’ experience with low parental involvement in Title I schools impacts the needs of students. Using the hierarchy of needs theory helped locate where parents are in this hierarchy as well, according to their priorities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 13 participants, focus groups interviews, field notes, and observations. The data analysis was completed using Moustakas’ systematic steps to provide both textural and structural descriptions capturing the essence of teachers’ experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools. The results of this transcendental phenomenological study showed that the participants experienced significantly low parental involvement in these Title I schools which are rich in resources, with learning gaps still present despite additional funding. Participants shared that schools must be concerned with students’ needs which are not being met on the most basic physiological level. This study suggested other Title I schools and traditional elementary schools repeat this study for further research. Implications for various stakeholders were presented from the district-level leaders to community members. Educators shared that schools are important institutions, and so is family—the family matters.

Keywords: parental involvement, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Title I
Dedication

I want to start by thanking God for loving and keeping me through every mountain and valley; without Him, I am nothing. I want to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Mitchell and Dyanne Taylor. Their love, dedication, and support have been unwavering since they welcomed me into this world. I am grateful for the values they instilled in their children. I cannot begin to express the depths of my gratitude for all they have sacrificed so that I could have the best opportunity to be all I aspired. I pray God continues to bless them both abundantly for taking care of me the way he entrusted them to do. Mom and Dad, I am one blessed woman to have been raised by the two of you. I will never be able to repay the debt of all you both have sacrificed for me, but I will spend my life dedicating it to making sure you are proud.

To my late Grandmother, Mrs. Mary Alice Jackson I am incredibly blessed to have been raised so close to her; she gave me so much wisdom. I will never forget how important it has always been for me to take time to "get my lesson." I am a better person because of her. To my loving Grandmother, Mrs. Hazel Taylor, who has always encouraged my dreams and been so proud of me, I am grateful for your love and guidance, Granny. It has been my pleasure to make both of my beautiful grandmothers proud.

To my late, dear cousin Enaise Johnson-Henderson, who departed this life at the end of my doctoral journey, I also dedicate this to her life and legacy. She was a driving force in my life, and this degree meant so much to her. I miss her immensely and will honor her by continuing to journey on and lead an extraordinary life that reflects the love of our beautiful family. I know "Naisey," along with others who now reside in heaven, are with me always.

To my love, Mr. DeCorey Johnson, I thank you for your love, patience, understanding, and support; it made all the difference. To my loving sister, Mrs. Linette Tutt, her husband
Darren Sr., son, Darren Jr., and Daya, thank you all for bringing so much joy to my life and understanding the journey this has been for me by being there every step of the way. To my big brother, Gregory Taylor, and his beautiful children and grandchildren, Shauntay, Tiffany, Desiree, Tamika, and Manny, I am so proud of each of you and hope you always know how much I love you all. I pray you are always inspired to pursue your wildest dreams.

To my aunts, uncles, godparents, godchildren, cousins, friends, pastor, church family, students, and all the other beautiful people who have encouraged me along the way, thank you! May God bless every one of you for believing in me and speaking life into my hopes and dreams. There are different ways you have all touched my life, and I am forever grateful. To my future children: Mommy did this with you in mind; worship God, keep your faith strong and go after the desires of your heart! May we never forget that as long as you have God and the love of your family, the limits do not exist for the level of greatness you can achieve.

To my entire family, this degree is for all of us! If one of us makes it, we all do because we are one. I realize I am my ancestors’ wildest dreams, and their pain and suffering are not in vain. As I write this dedication, I am reminded of a song that has resonated with me from the pews of New Hope Baptist Church as a small child, and the words are as such: "We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord. Trusting in His Holy Word, He never failed me yet!" He truly has not.

_The marathon continues . . ._
Acknowledgements

I want to honor God once again for giving me all I needed to accomplish this monumental task of becoming a Doctor of Education. I also want to share my sincere appreciation to my committee members, especially Dr. Gail Collins, who helped me every step of the way. I believe God to be intentional, and I am so glad I was moved to ask Dr. Collins to be my chairperson, and she accepted it. Dr. Collins spent countless hours revising, providing feedback, encouragement, and guidance throughout this process in its entirety. Dr. Collins, thank you for bringing out the best in me and being as thorough as you have been.

Thank you to Liberty University for making this third and final degree that I have earned here a memorable experience that has helped mold me into the leader I was created to be. I consider it a blessing to have lasting relationships with many believers through the residential and online learning environment with fellow students and professors.

I extend my sincerest gratitude to this study's school district for their willingness to allow me to complete my research there. Without the help of administrators, leaders, and teachers, this would not be possible. To everyone who has taken part in this process, from encouragement to editing, I do not take it for granted, and I thank you.
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Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Standards of Learning (SOL)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Capturing the essence of the lived experiences of teachers in a Title I school with low parental involvement provided significant insight into the impact this phenomenon has on the needs of students. The depiction of these experiences is useful for all shareholders moving forward in academic school years to come. Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs was used as the theoretical lens for this study. This chapter provides information on the topic as well as the researcher. The central research question addressed in the study asked, What are the teachers’ experiences with low parental involvement in a Title I school? There is also a discussion of four sub-questions which all relate to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact that low parent involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school.

Background

According to Çağdaş et al. (2016), studies for parental involvement and family participation have been discussed in the United States since the 19th century with the majority of studies focused on how family involvement in education affects the child’s academic achievement positively. Sheppard (2009) found that “parental involvement was defined as good parenting at home, development of children’s academic self-concept and positive interaction of parents with school staff about their children’s progress with schoolwork” (p. 104). There has been a great deal of research performed on parental involvement in various academic settings (Park & Holloway, 2018). Many of these studies were conducted to understand why parents get involved in their child’s academics. Erol and Turhan (2018) shared, “Whereas the focus of most parental involvement research has been on examining its effects on student outcomes, the goal of
our study was to explore the determinants of parental involvement” (p. 2). There is a wealth of additional resources given to Title I schools within this study as well as the allocation of additional funds. Johnston and Martelli (2019) shared information about a literacy festival that was funded for unsupported students in Title I schools. The literacy festival featured a variety of diverse authors who presented hands-on workshops showcasing how their literary craft can enable students from Title I schools to engage with the authors and motivate students from diverse backgrounds to develop an excitement for reading. Despite having other resources in a Title I school, there are still unmet basic needs of students, and these are impacted when there is low parental involvement. For this study, I sought to capture the teachers’ perspectives of how students are impacted when there is low parental involvement in Title I schools.

**Historical Context**

The existing research indicates that the role parents play in their child’s education is a critical component of how likely they are to succeed when this need is met. Erol and Turhan (2018) shared, “Families, students and schools are bases for education and training and families need to contribute to the education and training of their children because they are one of the three basic pillars of education and training” (p. 2). Over time, there has been a significant increase in the research, which confirms that further understanding regarding the issue of low parental involvement is necessary. Sawyer (2015) shared the importance of parental involvement in student academics in both the general and special education populations, as well as approaches for improvement. Low parental involvement is a vital component of why students, at times, do not reach their full academic potential. Many of these studies show that there are barriers present in why many parents are not involved (Martin, 2015); however, there are no studies that examine this from the teacher perspective. Title I schools receive additional financial support and
resources. Even with the additional support, there was still a need to examine low parental involvement and how this impacts the students. Parental involvement in the education process is of paramount importance to the strategies applied to improve the quality of education (Lindberg & Demircan, 2013). Teachers in these academic institutional settings were best able to identify the many educational and developmental deficits that children encounter when these needs, according to Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs, are not met, and the significant impact it has.

**Social Context**

Low parental involvement affects students in a variety of ways. These students are not as likely to develop and sustain healthy relationships because their social skills may be impacted due to unmet needs (Erol & Turhan, 2018). Students may have trouble having a positive self-image if they have needs that are lacking attention. Social development is vital in the early childhood years. Isolation may occur if children feel that they do not belong in school or with a particular group of people, and that could further impede their learning. Students are not able to focus as they should when they have an empty stomach or are thinking about things that are beyond their control.

Park and Holloway (2018) “found support for a direct relationship between school factors and parental involvement, as well as an indirect path via parents’ perceptions of their role in promoting their involvement” (p. 1). These relationships should be considered when designing programs that foster parental involvement and the frequency with which they occur because the success of students is contingent upon them. This poor success of students may have the potential to create some of the biggest challenges in homes and communities. Students need the optimal opportunity to reach their maximum potential, and to do so, everyone needs to be accountable and take their rightful places in the lives of these children.
Theoretical Context

Using the perspective of Title I teachers, I captured the meaning of their lived experiences using Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs as the theoretical lens. There are needs an individual has that start as early as birth. These same needs are met only through the role a parent or guardian plays in the presence of that child's life. Children require care, and the optimal opportunity to reach their potential is by being cared for in a variety of ways. Maslow’s hierarchy is evident in how the quality of life for one is impacted when the needs are not met. Students in Title I schools often do not have their most basic need met, such as the physiological need mentioned in the first hierarchy. Maslow described basic needs as those such as breathing, food, water, and homeostasis. Students are impacted daily in Title I schools by these situations that could pose a threat to the success they attain or delay their achievement. The last and highest level of Maslow’s hierarchy is self-actualization. Harrigan and Lamport Commons (2015) shared that this level of the hierarchy is where an individual obtains morality, creativity, problem-solving, lack of prejudice, and acceptance of facts derived from the curriculum developed for schools. Gobin et al. (2012) shared that Maslow’s self-actualization should be the focal point in the system of education and that self-development should be one of the final goals of learning. If the remaining four lower levels are not achieved, this has an impact on what students are capable of learning, even if they are physically present in the classroom. “Previous research on parental involvement has emphasized the notion that parents’ beliefs about what they can and should do for their children is shaped by external factors including messages from the school” (Park & Holloway, 2018, p. 14).
Situation to Self

I am an elementary general education teacher, currently serving as a grade level chairperson, private tutor, school building data designee, and doctoral student at Liberty University School of Education. I am presently in my seventh year of teaching at a Title I school like the site schools in the study. I have worked at two Title I schools like these in the study and have seen a significant difference in the overall success of the students when parents are or are not involved. Some issues range from low student achievement to a poor self-image, which further diminishes the intrinsic motivation of students. I have a Christian worldview that has assisted in shaping my philosophy of education and what is needed for students to thrive. I am a second-grade teacher in the district where the site schools are located, but not at any of the schools in this study. I did not work directly with the participants but still took the necessary precautions throughout the study to ensure that I in no way influenced the participants.

Ontological Assumption

The ontological assumption of my study was solely based on embracing the idea that there are multiple realities concerning low parental involvement in a Title I school from the teacher’s perspective. This study was conducted with teachers in the elementary school setting who had experienced this phenomenon and presented more than one perspective and reality. Creswell and Poth (2018) shared, “Evidence of multiple realities includes the use of multiple forms of evidence in themes using the actual words of different individuals and presenting different perspectives” (p. 20). The means for collecting these realities included the use of individual interviews, focus groups, and observations that captured the essence of these lived experiences. I invited the selected participants to be co-researchers in the study based on the specific criteria. In conducting human research, Moustakas (1994) shared this method, and the
co-researcher assisted in having the reality of these phenomena described from their experiences. I reported on how these co-researchers viewed their experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

**Epistemological Assumption**

Olmstead (2013) stated, “The epistemological approach of social constructivism supports the notion that meaningful, positive interactions between home and school provide children with the understanding that education is important” (p. 29). This epistemological assumption guided my study as I sought information from participants in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I lessened the distance between myself and the teachers who have experienced the phenomenon of low parental involvement in the study and got as close as possible with participants in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I also collaborated with the participants in the study, spent time in the field with teachers, and became an insider in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Rhetorical Assumption**

Rhetorical assumption refers to the language I used and my writing structure, which followed the organization of this phenomenological study suggested by Moustakas (1994) to create the research manuscript (1994). The first chapter is an introduction, the second a review of literature, the third is methodology, the fourth presents the data, and the final chapter is the conclusion with the summary, implications, and outcomes. Creswell and Poth (2018) shared that the rhetorical assumptions are when the researcher uses terms and narrative which are specific to the qualitative approach. The composite description of textural and structural descriptions captured the essence of teachers experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools.

**Axiological Assumption**

The axiological assumption addresses the recognition of values I brought to the study, making them known, and how I positioned myself in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). “In a
qualitative study, the inquirers admit the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20). I have experienced low parental involvement in Title I schools serving as a teacher in these settings the past seven years. There have been observations of detrimental effects on students when there is low parental involvement when looking at the needs of students. Looking at this phenomenon through Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs as the theoretical lens provided all leaders in the school district, teachers, building administrators, students, parents, and community members with a vivid depiction of the need for an increase in engagement and provided strategies to do so. This study improves the future of students and their families serviced in these settings.

**Research Paradigm**

Guba and Lincoln (1994) defined a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs or a worldview approach that guides research or an investigation. I used the research paradigm of social constructivism. “In social constructivism, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 24). I studied the lived experiences of teachers in Title I schools with low parental involvement and the constructivist worldview manifested in this phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994). All experiences of these teachers who are co-researchers that experienced low parental involvement are subjective and formed through social construction. I recognized my background as a teacher in Title I schools shaped my interpretation of meanings others have with this phenomenon of low parental involvement.

The goal of this study was to rely as much as possible on the participant views of the situation rather than my own (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In social constructivism, the researcher is looking at the complexity of views and does not want to narrow the meaning of their perceptions
into categories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I interpreted the experiences of the participants to give subjective meanings and develop themes as I answered the research questions for the study. The social constructivism worldview assisted me in establishing a better understanding of my profession and the demographics of where I work in the mid-Atlantic United States (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The semi-structured interviews with each of the participants allowed their views and experiences with low parental involvement as it relates directly to the needs of the students in the classroom to become evident. I utilized interviews, focus groups, field notes, and observations as my data collection methods. As the human instrument for data collection and analysis in the study, it was imperative to bracket myself out of this study by setting aside my own experiences of low parental involvement in Title I schools to allow the essence of my participants’ lived experiences to be described (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I got as close as possible with the teachers who participated in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The motivation for this study came from my desire to have students reach their full potential to ensure their needs are met. To be given an optimal opportunity to succeed, students need to have their parents supporting them in and out of the classroom. It has been challenging to watch students miss enriching experiences because there may have been a parent who was not able to assist their child in time to meet the requirements for participation. I was excited about the greater understanding gained from the lived experiences of teachers as to why there is a need to have an increase in involvement. The demographics where I work are with students who face challenges each day that most adults may never experience. The students in these schools need to have every morsel of motivation they can acquire from their homes, schools, and communities. There are many times these students are not able to participate in enriching academic opportunities because they do not bring the required permission forms back to attend.
Other times, some students are engaged in sports where there is no support in the stands outside the support of their teacher. I try and attend functions for my students outside of school, so they are encouraged to continue to do their best at what they are passionate. Although I would like to fill the voids that many students have, I know that I cannot do it all alone. Attempting to assume the role of family members is often exhausting for a teacher, but the reality is for many students, teachers are the only constant support or source of love and encouragement they have. When this is the situation, which too often it is for me, I begin to develop the desire to try and compensate for their parents' absence when in reality this will never be, and I still struggle to learn how to be at peace when things are beyond my control.

**Problem Statement**

Although Title I schools receive a significant amount of additional funding and resources, there are still needs of students that are unmet due to low parental involvement. According to Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy, the continuation of having these various needs unmet could impede the academic successes of students. The consistent association of parents in the lives of students and relationships established between home and school are vital in how students achieve and develop (Maqouirk, 2015). Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs and motivation suggests that it is imperative parents are involved in their child’s educational practices. Barriers either are created or increased for children when parents are not concerned about their academics. The funding that is available in a Title I school will not alleviate all the obstacles and issues present in the learning environment. Teachers were able to provide a critical perspective which captured the essence of the experiences with low parental involvement in a Title I school in the mid-Atlantic United States. The learning and teaching process may be realized at school but starts and takes place in the home (Yurtseven & Altun, 2015). By taking into consideration the fact
that for students the first educators are indeed their families, families are viewed as being of
great importance regarding the success and development of the child (Aslan, 2016). Parental
involvement plays a critical role in academic achievement for students. While parental
involvement is vital in a student’s academics, there are policies in place for parents noting their
rights and obligations during a child’s academic journey (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).
Hall and Quinn (2014) found that teachers experienced various problems in their communication
with parents which hindered student success, limited dialogues with students, and prevented the
implementation of more effective teaching processes.

While there is quality research on parental involvement from various perspectives, there
is a limited amount of quality research on the experiences of teachers in Title I schools with low
parental involvement, which led to the need for this study. There is currently no specific
definition of low parental involvement. The U.S. Department of Education (2014) defined
parental involvement as the participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful
communication involving student academic learning and other school activities. Therefore, low
parental involvement is to be defined as the absence of these descriptors in the Title I site schools
within the mid-Atlantic United States. The problem that this study sought to understand is the
teacher perspective on low parental involvement in Title I schools and how the needs of these
students are impacted using Maslow’s theoretical lens.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact
that low parent involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school.
Parental involvement was defined as the participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful
communication involving student academic learning and other school activities (U.S.
Department of Education, 2014). Aspects of parental involvement include ensuring parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning, involved in decision-making committees that contribute to their child’s education, and that other activities are carried out from section 1118 of the parental involvement document set forth by the U.S. Department of Education (2014). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) described parental involvement as a parent’s role in the educational support and development of the child regarding academic learning and school activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The U.S. Department of Education (2007), shared, “Parent involvement occurs when parents and educators participate in regular two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities” (p. 2).

The theory that guided this study is Maslow’s (1970) theory of human motivation which offered a hierarchy of needs. Using this theory helped identify and describe how teachers’ experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools impacts the needs of their students and could locate where parents are in this hierarchy according to their priorities.

Significance of the Study

This transcendental phenomenological study describes the impact that low parental involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school. This section explains the theoretical, empirical, and practical significance this study has on the knowledge base of this issue.

Theoretical Significance

Viewing the significance of this study from a theoretical perspective contributed to the current research that exists. Theoretically, this study supported and contributed to the literature of Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs theory. The theoretical significance of using Maslow’s
hierarchy of needs further recognized and described the student needs that are not being met when there is low parental involvement. Despite the wealth of additional resources the school has to use each school year due to the allocation of Title I funding, low parental involvement still impacts the performance of many students. The perspective of teachers in Title I schools who have experienced this phenomenon was crucial in capturing the essence of this low parental involvement. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and motivation has been a theoretical lens used in other studies as well. The theoretical significance of using Maslow’s hierarchy of needs further recognizes and describes the needs that are not being met for students when there is low parental involvement.

**Empirical Significance**

This study added to the body of knowledge that is available about the phenomenon of low parental involvement. In a study conducted by Park and Holloway (2018), they found that the focus of most parental involvement research had been on examining its effects on student outcomes; the goal of their study was to explore the determinants of parental involvement. This transcendental phenomenological study provided a different perspective by using teachers and the setting of Title I schools. This research improved the implementation of programs for students who are serviced as well as their families. This study provided an opportunity to examine this phenomenon of low parental involvement in Title I schools from the teachers’ perspective. Strong engagement with school strengthens the students’ emotional ties felt toward family, school, college, and facilitates school success, trust, and socialization. On the contrary, students who do not have a strong engagement or parental involvement are more likely to become involved in crime (Yıldız & Kutlu, 2015). Capturing the impact that low parental
involvement has on the students in this setting confirmed findings of studies that used similar parameters and what other researchers have found.

**Practical Significance**

The practical significance of this study was that the parents are influential in how students perform and develop. “To ensure children’s academic success, support is needed from multiple systems, including parents and schools” (Taliaferro et al., 2009, p. 278). This approach allows building administrators, teachers, parents, community leaders as well as students to see the daily issues that arise when there is low involvement by parents in the day-to-day development of their child in an academic setting that is rich in resources. I believe Title I schools in the mid-Atlantic United States need to see just how profound the impact of low parent involvement is on the success of their students both academically and developmentally. This study could potentially improve the accreditation status of similar schools because it identifies unmet needs, how to meet them, and provides initiatives to assist parents in how to be more active in the educational experiences of their children. This study on low parental involvement from the perceptions of teachers and the impact this phenomenon has on students provides a clear picture of the challenges their child may be facing. The school environment will be positively impacted if there is an increase in parental involvement for students, teachers, and building administrators. This study also presents ways parents may be able to change the course of their involvement in academics to increase positive outcomes for students. This study could potentially improve the relationship parents have with school staff as well as their child. As Turney and Kai (2009) shared, “Parental involvement in children’s education is linked to academic success or behavioral success in elementary school” (p. 257). The benefit of this research impacts parents by giving them a vivid depiction of how they are vital to their child's
academic success. Even if a student has an exceptional teacher, parental involvement is the most critical factor in aiding a child's progress. All stakeholders benefit from this research. Students are being taught to be good citizens who are productive and competent in our ever-changing and competitive society.

There are various measures of success according to the current state of today’s education. Schools receive a passing status of accreditation according to the success of students on the state’s standardized testing that measures the mastery of the curriculum for the current school year. Erol and Turhan (2018) also argued that supporting parental involvement by providing additional opportunities for parents to be actively engaged at the school had a positive effect of increasing the level of student engagement to the school. Therefore, when these standards are regulated, many factors that attribute to how well or poorly a child performs must be considered. This research study may help bring about the necessary change to address the still prevalent issue of low parental involvement in Title I schools that have a hard time achieving the desired status of accreditation. This study assisted teachers in identifying how severe the deficits still are for the students they teach, the way they design their learning experiences, and the importance of how they create and sustain relationships with students and their families. The findings from this research could interest the superintendent and all hired personnel that make decisions for these schools and reveal what is necessary to meet the needs of the child and requirements desired for the state department of education.

Research Questions

Using Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs as a theoretical lens demonstrates how critical it is to have parents involved in a child’s educational experiences. The importance of having students’ needs met and having more enriching experiences in these educational institutions is
necessary. Still, when their most basic needs having food and shelter are not met, it makes success more difficult to attain. “It was also found that there was a significant and positive relationship between the parental involvement scale and the engagement to school scale” (Erol & Turhan, 2018, p. 1). Using the composed interview questions during individual interviews and focus groups along with field notes and observations as data collection tools, I obtained the information necessary which reflected components of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory. Each question reflected the levels of the hierarchy concerning how students’ needs are impacted when there is low parental involvement from the teacher’s perspective in Title I schools.

The central research question for this study asked, What are the teachers’ experiences with low parental involvement in a Title I school?

These are the sub-questions that guided this transcendental phenomenological study:

1. How do teachers in Title I schools describe the impact low parental involvement has on the physical needs of students?

   Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1970) depicts the physiological needs of an individual as the greatest needs of them all, which impacts reaching the next level of safety. This first level of the hierarchy refers to the basic needs being met: having food, sleep, and water as well as other nutritional needs required for human survival. I was interested in the impact on students when they are not receiving adequate food and water. This basic need is the greatest, and many students are not having this need met outside of the school. How teachers perceive this impact was captured with this question.

2. How do participants describe the impact low parental involvement has on the social needs of students?
When examining Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs, it was essential to consider the esteem and love/belonging levels of the hierarchy when looking at students socially. It was crucial to have this essence captured because this component can impact a child’s self-esteem and sense of belonging, which could drastically alter a child’s learning experiences or ability to focus on instruction. I was interested in having teachers provide a more in-depth look into this aspect of Maslow’s (1970) theory.

3. How do participants describe the impact low parental involvement has on the educational needs of students (supplies and being present for school activities)?

Safety is the second level of the hierarchy of needs pyramid by Maslow (1970). It is evident that an individual will be able to successfully acquire this level by having secured resources necessary to function within the capacity of a school. I was interested in providing a rich description of what this means for students who lack a sense of security because they are coming to school without the necessary materials. This research impacts students in a plethora of ways; by providing the essence of the experiences teachers have had, this research adds to the importance of taking a more in-depth look at these students and their family needs.

4. How do participants describe the impact low parental involvement has on student achievement?

Theodorou (2008) shared, “Increasingly, parental involvement has been promoted as a method to enhance student achievement” (p. 253). For this reason, it was essential to capture the essence of how student achievement is impacted when there is low parental involvement. Student achievement is a measure which drives instruction and the accreditation standing at these schools in the mid-Atlantic United States. Capturing the experiences teachers have had may assist in offering strategies, programs, and incentives that will address the needs of students
beyond funding, for both parents and students. In turn, this could assist in the successful
development of students, including their academics, and close any gaps they may have.

**Definitions**

1. *Parental Involvement* – Parental involvement is defined as the participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). According to another definition, engagement to the school is the quality and amount of psychological, cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to students' learning process, in-class and out-of-class academic and social activities, and attainment of successful learning outcomes (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015).

2. *Title I* – Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended, provides financial assistance to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Federal funds are currently allocated through four statutory formulas that are based primarily on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

**Summary**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact that low parental involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school. The impact that the phenomenon of low parental involvement and the absence of meaningful engagement between home and school has on meeting the needs of students was discussed from the perspectives of teachers, using Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs theory as the theoretical framework for the study. There was one central research question guiding this
study: What are the teachers’ experiences with low parental involvement in a Title I school in the mid-Atlantic United States? The problem was the phenomenon of low parental involvement in Title I schools; there was limited quality research on this phenomenon from teachers’ perspectives. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the meaning of these lived experiences with the phenomenon. The findings from this study add to the limited existing body of knowledge on low parental and describe the impact on students using Maslow’s hierarchy of needs as the theoretical lens. This study is a tool districts can use to increase the opportunities for engagement, implement strategies to bring positive change, and provide a visual of the impact of low parental involvement on students.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Parental involvement is vital to student success on a variety of platforms. As students receive consistent support throughout their academic career from parents and teachers, it is expected that this child will be equipped to make gains in their personal and academic development. According to Kaplan Toren and Seginer (2015), components such as the lack of family structure, attendance issues, and various types of absences were all factors that negatively influenced school achievement. The overall success of a student is measured in a variety of ways including, but not limited to assessments, behavior, social conduct, and work/study habits. In the state of Virginia, a significant assessment of a child’s academic success is measured by a standardized assessment tool. The child’s educational progress is established and determined by results on high-stakes tests, and many factors can affect productivity (Egalite, 2016).

A review of the literature was conducted to find the impact parental involvement has on student development in Title I schools with low parental involvement. “A key element in many of the most recent educational reform movements has been to increase parental involvement in the academic lives of children” (Shephard & Rose, 1995, p. 375). The gap in the literature is found in presenting teacher’s attitudes towards these experiences and how impactful this phenomenon is on meeting student needs for a successful development using Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs theory as the theoretical framework. Related literature is shared as well as a summary of the review of the literature pertinent to this study.

Theoretical Framework

As a teacher who has worked with children of all ages for decades, it is clear to me what the needs of students are and the detriment of not having those needs met. Without a doubt, I
believe we are born with the desire to thrive in every possible way to be productive members of society and to have a positive self-image. The theory guiding this study is Maslow’s (1970) theory of human motivation which offered a hierarchy of needs.

Maslow established a theory of human motivation in 1970, and from that theory emerged a pyramid used to address the needs of humans. Harrigan and Lamport Commons (2015) noted, “This hierarchy of needs was presented as a model of human motivation. In this model, higher needs will not be as motivating until lower needs are fulfilled” (p. 1). The hierarchy initially had five categories within which all motivational needs lie. According to Maslow’s original text, the first to the fifth levels in the pyramid are the physiological needs, the safety needs, the belongingness and love needs, the esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization (Maslow, 1970). The first two tiers of the hierarchy are the physiological and safety needs, and both are categorized as basic needs. The third tier is belongingness and love needs, the fourth tier is esteem needs, and both are classified as psychological needs. The final, highest level is called self-actualization and is categorized as self-fulfillment needs. “The quality of early living years is an important factor in shaping the individual hierarchy of a person. Therefore, if the satisfaction of basic needs is sufficient, then Maslow will describe the individual as a healthy and normal person” (Saeednia, 2009, p. 56).

In Maslow’s (1970) original work he shared that individuals are required to satisfy the lower level needs before they can advance towards meeting the needs of the higher levels in the hierarchy. Later, Maslow (1970) made a statement which clarified his initial beliefs that this was not an “all-or-none” phenomenon and shared that his primary beliefs may have provided “the false impression that a need must be satisfied 100 percent before the next need emerges” (p. 69). Every individual is proficient in moving up in this hierarchy, with hopes of attaining self-
actualization. On the other hand, some circumstances take place that may interrupt this process when there are basic needs which are not met. Gobin et al. (2012) shared that Maslow’s self-actualization level should be the focal point in the system of education. Gobin et al. also shared that self-development should be one of the final goals of learning. Maslow’s work indicated that the lower needs were more influential than the higher needs of the pyramid; the more the basic needs are fulfilled, the better the psychological health will be for the individual.

For this reason, when students’ basic needs are not met, their advancement on the hierarchy is halted. Parental involvement is an identified component of how students are assisted in thriving or having these needs met; therefore, low parental involvement needs to be addressed. For this study, I focused on the perception of teachers with low parental involvement, to give the essence of their experiences and how their students’ educational achievements are impacted. Needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs higher up. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are as follows: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.
This study utilized Maslow’s (1970) theory to guide the research and will help identify and describe how teachers’ experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools impact the needs of students. It is a necessity that parents are involved in their child’s needs daily which stretches beyond their home to the school as well. According to Çağdaş et. al. (2016), when families are involved in the educational processes of their children, not only does it help strengthen their toolkit, but they are also improving the lives of their children and helping the educational institutions to develop more positively as a whole.

Children need to feel a sense of support from all angles in their lives, which is why using Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is vital to identify the needs impacted by students when there is low parental involvement. Using this theory helped locate where parents are in this hierarchy as
well, according to their priorities. I believe that every individual is born with the innate desire of having their needs attended to and met. When referring to a child who needs assistance to do so, there is an issue with meeting these needs because they cannot reach them alone. There are shared strategies for bridging the gaps parents may have in understanding the significance of their involvement.

**Related Literature**

This study examined literature associated with Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs theory and documentation related to understanding the phenomenon of the study. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact that low parental involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school. In this section, there is a synthesis of the pertinent information related to this study and how the phenomenon of low parental involvement continues to develop. The related literature addresses the school, home of students, teachers, parents, and needs of students for their success.

**Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement is a topic that has been relevant since the 19th century and is still a trend today. It has been considered by many (Desimone, 1999). In the early 1980s, there was a great deal of research which was centered around the social contexts of education, focusing on the relationship between teachers and students. In most cases, the teachers were viewed more as leaders and not co-facilitators of a relationship. In these cases, there was inconclusive evidence of the importance of student–teacher relationships (Minuchin & Shapiro, 1983). Jeynes (2007) published a meta-analysis focusing on the link between parent involvement and urban student academic achievement and among his foci were parental expectations, parental style, communication, and homework.
Parental involvement can encompass a variety of actions, such as assisting with homework, attending school functions, discussing academic expectations, and communicating with faculty and staff at their child’s school (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015). Cheatham and Ostrosky (2011) shared in their study that parents have a great deal to contribute to their child’s learning. Parents must make meaningful contributions to their children in all their educational processes. Various educational researchers have found evidence showing the significance and importance of parental involvement in children’s education (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Huang & Mason, 2008; Lewis et al., 2011; Patel & Stevens, 2010). There have been multiple studies that have been conducted to explore the influence of parental involvement in the educational system (Apple, 2013; Crichlow, 2013; H. Kim & Page, 2013; Kurtulmus, 2016; Leithwood & Patrician, 2015).

The Educate America Act, also known as Goals 2000, was signed into law in 1994 by former president Bill Clinton and these standards-based goals were set by the U.S. Congress to be met by the new millennium (Bennett, 2007). The Goals 2000 legislation expressed the need for schools to promote partnerships with parents, which would enhance students’ social, emotional, and academic growth (Bennett, 2007). These goals were in place to ensure that not some but all students are able to reach their full potential. The second federal effort that addressed parental involvement was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). One tenet of this legislation was that all school districts in the United States must have parent-involvement policies (NCLB, 2002). Despite the initiatives in place, Malone (2015) noted that the socioeconomic status was a challenge for parental involvement in many public schools; however, Malone stated that educators can find creative ways to help parents overcome these challenges. Therefore, there is a need to continue to look at new ways of increasing
involvement and opportunities for parents. Young et al. (2013) argued that parental involvement boosts a child’s perceived level of competence and helps to internalize the value of an education and their academic performance.

Parental involvement is vital to student success on a variety of platforms. Dove et al. (2015) stated that parental involvement extends beyond home practices into children’s classrooms. Hill and Tyson (2009) found that two of the greatest impacts on a child’s academic success stem from parents having high expectations for their child, which they express through encouragement, and from parents having school support. Parental involvement would improve student achievement, parent–teacher relationships, teacher morale, and school climate (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). As students receive consistent support throughout their academic career, they are better equipped to achieve the guidance required to make academic progress. According to Kaplan Toren and Seginer (2015), components such as the lack of family structure, attendance issues, and various types of absences were all factors that negatively influenced school achievement. The perception of parental involvement and student success varies for all stakeholders (Maquirk, 2015). As a result, the validity of all findings associated with the parental participation is threatened because there is not a standard guideline to measure how much or how little a parent’s commitment constitutes being an active parent. The research by Kaplan Toren and Seginer (2015) fully supports the belief that parental involvement and student achievement are intimately intertwined.

When parents go above and beyond just putting their child on the bus to attend school (or what is seen as the most basic duties) and ensure the needs of the child are met socially, academically, emotionally, and physically, that child is more prone to experience fewer challenges than someone who does not have this support in place. Caspe et al. (2007) shared,
The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, mandated that elementary schools give parents the tools they need to support their children’s learning in the home, communicate regularly with families about children’s academic progress, provide opportunities for family workshops, and offer parents chances to engage in parent leadership activities at the school site. (p. 361)

An article by DePlanty et al. (2007) added,

This law recognizes that parents are their child’s first and most important teacher, and for students to succeed in school, parents must participate actively in their child’s academic experience. Parents need to become involved early and stay involved throughout the school years. (p. 364)

Parents and teachers must be active in the lives of children; it will take the unwavering efforts of both sets of people to assist students as they develop and move forward in life. Not every student will come from a home where there is the ideal family structure, financial stability, and even transportation to improve mobility, but students should feel that they have the same chances at success as someone who does. Gonida and Cortina (2014) determined that schools with students who have regular parental interaction maintained higher achievement scores on standardized end-of-year tests in comparison to those students who did not have regular parental interaction.

Many issues may impact parents’ ability to be involved in their child’s education, but it does not remove the impact of the need on students when they are not. There are a variety of ways parents can be involved that will have a profound impact on early learning. Dove et al. (2015) shared a few enriching activities parents take part in with their child such as singing, drawing, reciting, game playing, shared book reading, rhyming, and storytelling, that have shown
to improve children’s language and literacy outcomes in areas of print knowledge as early as the preschool years. There was a need to make parents aware of the following: what can seem like meaningless play is profound in effectively promoting knowledge. These activities should be encouraged for daily participation. Other research suggested that parental involvement may take many methods and be influenced by multiple factors (Dove et al., 2015). These forms might include but are not limited to aiding with class work, guest speaking in class, and organizing school functions.

Increasing the awareness of parents as to the vital role they play in their child’s education is imperative to have a chance of raising the amount of involvement received throughout the school year. Teachers cannot be the only individuals who are active in the life of a student. Some duties are required of staff and administration as well to positively influence the needed rise in the trend of low parental involvement within schools.

Factors such as parental awareness of school activities and parents’ ability to identify with the values espoused by the school and with the direction of the principal’s leadership were found to be related to parental involvement. It appears that these factors helped parents feel appreciated and welcomed by the principal as partners in the education process, consequently contributing to the development of positive parental involvement. (Fisher & Kostelitz, 2015, p. 300)

Although there are various predictors of how well a student will perform, parents and families being involved are most impactful. Machen et al. (2005) shared that parents are an important part of the process of improving schools, as is allowing parents to have an effective voice in decision making in the school. Building administrators in Tran’s (2014) study also shared that students who have active parents in their education have positive attitudes towards
their academic and extracurricular activities. “The level of parent-school involvement is a better predictor of grades than are standardized test scores. That finding strongly suggests that parent involvement is a vital component of any student’s education” (DePlany et al., 2007, p. 361). Since parental involvement is critical to the development of students, the initiative must always be taken by the school and professionals to seek the opening of communication and interaction of parents.

The National Parent Teacher Association (2011) shared that practices that have been most successful are for teachers to actively seek parents for involvement opportunities rather than wait for parents to step in and assume those positions. There should be an established list of opportunities for parents to be able to contribute to fostering a positive learning community. Parents should also be provided with a handbook that will assist them in being more familiar with policies, practices, and events that all impact their child, as well as a contact list of people who will serve as a source if any additional resources are needed. Teachers are vital in creating a wealth of choices for parents to be involved in the learning processes of their child. According to Caspe et al. (2007), family involvement is more likely to occur when schools are committed to it.

Assumptions are made at times about what parents do or do not know, as well as what they will and will not do for their child concerning their academics. There is a need to also assess the needs of parents in order to increase their toolkit to assist their children in moving forward in their academics. Instead of teachers and building leaders being reactive with low parental involvement, they must be proactive and seek ways to improve the phenomenon in not only Title I schools, but all schools to increase student success.
Teachers that implement effective strategies for parental involvement have reported that the relationship between families and the school have improved teacher morale and school climate. Increased parent involvement in their child’s education was noted to improve parental confidence, satisfaction towards the school as well as increased interest. However, many times there is a chasm between best practices for parental involvement that is found in the literature and the practices implemented in the schools. (Hornby, 2011, p. 25)

**Student Achievement**

Student achievement is critical, and it will take all stakeholders to be active in exciting and sustaining the belief in students that they are not alone, that they can, and will succeed. Student achievement is tied to parental involvement, and when participation is low, there is an increase in the detriment it could have on how well a student achieves academically. When educators rigorously teach students for mastery of academic standards, it is challenging to achieve 100% success if subgroups of students enter the classroom already disadvantaged from the start (Golombok & Tasker, 2015). Low parental involvement has disadvantages because at times students are inadequately prepared for school, resulting in one of the main reasons they may not excel. When students do not perform well academically or present other challenges, there is a greater need for instructional support to meet the needs of students. In many cases because of poor achievement, remediation or Response to Intervention (RTI) is necessary. The students in need of remediation in specific objectives should have an individualized educational plan to remediate and reteach by their teacher. As part of remediation, homework is differentiated as well, and there are times students are not completing homework or bringing back forms that discuss the progress of the students. Parents must be active in communicating
with the teacher and school to address educational issues that are able to be strengthened in the home. Low parental involvement further hinders growth for students many times because they have decreased motivation due to the lack of accountability at home. Other times, parents may not be intellectually equipped to assist students with their coursework and do not ask for clarification due to embarrassment (Martin, 2015). Many students are not performing according to standards even though they are present at school every day, which clearly articulates that there is something else needed to meet these students’ needs who are capable of learning but may not be producing a standard measure of success. These various gaps in achievement can also be attributed to parents lacking the tools needed to help their child due to possibly being undereducated and not able to grasp concepts without professional assistance as mentioned previously. Parents are at times in need of assistance on how to advocate for their child in hopes of improving the relationships between home and school.

Student achievement is essential in education because it is a measure of mastery of the skills needed to function in our society (Egalite, 2016). There are standards provided by the state which serve as the framework for school curriculum designed to equip students with the necessary tools to be global learners and good citizens able to thrive in our diverse, competitive world. However, education starts at home. When parents are involved in their child/children’s education, accountability is increased, and students are more likely to perform with the intent to thrive.

According to Leisy-Stosich (2017), recent studies suggested that principals also play a vital role in how to communicate and implement the standards for teachers’ practice and should provide teachers with support and professional learning opportunities. Leaders must take initiative to meet the needs of students and their families as well and should foster positive
relationships between home and school, as well as creating programs essential for success and to increase parental involvement. When the proper programs are in place for parents, they will be able to advocate for and participate in the academic success of their child. According to Thomasson (2006), there is a significant relationship that exists between parental involvement and student achievement within the elementary school climate and the level of performance of the students which are measured by standards of learning. Graduation rates and self-image will increase, and dropout rates and attendance issues will likely decrease.

In the research by Teigen (2009), she speaks to how various forms of data are used to make decisions about schools within a division. For example, assessments are not the only method to measure which decisions will be executed for a school. There are other forms of data like the demographics of the students that are serviced, socioeconomic status, geographic location, needs of the physical buildings within the district, and academic materials. Decision making is driven by and includes the beliefs of the leaders within the structure and how they view the school and needs of the students. Examining student achievement is crucial to this study because this is significantly impacted by low parental involvement. Many of the characteristics mentioned in this study are the reason some schools in the district where the site school is located are failing to improve the trend of parental involvement. This transcendental phenomenological study addresses the teachers’ experiences with low parental involvement in a Title I school in the mid-Atlantic United States. Characteristics mentioned in the study about the site school for Teigen’s study were similar to the Title I schools for this study in the mid-Atlantic United States.
Standards of Learning

Kelly (2011) found that the stakes are high for students, teachers, administrators, and school districts regarding funding, graduation rates, and job placement for teachers and administrators because they are all tied to student performance. Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments are a measure of student success and achievement starting at third grade and includes an entire academic year of learning at the end of a calendar school year. Virginia’s SOL are criterion-referenced tests and administered beginning in Grade 3 of primary school (Malone, 2015). Third-grade students are now assessed in the content areas of math and reading. Fourth graders are evaluated in math, reading, and Virginia studies. Finally, fifth graders are measured according to their performance in math, reading, and sciences SOL scores. Kaplan Toren and Seginer’s (2015) research determined that schools with students who were attending school on a regular basis maintained higher achievement scores in comparison to those who did not. The study was conducted in two different elementary schools that serviced students of the same demographics. Schools from each of the studies undertaken by Kaplan Toren and Seginer (2015) were failing and had not met accreditation standards.

The system of accountability and support is deeply rooted in the SOL adopted by the state of Virginia in opposition to Common Core State Standards (Malone, 2015). Leisy-Stosich (2017) shared that standards are envisioned to foster excellence and fairness in student learning. This is done by institutionalizing high expectations for all students while permitting educators to have professional discretion in determining how students will meet these goals (Leisy-Stosich, 2017). Most often, you may find teachers who are required to teach these mandated state standards and do not feel they have freedom in how the material is assessed. The scores of students who have struggled with meeting standards and were identified as students who
received special education services with accommodations are factored in with the overall ratings of the school. Virginia has invested in the SOLs since 1995, exceeding $250 million, and is continuously supported by the Board of Education (Malone, 2015).

Many issues are present when reviewing standardized testing. There is the element of differentiation present in instruction, and when it is time for students to test, students are then tested on a standardized scale. Within the past couple of years, there has been a change in how the test is programmed (Scott & Suh, 2015). Students are now assessed using an analysis that is adaptive to their performance. If a student answers the test question correctly, the rigor of the next question will increase. The contrary happens when the subject is answered incorrectly. After a student answers the test question inaccurately, they are then given a lower level question. The change in test format may be a significant advancement in the regard of students who do not develop or have testing anxiety. For a child who presents challenges when testing, they are likely to become frustrated during the assessment and ultimately may not do as well which will impact their score. There is growing interest in just how useful these new adaptive tests are in comparison to the version of the past.

Thomasson (2006) provides research about various perceptions of what the climate of the school is like and how this impacts the achievement of students on a high stakes test. Testing is vital to the study because it refers to the feelings of teachers and students towards the school’s climate. This research was conducted in a mid-Atlantic state which uses high stakes tests; thus, it was essential to see how perceptions relative to how stakeholders feel about the school also impact learning and achievement.
Barriers to Involvement

Although parental involvement has been widely recognized as an important dimension of education, there are a variety of barriers that hinder the process (Kurtulmus, 2016). Often times for many families, there are barriers to their level of involvement in their child’s academic progress. Some of these barriers include diversity, parent perceptions, teacher perceptions, attendance issues, volunteer opportunities, extenuating circumstances, communication, and relationship between home and school.

Diversity

Some argued that race exhibits an independent and adverse effect on Black parents’ involvement by undermining Black parents’ ability to comply with institutional standards for participation (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Caucasian Americans typically have more significant resources with which to negotiate the educational system than their working-class African-American counterparts, who are expected to potentially live in more difficult neighborhoods and interact with lower quality schools using fewer valued resources (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). Ogbu’s (2003) belief that the measure by which other ethnicities are evaluated cannot be that of the White middle class. African Americans, particularly, tell the story of difficult and unfair times in their history with American schools (Cross, 2003).

Parent Perceptions

According to Robbins and Searby (2013), when parents positively perceive invitations for involvement from teachers, they are very likely to increase their involvement in their child’s education. Parental perception is instrumental in understanding how they are taking in what is presented to them and their children. The view and attitudes of parents are a factor to consider when examining their level of involvement. Parents want to see leadership maintaining a safe
school concerning discipline and bullying (Stockdale et al., 2002). There is strong support in the literature that suggests parents perceive guidance counselors as playing a critical role in guiding students throughout their educational experiences (Dean, 1989; Lapan et al., 2001). Weaver et al. (2002) found that 94% of parents believe that sex education should be taught in school and is essential to the health of school-age children. The perception of parents about health education is that the experiences are likely to lead to positive behavioral decision-making, decreasing the risk of engaging in problem behaviors, and increasing academic attachment and pro-social interactions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). A study conducted by Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) examined the connection between schools, parents, and how it influenced the parents’ involvement. Results showed that parents’ perceptions of school operations and teacher motivation had the most significant effect on the parents’ role and involvement with their child’s school.

**Teacher Perceptions**

Teachers operate as socializing agents and offer students social and intellectual experiences by instilling in them values, providing motivation, addressing their need to belong, and helping them to develop a social identity (Davis, 2003). The effectiveness of communication as well as instruction is greatly shaped by the perceptions of teachers. Thomas and Oldfather (1997) argued that some teachers view themselves as the “keepers” of knowledge, deciding who gets to know what based on the teachers’ perceptions of who is ready for what information. It is important to ensure teachers are equipped to foster positive relationships with their students and parents. The willingness of teachers will have a significant impact on how successful these attempts are.
Teacher Training

Hindin (2010) shared that “the strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and home are the specific school programs and teacher practices that encourage or guide parental involvement” (p. 76). Although the role of the teacher is a vital aspect of parental involvement, there is not much known about how teachers formulate expectations and understandings of practices to increase parental engagement in the school. The research found that just like parents, teachers have memories of the educational experiences and interactions that their parents had when they attended school, which helped to shape their views on what the role of the teacher is concerning parental involvement. These views can be changed to make a positive impact on parents and students, who are serviced by these teachers. There is a need to make necessary revisions in the coursework and teacher preparation programs available to preservice and continuing education for teachers. “If professionals do exhibit some negative attitudes toward parents, then it is hardly surprising since the majority of them would have received little or no input on working with parents on their initial training courses or as a part of any subsequent in-service training” (Hornby, 2011, p. 6). DeHass (2005) shared that teacher preparation programs across the nation identified that less than half of the state’s programs included a parental involvement component.

Consequently, this lack of teacher preparation and learning on how to effectively deal with and involve parents in the school leads to minimal parent involvement (DeHass, 2005). There are many teachers who, at times, do not feel comfortable speaking directly to parents as well as physically interacting with them, and this could be the result of a lack of preparation or skillset. School districts should focus a great deal of their professional development on increasing the teacher toolkit and doing a needs assessment. There are many times the social
capacities of the teachers are not adequately assessed and need to be addressed in hopes of making them more effective in their communication and relationships with students and their families. Communication is vital in education, from teaching students to fostering positive relationships with parents. Teachers will be more effective in planning and student success when communication improves. Better communication will impact conferences and meetings as well as relationships. Sound communication strategies afford the chance to understand the needs of all stakeholders that otherwise would likely not be addressed and would embitter the family-school partnership (DeHass, 2005, p. 66).

**Economic Barriers**

Socioeconomic status is one of the most significant barriers that exists in parental involvement. A study by Smith (2006) showed that parental involvement is often linked to socioeconomic status, with parent involvement being lower in low-income communities. Another study by Thurston and Navarrete (2003) discussed the impact of poverty on children’s development and learning. The Thurston and Navarrete study looked at low-income rural mothers in the four states of Kansas, Tennessee, Texas, and Florida. They investigated the differences that existed with the involvement of mothers and their children. The two groups studied were with students who had special needs and those who were considered general education students. There were 263 women from economically deprived families who participated in the study. The findings were astonishing: 54% of the rural, financially poor mothers reported that they have at least one child with special needs. Approximately all mothers from the study responded that they wanted to be more involved with their children’s studies and school activities, but they shared that they did not feel comfortable around the teachers. Parents considered economically weak are substantially less likely to be involved in school-led activities
and far less likely to meet with educators due to this sense of intimidation and past negative experiences (Machen et al., 2005, p. 15).

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) hypothesized that the socioeconomic difference in attainment resulted from differences in parental involvement in children’s education, exhibited continuously through parent enthusiasm and a positive parenting style. Most often, society and the media place blame on lower-income households for children’s academic difficulties or failures without considering all circumstances. Research has shown that the success of students and schools as a whole is critical to minority and low-income parents. The desire for parents to be involved is genuine even though their contact with the school is not always in the same manner as middle-class White families (Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, 2011). Jacobs and Harvey (2005) noted that a student’s family background is widely recognized as the most significant important contributor to success in school. Students’ home environments have a significant impact on their performance in school, and biases should be removed as to why parents are or are not active and involved. There are parents who have jobs and work long hours and sometimes they hold two positions to make ends meet. Other parents do not have a job, but having more than one child and possibly no transportation sometimes makes them too tired to sit down at night to help with homework. There are some cases where these parents need assistance with the material the students are working on in school in hopes of being able to assist them better. Some parents are working and cannot afford to miss work to participate in school functions to make sure they can provide for their families. Many parents of at-risk students are unable to commit to taking part in school activities due to battling their challenges with substance or chemical abuse. “Most would agree that students who come from low-income and single-parent homes have significantly less school success than students from high
socioeconomic and intact families” (Jacobs & Harvey, 2005, p. 432). “In low-income schools, there is a need to acknowledge and encourage even the smallest efforts made by parents to support their children’s education” (Smith, 2006, p. 54).

The Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA (2011) reported that many minority and low-income parents recalled their own school experiences and equated it to their children’s experiences, which were not always pleasant. Hango (2007) shared that children with parents who have financial resources are at an advantage because their parents are very involved in the schools and know how to negotiate the educational system. Hornby and Lafaele’s (2011) research shared that schools versus the working-class family more genuinely value middle-class parents. The White, middle-class parents, who are primarily involved, are perceived by teachers and staff as the “good parents.” The study shared that these parents are usually married and heterosexual. Research conducted by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) suggested that socioeconomic status does not always indicate why parents decide to become involved.

**Attendance Issues**

Kaplan Toren and Seginer (2015) shared that students who are frequently absent without proper documentation can be attributed to the lack of parental involvement. The trends in attendance have a negative impact on learning and success on high-stakes testing such as the Virginia SOLs. Students who had attendance issues demonstrated excessive absences due to less supportive families, temporary homelessness, inability to pay fees, and also domestic misunderstandings (Kaplan Toren & Seginer, 2015). Schools must consider researching policies and possible opt-out options in regard to testing for students who have attendance issues, which could have a negative impact on the student success and accreditation status of the school. In
turn, failing to resolve the problems of poor attendance can negatively influence student performance in the classroom.

Attendance issues can lead to a subpar achievement on standardized assessments and low evaluations of teachers. Hammonds (2017) expressed that if teacher education programs address concerns of teaching in urban schools, this could minimize the discomfort for teaching candidates. Many teachers may choose not to work in a school or district due to the low performance of the school and what they see as a place where they lack support from parents (McElroy, 2013). It is imperative parents are advocates for their child at all capacities. Parents should be held highly accountable for aspects of poor attendance that are unresolved. There should be a limit on the occurrences of unexcused absences (e.g., notes that merely state a child was out sick). Parents must be held accountable to address issues such as attendance. It is also imperative the secretary who accepts the letters of absence if any are given as well as making the phone calls is seeking to create and sustain meaningful relationships with these parents in hopes of increasing the amount of engagement between home and school (Richardson et al., 2019). If a child is not present, they cannot learn. Attendance is imperative, and not holding parents and students accountable could potentially be a threat to the overall success of the individual student and school.

Low Self-Esteem

There are many times parents have low self-esteem and do not feel comfortable addressing their child’s teachers and school staff. Parents who do not feel comfortable in these settings are limited in how they can help their children and will most often avoid contact with the school. “For some parents, lack of confidence in helping their children maybe because the language of instruction is not their first language and they feel they cannot communicate
effectively with teachers” (Hornby, 2011, p. 4). Thus, they do not become involved in school and activities with their children.

How parents views their skill level is instrumental in their thinking concerning the definition of success for their children. “Parents’ help with homework particularly seems to decline as children’s subject matter moves closer to or supersedes parents’ knowledge” (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005, p. 115). Therefore, many parents refuse to help and allow their children to avoid the task or struggle with the material. These instances where parents grow more uncomfortable with assisting their child with homework and projects are especially true as the child advances primarily to middle school and from middle school to high school academics.

**Domestic Circumstances**

Hornby (2011) shared that family circumstances can also prevent parental involvement in a child’s academic journey. Because of the ever-changing structure of families, such as increased working hours, two parents are working, increasing divorce rate, and re-partnered families, parents are dealing with higher stress and less time and money to devote to involvement in education. Both single-parent households and large families do not become involved at times because of the responsibilities of caring for their families. The National Parent Teacher Association (2011) shared that many parents feel that they have nothing of value to contribute to the school or their child’s classroom. It is imperative schools do as much as possible to change the perspective of parents if they do not feel that they are valuable, considering parents are the most helpful, intricate piece to their child’s success. Also, some parents may have a criminal record, and are uneasy about becoming involved in the school where volunteers are asked for fingerprints or records. There are times when parents avoid these situations out of love and not wanting to humiliate their child or having to face judgment. Some educators and school
personnel have their feelings or biases and often do nothing to improve this feeling of uneasiness for these parents if they feel parents lack in some way. The National Parent Teacher Association (2011) also found that parents with disabilities have a tough time knowing how to become involved and contributing to the school. DePlanty et al.’s (2007) research suggested that the resources provided through social networking of parents play an integral part in parents becoming involved in their child/children’s education. If this social network is inadequate, parents will likely tend to be less involved in their child’s education. It was also noted in this research that the financial resources of the parent are indicators that they will be more or less involved with their child’s education. Lastly, this research further noted there was the correlation of parents’ educational level, especially the mother’s educational level, which will determine the level of parental involvement in school activities such as conferences or Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

**Extenuating Circumstances**

In a wealth of societies today, there’s an increase in the number of couples who have racially diverse households, which is a contributing factor in parental involvement (Ross-Aseme, 2012). “According to the United States Census Bureau Data, (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), 38 million of the United States population is foreign-born and non-U.S. citizens. This means that approximately 12% of the United States population is immigrants” (Ozturk, 2013, p. 13). Decade after decade, our country has become more diverse, and there is a melting pot of cultures and customs in the mid-Atlantic United States where the study took place. Students who are of the minority and have spoken different languages could have more issues with parents being active due to the language barriers that often exist. Cultural and language differences are also contributing factors to low parental involvement due to the frustration of not being understood or
their children not being able to interpret for the teacher or parent during a parent/teacher conference. “In general, minorities are less involved, less represented, and less informed, and are less likely to have access to resources as well as more likely to have problems associated with language, transport, communication, and childcare” (Hornby, 2011, pp. 7–8). “Tapping into the experiences of English Language Learners (ELL) parents in their own lives about school and literacy is a resource educators can use to increase parental involvement” (Panferov, 2010, p. 106). It is necessary for teachers and building administrators to have programs in place to assist these parents and students in increasing their comfort level in engagement. Extending the opportunity for families to be involved is critical no matter the barriers that exist.

There are extenuating circumstances that should always be considered when discussing how few or frequent a parent is deemed to be involved in the academic progress of their child. A few of those circumstances could be attributed to the additional needs of a child during the school day (behavior issues, meetings with the special education team, and called meetings with teachers). Many parents may be absent from specific activities due to their home life and the difficulties of working and not being able to come to school for their child. According to the study conducted by Ross-Aseme (2012), many parents at the Title I inner-city school where the study took place had many parents who lacked transportation and at times missed mandatory meetings because they did not have a way to attend, even though they may have wished to be actively involved in their child’s school. It is crucial for school districts to look closely at their family-based involvement programs. There is a need for collaborative programs here in USA and other countries as well. According to Baek and Bullock (2015), in these family-based involvement programs, there is collaboration among families, schools, and communities which is vital to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors. Baek and Bullock also shared that this
can be attained by encouraging supportive family dealings, increasing positive parenting skills, promoting adequate parental supervision, providing parents with information, and urging consistency of discipline in the home. Ultimately, school administration and staff should not assume a parent does not want to be involved because they are not physically present, therefore removing judgment and prejudices in their absence.

“Most would agree that students who come from low-income and single parent homes have significantly less school success than students from high socio-economic and intact families” (Jacobs & Harvey, 2005, p. 432). Students who come from homes where stability and support are lacking could explain the difficulty some parents have to be physically present at a child’s school, especially if they are raising multiple children in the home. On the other hand, all efforts of parents should be celebrated, especially in Title I schools. “In low-income schools, there is a need to acknowledge and encourage even the smallest efforts made by parents to support their children’s education” (Smith, 2006, p. 54).

**Relationships between School and Home**

Family and schools can be the most important influences in the lives of children, and the relationships between the two can help determine the children’s development (Nzinga-Johnson et al., 2009). Bauch and Goldring (1995) found that the need for parental relationships does not wane as the student gets older. In fact, the necessity of a viable relationship between home and school in rural secondary schools is possibly even more salient because of other factors such as family dissolution rates, many two-parent working families, and unique sociological pressures on children (Amato, 2005; Bauch & Goldring, 1995; Hampton et al., 1998; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Lightfoot (1978) argued that the two entities of home and school are frequently and naturally in dispute because of the roles each plays and the differences in parent-child and
teacher-child relationships. She went further to say in the findings that this was not altogether a bad thing, but could actually be considered beneficial, as it makes children more “malleable and responsive to a changing world” (Lightfoot, 1978, p. 39). Litwak and Meyer (1974) offered the idea of balancing the duties between home and school. School personnel, according to their conceptualization, have the responsibility of providing formal educational experiences, while the family should be responsible for informal learning and motivational tasks. The context the teachers create is believed to affect the students’ perceptions of learning. The beliefs teachers carry into the classroom about schooling, knowledge, and learning may influence their level of involvement with the class, the instructional material, and particularly with the students (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). From either perspective, the emotional connections between students and caring, non-parental adults are important factors in the students’ academic performance (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

According to Griffin and Galassi (2010), students’ chance of achieving academically increases when there is collaboration between parents and school staff in the areas of academics, attendance, and truancy. The notion that parental involvement influences educational success is of such importance that education leaders have required schools to develop and implement parent-involvement plans that can be used to help promote parental involvement (Kurtulmus, 2016). Teachers can be instrumental when it comes to parental involvement. Therefore, collaboration between parents and teachers is a necessity (Epstein, 2011; Hill & Tyson; 2009; Jeynes, 2010). Teachers have the job of ensuring that their students have the necessary skills to function outside of school (Miller et al., 2013). To be more successful in doing so, it is important for teachers to seek and build relationships with families and communities (Jeynes, 2012). Meaningful interaction between parents and teachers stems from teachers’ approach
when it comes to fostering relationships that are perceived as positive by parents (Patel & Stevens, 2010; Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013).

**Strategies for Improvement**

Martin (2015) presented a phenomenological case study that addresses the barriers present that keep parents from being involved in their children’s academics. This perspective is essential to the study because it addresses the same concerns that are present in the mid-Atlantic school district in this study. Martin suggested a wealth of strategies to increase the level of parental involvement as well as identifying the issues themselves. These same strategies, if implemented in the school district in the study or others with similar problems, could likely make a positive change. As many of the elementary schools in the site’s school district have a history of struggling with maintaining full accreditation, there needs to be more programs developed that are geared toward increasing the opportunities to encourage and sustain parental involvement in the school (Benner et al., 2016). Parental involvement includes the teachers’ participation with parents as well. Teachers must be able to articulate to parents what is needed in a manner which is inviting. What does this mean for teachers who are just entering the profession? New teachers enter the profession every year, and for this reason, along with others, there must be adequate professional development opportunities to ensure these relationships between parents and teachers are established.

Teacher education must provide a foundation of effective communication skills to encourage a thoughtful interchange respective of each stakeholder’s background. Sound communication strategies afford the chance to understand the needs of all stakeholders that otherwise would likely not be addressed and would embitter the family-school partnership. (DeHass, 2005, p. 66)
Volunteering Opportunities

Schools should start before the school year begins to secure programs and initiatives to develop partnerships with various stakeholders. To do so, the school should complete a needs assessment survey for the families they service. After this, they should use the data to establish what direction they should take when securing meaningful partnerships and initiatives. These programs and activities should be focused mainly on allowing the parents and all school staff members to meet and establish a positive rapport. These activities should be directed at the social aspect and have a climate of peace and relaxation, removing the barriers that would decrease the amount of interaction between parents and staff. It should be an environment that is welcoming for all parties, with the students and parents as a focal point. If these programs are not in place, this is an additional barrier created that will result in a decrease in opportunities for involvement. Parents need to receive correspondence about these programs, in a timely manner to allow adequate planning time to attend these programs. The programs are an excellent opportunity for communication to begin. These social activities where everyone can become acquainted help lay the foundation for building home-school partnerships (Wherry, 2009). The school plays an essential role in attaining parents’ involvement in the school. “The National Parent Teacher Association (2011) recommends that parent/family involvement programs welcome parents as volunteer partners in schools and that these programs invite parents to act as full partners in making decisions that affect children and families” (National Parent Teacher Association, 2012, p. 3). Parents must be recognized as partners to teachers because they genuinely are a driving force of how students will excel. When schools take the initiative to build meaningful partnerships with parents, respond to their concerns, and allow parents to share in decision-making, barriers are removed in time.
Communication

The schools that have generated successful parental involvement “start with the belief that student success is a shared interest of both school and family, envision parents are partners in the learning process, and then identify concrete ways that partnership can be activated” (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005, p. 2). Communication is a dynamic component in the success of parental involvement. Jackson High School in Manassas, Virginia, implemented an interactive voice mail where parents can hear messages from teachers (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005, p. 2). At Hawk Elementary School, located in the southeastern United States, teachers and administrators call parents to remind and invite them to all school events, and this is common for many school districts. Schools will also send home some correspondence on paper newsletters. In some places, it is frowned upon to do so, but teachers will also give out their cell phone numbers to increase the opportunities for parents to communicate. There are times parents may not use email and prefer to notify via cell phone. Many applications can now be downloaded on cell phones and other electronic devices that also give them their cell phone numbers so the parents can communicate with teachers. Parents are then able to have real-time pictures of activities their child is involved in within the classroom. Through these various applications, the parents and teachers can send messages and contact each other at any time. Also, weekly reports are posted, both in English and Spanish. “Parental involvement contributes to building partnership between schools and children’s educational success. Parents bring the social psychological capital to schools” (Zhou, 2014, p. 5). These are just a few of many examples of communication. “The openness of the school environment, the caring attitude of school staff, positive interpersonal relationships, a simple smile, a friendly gesture, and respect lead parents to become partners in the challenging
task of educating their children” (Y. Kim, 2009, p. 88). Olmstead’s (2013) research noted that increased communication between the parent and the teacher causes more engagement that ultimately leads to more significant student achievement. It is going to take the schools' willingness to develop strategies for communication personalized to fit their particular school’s population, demographics, and needs.

**Summary**

This chapter provided a synthesis or focused summary of what is currently known about low parental involvement, Title I resources, and the needs of students according to Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs. The problem was that while Title I schools receive a significant amount of additional funding and resources, there are still needs of students which are unmet and influenced by low parental involvement. When basic needs are met, but essential needs are not, they cannot reach the next level in the hierarchy to achieve self-actualization. Low parental involvement is a critical issue when considering the education of children and how parental involvement assists their developmental need in both negative and positive ways. Çağdaş et al. (2016) shared the positive effects family involvement has on the achievement of students. In turn, the lack of participation has a negative impact on how students achieve and their perceptions of learning.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact that low parental involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school. Parental involvement is defined as the participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). According to Gunuc and Kuzu (2015), engagement to the school is the quality and amount of psychological, cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to students' learning process, in-class and out-of-class academic and social activities, and attainment of successful learning outcomes. This study provides additional information about the impact that low parental involvement has from a teacher’s perspective, using the teacher’s perspective through the lens of Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs, giving new insight to correct the issues still present, with a goal of promoting student success and improving relationships between the parents and the teachers. All data were collected using interviews, focus groups, and observations. This chapter discusses the design of the study, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, role of researcher, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations of this phenomenological study.

Design

A transcendental phenomenological design was utilized and most appropriate for this study due to the nature of this research. This study focused on capturing the essence of the lived experiences of my co-researchers with the phenomenon of low parental involvement rather than on my interpretation of the experiences of the co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994). I explored the phenomenon of low parental involvement with Title I teachers to capture the essence of the lived
experiences and how it impacts the students, using Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs as the theoretical lens. The transcendental phenomenological design was most appropriate for this qualitative study because the data collected came from in-depth interviews with teachers. Creswell and Poth (2018) shared that qualitative research provides the opportunity to understand and describe the personal life experiences of participants intimately. The interviews used a variety of open-ended questioning. This approach assisted me as I explored the phenomenon of low parental involvement with a group of individuals who have experienced it. I was interested in describing the lived experiences of participants with low parental involvement in Title I schools in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I first bracketed myself out of the study as much as possible to focus on the lived experiences with the phenomenon of low parental involvement.

Additionally, I followed systematic procedures to collect data and summarize “what” and “how” the participants experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I then analyzed the data by reducing the information into themes derived from the identification of significant statements. To capture the essence of the lived experiences, I developed textural and structural descriptions of what and how participants experienced low parental involvement in Title I schools.

**Research Questions**

The central research question for this study asked, What are the teachers’ experiences with low parental involvement in a Title I school?

These are the sub-questions that guided this transcendental phenomenological study:

1. How do teachers in Title I schools describe the impact low parental involvement has on the physical needs of students?
2. How do participants describe the impact low parental involvement has on the social needs of students?

3. How do participants describe the impact low parental involvement has on the educational needs of students (supplies and being present for school activities)?

4. How do participants describe the impact low parental involvement has on student achievement?

**Setting**

The school system where the study took place is in a large city school district in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This district services approximately 25,000 students with a diverse mix of socioeconomic backgrounds. This study was conducted in two of the 26 elementary schools in this inner-city district. These two schools are public, Title I, traditional elementary schools (K–5) with a current enrollment of 683 students at Leap Elementary (pseudonym) and 369 students at Pleasants Elementary (pseudonym). Leap Elementary student population is 96% African American, 2% Caucasian, and the remaining 2% identify as other. At Pleasants Elementary, the student population is 93% African American, 4% Caucasian, 2% Hispanic, and the remaining identify as other. At both study sites, 100% of this schools’ population receive free breakfast and lunch.

These schools were selected because there is a wealth of additional resources provided through Title I funds and yet there is still low parental involvement, which is paramount for student success. These schools mirror the school where I work and is the reason for selection as well as to remain objective throughout the study. The leadership teams at both of these schools are composed of a principal and two assistant principals. Each site includes teachers from
Grades K–2 and 3–5 who have experienced the phenomenon of low parental involvement in these Title I schools.

**Participants**

I used purposeful sampling for this study. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select participants based on purposeful criteria (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The selection criteria for this study was teachers who have taught for a minimum of three consecutive years in the Title I school site and have experienced low parental involvement. Although it was not part of the selection criteria, I sought to include participants of various ethnicity, ages, and gender. However, most participants were females due to the majority of staffed teachers in all schools within the district being female. This transcendental phenomenological study used a total of 13 participants, six from one site and seven from the other site from Grades K–5. This sample size allowed me to attain a thick, rich description of the teachers’ lived experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools.

**Procedures**

I planned and organized an efficient execution for this study to meet all requirements. Prior to beginning this study, I completed an expert review of my data collection tools. Two of the experts were two building administrators in a Title I school, and the third expert was a teacher who has taught in Title I schools for 22 years. All experts who reviewed the data collection tools were interested in this study and the results it would bring the field of education and our school district. One of the administrators completed a qualitative research study this past year. I gained insight into the amount of time to complete the interview and how to present my research questions. There were no recommended changes to the questions; there was just a discussion about my thought process for creating the questions for the research question asked. I
secured an approval letter for permission to conduct this research from the superintendent of the district where the site schools are located. I placed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval letter for this study in Appendix A. As the first step after acquiring IRB approval, I completed a pilot study. This pilot study consisted of four individuals who met the same criteria as my co-researchers for the study but did not become participants in this study. Their feedback helped me identify what changes I needed to make in my interview skills or with the data collection tools to make the questions or instructions regarding the observations clear to the participants. I used teachers from my school to complete this pilot study. Creswell and Poth (2018) shared that pilot testing will assist the researcher in checking the content validity of the study. Although the data collected from this pilot study were not included in my data analysis, this pilot study was a critical procedure for this qualitative study.

After completing the pilot study, I sent the potential participants the recruitment letter (Appendix B). I acquired the names and email addresses of the potential participants from the building administrators. The potential participants of the study were selected after I reviewed a brief screening survey (Appendix C). The first three questions verified that they teach in a Title I school, the grade level they instruct, and if they have experienced low parental involvement. The fourth, fifth, and sixth questions specified the ethnicity, age, and gender of the potential participant. The seventh and final question asked if they were willing to participate in the study. When I identified those who qualified, I emailed them with further information about the study which can be found in Appendix D. I also included in Appendix D an email to those who were not selected to participate in the study. Polkinghorne (2005) recommended a sample size of 5–25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. This transcendental phenomenological study used a total of 13 participants, six teachers from one site and seven from the other in
Grades K–5. This sample size provided a thick, rich description of the lived experiences. Through email, the participants and I discussed a date that was best for their interview as well as potential times they were available for the focus group session. Then, I scheduled and began conducting individual interviews with the teachers from various grade levels of kindergarten through fifth grade to collect data on the phenomenon of low parental involvement. After individual interviews were completed, the focus group interviews began. Observations were conducted as well to gain greater insight about the phenomenon of low parental involvement.

**The Researcher’s Role**

As the human instrument for data collection and analysis in this study, it was imperative to bracket myself out of this study. Moustakas (1994) referred to this process as *epoche*; it was done by setting aside my own experiences in a Reflexive Journal of low parental involvement in Title I schools to allow the essence of my participants’ lived experiences to be described and examined impartially (see Reflexive Journal in Appendix I). I am a teacher in the district where I conducted this research, but I did not teach at either of the site schools in this study. I did not work with participants but still took the necessary precautions throughout the study to avoid influencing them.

The motivation for this study came from my desire to have students reach their full potential to ensure their needs are met. To be given an optimal opportunity to succeed, all students need to have their parents supporting them in and out of the classroom. I am excited about the greater understanding gained from the lived experiences of teachers as to why there needs to be an increase in parental involvement. I work in an area where students face challenges each day that most adults may never experience. The students in these schools need to have every morsel of motivation they can acquire. At times it is exhausting for teachers to be
the only constant in the life of their students and their only source of love. When this is the situation, teachers develop the desire to try and compensate for their parents' absence when in reality this will never be, and they struggle to learn how to be at peace when things are beyond their control.

**Data Collection**

This study consisted of individual interviews, focus groups, and observations as methods of collection. The interviews with participants were audiotaped using a recording application on an iPod device. In the event that the iPod did not work correctly, there was an additional Apple device available to complete the recordings. Upon the completion of the interviews, I transcribed each interview.

**Interviews**

The researcher interviewed participants using in-depth, semi-structured questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that interviews are a conventional data collection method in phenomenology, often multiple interviews with the same individuals. I conducted one personal interview with each co-researcher at a time via Zoom. The interviews were open-ended, and field notes were recorded for further review (see Appendix F for Interview Questions). The teachers had an opportunity to elaborate in any way they felt was vital to the study. I asked Questions 1–5 to the co-researchers during their interview using Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs to establish what compromises parental involvement from their experiences.

1. In the school setting, what do you feel parental involvement is composed of?
2. In what ways have parents shown they feel comfortable being involved in their child’s education?
3. How important do you believe parental involvement is to the lives of your students?
4. What activities or opportunities are available for parents to be involved at the school?

5. Do you believe there should be more programs or opportunities for parents to be involved? If so, what are they?

The theoretical lens of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1970) depicts the physiological needs of an individual is the greatest need of them all and impacts reaching the next level of safety. Questions 6–8 were useful to collect information on the teachers’ experiences that are related to the phenomenon of low parental involvement and the impact it has on the physical needs of students.

6. In what ways are the physical needs of students impacted when there is low parental involvement? Please provide some examples.

7. Where are places at school or programs available that are able to help children with their physical needs that are not being met by parents? In what ways are these programs helpful or not helpful?

8. Who is the personnel at school that is available to help children with their physical needs that are not being met by parents? How often are they available? Are students and parents aware these personnel are available?

It is imperative to consider the esteem and love/belonging levels of the hierarchy when looking at students socially using Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs. Questions 9–11 captured the essence of the impact low parental involvement has on the social needs of students in Title I schools.

9. In what ways are the social needs of students impacted when there is low parental involvement? Please provide some examples.
10. What programs in the school are available to students who are not having their social needs met due to low parental involvement? In what ways have these programs been helpful or not?

11. In what other ways do you see low parental involvement impacting the social needs of students in school?

Additionally, there were questions asked that spoke to the impact on the educational needs of Title I students as a result of low parental involvement. Utilizing Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs, I explored the importance of parental involvement to the safety of students by having the necessary tools to secure resources that allow a student to function in school adequately. Questions 12–15 assisted in improving my understanding of teachers’ experiences.

12. How has low parental involvement impacted the educational needs of your students?

Please provide some examples.

13. What ways do parents advocate for their child and his/her needs academically?

14. If students are not given the adequate materials for school from home, how does this impact the learning process for them?

15. In what ways have parents exhibited an understanding of how critical their role is for being involved in their child’s education?

Finally, Questions 16–20 asked teachers to depict the impact of this phenomenon of low parental involvement in Title I schools on student achievement. Student achievement is a measure that is monitored closely and determines the accreditation status of schools. Therefore, it was essential to depict how achievement is affected by the lack of parental involvement, which is a crucial component of Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy. Having the teachers give their account of
experiences could also further close gaps in achievement because of the additional strategies this study provided for students and their families to be successful.

16. How does low parental involvement impact student achievement? Please provide some examples.

17. What activities are in place for parents to be part of student achievement ceremonies or enrichment opportunities? In what way have these opportunities been successful? Are there any additional programs you see as a good fit to strengthen the engagement?

18. Please share ways you believe low parental involvement impacts student achievement both positively and negatively?

19. How significant is the impact of low parental involvement in the overall achievement of students? Why is this so?

20. What would you like to add that I may not have asked or that you may be thinking in relation to what we have discussed today?

Observations

The observations for the study occurred randomly throughout the data collection periods. They were conducted at site schools during the school’s Title I reading and math nights virtually, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings with faculty, staff, parents, students, and community members virtually, conferences that were both virtual and in-person, as well as distribution days for technology. Some of the observations did occur virtually because of virtually learning measure put in place during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. I acquired permission from those in charge of the events I observed before attending, both virtually and in person. I went to the site schools and observed virtually the interactions that were taking place with parental involvement where there was an opportunity given to have engagement between parents and
teachers regarding student behavior and academic performance. There were also Title I reading and math nights where parent participation was observed with teachers, parents, and students. “Observation, particularly participant observation, has been used in a variety of disciplines as a tool for collecting data about people, processes, and cultures in qualitative research” (Kawulich, 2005, p. 1.). These observations were scheduled, and I was a non-participant observer in each of the activities or meetings conducted as they occurred where parent participation was expected. These observations happened at least twice a month and lasted a minimum of 20 minutes, depending on the event. The Observation Protocol can be found in Appendix H of the Appendices. During this time, I observed the conversations as well as the interactions between parents, teachers, and students. Although this represented the population of parents who are involved, this also provided insight as to what information or engagement activities parents are missing out on when they are not participating in these events.

Field notes were kept, providing me with descriptive notes on occurrences. “Field notes contain what the researcher has seen and heard” (Ary et al., 2006, p. 477). It was necessary for me to review the observation entries. “Field notes are defined as the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 118–119). These notes addressed the mood of the room during the observation. The demeanor of participants was captured in these notes as well and were influential in capturing the essence of their experiences.

Focus Groups

The focus groups consisted of two small groups of six or seven co-researchers who answered standardized open-ended questions. Krueger and Casey (2015) shared essential information for focus group interviewing. They stated that the first few minutes of the focus
groups are vital to the success for the overall session. I created an environment for my co-
researchers that was thoughtful, with a permissive atmosphere, providing the ground rules and
setting the tone for the session (Krueger & Casey, 2015). These focus groups allowed me to
gather more information about the experiences of teachers with low parental involvement. These
sessions were conducted in a relaxed environment where there were opportunities for
participants to elaborate on their experiences as well as the experiences of others. Maslow’s
(1970) hierarchy of needs theory was the theoretical lens used to guide this research and these
sessions. The focus group interviews provided more information about the experiences of the
co-researchers regarding Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs theory. The following questions
were asked to capture the essence of the lived experiences of these teachers with low parental
involvement in a Title I school (see Appendix G for Focus Group Questions).

Standardized open-ended focus group questions:

1. What does parental involvement look like in a school or classroom setting?
2. How does your school provide parents with opportunities to participate in their child’s
   educational journey?
3. How are these programs mentioned in the previous question effective?
4. In what ways socially are students impacted when there is low parental involvement?
5. In what ways physically are students impacted when there is low parental involvement?
6. In what ways are the educational needs of students impacted when there is low parental
   involvement?
7. How is student achievement impacted when there is low parental involvement?
8. Is there anything anyone would like to add about low parental involvement in a Title I
   school and the impact it has on students that we have not talked about yet?
Data Analysis

I utilized Moustakas’ (1994) steps as the primary model for data analysis. This phenomenological study was more than a descriptive study; I also sought to give the meaning of the lived experiences. For this qualitative study, there were multiple tools I used to analyze and organize the various data collected in the study. The data collection tools were individual interviews, focus groups, and observations. The data were held and evaluated in a manner that further promoted the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The information was kept in a way for easy access to have the data analyzed. Electronic documents were kept in folders on a password-protected external hard drive. Notes and documents that were part of the data collection process were stored in the same safe as the external hard drive and are protected by a password that no one else has access to.

Epoche

I started by gathering the essence of the experiences of the co-researchers in the study with the phenomenon of low parental involvement in Title I schools. As the human instrument for data collection and analysis in this study, it was imperative to bracket my biases. Moustakas (1994) referred to this process as *epoche*; it was done by setting aside my own experiences of low parental involvement in Title I schools to allow the essence of my participants’ lived experiences to be described while refraining from judgment. Moustakas (1994) cited Husserl’s emphasis on the crucial importance of returning to self to capture the essence of these experiences as they have happened, remaining objective. I kept a reflexive journal (Appendix I) to have a running account of my biases as they occurred throughout the study.
Phenomenological Reduction

Moustakas (1994) stated that qualitative data analysis allows the researcher to reduce the data after careful analysis and provide a combination of textual and structural descriptions of the experiences. This process makes it real for those who read the research. The systematic procedures I followed allowed me to move from narrow units of analysis to broader units, and on to detailed descriptions to summarize what and how teachers experienced low parental involvement (Moustakas, 1994).

I used phenomenological reduction as the strategy for data analysis, following *epoche*. This process is where I described just what I saw, external and internal, the relationship between phenomenon and self. I considered the phenomenon of low parental involvement with an open mind, removing all biases, as I viewed the various teacher perspectives. Moustakas (1994) shared three essential questions to ask when themes are being identified before the confirmation of each when the data are being reviewed: “(a) is the theme complete; (b) are the themes compatible with the transcript; and (c) if they are incompatible or irrelevant, should they be deleted” (p. 121). Moustakas (1994) further cited Husserl’s view of this reflective process, referring to it as a visual ray that changes from experience to experience, with new perceptions as they appear and disappear. As the researcher, this process required me to use textural language as I looked and described and repeated the process multiple times while always referencing textural qualities (Moustakas, 1994). Horizontalization is another dimension of phenomenological reduction acquired by identifying significant statements from the data collected and treating every comment as having equal value (Moustakas, 1994). This process continued to eliminate repetitive statements, questions, and other statements which were irrelevant to the study after the horizons and themes from the study were produced (Moustakas,
1994). From this process, there was textural descriptions from each co-researcher and groups that occurred (Moustakas, 1994). The outcome was a textural description of the phenomenon of low parental involvement in Title I schools from the teachers’ perspective.

After phenomenological reduction was completed, the next step was imaginative variation. The imaginative variation process required imaginations and intuition to reflect the relationship or themes, pertinent to the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Describing the essential structures of low parental involvement in Title I schools was a major task in this process (Moustakas, 1994). The themes derived from the textual description were used to construct the structural epitome of the teachers’ experiences obtained from phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994).

The synthesis of meanings and essences was the final step in phenomenological reduction. Here is where the textural and structural descriptions were combined to capture the essence of the experiences as a whole, although the essence of these experiences was never wholly exhausted (Moustakas, 1994). There was an emphasis on space and time when the phenomenon was observed (Moustakas, 1994). Here is where the essence, or final truth, of low parental involvement in Title I schools from the teachers’ perspective was captured.

Descriptions and Essence

Next, I developed a list of statements that were significant in the study and created a list of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements. After the accounts were gathered, I grouped them into thematic units. Coding and recoding were necessary to describe and capture the essence of the phenomenon of low parental involvement (Moustakas, 1994). The collection process was essential because all data derived assisted the researcher in presenting themes within the research that were practical for readers to both understand and implement in any ways they saw fit.
Textural descriptions were then provided of the experiences accompanied by verbatim answers from the transcribed interviews (Moustakas, 1994). Then there was a structural description provided of how the encounters happened. Moustakas shared that “structural descriptions will provide a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience, the themes, and qualities” (p. 135). The structural description became evident to me through imaginative variation, as I engaged in the reflection and analysis of the essences of these experiences. Finally, I incorporated both the textural and structural descriptions to capture the essence of the experience of telling the reader “what” and “how” the co-researchers experienced this phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

**Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of the study was established in various ways. Lincoln and Guba (1985) shared the criteria and techniques for evaluating the worth of a study using credibility, dependability, and confirmability. There was prolonged engagement between myself and the co-researchers. Prolonged engagement assisted in building a positive rapport one needed to produce the most valid results (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There was a relationship of trust established, which resulted in the co-researchers’ willingness to be transparent and share the most information about what was taking place when I observed the parents with the teachers. Persistent observations of the participants increased the validity of the study and provided me with more substantial reports rather than those that are conducted at only one point in time. I built trust with the participants and sought to understand the culture and continuously checked for any misinformation that arose from myself or the co-researchers in the study. This process also increased the trustworthiness of the study because I made decisions appropriate to the
research and participant observation with long-term contact which further created and sustained the trustworthiness of this study.

**Credibility**

I addressed my position, as the primary researcher, and any other biases present in the study that influenced the analysis to clarify researcher bias through the Reflexive Journal that can be found in Appendix I. Creswell and Poth (2018) articulated that the goal of qualitative research is to promote understanding. It was imperative that I, as the researcher, conveyed my beliefs to avoid the adverse effect of them not being clearly articulated to participants, which would have decreased the validity of the research.

I had prolonged engagement with participants and completed member checks and triangulation. Using triangulation of the various data sources validated findings and confirmed their credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation occurred through the use of multiple data sources that included face-to-face interviews, field notes, observations, and focus groups to ensure that constructs existed and were validated in more than one method (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This triangulation of data collection provided a deeper understanding and shed adequate light on the phenomenon, which could not be achieved through one single data collection method (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A member check was completed after I had transcribed the interviews and focus group data; this further confirmed that I had not in any way altered the perspectives of the teachers. Member checks were a crucial component when confirming the study. I asked the participants to review the transcriptions of their interviews and their part of the focus group to check for accuracy (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Memoing occurred as the data were reviewed during analysis. Then there was a transcription created for each discussion. The transcriptions were thoroughly examined to
identify themes and statements of significance, which captured the essence of the experiences. This information was coded after a thick, rich description was provided. This process increased the study’s credibility. “Memoing is the act of recording reflective notes or memos during data collection and analysis” (Groenewald, 2008, p. 1). These memos made a substantial contribution to this qualitative research and established the credibility of the study. According to Moustakas (1994) when the researcher provides details when describing a case or when writing about themes, it is a thick, rich description. This thick, rich description allows the readers to establish this study’s transferability, because they have been given a description of the setting and co-researchers of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Dependability and Confirmability**

To establish dependability, it was necessary for me to bracket my biases from the start of research and when necessary throughout the study to remain objective (Moustakas, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that the study needs to be accurate and consistent in order to be dependable. The triangulation of data increased this study’s dependability by using multiple and different sources and methods to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I took accurate notes of all data collected in the study. Concerning dependability, there were external audits to assess the accuracy of the process. An external audit is when an external consultant who has no connection to the study examines the process and product of the account, ensuring the information is accurate (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Transferability**

I included teachers in various grade levels to produce a rich, thick description and to also enable replication. According to Moustakas (1994) when the researcher provides details when describing a case or when writing about themes, it is a thick, rich description. This thick, rich
description allows the readers to establish this study’s transferability, because they have been
given a description of the setting and co-researchers of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Making sure that the context of this study could be transferred to a new situation or case and be
replicated not only provided the readers of the study with information that allows them to move
the data to a new location, but proved that what occurred within the study was accurate and not
embellished or fabricated by the researcher (Patton, 2015). This study presented readers with
opportunities for further research in other aspects and demographics from multiple perspectives.
To assist with the transferability of this study, an audit trail was completed, organizing events
chronologically as they occurred in the study using transparent descriptions of the research steps
from the start of the study, development, and to the reporting of findings (Lincoln & Guba,
1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also claimed that audit trails are vital in assuring the
authenticity of both the researcher and the completed work. An audit trail documents each of the
steps taken to complete the study with all personal biases aside (see Appendix J for Audit Trail).

**Ethical Considerations**

I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the study
followed the necessary guidelines to conduct research that was safe and ethical (Creswell &
Poth, 2018). The IRB approval was secured before collecting any data from either the school
district or site schools. Consent of participants in the form of signed documents was gathered
before the study began. These consent forms allowed the co-researchers to withdraw from the
study at any time, shared the background information of the study and procedures, listed
associated risks, benefits, and compensation, and promised to respect and protect the privacy of
participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
The issue of justice was addressed by letting the participants know that they should not expect to benefit from the study and that there would not be any evidence of researcher bias present in the final document. I ensured every participant was given equal opportunities in the study. There was also no element of favoritism where the comments on one participant were held in higher regard than those of another (Krueger, 2002). Some precautions were carefully considered to be confident there was no manipulation within any of the formed relationships.

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that data be stored in a secure location where the researcher is attentive and aware regarding when and how the data will be used. Data for this study were stored in a variety of ways. Transcripts, observation notes, and other notes were on a computer and stored in different locations such as the computer’s internal hard drive, external hard drive, and printed transcriptions with multiple copies at various locations. Multiple copies and saved files were necessary to have in the event one method was destroyed. A recording device of high quality was used with adequate equipment needed for a successful recording whenever I needed to tape any type of data collection session. I had a list of all information gathered and remained consistent with the updating of the material. The data will be disposed of using a shredder to shred all paper documents, and computer programs will be used to delete electronic records after three years.

Pseudonyms were used for the site school and participants to ensure the confidentiality of the co-researchers. There were additional precautions taken to avoid influencing participants, which was first established by bracketing.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research plan for this transcendental phenomenological study that sought to describe the experiences of teachers with low parental involvement in Title I
schools. I shared the research design for the study. A description of the site schools was provided as well as the participants or co-researchers. The procedures section provided the steps I followed to conduct this study. As the “human instrument” of this research study, I defined my role as the researcher. Rigorous and varied data collection techniques were shared in the data collection section. A rationale was provided for each type of data analysis procedure I utilized. Lastly, I offered how I established and sustained trustworthiness and ethical considerations for this study to capture the essence of the lived experiences of teachers or co-researchers in the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact that low parental involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school. The theory guiding this study was Maslow's (1970) theory of human motivation which offered a hierarchy of needs. Using this theory helped identify and describe how teachers' experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools impacted their students' needs and could locate where parents are in this hierarchy according to their priorities.

During this research with 13 co-researchers, I was able to capture the essence of these teachers' lived experiences with low parental involvement. These educators consisted of 10 women and three men, holding positions in kindergarten through fifth grade at two Title I schools in the same district. The data collection method was Moustakas' (1994) approach to transcendental phenomenology; I collected, organized, analyzed, and interpreted the data using his model.

This chapter starts with reviewing the research guiding this study, and then a description of each of the co-researchers is provided. Pseudonyms are used for the schools and the participants to protect their identities. The research questions guiding this study and the themes that emerged from the co-researchers' experiences are outlined in this chapter. This transcendental phenomenological study sought to bring to life the teachers’ lived experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools and to allow their stories to be told.

Participants

Creswell and Poth (2018) shared that qualitative research provides the opportunity to understand and describe participants' personal life experiences intimately. The 13 participants in
the study are introduced in this chapter. There was a total of 10 women and three men who participated in the study. Purposeful sampling was used for this study and allowed the researcher to select participants based on purposeful criteria (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All of the co-researchers work in one of the two Title I elementary schools in the same district. They have all experienced low parental involvement. Additionally, the researcher followed systematic procedures to collect data and summarize "what" and "how" the participants experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). To provide a vivid description and capture the essence of the co-researchers’ experiences, I included a description of each with a direct quotation from our interview. All quotations from participants are presented verbatim, which includes verbal ticks and grammatical errors in speech and writing to accurately depict the participants’ voices.

Maria

Maria is a kindergarten teacher at Leap Elementary. She has been teaching for four years and has had experience with low parental involvement each year. Maria was very enthused to share her experiences with me throughout the interview, even after a tiresome day at work as she shared:

I cannot begin to tell you how happy I am to be able to talk about low parental involvement. This is a conversation that needs to be had and there is ears that need to be listening to what we have to say, as teachers. This impacts our experience negatively in most ways.

Leah

Leah has been teaching a wide range of elementary grade levels within her 11-year teaching career. She currently teaches first grade at Leap Elementary and shares her love for this grade level. Leah was exhausted on the day of the interview but seemed very excited as we
moved into the questions after introducing ourselves to one another. Leah shared in her individual interview,

Janelle I seen your study and I was hype to know that there is great someone else cares about this matter. I wonder if people ever really sit and think about accountability being held elsewhere. Do they even consider other factors in the learning process and how much of an issue low parental involvement still is?

Brooke

Brooke is a second-grade teacher at Leap Elementary and has been in education for 10 years. Four of those years she has spent in elementary education in Title I schools. Brooke was very energetic and concerned with how the school year was going for me as well. She started by asking about my mental health and how teachers are not as nurtured as we should be. Brooke’s take on low parental involvement was very clear from the start; in her individual interview she shared:

We have so much on our plates as teachers. I mean seriously though. We wear many hats that most times. We should not have to as much as we do, and for this reason we reach burnout very fast. Low parental involvement in school settings like our schools where they are already so many challenges, this mess wears on your mental health all while the demand for things to be done increases. It is a shame.

Olivia

Olivia is a third-grade teacher at Leap Elementary and has been teaching for six years. She has a passion for learning that exudes from her when she speaks about the students and what they need in education. She also elaborated on her desire to go into leadership. During her candid interview, Olivia shared,
There is not enough being done to make sure everyone is held responsible for their part in the lives of our students and their education. It may seem like it is, but that is not true. Even though I take great pride in the work that I do, some of what I have to endure I should not even have to. Everything is not our fault as teachers, I want to believe that we all do the best that we can. It just seems that us teachers, are always to blame for everything. There is something that needs to be done to increase the level of support parents need give, like a requirement. We have many great opportunities here in the city, but there is clearly still something missing.

**Justine**

Justine has been teaching for 16 years and currently teaches fourth grade. She has been at Leap Elementary for nine out of her 16 years. She is dedicated and devoted to her students. During a discussion in a focus group, Justine commented,

How do I walk away? Even though at times I feel that I’m barely hanging on, I cannot walk away. There is not enough being done to put things in place for the students who are in desperate need of support not only in the school academics, but in their homes. There is not enough being done as far as advocacy is concerned for the students in my opinion. It takes more than us as teachers but at times we are not clear about the fact that we can only do so much we just take on the extra and keep going. I give my all but some things have to change. This is why some great teachers leave, mentally it is draining.

**Dominic**

Dominic is a male educator and has been teaching for the past four years. He is very transparent about his experiences thus far. He teaches fifth grade at Leap Elementary School. During the interview, Dominic shared,
The demand for male educators is great but some people are not equipped for what it takes to be a male teacher in the settings. At times I feel that we are used as behavior support specialist and often times are not able to thoroughly teach lessons because we are called in other areas of the school for the physical support if necessary. Even if it is a scare tactic. It is exhausting even as a man to be in this profession and to see the needs that are going unresolved. It’s very hard to see these young boys not have a father figure, and parents not active, they don’t have great relationships with me for starters because of their lack of trust. It’s hard for these children and I especially see it in the males.

Something has to be done to help them. I picked the right field although at times it’s extremely overwhelming.

**Stephanie**

Stephanie has worked in two different school divisions, but all schools have been Title I elementary schools in the last 12 years. She is a fearless advocate for students and their well-being at Pleasants Elementary. Her commitment shines through despite the challenges she faces: “This is my mission; it is what I was born to do. My calling is to do this tough work because the children need me, and I need them.”

**Allison**

Allison is a kindergarten teacher at Pleasants Elementary. She is currently in her fifth year of teaching, and she is part of several professional learning communities while presently working on her master’s degree in elementary education. Allison has a background in mental health before switching careers and becoming a teacher. It was in her former career where she found her calling. In Allison’s interview, she was candid about her experience:
I worked with a great deal of students and families in my former career as a behavior counselor. I found my passion for students in that career and learned quickly that this is tough work educating students, but I wanted to do it. I have dealt with low parental involvement dealing with some of the most severe cases of mental health while trying to assist students in the home and at residential facilities. A great deal of students were on their own trying to cope and all they had were counselors and teachers. The absence of their parents at times made it more challenging to reach them and in the academic setting it is no different.

**Erica**

Erica is a first-grade teacher at Pleasants Elementary and an adjunct professor at an online academic institution. She has a very bubbly personality, yet unyielding and clear on her expectations for the optimal learning environment. Ericka has a very witty personality, and it showed throughout the interview. Our conversation led us to elaborate more on some challenging experiences for both teachers and students. During her interview Erica stated:

Some days I do not know if I am coming or going when I think about how these parents are not actively involved. I can only do but so much, honey. It’s been the same each year and I have been doing this a long time now. These past 23 years has opened my eyes to so much and I am able to better help pre-service teachers because of my direct relation to the current practices and education. It is very challenging, but it is our job to handle everything as teachers according to what is expected of us.

**Bethany**

Bethany is a very loving and caring teacher; it radiated throughout the interview. She is a second-grade teacher at Pleasants Elementary. She has held positions in both private and public
schools and this is her fifth year of teaching. Bethany had just completed a long day of learning and was very candid about her parental involvement challenges. Her love for her students runs deeply, and the conversations spilled beyond the interview for a bit, showing her passion and dedication to the profession regardless of the very tough challenges she deals with from students academically and behaviorally, as well as the lack of parental support. Bethany made the following comment in a focus group session:

If students do not have parental support, it affects them negatively. Their parents must support a student in the school environment and the home environment. It creates additional pressures on a student if their needs are not being met at home.

**Austin**

Austin has been teaching in elementary schools for the past 15 years, all of which have been in Title I schools in the same district. He currently teaches fifth grade at Pleasants Elementary. Austin is also a current continuing education student in pursuit of his second master’s degree. Austin has powerful feelings towards mentoring programs for young men and father figures, especially if there is an absence of such for a student. He truly cares about how his students can learn, and this was evident throughout his interview and focus group session. Austin shared with me by stating,

It takes a lot man, being a black male educator in an inner-city school is very challenging. I want to say most often than not but you can’t turn your back on these kids. They need us, they need to see more people who look like them and give them some hope, letting them know that no matter where they are they can and will be successful. This job is rewarding on so many levels that is why I chose to go on to pursue my next degree. The success of my students is why I do what I do.
Ryland

Ryland has been in education for the past 21 years. He is nearing his 16th year with this district. It is clear how much Ryland loves the school district and the students by his enthusiasm in his voice and how he lit up when talking about his experiences. Most of these years, he has paired with other teachers to deliver instruction in special education settings. He is a fourth-grade teacher at Pleasants Elementary, and his background is in general education and special education. Ryland was able to articulate what low parental involvement was like for him during his interview:

There are a lot of meetings that parents must attend when we are dealing with special education and services provided to the students. Parents are the people giving consent and many times it is delayed due to lack of communication or follow-through on their part. It is devastating to see how sometimes the needs are extended far beyond the students and also to the parents. Things are often on hold because we cannot get in contact with a child’s guardian in regard to deadlines for IEP meetings or to discuss changes in their behavior. There is a strong need for something in place when looking at educating the entire child beyond what we already have. The mark is still being missed.

Kristina

Kristina is a third-grade teacher at Pleasants Elementary. She is currently in her fifth year; she displayed an excitement about continuing in this profession. Kristina was very transparent about the hardships of teaching in a population with low parental involvement with a wide variety of needs. Kristina revealed in her interview,

I can honestly say I don’t feel I was as prepared for what I would truly face as a teacher, except in the ideal learning environment. It is hard to face, but I have made the most of
my time to learn all I can on how to make things better for students and their families. My reality has been very different since I graduated a few years ago but I would not have it any other way. Teaching in this demographic requires a very special person who is dedicated to staying on the journey and not giving up on these kids in their families. This is where the village has to have an extra dose of awesome each day. I’m excited to do the work.

**Results**

Upon collecting data, I thoroughly read and reread the transcripts from the individual interviews, focus groups, and observations conducted for the study. Once I started to realize the significant statements made by participants, I generated a list used to develop codes and consequently identify themes from the statements (Moustakas, 1994). Continuing to follow Moustakas’ (1994) processes, I began horizonalizing the data collected, giving every statement by participants equal value. This results section presents the themes and subthemes that emerged from the co-researchers’ data. The themes are as follows: training and development, student success, learning environment, incentives for participation, parental accountability. These themes are broken down into sub-themes, as evidence in Table 1. This section will further be documented by the central research and sub-research questions that guided this phenomenological study. There are direct quotations from participants throughout this chapter to capture the essence of their lived experiences with low parental involvement.

**Theme Development**

Five themes and sub-themes emerged from the data that were collected from participants during the individual interviews, focus groups, and observations. Throughout each data collection method, themes that emerged were shared amongst all co-researchers who are Title I
teachers that shared their experiences with low parental involvement. These themes were derived from the codes from significant statements identified during the data collection process. These codes emerged after collection, analysis, and horizontalization, just as Moustakas (1994) shared for the process of phenomenological research. The codes and themes are detailed below.

**Table 1**

*Theme Development*

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<tr>
<th>Open-Codes</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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<td>Development sessions</td>
<td>Training and development</td>
<td>Teacher training</td>
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<td>Groups meetings</td>
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<td>Student mentoring</td>
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<td>Positive relationships</td>
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<td>Goal setting</td>
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<td>Overcoming challenges</td>
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<td>Motivation to complete work</td>
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<td>Sharing experiences</td>
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*Theme 1: Training and Development*

The participants in the study were very candid in sharing their experiences. Throughout the interviews and observations, the theme of training and development emerged. Under this
major theme three subthemes were identified that included (a) teacher training, (b) student mentoring, and (c) family meetings.

**Teacher Training.** Participants shared a wealth of professional development opportunities that they are offered every week. They commended the school district for implementing so many options for enrichment and sharpening the toolkit for teachers to be more effective in their practices. Teachers also mentioned the opportunities outside of the school district to receive training in various areas. The community makes monetary contributions to those who want to participate. While they do attend and appreciate the training sessions, all six teachers in one focus group felt inadequately prepared for some of the challenges they deal with daily in the classroom and school building. In her interview, Kristina shared:

> There is no way a textbook prepares these teachers who are coming into the school fresh out of college for what they will experience in many of the demographics they will have to serve. Being unprepared is detrimental to the children and the teacher as well. I know I have seen many colleagues leave the profession because they were overwhelmed, and the demand was mentally taxing.

Teachers were very candid about how they often feel ill-prepared for many situations they encounter and are expected to navigate effectively. They spoke of not having enough opportunities to strengthen their toolkit beyond instruction. Justine, who teaches fourth grade, went on to share:

> I thought that I would be in this profession until I retire, but I feel as if I will not survive many more years, sometimes after the last few years. No, it is not because I don't love my students or the job, but I am at a point in my life where I cannot handle additional stress that is beyond my control. They (district leaders and administration) do not always
consider that we have personal lives that impact us professionally also. We are not robots, although it feels that way at times. To leave a stressful environment where you give your all and to have to come home and raise my children with a little or no energy left is frustrating at times and makes me sad. It is tougher than people want to share. During a focus group discussion, it was evident that the teachers feel strongly about needing support and their unwavering love for their students. Then during an observation, I noticed a teacher calmly listening when a parent asked her about her child's behavior during class. It was made to seem as if the teacher was ultimately at fault for her child's disrespectful outburst. The teacher listened patiently while the parent used profane language despite being in a guest’s company. In these instances, teachers genuinely need to be supported, and there needs to be a standard to help guide these conversations on a meaningful level. I asked how the teachers were feeling after the meeting when we were alone, and Bethany shared,

I'm so upset I could cry. Nothing is ever done, and her mother is always supported, and I am repeatedly told this is just how she communicated and be patient with her [by administration]. It is like verbal abuse. She said this is not the first time, and I'm sure it will not last. This is why her daughter talks to me about how she does, and I am her teacher. This is wearing me out, and I don't deserve this, but no one is going to speak up for me.

Teachers need additional support to possibly have liaisons or mediators involved when relationships between parents and teachers have reached levels that violate one or both parties in any way. Dealing with parents who also have mental health counselors themselves was shared during a focus group. None of the teachers have had mental health services training or similar development for the teacher to be better equipped to handle those situations.
Student Mentoring. Several teachers in the study mentioned the necessity of having students paired with mentors and people they can look up to for inspiration. It was common that students come from single-parent homes or homes with many different issues that impede students' peace of mind. It appears that students worry about things that are consuming, and it takes a great deal for students to unpack sometimes when they arrive at school. Austin shared in the focus group that "many students are raising their siblings or themselves and get to school in the best shape they can, whether their hair is combed or clothes are cleaned but they are there, and we are happy to have them."

According to the participants, it appears that students rely heavily on the relationships they build within the school, which solidifies why mentoring is a common theme. In her interview, Olivia explained, "These babies need to know that there is someone who cares even beyond their teachers even though we are mentors too. People who look like them, especially in some cases." Mentors often have feasibility that the classroom teachers do not have daily. These mentors will give additional life skills and have more personal conversations with students, making more meaningful connections with others and faculty and staff, which they tend to look at in a particular light. It truly takes a village to raise a child, as Dominic mentioned: "Giving the students a mentor also means giving them additional doses of hope. It's the medicine they don't even know they need so badly, for real. I mean, who doesn't need all the hope they can get?" During one focus group session, two teachers were having a conversation about the impact mentors have on students that they have seen in the past in a different Title I school where they had a mentoring program with a local university. They were very candid in how beautiful it was for students and to see the interactions and growth students made in their attitudes. Leah added,
It gave the students something to look forward to and another person they knew who cared and wanted to make them proud. Every student in the building was assigned a mentor. Every Title I school definitely should have these opportunities available. The learning environment has changed, removing those mentors, and some students have not adjusted in a good way to the change.

During one observation, a parent asked the teacher whether or not her child would get a mentor for the school year because she loved seeing her mentor at school, and it was something to look forward to. This female student has had a history of challenging behavior, and her mentor was someone that understood her and made learning better for her. Mentors can connect with students and play a significant role in their lives as well as teachers. Mentorship matters. The co-researchers also shared that students need more opportunities to assemble and connect with their peers. Brooke mentioned how her second-grade class could take time each day to talk with their friends and to have a moment to connect with and enjoy one another. In this same focus group Brooke shared,

This critical time is not built into the schedule, but I have to make time for it because they are craving those meaningful connections with one another. Teachers have to go above and beyond to make sure that students' needs are met beyond academics. Many of them are crying out in different ways to be seen and heard. I will only add to the pain if I don't give them chances to draw closer and find commonalities between each other.

Ryland added,

There's so much that we are required to do as teachers, and they [administration] doesn't give us time for everything, nor do they consider all the factors that we have to deal with every day before we even begin the school day. We have to advocate for our students
every chance we get because sometimes the students and their parents do not know how vital these encounters are.

It was highly evident throughout the individual interviews, focus groups, and observations that students are not always prepared when they enter the learning environment and often long for connection. They have much on their minds and in their hearts that impact their learning. Teachers need opportunities to provide more time and ways to help the whole development of students. Guidance counselors are an asset to the school, but classroom teachers have the students most of the time, and there needs to be more daily opportunities for students that help deal with the social and emotional needs students have. The introduction of such time would only put students in a better position to excel.

**Family Meetings.** Family meetings were a reoccurring theme about gathering with families to make things better for students collectively, starting before the school year begins. It gives everyone time to articulate their goals and desires, including the students, and time to get acquainted with minimal distractions. No students are the same, and each of them requires something different. Several participants spoke on how important it is to provide services to parents and guardians as well as putting supports in place that aid in creating unity and breaking down barriers and misconceptions that may exist. It was made clear that not all parents know how to advocate for their children. Erica observed during her focus group session,

Some parents may be embarrassed because they do not know some of the material their child is learning. If we are all honest, much of what we teach may not have been presented in the way we see it today; therefore, we have to reteach even ourselves, so I understand. I've had some parents be transparent and share they don't know what their kids are learning or even how to help them. It's easier to help these parents who are
having these conversations because we are aware they need the help, and other times, we have to consider some parents' temperament because you never want to assume.

Maria added during one of the focus group interviews,

Meeting with parents and guardians is so important and sets the tone. It is challenging because the parents who often shut down or do not respond to emails or correspondence make it more difficult to assist them or their child. Some parents won’t say what their needs are. Others are vocal and do not mind asking for assistance in many ways. When you’re reaching out regarding their child, it’s harder to build a rapport and work together if you are blocked out from the very start. The walls that exist are often broken down with consistent care and communication. We can’t give up on the students, and that means we can’t give up on their parents either.

It was evident throughout conversations and observations that teachers are genuinely giving all they have to meet their students’ needs, whether they are met halfway from home or not. Teachers going the extra mile to ensure students are successful is the extraordinary work being done. All teachers are commended for going above and beyond for students and their families.

**Theme 2: Student Success**

All participants discussed how student success is tied to home and school, but it primarily starts from home. Stephanie said, “It seems the importance of students’ success has been placed more on schools and teachers rather than with the parents. Home is where it starts [building values for student success] and ultimately counts most.” Allison shared, “When parents are not involved the way they should be, you see some of the same behaviors in students and their regard for their schoolwork as well, making it challenging to reach them.” The goal of student success
was apparent in the voices of the participants. Their passion for this work in education and their love for their students shone throughout the study. Austin shared his experiences with student success in his interview:

When parents are involved and are as active as possible, their child exhibits the same behavior and takes more pride in their work. It isn’t hard to see tell there is a domino effect here, whether positive or negative it is obvious.

Justine mentioned in her individual interview,

Some students do not have active parents, but many students will care so much about having me as their teacher, and my expectations they will use that as an incentive and put forth the effort required. They know I am counting on them to excel and show up for themselves, and that matters to me as much as it does to them, if not more. The fact that they care that I care is a blessing to me.

Student success was discussed throughout the interviews, focus groups, and observation when communicating the goals for students and the desires of the teachers’ hearts that their students achieve and master skills. Teachers did a great job opening up and provided the essence of their lived experiences. During her individual interview, Brooke added:

When I think of low parental involvement, one instance that will always come to my mind is when a sweet student of mine was trying everything he could to excel, despite the hardships he experienced at home. He was selected to attend a field trip that was by invitation only, and it was an excellent opportunity for him to explore a museum and art, which he so deeply enjoyed. His mother was in and out of the home, and she refused to sign his permission slip without explanation. I realized he forged her signature, and when I spoke to him in private to get to the bottom of it, he shared why he did it. It took me to
go to her house on several different occasions, leave voicemails and seek an opportunity to get together before she finally agreed to meet with me. I helped her to understand the importance of this opportunity and how much it meant to him and me. Not only did she consider it before she signed it, but she wanted to go to see just what he was interested in. This opened up something different between her and her son, and I do not regret it.

Going above and beyond is the work many of us are doing as teachers in these demographics. When you genuinely care, it can take everything out of you to make things happen every day.

Participants discussed various similar situations and how empathetic they were still to the parents despite the additional task they took on because of low involvement. The students’ success depends on more than just school, and it is important to articulate how various roles are still vital to make things happen. It was evident during several observations that at times when there were scheduled conferences, there was an average of two or three parents present for them out of a class of 14 to 17 students. When speaking with participants after conferences, each shared that the parents who attend have constant communication with the teacher. The parents who do not attend are usually the ones teachers need to speak to the most and have inconsistent contact or none at all. While teachers are not downplaying their student success position, they wanted to be clear this is not a blame session. This study is an opportunity to shed light that dedicated teachers and school personnel should not dismiss the negative impact low parental involvement has on students.

**Theme 3: Learning Environment**

The theme of the learning environment reoccurred throughout individual interviews, focus groups, and observations. Each of the 13 participants identified the learning environment
as a vital part of how students can succeed. Four subthemes emerged which include, (a) growth mindset, (b) resources, (c) student attitudes, and (d) cultural consciousness.

**Growth Mindset.** Participants were very clear regarding how effective a growth mindset is for students in these demographics. Ryland shared in his fourth-grade class that students are even aware of the terminology used when speaking about growth mindset and how important it is that they know they are in control of the heights they reach. He also shared how he knows how instrumental he is in helping his students achieve their goals. Leah said, “In my classroom, the learning community is one of a family where everyone wants to help each other excel in their studies and interpersonal relationships. It works if you work it,” she added.

Oliva added that growth mindset has been effective in her third-grade classroom to teach students how to be proud of themselves and believe that they can and that they will reach success. She shared how it is amazing to see the mindset of her students shift once they believe in what she is teaching them. In the demographics where the participants serve as teachers, students encounter tough situations that they must overcome to even be reached during instruction; a growth mindset helps give students tools to grow. During her focus group session, Olivia added,

> When I used to live for the moments where my students would master content skills, I remember it became so much bigger than that. When you see that they develop and sustain an attitude to give their best and present their work with pride even when things may not be accurate, it makes me happy because they get it! Having a growth mindset is designed to help students realize their potential at a very early age, and it teaches them to have positive self-esteem. These lessons are priceless but should be incorporated in
every classroom, especially in Title I schools, where the challenges are heavy for the students we service.

A growth mindset is something that indeed extends beyond the classroom. It does not shy away from challenges but helps students understand that they have what is necessary to overcome challenges in all aspects of life. Allison commented, “Teachers must model having a positive attitude towards everything, and they will see the students follow suit, teachers have to realize the impact they have and just how profound their role is in the life of a student.”

**Resources.** The resources made available to Title I schools are typically plentiful, and there is a large variety of wraparound services offered to students and their families. Teachers shared that those kinds of additional resources need to be considered when giving students the optimal opportunity for learning and experiences. Maria stated in her interview,

Students need enrichment opportunities outside of the school building as often as they can, ideally students in these Title I schools should have an out-of-school field trip at least once per month related to a Virginia Standard of Learning. Many of them lack background knowledge of a great deal because they lack exposure.

Billy elaborated on how many of the students never make it out of their housing community and need every chance to see what is out in the world and how much they can learn from places around them. Sponsorships would be great to have with external partners to ensure many students do not have to pay out-of-pocket to attend these field trips. Money may be an issue for parents to give students for the child to participate in various activities. In a focus group session, Erica revealed that academic and sports teams need to be created schoolwide with activity buses to get the students back-and-forth to practice and games. In a focus group session, Erica shared:
The students who do not have parents who can attend games and practices must have the means to be a part of something still and have an outlet needed by most of them. They will also enhance their lifestyle, learn to work well with others, and have a better life perception.

Securing sponsorships and external learning opportunities is vital for students and should be accessible to all.

**Student Attitudes.** Student attitudes were a subtheme that was present within the learning environment. Students' attitudes towards their classwork and the relationships they establish are impacted by those relationships they have at home. It is apparent how teachers interact with parents that there are similarities in how their children communicate with their teachers, as Kristina shared after an observation during our debrief. Stephanie shared that she and a parent did not see eye to eye at the beginning of the year, but it was because they did not fully understand one another. It was not until Stephanie made personal phone calls home to get to know the mother better and build a positive rapport with her that things took a positive turn. Stephanie also stated that this trickled down to her having a better relationship with her student, and she was better able to reach her in the classroom: "It worked, it was hard work, but it worked, and here we are now able to meet halfway and get things done the way a team should."

Brooke cited, “Being a Caucasian teacher in an environment of predominantly African-American students, and I had to take extra measures to connect with parents and students. I needed to understand them better and show them that I care.” While Brooke elaborated that this was difficult, it was necessary, and it has made all the difference towards the attitude her students have towards her and their classwork. Brooke further elaborated in her interview,
Our differences mattered at one point, and now they don’t anymore. We are just a family with different shades of skin. We care for one another and work as a team. Students who feel that their teachers do not care about them are less likely to do anything that benefits them. Children get excited and will do for their teachers because they know they care about them.

On the other hand, students who do not like their teacher or do not have a positive relationship with them will likely not do what is asked of them or try their best. During the focus group, Dominic advised, “You shouldn’t teach if you don’t care about how a student feels about you. Positive relationships are essential in these Title I schools for every stakeholder.” In his individual interview, Ryland stated:

For many students we service, school is the safest place to come to, where they always have love and their needs are met. Students with learning deficits or gaps who do not perform on grade level are also a ball of joy walking into the school building because of the love they receive and the care that is taken with them. The meaningful relationships they build are important and primarily start at school. It is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure that students have optimal opportunities to build positive relationships while teachers are modeling positive relationships with their peers and other students. This truly can set a positive tone for students and in their perceptions about school and life in general. Teachers should always be mindful of the relationships they make with students and other adults. Students learn by example and need positive interactions on display with those who serve as role models.

**Cultural Consciousness.** Cultural consciousness must be considered by all people working in any demographic, but especially in areas where schools are considered Title I.
Considering the home life and environment in which most of these students live, one must be sensitive and consider all the situations students encounter daily working in this population. Leah explained, “So many students go through tough things even at these young elementary ages that as an adult I have never come remotely close to experiencing. They are survivors and can thrive when given the right tools.” Allison mentioned in her interview, 

> It must be realized by every stakeholder that students need more compassion than anything. They are not sad stories without a bright future. They are resilient and can achieve anything they set out to do. We have to do what we can to understand where they’re coming from and what they need.

> These teachers shared so many of the same experiences and supported one another. Bethany also shared in the focus group that when teachers understand their students and where they come from, teachers will better know how to interact with them and build a positive relationship with them. Erica, without hesitation, added in the focus group,

> Even as a Black teacher, I can identify with my students somehow but not in all ways because I had a very different upbringing and background than my students. I had to learn and also accept our cultural differences as I know they had had to and meet my students where they are. We learn so much from one another, which leads us to learn more about ourselves.

**Theme 4: Incentive for Participation**

This theme emerged from a discussion during a focus group. Teachers were very eager to discuss things to make sure parents have the opportunity and incentives to increase their involvement when possible. The co-researchers discussed how a point and reward system for parents could likely increase the participation in a variety of ways. Bethany mentioned that
while it is tough to think that some people need an incentive to do what is necessary for their child, we must do whatever it takes to increase the parental involvement in Title I schools because the end result is excellence for their child or children since many of them have multiple siblings in the school.

This focus group session started to sound much like a committee of teachers excited, exchanging ideas, and planning ways to initiate a program. The co-researchers also shared a need for more opportunities for parents to be involved before, during, and after the school day ends. School leaders should also consider providing transportation for students and parents to events because some families do not have a ride. Still, it does not mean they do not have the desire to be involved. Several of the participants discussed how there could be training provided to parents and guardians to volunteer in various capacities of the school building. Having these opportunities in place also gives parents a feeling that they are making a difference. They will make that difference in the lives of multiple students because they actually would be interacting with students during the school day in various ways.

District leaders should consider additional resources necessary and allocate funds to ensure that these programs happen for students and their families. Leah suggested that community leaders and businesses sponsor various grade levels each year. Some of the offers could be gift cards, dinners, monetary gifts to parents within grade levels who have had many participation activities throughout the school year. Fundraisers are great to consider as well as a schoolwide initiative for parents. These things will enhance a positive shift in involvement, generate excitement about winning prizes, commend parents for the needed support, and build a stronger sense of community.
Theme 5: Parental Accountability

Several co-researchers shared how there needs to be the incorporation of additional measures to hold parents accountable in their child or children's education processes. In Maria’s interview, she shared,

There should be a contract signed by parents to attend a certain number of mandatory meetings throughout the school year, just like contracts for students and teachers. These contracts should address duties and responsibilities thoroughly. We all have a job to do as teachers, and the expectations are clear, how about other important people like parents. These contracts would be a pivotal integration that aids in student success within various capacities.

Olivia elaborated that contact information is an issue when trying to communicate with parents. Maria explained,

When parents change their numbers, teachers and school staff are likely to be the last to know, and it is hard to get in touch with these parents even in the case of an emergency. That is so dangerous when you think about it.

Participants shared there should be a system in place where numbers are checked throughout each month. It should be mandatory for parents to notify the school of phone number and address changes within a certain amount of time. Having these mandatory stipulations in place to ensure communication lines are available would be another measure of accountability.

Research Question Responses

The research questions that guided this study and produced various responses that captured the phenomenon’s essence are outlined in this section. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact that low parent involvement
has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school. I gathered detailed descriptions of the teachers' experiences from one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and observations.

**Central Research Question**

The central research question for this study asked, *What are the teachers’ experiences with low parental involvement in a Title I school?* The participants in the study were candid about their experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools. They spoke on the rewards of teaching in a population where they can genuinely operate from their hearts, and where what they have to offer is needed most. They shared that many of them worked in diverse schools and have found the Title I setting to be the most challenging yet rewarding for each of them. They spoke to the joy they get in seeing their students excel and develop positive self-esteem where there may not have been for quite some time. In her interview, Erica said,

> It is a love that you have to experience to understand its capabilities truly. I feel like these students are mine, and they depend on me as they do their parents. Is it hard? Yes, but I love what I do and wouldn’t want to teach in any other population.

Co-researchers shared how they are prepared at times for situations they encounter and how in other times, they are in dire need of additional support and training to enhance their teacher toolkit. They also mentioned how most of them are not from the same backgrounds as their students, and it is appropriate to learn and understand the students they service as well. Teachers also discussed the importance of holding the appropriate people accountable, and they offered a variety of strategies to do so. From the central research question, the themes and sub-themes that emerged were (a) training and development, (b) cultural consciousness, (c) learning environment, (d) incentives for participation, and (e) parental accountability.
Sub-question 1

How do teachers in Title I schools describe the impact low parental involvement has on the physical needs of students? Teachers in Title I schools described the impact low parental involvement has on the physical needs of students by expressing the challenges of time constraints, limited or lack of daily exposure of information and carryover between both the home and school environments, and the lack of parental–teacher engagement and communication to set high expectations and goals for successful outcomes. Allison spoke more about this in the focus group:

Unfortunately, many Title I schools suffer from a low rate of parental involvement. As a student, they cannot make certain decisions for themselves. Their responsibility is to complete their work and be the best student that they can and if they don’t have the necessary materials or family support to make that happen, it impedes on every aspect of their lives.

Allison currently teaches kindergarten and made it clear she has seen the physical needs of students be neglected and impact how they are able to focus or their esteem. There was not one participant present in the focus group who did not agree with the importance of making sure the physical needs of students were met before school and how that would lessen a great load they often experience. Brooke shared most students are excited to eat the breakfast despite what it may be, due to being hungry or going to sleep without dinner the night before. She shared how making sure students eat, even if they are tardy for school, is a sure attitude shifter in a positive direction: “Low parental involvement impacts students physically in many ways. It can be physical neglect in the form of malnourishment, clothes that are dirty or don't fit right, and hair that isn't styled neatly.”
From this research question regarding the impact low parental involvement has on the physical needs of students the themes and sub-themes that emerged were (a) resources, (b) parental accountability, and (c) student success.

**Sub-question 2**

*How do participants describe the impact low parental involvement has on the social needs of students?* Participants described the impact of low parental involvement on the social needs of students, including difficulty in (a) developing positive peer relationships, (b) establishing a sense of empathy, and (c) showcasing confidence and positive self-esteem. Justine stated, “It deeply affects a student’s social stability. If students are stuck at home without social support and constantly around their parents and/or negative factors, it can prevent the social needs from being met.” Bethany, who teaches fourth-grade, elaborated on the importance of friendships and connections students are able to make especially at that age. During the focus group, Bethany shared,

> Kids may be louder than others because they're looking for the attention they don't receive from their parents, or they could also be shut off by faculty or other students in the building looking for attention or to be noticed. Sometimes students need additional help with how to properly communicate because they may not know how or have had the best examples. Low parental involvement can also deter students from involving themselves in after school activities, such as talent shows, various social clubs and sports teams.

From this research question the themes and sub-themes that emerged regarding the impact low parental involvement has on the physical needs of students were (a) student mentoring and (b) student attitudes.
Sub-question 3

How do participants describe the impact low parental involvement has on the educational needs of students (supplies and being present for school activities)? The participants shared how the educational needs of students are presented with challenges in many ways. One is without food at times, even at night or breakfast before school, which impacts their learning and mood. The lack of involvement or supervision may affect the amount of rest students get, which aids in healthy cognition, like students staying up playing video games or going to sleep at unreasonable times. Kristina shared,

If students do not have parental support, it affects them negatively. Teachers and parents must support a student in the school environment and the home environment. It creates additional pressures on a student if their needs are not met at home. For example, without the praise from parents and parents coming to pick up their school materials, they cannot complete their academic needs.

There are also financial insecurities in the home that impact students’ readiness to participate in activities like field trips, book fairs, or to purchase snacks during the lunchtime they desire to enjoy with some other friends. A lack of involvement or transportation adds additional challenges with attending academic engagements. The participants shared that many community partners assist their schools in funding field trips. They also provide monetary donations to support schools, which enables events to happen despite the challenges. They also made it clear that parents show a great deal of appreciation when the financial burden is able to be lifted. Erica, in her focus group also described the impact on educational needs of students she has experienced:
Low parental involvement could have many adverse effects on a child's education. Parents may not buy proper materials and supplies; necessary forms may not be filled out and returned; school assignments may not be completed, which could have an overall negative impact on the child's grade or overall performance. Studies I have read have also shown that children who are read to by a parent tend to learn how to read at a faster rate. Additionally, family time (such as dining together) can lead to high self-esteem; in the classroom, students who have high self-esteem perform well because they believe in themselves.

From this research question the themes and sub-themes regarding how low parental involvement impacts educational needs of students that emerged were (a) family meetings and (b) parental accountability.

**Sub-question 4**

*How do participants describe the impact low parental involvement has on student achievement?* Teachers shared that student achievement is the driving force for schools and how they function. According to Justine, "There is a great deal that impacts student achievement in a negative way, not just low parental involvement, but the mastery of skills is usually all that is discussed without addressing issues that impede learning for many students." The participants noted that the achievement data does not account for the realities they face: Although many of their students do not have their basic needs met to set them up for the optimal learning experience, yet the accountability and responsibility for student achievement are solely placed on the teachers. Throughout focus groups, during interviews, and post-observation conferences, teachers reiterated that they fully understand the role they play as teachers and are honored to do so. They emphasized that while they are not placing blame, it is crucial to see that even the best
teachers, schools, and learning environment are not a substitute for the home's structures and responsibilities. Everything works better together; neither the school nor the home can take the place of the other. Stephanie elaborated in her interview:

Suppose a parent refuses to be supportive (this support includes collecting the student’s materials from the school). In that case, the student cannot complete their assignments or stay on task without overwhelming feelings of defeat that slow their progress. The impact is more negative on students than anything; it sets the tone and standards students set for themselves.

Ryland was always enthused when talking about his current and past students. His absolute joy and passion were evident, similar to many other participants. With the same excitement in the focus group, Austin shared his perception of how student achievement is impacted when there is low parental involvement:

Lower grades can result from students not having an adult at home to assist with their assignments or provide materials required for class. Also, a student’s self-esteem can drop from lack of parental involvement; if a student’s mindset is that they can’t achieve their goals in class that is likely what will happen. This is why many teachers foster a Growth Mindset in their classroom.

From this research question on low parental involvement and the impact it has on student achievement the themes and sub-themes that emerged were (a) growth mindset and (b) student success.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the data analysis from the study. This chapter began with the participants from the study, and I used pseudonyms to replace their names. The data
were collected from one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and observations. The themes that emerged from significant statements made by participants from the study were presented, followed by the central research questions and four sub-questions where the themes and subthemes were derived from the structural and textural descriptions. This section provided direct quotations from participants throughout this chapter to capture the essence of the teachers' lived experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools. The results from the data analysis were presented by themes and were written in narrative form.

The co-researchers gave candid accounts of their experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools. The teachers made it clear that they love the work they do despite the additional challenges they face because of their students' hardships. Their detailed experiences showed plenty of resources and extra money available to these schools, but the extra funding does not alleviate all of the issues with which students deal. Participants spoke of the rewarding relationships that are formed with students and their families. The co-researchers elaborated several times that they do not blame parents, but they want to be clear that parental involvement is vital for a child's overall success. They also see their participation in this study as a form of advocating for parents who have challenges, presenting strategies that could ultimately improve involvement. Throughout this study, during interviews, focus groups, and observations, it was clear that these students are loved. These participants are some of the most compassionate teachers I have had the pleasure to meet, and they go the extra mile for their students and their families to ensure success for the entire child.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

Although Title I schools receive a significant amount of additional funding and resources, there are still needs of students that are unmet due to low parental involvement. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact that low parent involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school. I begin this chapter with a summary of the findings in this study using the guiding research questions. Next, there is a discussion of the findings in relationship to the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed from Chapter Two. Then, I share the study's implications, the delimitations and limitations of the study, and the recommendations for future research before this chapter closes with a summary of the study.

Summary of Findings

Teachers from two Title I schools in the same school district participated in this study. These participants volunteered to complete the study and were chosen due to purposeful criteria sampling. These teachers were candid in sharing their lived experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools and its impact on students. The participants in the study all had similar experiences with low parental involvement, which was evident in each of the focus group sessions. They shared great discussions that aided in gathering data. Participants were clear about the adverse effects that low parental involvement had on students in many ways. Despite the challenges, there are many rewards still for teaching in their schools. The teachers from the study are dedicated to enriching the lives of their students. Each day they are actively building a bridge for success beyond the textbook.
The central research question for this study asked, *What are the teachers’ experiences with low parental involvement in a Title I school?* All 13 participants shared that they are honored to serve as teachers despite the challenges that are present in these schools. They have established that their role in the lives of their students is monumental in how students will excel beyond the classroom. Each of the participants shared the significant negative impact low parental involvement has on the students they teach. The impact of low parental involvement on the students’ physical needs can be seen in a variety of ways, from impacting students' attitudes to impacting their ability to focus. Students come to school with a wealth of needs that have not been met at home, such as a lack of hygiene or a lack of attention from parents or guardians. By the end of the study, it was clear that many students in these schools have a great deal to unpack before they begin the school day. It is also crucial to consider that many teachers, despite their love for serving in these capacities, feel that they are forced to deal with issues they cannot handle effectively and must learn as they go.

The first sub-research question for this study asked, *How do teachers in Title I schools describe the impact low parental involvement has on the physical needs of students?* Nine of the 13 participants shared at least one direct experience with a student coming to school with unmet primary care needs. It was shared amongst all participants how students are negatively impacted by low parental involvement, often seen in the poor hygiene students have. Participants shared occurrences regarding the lack of adequate nutrition, which affected students' ability to focus; in other instances, students consumed unhealthy foods that impacted their stomach and digestive tract. One teacher noted that students often suffer without care from a physician when they become ill at school because parents fail to pick them up. Students must not only have champions at school but home as well; this will increase their self-esteem and invite them to
have a more positive outlook on life. Participants made it clear that students learn better when they are clean, clothed appropriately, and fed, yet there are plenty of students who are not. Teachers are losing instructional time to care for students’ urgent physical needs in order to promote an optimal learning opportunity and a sense of love and safety for the students.

The second sub-research question for this study asked, *How do teachers in Title I schools describe the impact low parental involvement has on the social needs of students?* Many participants shared how students are impacted both positively and negatively when there is low parental involvement. Four participants also shared how students are often socially awkward when they do not have positive relationships with their parents, which can deter them from building relationships and establishing trust with others. The participants also shared how students are more likely to gravitate towards others because they have shown some interest in them. They are willing to open up and develop relationships that aid in better communication with others and self-advocacy. In one focus group session, the teachers all agreed that students need more opportunities to bond and interact with one another to establish more respect for their differences and increase a more positive school climate based on acceptance.

The third sub-research question for this study asked, *How do teachers in Title I schools describe the impact low parental involvement has on the educational needs of students?* Every participant in the study shared that there is a negative impact on students in various ways. Some ways that students are negatively impacted included (a) students not having the necessary materials to complete assignments, (b) forms that offer enrichment activities are not submitted, and (c) pride preventing students from accepting help in front of other students, even if a teacher supplies the materials. Inadequate preparation for school is easy to make students feel a sense of inadequacy, according to participants. Participants noted that many students lack a positive self-
image, mainly due to what they cannot control like how they are cared for and sent to school by others.

The final sub-research question for this study asked, *How do teachers in Title I schools describe the impact low parental involvement has on student achievement?* Several participants shared how students have a more challenging time retaining newly taught material when they do not spend time at home doing homework or studying the recently learned material. Also, if there is low parental involvement, some assignments cannot be completed, which could harm the child's grade, like constructing a graded project at home. Two participants shared the importance of having teachers understand their students' circumstances and allowing additional time at some point during school for students to complete the project over time or provide the student with necessary materials for completion at home.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact that low parental involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school. A transcendental phenomenological design was utilized and was most appropriate for this study due to the nature of this research. This study focused on capturing the essence of the lived experiences of my co-researchers with the phenomenon of low parental involvement rather than my interpretation of the co-researchers' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The theory that guided this study is Maslow’s (1970) theory of human motivation which offered a hierarchy of needs. The five themes that emerged from the data analysis were (a) training and development, (b) student success, (c) learning environment, (d) incentive for participation, and (e) parental accountability. This section will discuss the study’s findings related to the empirical and
theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. This section will also share contributions this study adds to the field of education.

**Empirical Discussion**

This transcendental phenomenological study confirms, extends, and diverges from previous research presented earlier in Chapter Two. This study confirmed previous research, such as the study by Robbins and Searby (2013), which found that when parents positively perceive invitations for involvement from teachers, they are very likely to increase their participation in their child’s education. It was clear that teachers from the study who had significant interactions with parents despite challenges saw increased involvement in the child’s educational processes. This research confirms another study conducted by Gonida and Cortina (2014), which determined that schools with students who have regular parental interaction maintained higher achievement scores on standardized end-of-the-year tests than those students who did not have regular parental interaction. A study by Hindin (2010) shared that “the strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and home are the specific school programs and teacher practices that encourage or guide parental involvement” (p. 76). Teachers in this study confirmed that despite having a wealth of resources due to Title I funding, there is still a missing component that will further impede the overall success of students and the accreditation status of schools, which is attributed to low parental involvement.

This phenomenological study is an extension of previously conducted studies on low parental involvement. However, while there was research concerning parental involvement, there was limited literature from a teacher’s perspective regarding low parental involvement. There were also various research designs for studies used, such as a case study, narrative, or ethnography approaches. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was not a typical theoretical lens used for
the reviewed previous studies. In one study conducted by Martin (2015), Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was used as the theoretical lens. Still, the research was performed using the perspectives of parents and how to increase parental involvement. No notable findings diverged significantly from previous research shared in Chapter Two other than the design used, perspective, and theoretical lens.

This qualitative study adds to education in many ways and sheds light on the importance of parental involvement in Title I schools. Yıldız and Kutlu (2015) found that students who experience low parental involvement are more likely to become involved in crime. Further initiatives must be put in place for parents to be more active in the educational processes of their children in hopes of avoiding detrimental outcomes. Participants in this study shared how incorporating a growth mindset climate in their classrooms is a vital part of their daily practices due to what their students face daily. Henderson et al. (2007) suggested, “The more the relationship between families and the school is a real partnership, the more student achievement increases. When schools engage families in ways that are linked to improving learning, students make greater gains” (p. 3). This study emphasizes that additional opportunities are needed for parents to participate in school activities and provide teachers and parents with resources that create and sustain positive interactions.

**Theoretical Discussion**

The theory that guided this study is Maslow’s (1970) theory of human motivation which offered a hierarchy of needs. Maslow established a theory of human motivation in 1970, and from that theory emerged a pyramid used to address the needs of humans. Harrigan and Lamport Commons (2015) observed, “This hierarchy of needs was presented as a model of human motivation. In this model, higher needs will not be as motivating until lower needs are fulfilled”
The hierarchy initially had five categories in which all motivational needs lie. In Maslow’s (1970) original work, he found that individuals must satisfy the lower level of needs before advancing towards meeting the needs of the higher levels in the hierarchy. The most basic level of this hierarchy is the physiological level that speaks to necessities like breathing, food, water, and sleep (Maslow, 1970). Teachers in this study spoke candidly about how many students arrive at school with hopes of learning while many of these physiological needs are unmet. For this reason, there needs to be more structures in place in addition to what Title I schools offer to increase parental involvement. The teachers in this study believed that increasing opportunities for parents to be involved as well as creating accountability measures for parents will aid in improving student success comprehensively.

“The quality of early living years is an important factor in shaping the individual hierarchy of a person. Therefore, if the satisfaction of basic needs is sufficient, then Maslow will describe the individual as a healthy and normal person” (Saeednia, 2010, p. 96). Gobin et al. (2012) shared that Maslow’s self-actualization level should be the focal point in education, which is the highest level of the hierarchy. According to the teachers in this study, the challenges students face because of low parental involvement prevent them from reaching Maslow’s highest level of self-actualization. According to Çağdaş et al. (2016), when families are involved in the educational processes of their children, not only does it help strengthen their toolkit, but it also improves the lives of their children and helps the educational institutions to develop more positively as a whole.

**Implications**

The purpose of this study was to describe the impact that low parent involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school. The findings revealed that Title I
teachers had a great deal of experience with low parental involvement and the impact on students, which was evident in many ways. While teachers have shared positive experiences with students and significant positive relationships established with their students, teachers collectively shared that low parental involvement still negatively affects students. This study examined the experiences of teachers and the various implications gathered from the data. In the following sections I will discuss the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. The information collected will provide multiple stakeholders with appropriate recommendations moving forward.

**Theoretical Implications**

The theoretical lens that framed this study was Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs. This study supported the literature of Maslow (1970) and further recognized and described the needs that are not being met of students when there is low parental involvement. All of the Title I teachers from the study shared how the students had a great deal to unpack before learning each day. From their accounts, basic needs which were unmet, such as sleep, being fed, or having clean clothes, impeded students’ ability to get beyond the initial level in the hierarchy. Students concerned with how they smell, being tired because they have not gotten adequate sleep, or being hungry cannot focus on what is essential once they arrive at the classroom each day. For this reason, teachers shared the importance of having parents held accountable to increase students' success and their overall well-being.

Students are impacted in other ways when their physiological needs are unmet. For example, when students worry about things they cannot control, such as their hygiene, it starts to disrupt focus, positive relationship building, and their self-esteem. Teachers were asked a series of questions about how their students’ most basic needs are unmet due to low parental
involvement. These were all issues still present despite the wealth of resources in place to assist students in these demographics. It is evident that more initiatives need to be put in place.

Saeednia (2010) found that "the quality of early living years is an important factor in shaping the individual hierarchy of a person. Therefore, if the satisfaction of basic needs is sufficient, then Maslow will describe the individual as a healthy and normal person" (p. 96). This study further supports that students must have interventions placed in the home when it impedes their overall success. A child's home and parents play a vital role in what takes place in school as well as a child's outlook on their future and self-perceptions. Schools should focus on teaching students in a way that sets them up to reach self-actualization, which is the highest level of Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy.

School districts in each level therein starting from the superintendent to the school board should be conscious when making decisions with additional funding secured in these Title I schools. Incentives and initiatives need to be created and funds allocated in various ways to address the lack of positive self-image and poor student achievement still present in these schools that starts and extends from the home. Gobin et al. (2012) shared that Maslow's self-actualization level should be the focal point in the system of education. Therefore, just as teachers should design instruction by starting with the end in mind, so should school leaders when making decisions. The end goal must be considered, and then there needs to be a realistic pathway set to attain it. Gobin et al. also shared that self-development should be one of the final goals of learning. Maslow's (1970) work indicated that the lower needs were more influential than the higher needs of the pyramid. When the most basic needs are fulfilled, the better the psychological health will be for the individual. When educating the entire child is considered, we must look at what it will take to ensure schools help parents understand the critical role they
play and ensuring they are held to a standard just as teachers are. It is also crucial to assess the needs of parents and students individually. When this is done, it is ideal for tailoring programs to increase involvement that will also improve and sustain student success. District and building leaders should remove assumptions and biases to assist parents in bridging the gap toward the desired goal for all.

**Empirical Implications**

Research previously conducted gave perspectives of parents and students in Title I schools. Including the teachers’ perspectives from this study extends this existing body of knowledge. Previous research conducted by Park and Holloway (2018) shared that the focus of most parental involvement research had been on examining its effects on student outcomes; the goal of their study was to explore the determinants of parental involvement. This study shed light on issues that school leaders believed to have been taken care of with the additional Title I funding received. Despite the reasons parents are not as involved from past studies, this study shows the significant impact low parental involvement has on students, even with additional monetary resources. Family matters is a heavy determinant of student achievement and success, as evidenced by this study and previous research. The in-home relationships and the level of care given to children are essential when thinking of student outcomes in and out of the classroom.

The second empirical implication is that teachers need additional support and training for students. Often, teachers deal with issues in the school building beyond any training or professional development they have been provided, whether this is coping with social-emotional problems that the student is displaying due to things occurring outside of the school or addressing some of the hygiene issues students may have; this impacts their learning and
sometimes safety. Problems that may occur due to poor hygiene or clothes that do not fit are bullying or teasing, which could lead to an altercation that a teacher has to diffuse. Teachers in the study expressed the constraints with time and how it difficult it is to complete all required tasks in a school day. Heavy workloads are not uncommon for educators and are often increased with tasks due to students' unmet needs when coming to school. Teachers and students can greatly benefit from having the opportunity to teach and learn in a healthier learning environment when parents are held accountable. This would make it easier for their child to learn without numerous accounts of their child's needs being neglected in a variety of ways.

The third empirical implication is that more innovative initiatives are vital for student success. There needs to be opportunities for parents to connect and interact before, during, and after school hours. This research should serve as evidence to improve the implementation of parental involvement initiatives and programs for students who are serviced and their families. This study provided an opportunity to examine this phenomenon of low parental involvement in Title I schools from the teacher's perspective. This perspective is imperative because these are the people who carry out instruction and are most familiar with the child, their needs, how they are or are not being met at school, and the impact of parental involvement. Capturing the effect that low parental involvement has on the students in this setting confirms studies that used similar parameters and what other researchers have found. Kaplan Toren and Seginer (2015) shared that components such as the lack of family structure, attendance issues, and various absences were all factors that negatively influenced school achievement. The participation of family matters and was agreed upon amongst all participants. Shepard and Rose (1995) observed that “a key element in many of the most recent educational reform movements has been to increase parental involvement in the academic lives of children” (p 375). Moving forward,
years later, this is still a movement that has gained momentum due to its importance. There will still be gaps in achievement and student success if the proper measures are not in place with accountability in every area that it should be. Educators shared that it should be mandatory that parents read and sign off on communication logs and return essential documents. One teacher from the study shared that phone numbers of parents often change, but the school is not provided with the correct number, leading to issues of safety; current, working numbers should always be on file. Jeynes (2007) published a meta-analysis focusing on the link between parent involvement and urban student academic achievement, and among his foci were parental expectations, parental style, communication, and homework. Educators also shared in this study that it is imperative to understand parents and their needs and bridge the gaps that exist to strengthen the relationships between home and school.

**Practical Implications**

There are practical implications for various stakeholders revealed in this study that would profoundly impact student success, starting from the district to the community level. The practical significance of this study is that the parents are influential in how students perform and develop. "To ensure children's academic success, support is needed from multiple systems, including parents and schools" (Taliaferro et al., 2009, p. 278). These practical implications will allow stakeholders to see the daily issues that arise when parents' low involvement in the day-to-day development of their child in an academic setting occurs despite being rich in resources. The perception of parental involvement and student success varies for all stakeholders (Maquirk, 2015).
District Leaders

Parental involvement can encompass a variety of actions, such as assisting with homework, attending school functions, discussing academic expectations, and communicating with faculty and staff at their child’s school (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015). The implication for district leaders would be to start looking at the head officials of the district and make decisions tailored for each significant case, removing the “one size fits all” approach because it does not meet the needs of everyone. It is contradictory to have teachers differentiate student learning because it is needs-specific when this approach is not used for other decision making and planning. While building administrators must make the necessary changes for the teachers, the issue of low parental involvement needs to be addressed from the top, on the district level, and hearing what the needs of teachers are in terms of desired support. While this study took place in Title I schools, the district services schools that are not all Title I but likely have students who would also benefit from initiatives that increase parental involvement.

Districts need to allocate additional funds in Title I schools to improve and sustain parental involvement, student achievement, and foster positive relationships. There needs to be a decrease in the number of issues teachers have to tackle, ultimately leading to high teacher turnover and burnout if left unaddressed. Teachers in the study shared how they have lost colleagues due to feeling overwhelmed from handling situations they were ill-prepared for along with heavy workloads. They also shared feelings of being unsupported by both building and district leaders, like requests going unheard or without resolution and no follow-through when they have been promised change in areas that teachers requested due to the need. Teachers who are not cared for will find somewhere else to share their gifts, which could be detrimental to districts and, more importantly, the students. Teacher retention should be examined quarterly in
school districts as time goes on. Some great teachers are dedicated and teach in these more challenging demographics by choice and love what they do. Educators from this study shared that even the best teachers dedicated to this work and servant leadership have expressed they can only take so much and have left the district or profession entirely. They shared that much of the reason was an increased workload, often being ill-prepared to deal with specific issues that arise in their classroom with limited support but with the same expectation for success.

District leaders need to understand the importance of increased parental involvement, support for teachers, and their well-being as they are the driving force of schools. According to the Goals 2000 legislation, schools need to promote partnerships with parents, which would enhance students’ social, emotional, and academic growth (Bennett, 2007). Implementing a certain number of professional development opportunities where there is a need within various schools in the district is imperative. Each school should have a separate assessment checklist while understanding every school is different, and the solutions will not always be uniform. One teacher shared in a focus group that the curriculum for the district is always uniform, and they have to spend a great deal of time supplementing material to teach their students. Another teacher shared how time-consuming this is rather than having a specific curriculum for certain schools due to factors such as student experiences and ability levels.

Another recommendation is to incorporate wellness days, which would focus on the well-being of the staff and administration and provide support in the area where it is needed. Teachers shared how much they would enjoy having a room to visit, to take a mental break or cool down without tons of questions, just being met with understanding. Other educators in the study shared that having check-ins should be considered as well after participants shared how quickly burnout occurs. These check-ins would primarily be conducted by the administrators,
asking how teachers are and if they need support or resources of different sorts. Healthy teachers are what schools need, just as well as healthy students who can learn without hindrances. Operating under the "one size fits all approach" should be deemed unacceptable.

**Administrators**

There are implications for building administrators as well. Administrators need to be conscious of how they show up and support their teachers. Just as teachers advocate for their students, building leaders need to advocate for their teachers. Building administrators must allow opportunities for teachers to feel heard and supported. According to Leisy-Stosich (2017), recent studies suggested that principals also play a vital role in how to communicate and implement the standards for teachers’ practice and should provide them with support and professional learning opportunities. In Jeynes’ (2018) study building administrators also shared that students who have active parents in their education have positive attitudes towards their academic and extracurricular activities. Much of the work teachers complete is beyond the daily duties required for their position, but their hearts are in it and dedicated to their students and families.

All 13 participants from the study expressed the importance of their administrators’ supporting them by ensuring that parents do their part. At the start of the school year, parents could be required to sign a contract that ensures they will be part of all required meetings regarding their child's academic and behavioral concerns. The form could also explain the importance of their involvement, accompanied by a list of activities they are encouraged to attend and share the prizes parents can earn. There could be a meeting to get parents' suggestions about what committees they may want to create or join and places they would enjoy gift cards to increase buy-in for participation. Administrators could also set up a tracking system of the
different activities parents have attended, connected to their child's student accounts. For example, it is mandatory parents sign in when they arrive at the school. When parents are present for anything unrelated to arrivals and dismissals, time is accounted for and added to a point system. There could be a parent of the month as well due to their participation. Gonida and Cortina (2014) determined that schools with students who have regular parental interaction maintained higher achievement scores on standardized end-of-the-year tests than those who did not have regular parental interaction. For this reason, it is imperative to increase opportunities for parental involvement, and from this study is it clear that teachers are on board to support initiatives.

Teachers think that building administrators often take the side of families even when the approach is not right and do not realize how severe the need is to address some of their concerns throughout the school year. Teachers in the study shared how they are not diminishing their duty and responsibilities, but they would like to ensure everyone else is accountable for theirs. It takes a village to raise and teach a child, sharing responsibility. Suppose administrators encourage district-level leaders to implement the necessary changes. In that case, this will be a move in the right direction not only for teachers but students and their families as well. If administrators help parents and guardians understand their vital importance and create and carry out initiatives, it will significantly increase parental involvement and student success. Young et al. (2013) argued that parental involvement boosts a child’s perceived level of competence and helps to internalize the value of an education and their academic performance. While school counselors are part of the staff, these counselors need multiple opportunities to meet with students each week.
Teachers in these academic institutional settings are best able to identify the many educational and developmental deficits that children encounter when these needs according to Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs are not met, and the significant impact it has. It was suggested that administrators hire additional personnel who can meet the needs of those students who have been identified as having repeated issues of neglect or challenging behaviors. Additionally, teachers shared that there should be a built-in time in the daily schedule for teachers to have more calm, peaceful transitions with students, opportunities for family building and establishing a community for students as well.

Educators from the study recommended that administrators ensure that teachers feel celebrated for the work they do each day. The district and building administrators can allocate funds to express gratitude towards their teachers once a month. These celebrations would allow teachers to be seen and heard. Just as teachers need not show favoritism towards any students, which will create feelings of inferiority, administrators also need to adhere to this. Every staff member should be recognized at least once throughout the school year, even if the praise is only verbal; teachers shared that this will encourage teachers while giving them the inspiration they need to push forward. Parents are also watching to see how well the teachers are treated and supported. Schools should have a community of love, and it should be evident and genuine as they can tell who is for them and who is not.

**Teachers**

Practical implications for teachers would be to continue advocating for themselves, their students, and their families. Teachers operate as socializing agents and offer students social and intellectual experiences by instilling in them values, providing motivation, addressing their need to belong, and helping them to develop a social identity (Davis, 2003). Educators shared they
take on a great deal of responsibility and the weight of what their students are going through every day. They also spoke to the fact that they are most aware of their students' needs and should be given the autonomy to do what is best for their students, which diverges from a lesson plan or schedule. Teachers should be encouraged to speak up, ask for what they need, and be transparent about what they feel ill-prepared for. Creating more safe spaces for teachers will produce healthier, happier educators who are not as stressed, which could decrease effectiveness. Teachers must have forums in which they can participate to open the lines of communication between teachers, administrators, and district leaders. Parental involvement would improve student achievement, parent–teacher relationships, teacher morale, and school climate (Hornby & LaFaele, 2011).

When teachers are equipped with the best practices and parents are as well, there will be more positive relationship building amongst the two stakeholders, which is vital to student success. Educators are encouraged to continue showing up and showing out for their students and doing what they need to do in their classrooms each day to ensure students' success, giving teachers more autonomy. Teachers should also encourage and uplift one another while sharing strategies that may be working in their classrooms to ensure the success of the entire building. DeHass (2005) shared that teacher preparation programs across the nation identified that less than half of the state's programs included a parental involvement component. Since there is funding for professional development opportunities in the school, teachers should be encouraged to search for meaningful sessions that may be offered to the school and present them to the administration to conduct or sign up for personal sessions covered by the district.
Parents

There are practical implications for parents as well. One recommendation would be that because parents are the key driving force in a student's education, they should be held to a high standard. Parents should be aware of the leverage they carry on the success of their child. It is vital parents show up in their child's educational processes and make clear when they cannot rather than be dismissive of the need when provisions can be made. Parents should participate in completing contracts at the beginning of the year, and this would list certain levels of participation where they can contribute. It is understood that there are various reasons why parents may or may not be able to be physically present. Still, there are also other opportunities in which parents can be involved.

Involvement and accountability should be enforced and set as a standard because there are high levels of low parental involvement in these Title I schools. As mentioned from the teachers' perspective, these parents involved should be praised and celebrated as well. Initiatives created for parents should also reflect some of their choosing. Using a point system, parents would be about to redeem points for prizes at PTA meetings and celebrations. Celebrating parents and the effort and energy they put forth to ensure their child's success is the least that administrators and teachers can do. Olmstead's (2013) research distinguished that increased communication among the parent and the teacher causes more engagement that ultimately leads to more significant student achievement. The implementation of social activities where everyone can become acquainted helps lay the foundation for building home–school partnerships (Wherry, 2009). Initiatives would increase the positive relationships between home and school. Everyone needs to work together as district leaders, building leaders, teachers, parents, and community members to support and encourage future leaders.
**Community Members**

Community members have implications that came from this study as well. First, community members should look into the schools in their community where the children are taught. These neighborhoods should reflect love, pride, and collaboration amongst all stakeholders. The children in these schools are the future leaders of society, and they need to see community members come together for them as well. Two teachers shared how there are community stores in the middle of some of their students' communities and how important it is that these owners take a moment to share a lesson with students as they frequent the store. Another teacher elaborated that a simple math lesson would be great for students to calculate the cost of their items and how much money they owe and are due back in change. Often, students may not have many positive relationships with adults as they should. Still, community members can band together to show them the way and positively impact these children. It is essential to give back to the schools because the schools teach students the best they can to give back to their communities. As many of the elementary schools in the site's school district have a history of struggling with maintaining full accreditation, more programs need to be developed that are geared toward increasing the opportunities to excite and sustain parental involvement in the school (Benner et al., 2016). These opportunities can include career days and field trips where students can learn the processes of businesses nearby. In these cases, students will have a chance to excite something within that may lead to a passion in time. Members of the community include store owners who should be willing to participate in positive initiatives by celebrating parents, students, teachers, and administrators. Making small yet meaningful donations such as monetary gifts or gift cards to their businesses would be great for contributions. One teacher shared that the number of participants on career day is minimal, and that needs to be changed by
creating more partnerships with community members. It truly takes a village, and the community is part of the village as well. Everyone must wrap their arms around these children and give them all the opportunity to be successful and be inspired.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

This study had delimitations based on decisions I made regarding what the study would and would not include. Due to the nature of the research and wanting to capture participants' lived experiences, I chose a transcendental phenomenological design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants were teachers at Pleasants Elementary and Leap Elementary schools, both pseudonyms, and these were the only schools included in the study. I chose these schools because they are Title I and their teachers had experienced low parental involvement. The study's sample size was small but purposeful; there was a teacher for each grade level representative of kindergarten through the fifth grade.

There were limitations for this transcendental phenomenological study that I, as the researcher, could not control. One is the qualitative design which provides narrative feedback. This study only included one school district and two schools that are both Title I. This study also contained a small sample size of 13 participants who voluntarily participated in this study. Teachers in the study had years of experience ranging from three to 18 years of teaching experience. Each participant had at least three consecutive years teaching in Title I schools and had experienced low parental involvement. This study was geographically limited to one urban city in the state of Virginia. For this reason, this study may limit the transferability to use in other areas of the United States. The participants in this study were primarily female, which may impact how males can relate and identify with the presented data.
Recommendations for Further Research

This study offered insightful information regarding teachers' experiences with low parental involvement in Title I schools and the impact on students. There are also recommendations for low parental involvement to be researched further to improve student outcomes, increase parental involvement, and provide incentives to parents and teachers. Researchers can also conduct future research at traditional elementary schools that are not Title I and see how the two schools are alike and different regarding the impact of low parental involvement. It would also be interesting to see if many teachers experience the same phenomenon in these schools and which ways students are impacted, if at all. Another way to gather more meaningful information would be to carry this study into secondary schools in Title I schools to see how the independence level of students by Grades 9–12 is impacted by low parental involvement. Researching after increasing incentives for participation in the lower elementary levels would provide meaningful data for stakeholders. It would be meaningful to see how teachers' attitudes change towards their jobs and see how their experiences may or may not have altered. Another recommendation for further research would be to gain the perspectives of teachers and parents, as it would provide an account from the same setting but from a different yet valuable perspective.

Summary

The participants in this study consisted of 13 dedicated teachers from two Title I elementary schools. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the impact that low parent involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school. Teachers from the study shared that they love their students, and while this profession is rewarding, this proves to be only a portion of what is required for students.
Participants elaborated on the additional funding received in these schools and how it does not alleviate the strain felt by students, most notably when there is low parental involvement. Participants were very forthcoming in sharing their experiences, which captured the essence of the phenomenon. Maslow established a theory of human motivation in 1970, and from that theory emerged a pyramid used to address the needs of humans. Maslow's (1970) theory of human motivation, which offered a hierarchy of needs, was the theoretical lens that guided this study. In the previous research, it was highly suggested that there must be a focus on the final stage, self-actualization, when considering what an individual needs. Schools must be concerned with students' needs when they are not being met on the most basic physiological level. This study suggests this theory in other Title I schools and traditional elementary settings for further research. Implications for various stakeholders were presented from the district-level leaders to community members. It is essential to consider the needs of students, the teachers who teach them, and the parents who are vital to their overall success. Schools are important institutions, and so is family—the family matters. The consistent association of parents in students' lives and relationships established between home and school are all significant in how students achieve and develop (Maquirk, 2015).
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

August 12, 2020

Janelle Taylor
Gail Collins

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-360 FAMILY MATTERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS EXPERIENCES IN A TITLE I SCHOOL WITH LOW PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Dear Janelle Taylor, Gail Collins:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46: 101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Bakar, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office
Appendix B: Recruitment Letter to Title I Teachers

Date:

To: (Name of Title I Teachers)

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate in Education. The purpose of my research is to understand the lived experiences of teachers in a Title I schools with low parental involvement. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are a Title I teacher (K-5) of at least three years, have experienced low parental involvement, and are willing to participate you will be asked to complete a face-to-face interview and participate in a focus group. To help with selecting a group of diversified participants, please complete the screening survey (attach a link to this here). After receiving the screening survey, I will contact you via email to let you know if you’ve been selected as one of the participants in this study. I will henceforth refer to you as a co-researcher since I already know you will provide valuable insight and a greater understanding of the phenomenon I am studying. If you are selected as a co-researcher, it should take you no more than one hour and thirty minutes to complete the procedures listed. Your participation will be completely confidential, and no personal information will be shared.

If you choose to participate, you be given a token appreciation which will be a $15 Amazon gift card after the completion of an individual interview, focus group interview, and reviewing your participation for accuracy of transcripts.

Sincerely,

Janelle D. Taylor
Graduate Student
Appendix C: Screening Survey

1. What grade level do you currently teach?
   a. K
   b. 1st
   c. 2nd
   d. 3rd
   e. 4th
   f. 5th
   g. Title I Reading Specialist (K-5)
   h. Title I Math Specialist (K-5)

2. How long have you been teaching in a Title I school?
   a. 0-3 years
   b. 4-6 years
   c. 7+ years

3. Have you experienced low parental involvement?
   a. Yes
   b. No

The following questions as asked to help me select a diversified group of participants

4. What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male

5. What is your ethnicity?
   a. White
   b. African-American/Black
   c. Hispanic/Latino.
   d. Asian
   e. Native American
   f. Other

6. What is your age? __________

7. Are you willing to participate in this study?
   a. Yes
   b. No

8. What is your preferred contact information?
   a. Email
   b. Phone Call
   c. Text Message
9. What is your preferred time(s) for interview? (select all that apply)
   a. Mornings
   b. Evenings
   c. Weekday
   d. Weekend

10. What is your preferred time(s) for focus group? (select all that apply)
    a. Mornings
    b. Evenings
    c. Weekday
    d. Weekend
Appendix D: Acceptance and Rejection Emails

Acceptance Email:

Hello (Potential Co-researcher’s Name),

Congratulations! Thank you for completing the brief screening survey for a research study. This email is to inform you of your selection to participate as a co-researcher in the study. This study is titled *Family Matters: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers’ Experiences in a Title I School with Low Parental Involvement*, by Janelle Taylor, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University.

Your participation is of monumental importance for this study. You will be a great contributor to the field of education, our great school district, and society as a whole. I will be contacting you soon with the consent form and further instructions for the next steps. I want to thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study.

I can ensure your confidentiality and that I will value your time and all contributions you make as we move forward with this research. I am looking forward to seeing you soon! In the meantime, take care!

All the best,
Janelle D. Taylor, EdS

Rejection Email:

Hello (Name of teacher),

I hope this email finds you well! I wanted to thank you for taking the time to complete the screening survey for the research study. This study is titled *Family Matters: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers’ Experiences in a Title I School with Low Parental Involvement*, by Janelle Taylor, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. Although you were not selected, your time was appreciated, and I thank you for continuing to make a profound impact on the lives of students.

Best wishes for a successful school year of teaching and learning!

All the best,
Janelle D. Taylor, EdS
Appendix E: IRB Approved Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: Family Matters: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers’ Experiences in a Title I School with Low Parental Involvement

Principal Investigator: Janelle D. Taylor, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invitation to be Part of a Research Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, and a K-5 teacher who has taught for a minimum of three consecutive years in a Title I school that has experienced low parental involvement. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the study about and why is it being done?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The purpose of this study is to describe the impact that low parent involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will happen if you take part in this study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a face to face interview with me virtually via Zoom. This interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon place and time. The interview will take approximately forty-five minutes to one hour to complete. The interview will be audio recorded for transcription and analysis purposes.
2. Complete a one-time focus group interview with other participants that will take place at a mutually agreed upon place and time virtually via Zoom. The focus group will be conducted using a set of standardized open-end questions and will take approximately forty minutes to an hour to complete. The focus group interview will be audio recorded for transcription and analysis purposes.
3. Complete member checking, where you will review transcripts of your individual interview and your part of the focus group to check for accuracy. Member checking may take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How could you or others benefit from this study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society may include describing the impact that low parent involvement has on students from the perspectives of teachers in a Title I school.
What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked filing cabinet and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all notes will be shredded.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years, then erased, and all notes will be shredded. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. After you have completed all the procedures listed above, you will be given a $15 Amazon gift card as a token appreciation for your participation in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Richmond City Public Schools. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Janelle D. Taylor. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [redacted] or [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. Gail Collins, at [redacted].
Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

__________________________________________

Printed Subject Name

__________________________________________

Signature & Date
Appendix F: Standardized Interview Questions

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Guide

Parental Involvement

1. In the school setting, what do you feel parental involvement is composed of?
2. In what ways have parents shown they feel comfortable being involved in their child’s education?
3. How important do you believe parental involvement is to the lives of your students?
4. What activities or opportunities are available for parents to be involved at the school?
5. Do you believe there be more programs or opportunities for parents to be involved? If so, what are they?

Impact on Physical Needs

6. In what ways are the physical needs of students impacted when there is low parental involvement? Please provide some examples.
7. Where are places at school or programs available that are able to help children with their physical needs that are not being met by parents? In what ways are these programs helpful or not helpful?
8. Who is the personnel at school that is available to help children with their physical needs that are not being met by parents? How often are they available? Are students and parents aware these personnel are available?

Impact on Social Needs

9. In what ways are the social needs of students impacted when there is low parental involvement? Please provide some examples.
10. What programs in the school are available to students who are not having their social needs met due to low parental involvement? In what ways have these programs been helpful or not?

11. In what other ways do you see low parental involvement impacting the social needs of students in school?

Impact on Educational Needs

12. How has low parental involvement impacted the educational needs of your students? Please provide some examples.

13. What ways do parents advocate for their child and his/her needs academically?

14. If students are not given the adequate materials for school from home, how does this impact the learning process for them?

15. In what ways have parents exhibited an understanding of how critical their role is for being involved in their child’s education?

Impact on Student Achievement

16. How does low parental involvement impact student achievement? Please provide some examples.

17. What activities are in place for parents to be part of student achievement ceremonies or enrichment opportunities? In what way have these opportunities been successful? Are there any additional programs you see as a good fit to strengthen the engagement?

18. Please share ways you believe low parental involvement impacts student achievement both positively and negatively?

19. How significant is the impact of low parental involvement in the overall achievement of students? Why is this so?
20. What would you like to add that I may not have asked or that you may be thinking in relation to what we have discussed today?
Appendix G: Standardized Focus Group Questions

Standardized open-ended focus group questions:

1. What does parental involvement look like in a school or classroom setting?
2. How does your school provide parents with opportunities to participate in their child’s educational journey?
3. How are these programs mentioned in the previous question effective?
4. In what ways socially are students impacted when there is low parental involvement?
5. In what ways physically are students impacted when there is low parental involvement?
6. In what ways are the educational needs of students impacted when there is low parental involvement?
7. How is student achievement impacted when there is low parental involvement?
8. Is there anything anyone would like to add about low parental involvement in a Title I school and the impact it has on students that we have not talked about yet?
Appendix H: Sample of Observation Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Name:</th>
<th>Date of observation:</th>
<th>Time of Observation:</th>
<th>Duration of Observation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justine’s Parent/Teacher conferences</td>
<td>Month: November Day: 11 Year: 2020</td>
<td>1pm</td>
<td>Total 2.5 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General observations during session**

There was a great deal of questions parents had in regard to virtual learning. Parents who were struggling with assisting their children with technology were not afraid to say they needed help. Justine was very helpful to parents by providing them with her phone number if they needed help. Parents were appreciative of the helping hands extended overall. One parent was frustrated and shared her dislike for her child not learning in the classroom. Justine provided reassurance and maintained her composure throughout the entire process.

**Behavioral observations during session**

The teacher was calm and prepared with informative, detailed slides. One parent while meeting was frustrated and talking in a hostile manner at times. There was another parent that was excited to see the teacher and share how pleased she was with how virtual learning was going. Her daughter/student was excited to sit there virtually with her mother and teacher, while sharing what she learns. The female student was given praise by her parent and teacher with how well she did logging in to have the conference.

**Environmental observations during session**

The teacher had a very friendly background during her session. This is the same background she uses for her instruction—a hundred chart in the background, affirmations, and alphabet depicted with pictures that start with that letter. The background of the student’s home was a bit loud at times, with little children chatting and a television playing. The parent and student were engaged in the conversation with the teacher despite the noise while sitting on the couch in their living room.

**Reflections on observations**

I was intrigued by the amount of questions parents had. I also was impressed by the number of parents the teacher had come to conferences. Virtual learning was new for teachers, students and parents. The need for assistance at home increased as parents were helping their children in ways never seen before. This caused a significant increase in involvement with parents in the educational processes of their child or children.
## Appendix I: *Epoche* Journaling Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/8/2019</td>
<td>Before I conduct my research my personal experiences with low parental involvement are fresh in my mind. The assumptions I have about the teachers who have experienced this phenomenon as well may not be like those experiences of my own. I am assuming those I interview will be honest and candid about their experiences. The bias is that I will not judge the feedback I am given as positive or negative. I must ensure my responses are receptive. Moving forward I will ensure my personal opinions and experiences are not mentioned. I will refrain from comments and making any facial expressions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/29/2020</td>
<td>I am completing my first interviews for the study. As I am interviewing these co-researchers, I have had my own set of experiences in this district with low parental involvement. While they have not all been pleasant, some have been. Therefore, I assume that these participants will have similar experiences to mine. My personal bias is not to be judgmental of the responses that I get from participants if they are different from those I would give or have experienced. Moving forward, I must not share my opinions with the co-researchers during these processes. I also need to ensure I keep comments and non-verbal cues out of these interviews, as well as facial expressions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/4/2020</td>
<td>I am halfway through my interviews at this point. Overall, I have had great experiences with the interviewing process and thoroughly enjoy talking to the participants and hearing their feedback. I am at a place where I am conscious of being very careful. The more comfortable I get about this interviewing process, I continue to refrain from making comments where co-researchers share something I agree or disagree with. The personal bias I have is to continue not judging what the participants are sharing with me in these interviews on any level. Moving forward, I must not share my opinions with the co-researchers during these processes. I also need to ensure I keep comments and non-verbal cues out of these interviews, as well as facial expressions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10/2020</td>
<td>As I wrap up the final individual interview, I am proud of the restraint I have gained in keeping comments to myself and facial expressions. This is my last male interview of them all, and it has been interesting to see such a different set of experiences between the women and few men of the study; In contrast, they have many similarities, there are some differences as well. For personal bias, it is to remain engaged while removing judgment from what he shares with me. Moving forward, I must not share my opinions with the co-researchers during these upcoming focus groups. I will continue to ensure I keep comments and non-verbal cues out of these focus groups, as well as facial expressions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/19/2020</td>
<td>This past focus group session went well as I allowed the participants to speak freely after each question I asked the group. I was pleased with how everyone shared candidly. Today is my second and final focus group. I have enjoyed working with these educators and am grateful for how comfortable they have been to provide me candid accounts of their experiences. The demeanor shares that they trust me, which I am thankful for. This study significantly benefits because of this. I will remain engaged for my personal bias while removing judgment from what the co-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
researchers share with me and one another. Moving forward, I must not share my opinions with the co-researchers during the time we have together, even after the focus group session. I will continue to ensure I keep comments and non-verbal cues out of these focus groups, as well as facial expressions.

1/18/21 As I begin coding, recoding, and thematic development, I am grateful for all I have gained through these experiences now that I have completed my data collection for analysis. However, I will continue to keep myself removed from this process for my personal bias and give light to the co-researchers' experiences only. I must remain mindful of this throughout this entire process. I will in no way alter the essence of their lived experiences by incorporating elements of my own. Instead, as I move forward in this process, I will continue to use only what I have gathered from their experiences, despite how I may or may not view things.
## Appendix J: Audit Trail Sample Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 12, 2020</td>
<td>Received IRB Approval to Conduct Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 17, 2020</td>
<td>Contacted Participants for Pilot Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 27–28, 2020</td>
<td>Conducted Pilot Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 4, 2020</td>
<td>Email sent with screening survey for potential participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 9–18, 2020</td>
<td>Emails received for potential participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 21, 2020</td>
<td>Email acceptance and rejection letters sent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 29–December 10, 2020</td>
<td>Individual interviews conducted with co-researchers and transcription completed after each interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 29–January 13, 2021</td>
<td>Observations Conducted at Various Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 12, 2020</td>
<td>Focus Group Session 1 and Transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 19, 2020</td>
<td>Focus Group Session 2 and Transcription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 18-28, 2021</td>
<td>The compiling of all data was complete. Coding and recoding began to identify themes that emerged from the significant statements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2021 -current</td>
<td>Writing and revising Chapter 4 and 5 drafts to submit to Dr. Collins.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix K: Permission to Use Figure

Hi,

You have my permission to use the image in your thesis.

Saul

Hello I am a doctoral student of Liberty University. I am writing in reference to securing permission to use the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs figure from your article. This figure would be used in the literature review of my dissertation. Is there anyway you can help me with this? Thank you so much for your time in this matter.