

CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND PARENTAL
COMMITMENT: A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Joshua J. Barela

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the parents' experiences with their children's character education. The central research question for this study was the following: What are the parents' experiences with their child's character education? The two subsequent research questions were: (a) What are the perceived critical factors experienced by the parents influencing their child's character education process? (b) What are the perceived obstacles experienced by the parents hindering their child's character education and development? The central phenomenon of the study included 12 parental participants at a private elementary school in South Asia. The central phenomenon was generally defined as the character education factors for elementary school children. The primary theory guiding this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological System, which postulated that human development interaction between people and their environment greatly influences their behavior with parents, family, friends, and school. Bronfenbrenner's theory provided an ecological analysis of children's moral education influences from multiple environmental perspectives. The data collection was from two surveys, interviews, and a focus group. NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Q-DAS) was utilized to perform data analysis. Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological research process of seven steps guided this data analysis. The results of the study identified several themes in relationship to the research questions. The major themes discovered were parental commitment/involvement, parental experiences, and school/education. Additional research is required about the universal common virtues and practical application of character education curriculum, and there is an extreme absence of research literature addressing children's character education in developing regions of the world.

Keywords: character, Christian education, children, development, biblical worldview

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my LORD and Savior Jesus Christ. Hallelujah! Glory to God from whom all blessings flow! “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (*King James Bible*, 1769/2017, 1 Corinthians 10:31).

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Hallelujah! Thankful to God for the compassionate support of my wife and children, who poured their love on me during this process and granted me the time to complete this dissertation. You all are a blessing from God. I love you! I am also grateful for my beloved mother in Heaven with Jesus Christ and her parental commitment to us children. Thank you, Dr. Jones, for providing much-needed feedback, edits, and positive guidance on this manuscript and dissertation process. Thank you, Dr. Cates, for providing additional manuscript feedback and review. Thank you, Dr. Park, for your motivating encouragement and review. Thank you, Dr. Michael, for your time and further input during my dissertation defense. Thank you, Dr. Stanley, for editing my final dissertation with professionalism. Thank you, Dr. Armstrong, my friend who recently graduated with his Ph.D. from Princeton University and took on a new professor position at Oklahoma State University, for taking the time to read my dissertation and for your encouragement. Thank you to all my professors and teachers who blessed my life. Thank you to all prayer warriors, family, and friends who prayed for me on this journey. God bless you all.

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Copyright Page.....	4
Acknowledgments.....	6
List of Tables	13
List of Figures	14
List of Abbreviations	15
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	16
Overview.....	16
Background.....	17
Historical Context	17
Social Context.....	19
Theoretical Context.....	21
Problem Statement	24
Purpose Statement.....	25
Significance of the Study	26
Research Questions	28
Central Research Question.....	28
Sub-Question One.....	29
Sub-Question Two	29
Definitions.....	29
Summary	30
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	32

Overview	32
Theoretical Framework	32
Related Literature.....	36
Summary	59
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	64
Overview	64
Research Design.....	64
Research Questions	66
Setting and Participants.....	66
Setting	66
Participants.....	68
Researcher Positionality.....	69
Interpretive Framework	69
Philosophical Assumptions	70
Researcher's Role	72
Procedures	73
Permissions	73
Recruitment Plan.....	73
Data Collection Plan	75
Surveys.....	76
Individual Interviews	81
Focus Groups	85
Data Synthesis.....	88

Trustworthiness	89
Credibility	91
Transferability	91
Dependability	92
Confirmability	92
Ethical Considerations	93
Summary	94
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	95
Overview	95
Participants	95
Matthew	96
Mark	97
Luke	98
John	99
Paul	100
Tabitha	100
Sarah	101
Leah	101
Rachel	102
Deborah	103
Vashti	104
Ruth	105
Results	106

Developing Themes	107
Surveys.....	107
Interviews.....	108
Focus Group.....	108
Journaling.....	109
Codes and Themes	109
Thematic Analysis	111
Theme One: Parental Commitment/Involvement	111
Subtheme One: Parental Commitment to God, Prayer, and Bible Reading	113
Subtheme Two: Parental Commitment to Home	113
Theme Two: Parental Experiences	113
Subtheme One: Children’s Moral Development.....	114
Subtheme Two: Unconditional Love for Children	114
Theme Three: Education/School.....	115
Subtheme One: School Commitment to their Students	117
Subtheme Two: Home and School Relationship	117
Outlier Data and Findings	118
Outlier Unexpected Theme: Time	118
Research Question Responses.....	119
Central Research Question.....	119
Sub-Question One.....	120
Sub-Question Two	121
Summary	122

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	123
Overview	123
Discussion	123
Interpretation of Findings	124
Implications for Policy and Practice	128
Theoretical and Empirical Implications	131
Limitations and Delimitations	134
Recommendations for Future Research	134
Conclusion	136
References	138
Appendices	161
Appendix A	161
Appendix B	162
Interview Questions	162
Appendix C	163
Survey Questions Part 1 and 2	163
Appendix D	165
Focus Group Questions	165
Appendix E	166
Informed Consent Form	166
Appendix F	169
Research Permission Request Letter	169
Appendix G	170

School Permission Letter	170
Appendix H.....	171
Recruitment Letter for Parental Participants.....	171

List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Demographics.....	96
Table 2. Open-Codes and Themes Table.....	110

List of Figures

Figure 1. Developing Themes.....	107
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List of Abbreviations

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Q-DAS)

Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD)

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

When children develop biblical morals and character, generations and nations experience positive eternal transformations. Throughout history, people have cherished character education as one of the highest and noblest educational pursuits. Educators often misunderstand character education, and competing character education ideas have led to mixed results in studies. This chapter provides the foundation and purpose of this qualitative research study, which involves the character education experiences of students' parents at an elementary school in South Asia. Research (Jeynes, 2019; Kress & Elias, 2020; Kumar et al., 2018; Pietsch, 2018) stresses that the lack of character education creates lower student academic achievement and increases problematic behavior. Also, according to the research (Blandin, 2017; Harris, 1927; Maitanmi, 2019; McKenzie & Jensen, 2017; Pietsch, 2018), the church, home, and school need to serve together as the three-legged stool providing balance for the child to grow up to be faithful citizens in God's Kingdom.

Furthermore, the church, home, and school are not competitors but partners, and all three are directly responsible to God (Blandin, 2017; Maitanmi, 2019). Investigators (Cox & Peck, 2018; Getu, 2018; Jeynes, 2019) found that when a child learns to follow a Christ-like behavior and mindset, they usually perform better in academics and life. A biblical worldview gives students the correct framework to properly function in society with good moral character. As Martin Luther King Jr. famously stated, "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education" (Getu, 2018, p. 170). Chapter One will present the background of character education in children's education and the researcher's relationship with the topic. This chapter will describe the research

problem, purpose statement, significance of this study, research questions, definitions of important terms relating to this research study, and summary.

Background

Understanding the historical, social, and theoretical background research in this qualitative research study about character education with elementary school students is paramount. The historical perspective highlights the educational leaders and philosophical thinkers on character education among children and youth (Jeynes, 2019; Pietsch, 2018). The social background evaluation enables us to understand the relationship between moral education and influences on children's holistic educational development. A more profound comprehension of the social backgrounds empowers others to understand the ways children's character education shapes societies, communities, and families (Bunnell et al., 2018; Pietsch, 2018). Further understanding of the theoretical backgrounds provides various approaches and credibility to the necessity of character education among children. These perspectives and backgrounds in character education connect to ancient biblical times and principles (Homiak, 2019; McKenzie & Jensen, 2017).

Historical Context

Leading educational thinkers and practitioners throughout the history of human education are in complete agreement about the centrality of character education. From a historical perspective, all the leading educational philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Jesus Christ, and many other architects for over 2,000 years believed that instruction in virtuous character is the most critical aspect of education (Jeynes, 2019; Jones et al., 2013; Marrou, 1956; McKenzie & Jensen, 2017). They held the common belief in the positive holistic impact of character education, inspiring virtuous character in the lives of their fellow citizens. They

unanimously believed that the most dangerous humans on earth are those individuals who are very intelligent and highly educated but do not live with virtuous character (Cicero, 2001; Homiak, 2019; Jeynes, 2019; Kumar et al., 2018; Middleton, 2004; Palmer, 2001). From the historical beginnings of most schools for children and formal educational systems, instruction in character is the heart of their curriculum (Jeynes, 2019). Throughout human history, the ideal environment for children to grow in their character and holistic education is in a home with parents who remain together in a biblical marriage. This parental involvement model is a biblical example for their children to follow in life (Jeynes, 2020; Pietsch, 2018). Historically, many researchers emphasize the significance of early childhood years (i.e., preschool - kindergarten) and early academic school years (i.e., first-third grades) to the holistic well-being and success in adulthood (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Hardy et al., 1997; Kagan & Kauerz, 2007; Ma et al., 2016; Malin et al., 2017).

Educators have promoted the central axiom that without virtuous character as the educational foundation of life, just training up people with intellectual minds is of limited or no value (Jeynes, 2019). This practice of imparting education without character is harmful and can create catastrophic results (Homiak, 2019; Krisjansson, 2015). Teachers throughout time firmly believed that the highest importance is to build up societies with the typical fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) found in the Bible (Cicero, 2001; Homiak, 2019; Jeynes, 2019; Marrou, 1956; Palmer, 2001). According to the Global Corruption Perceptions Index (Hanscamp, 2016), ranking 175 nations on their levels of corruption and poverty, the most corrupt nations tend to be more impoverished, bringing a strong correlation between poverty and corruption. Those nations built upon biblical principles and Christian character education experienced minimal corruption. Regrettably, children are the largest group negatively affected

by many issues caused by political corruption and economic poverty. As various battles take place around the world, it causes the hearts of many people to grow less concerned for suffering children and those with no access to quality moral education. Moral character education for children is the moral backbone and ethical foundation for any society shaping the coming generations (Betawi, 2020).

There are several significant areas of concern regarding the lack of character education in societies. According to research (Cox & Peck, 2018; Jeynes, 2019; Shultz, 2003), the progressive disintegration of the home and spiritual life of the family creates a spiritual war of moral values between the authentic biblical Christian home and the values of the global public school education systems. Additionally, Christians have a progressive weakening and moral impact on their cultures and societies. Biblical influences on an individual's concept of truth and reality create their beliefs, their steadfast belief shapes their values, and values drive their actions. In many unreached regions of the world for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the people do not have access to a local church or Christian school (Cox & Peck, 2018; Schultz, 2003). Unfortunately, in many nations already reached with the Gospel, there is a growing number of young people leaving their local church and losing their biblical moral compass. According to studies, only 7% of born-again Christian youth make moral and ethical choices based on God's Word (Cox & Peck, 2018; Jeynes, 2019; Pietsch, 2018; Schultz, 2003).

Social Context

From a social perspective, research (Jeynes, 2019) provides evidence that schools with moral character education founded on the Bible have lower suspension rates, higher social skills, and a significant decrease in violent behavior. Duong and Bradshaw (2017) and Hanscamp (2016) indicate the adverse consequences of increases in student violence, corruption, and higher

crime rates in regions that lack biblical character education. These negative consequences can be devastating to society as a whole. The youth's educational character foundations play a significant role in the family and societal developments. A recent research study (Jeynes, 2019) collected over 200,000 subjects' data from 52 research studies compiled, discovering significant findings. The study's main focus was from the PreK into the first year of college levels using independent and dependent variables. The research results show a strong connection between character education and a person's academic and behavioral successes.

Researchers with a biblical worldview frequently describe moral or character education as genuine Christian education. This character education needs to have a biblical focus on making disciples for Christ and multiple stakeholders' committed to involvement. The interrelationship between school leaders, teachers, parents, and students is critical in the student's academic and personal achievements (Cox & Peck, 2018; Getu, 2018). Virtuous parents must be actively involved in the character education of their children. In Christianity, most religious leaders do encourage active parental involvement in their children's religious education and character development (Bunnell et al., 2018; Kress & Elias, 2020; Pietsch, 2018). The school needs to encourage and support learning activities at home. Schooling and nurturing educational desires in the primary years are critical for childhood development. Cultural contexts, differences, and past school experiences are essential in determining the family's participation in the child's academic and moral education (Blandin, 2017; Getu, 2018; Kumar et al., 2018).

A parent's influence on their students and their educational process is multidimensional. The perceived support from the elementary school students' families directly affects the students' academic achievements and subject interests (Sha et al., 2016). The school must take holistic approaches and parent their children's spiritual development to create the proper environment for

good Christian education or *Kingdom education* (Bunnell et al., 2018; Maitanmi, 2019; Pietsch, 2018; Schultz, 2003). Respected historical and educational thinkers in various regions support the social concept that lasting achievement motivation is fundamental and foundational to all education. Moreover, home and school-life impact students' academic motivation and play a critical role in children's educational success and character development (Maitanmi, 2019; Schunk, 2020).

Theoretical Context

From a theoretical background, supporting character education is rooted in the ancient times of the Old Testament and New Testament biblical writers. According to the Bible, Jesus Christ is the foremost respected teacher and embodiment of character education (John 1:3; Romans 11:36; Colossians 2:3; Hebrews 5:9). Character education philosophies evolved in eastern philosophy through Confucius and western philosophy through the Greek philosophies of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Among all the Greek philosophical moralists, Aristotle was the educational leader in providing the most substantial psychological account of moral character education. Aristotle stated, "Those who educate children well are more to be honored than they who produce them; for these only gave them life, those the art of living well" (Arthur et al., 2016, p. 3). Aristotle was the first to recommend that the city provide character and academic education schools for all its people. If genuine intellectual and character education is booming, young citizens will use sound wisdom in developing their city with integrity and providing brighter futures for generations to follow (Homiak, 2019; Krisjansson, 2015).

The essential idea of collective impact is the understanding that lasting and significant changes are more viable with collaboration among all stakeholders than a single isolated impact. This isolated impact uses only one organization's effort to formulate plans and gather necessary

funding for a more significant social issue seeking a long-term solution. Higher costs make the isolated impact model a less effective solution (Niemelä et al., 2019; Sagrestano et al., 2018; Tilhou et al., 2021). The collective impact model stresses the collaboration of all stakeholders to tackle issues; this allows creative team-based solutions (Heifetz et al., 2004). In understanding character education, parents are the primary foundation of their children's education. Parents significantly mold the child's values, worldview, beliefs, perspectives, and character formation.

Regarding character education, morally ethical parental commitment is a family responsibility to lead their children's holistic education process proactively. Any education institution will not effectively grow without parents, or guardians, actively participating in their child's moral and academic education (Castro et al., 2015; Tilhou et al., 2021). Schools that utilize teacher-parent-friendly policies can gain a deeper understanding of practical approaches. These approaches should improve collaboration between educators and parents. Productive-wise, teamwork is reciprocal and embodies focusing on the student and sharing (Kumar et al., 2018; Robinson, 2017; Tilhou et al., 2021).

Educational theorist Bronfenbrenner (1979) postulated that human development interaction between a person and their environment dramatically influences their behavior with parents, family, friends, and school. According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1979), the mesosystem level engages with the relationships between a child's immediate environment. This mesosystem includes relationships between the family and the school (Kim & Riley, 2014; Shelton, 2018). Another theoretical concept relating to children's development context is Kolb and Fry 's experimental learning theory (1975). Kolb's experimental learning theory stresses that concrete learning experiences begin with reflective learning observations, abstract conceptualization, and interactive learning experimentation through personal

experiences (Kolb, 1984; Morris, 2020; Myers et al., 2019). Kolb's theory has roots connected to Piaget's stages of cognitive development (Piaget, 1936/1952). This elementary student developmental stage situates well into the preoperational stage and starts to transfer to the concrete operational stage (Piaget, 1928/2009). However, Kolb's theory further explains the development stages and their connection to the student's learning experiences, greatly benefiting social learning scholars with pragmatic solutions (Kolb & Fry, 1975; Myers et al., 2019).

In the U.S., the government education policies strongly encourage family engagement in school activities with their children (Epstein, 2018; Park et al., 2017). When parents cannot put their complete trust in their children's school leadership and teachers, they will not participate in school functions. A leading advocate for parental commitment to children's character education and development is Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1979), which promotes a bioecological systems theory (Kim & Riley, 2014; Shelton, 2018). Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological framework theory describes the shaping of children's development in multiple ingrained levels: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Each level ranges from direct interaction between the child within their immediate environment. The levels further describe the indirect influences of culture and institutions (Kim, 2018; Shelton, 2018).

In the development of moral education, social-emotional and character development (SECD) is the expanded concept of social-emotional learning (SEL). This conceptualization includes the collective promotion of student-level character virtues (Battistich, 2008; Elias, 2009; Hatchimonji et al., 2018; Weissberg et al., 2015). The continual growth of core SECD competencies remains a top universal priority across all demographics, cultures, and regions (MacDonnell et al., 2021). Furthermore, SECD can provide critical character skills to equip children for daily challenges and gradually grow into young adults (Yeager, 2017). Schools and

teachers educating students, primarily from lower SES situations, are in a unique position to support the promotion of SECD core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, embracing responsibility in making decisions, and social awareness with the necessary skills for healthy relationships (MacDonnell et al., 2021). These core competencies create positive school environments supporting the foundation of SECD initiatives (Gregory et al., 2016; Kress & Elias, 2020). Regarding student-teacher relationships, emotional positivity towards the school with productive relationships throughout the school greatly assist with students' strong motivation for academic engagement (Miller et al., 2017). High-quality relationships between the students and educators are a crucial component for creating an effective learning classroom environment and character development (Kress & Elias, 2020; MacDonnell et al., 2021).

Problem Statement

Globally, the problem is the lack of quality character education in elementary schools connected to student's families and school involvement, creating a negative impact on societies (Hatchimonji et al., 2020; Jeynes, 2019; Lerner, 2018; Ramos et al., 2019; Shoshani & Shwartz, 2018). There exists a significant gap in research, specifically in the phenomenon of children and parental experiences with moral education. All relevant stakeholders still do not fully understand the foundation of Christian education (K-12) with positive family involvement in student achievement (Bunnell et al., 2018; Cox & Peck, 2018; Pietsch, 2018). Over the years, researchers have expressed that schools and parents are critical components in determining the success of their children's moral character and educational experiences (Blandin, 2017; Pietsch, 2018). However, fewer researchers have addressed the research gap concerning the standard operational definition for parental involvement with their students' intellectual and character education (Jeynes, 2019; Shoshani & Shwartz, 2018). There is a vital research gap in moral education with

the continual debate about universal virtues. Furthermore, most character education curricula utilized in schools do not address the student's specific context with practical applications for daily life decisions (Hart et al., 2020). Additionally, there exists a critical gap in the extreme shortage of literature addressing children's character and formal education with school and family involvement in developing regions of the world (Kim, 2018).

From a pragmatic perspective, literature (Jeynes, 2019; Kim, 2018; Kumar et al., 2018) has encouraged moral character education for children involving critical stakeholders without exploring the phenomenon. These undiscovered educational phenomena and literature gaps are especially valid concerning the research context of developing nations (Kim, 2018; Kumar et al., 2018). This research study seeks to acquire a general understanding of this phenomenon in a developing world region. The Holy Scriptures require family involvement (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:5-7; Ephesian 6:1-4) in children's moral, intellectual, and cognitive development (Bunnell et al., 2018). Home and school life consume the most influential time and formation of an individual's childhood years. The elementary phases and building blocks of life require more research and a greater understanding of the practical applications (Kress & Elias, 2020; Pietsch, 2018).

Purpose Statement

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to understand the parental experiences with their student's character education. In this research study, the central phenomenon was the elementary school students' holistic moral character development factors. Character education is the installation of foundational life virtues and values in forming children's moral life compass (Jeynes, 2019; Ramos et al., 2019; Shoshani & Shwartz, 2018). The theory that guided this research study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system. This

theory postulated that human development interaction between a person and their environment dramatically influences their behavior. This research study applied this theory to the students and their interaction with their parents, family, friends, and school, shaping their behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018). Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) provides an ecological analysis of children's moral education influences from multiple environmental perspectives. According to a recent study (Kim, 2018), a significant development context is the multiple disadvantages and missed opportunities for those in developing regions of the world. Family involvement and context are critical to the success of holistic character education (Jeynes, 2019; Kim, 2018; Zaff et al., 2016).

Significance of the Study

Research within the area of moral character formation for students is an immediate and urgent crisis in many educational school systems (Garbacz et al., 2015; Holik & Sanda, 2020; Hood, 2013; Jeynes, 2019; Jeynes, 2009; Kress & Elias, 2020; Lerner; 2018; Peitsch, 2018). In the realm of character education, the need for creating biblical worldviews based on the Word of God in the lives of students remains a primary focus, especially among Christian schools (Brown, 2018; Burton & Nwosu, 2003; Pietsch, 2018; Smith; 2013; Van der Walt, 2017). The holistic character development of children is foundational for life and eternity (Adams et al., 2020; Francis et al., 2018; Getu, 2018; Lickona, 1991; Pike et al., 2020). Empirical research shows that applying moral character education in the curriculum increases academic achievement, lessens suspensions, lowers destructive behavior, and decreases student dropout rates (Agboola & Tsai, 2012; Jeynes; 2019; Kress & Elias, 2020; Kumar et al., 2018; Papen, 2018; Pietsch, 2018).

Ideally, character education needs to address the holistic child concerning intellectual character, moral character, civic character, and performance character. Each of these four areas of character aids in producing civic-minded citizens who are capable, productive citizens in society, the ultimate goal of education (Homiak, 2019; Kress & Elias, 2020; Kumar et al., 2018; Shields, 2011). Studies in character development recognize that students spend a great deal of time at school; therefore, schools need to provide students with the assistance they require to maximize their full potential in life. Students with more excellent character development in childhood tend to experience more holistic success in life. For character education to impact schools, it must reflect as part of the school's culture and in the curriculum. The school leadership, educators, parents, students, and community members are critical stakeholders in students' character development (Jeynes, 2019; Shoshani & Shwartz, 2018). Research advocates that effective communication with collaboration between the school and home is the crucial connection influencing the child's character and academic success (Blandin, 2017; Maitanmi, 2019; Williams et al., 2017).

This proposed research study was pragmatically significant as it offered pertinent information about character education at an elementary school in a developing region. According to a recent study (Kim, 2018), development contexts have multiple disadvantages and missed opportunities for those dwelling in developing regions of the world. Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) paints a picture of the ecological analysis of children's moral and general education in developing regions. In developing nations, all the levels are highly relevant. Development context creates multiple challenges, and the research literature provides ample evidence that the disadvantages endured by children in developing countries limit their access to quality character education and education in general. A family's lack of education and a poor learning

environment are critical barriers at the micro-level, with family-school connection gaps of poor or no relationship at the mesosystem level. The myriad problems faced by children from low SES homes in Western developed nations and children in low SES developing nations are very different. At the exosystem, additional challenges exist for developing countries at a national level (Kim, 2018; Seginer, 2006; Shelton, 2018; Zaff et al., 2016).

This research study sought to encourage more vital character education for children by understanding their parental experiences. Furthermore, understanding parental experiences with their children's character education encourages stakeholders to collaborate in discovering more effective educational practices. Educational collaboration provides the most significant benefit for the children and their character development (Niemelä et al., 2019; Sagrestano et al., 2018; Tilhou et al., 2021). Pragmatically, this research study sought to provide a fundamental understanding for schools and families who desire to teach effective moral education to their children. This study sought to provide all stakeholders with quality research information to form collective action plans for students' character development. Moreover, the research results may encourage educational stakeholders to apply character education curriculums in their schools and homes to improve children's education.

Research Questions

This research study sought to discover the phenomenological experiences in which to answer the following central research question and a two sub-questions to address specific components of this research.

Central Research Question

What are the perceived parental experiences with their elementary school student's character education?

Sub-Question One

What are the perceived critical factors experienced by the parents influencing their elementary school student's character education process?

Sub-Question Two

What are the perceived obstacles experienced by the parents hindering their elementary school student's character education and development?

Definitions

1. *Axiological* -The philosophical study of moral values and ethics that foundationally depend upon concepts of achievement, philosophical value theory, and other forms of ethics (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
2. *Biblical worldview* - The Christ-centered perspective, direction, and vision of life based upon the Word of God; Spiritual 'Scripture glasses' through which a person sees and interprets the world around them (Maitanmi, 2019; Schultz, 2003).
3. *Character education* -Teaching that is the targeted effort in the development of virtues that enable people to lead fulfilling lives and create a better world (Jeynes, 2019; Shoshani & Shwartz, 2018).
4. *Christian education* - Teaching with a Christ-centered learning process by which the student is biblically led, guided, trained, built up, and equipped for the Kingdom of God (Cox & Peck, 2018; Getu, 2018).
5. *Ecological systems theory* - Human development is divided into five different levels of natural environments. These foundational five levels are the Microsystem, the

Mesosystem, the Exosystem, the Macrosystem, and the Chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

6. *Pragmatism* – An interpretive framework for research that is concerned with action and change and the interplay between knowledge and action (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
7. *SES* – Socioeconomic status is the social standing class of an individual or group. This status is frequently measured as a combination of income, education, and profession (Gubbins & Otero, 2020; Mansour et al., 2016).

Summary

Chapter One described the following vital sections with detail and explanation: the overview, background, situation to self, problem statement, purpose statement, the significance of the study, research questions, definitions, and the summary. Around the world, there is a problem with the lack of quality character education in elementary schools connected to students' families and school-committed involvement (Hatchimonji et al., 2020; Jeynes, 2019). There also exists a significant gap in research, specifically in the phenomenon of children and parental experiences with moral education with character development. This phenomenological study aims to understand the parents' experiences with their students' character education. Family and school experiences with character education require further understanding with more research (Jeynes, 2019; Kim, 2018).

There is a vital research gap in moral education with the continual discussion about the ordinary virtues applicable to all people, times, and places. Most character education curricula fail to address the students' specific situations with practical applications (Hart et al., 2020). There is an extreme scarcity of research addressing children's character education with school and family involvement in developing regions. The most present research focuses on participants

and settings in developed nations (Kim, 2018). This phenomenological research aims to discover further the collective stakeholder's involvement in children's character education from their parents' perspectives. Continuing research on this vital topic indicates the desperate need for stronger moral education among all children. The decrease in moral education with practical applications leads to higher societal corruption and the destruction of present and future societies (Hanscamp, 2016; Kress & Elias, 2020).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two discusses the requirement to comprehend the parental experiences with their students' moral education in an elementary school. The importance of moral character education and parental involvement is foundational in the lives of all children (Getu, 2018; Jeynes, 2019; Maitanmi, 2019). Many researchers affirm that teaching biblical ethics is the core of all genuine character education. From a biblical perspective, a solid Christian home and school leaders are essential in every generation to make eternal disciples for Christ (Csinos, 2017; Maitanmi, 2019; McKenzie & Jensen, 2017; Villiger et al., 2012; Wilhelm & Firmin, 2008;). This literature review addresses the central research question about parental experiences with their students' character education. Another focus of this literature review is to explore the factors influencing students' character education. Researching the literature about these factors naturally highlights the critical obstacles to children's character education encountered by all stakeholders (Jeynes, 2019; Ma et al., 2016; Schneider & Coleman, 2018). The theoretical framework is in five sections based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) five ecosystem levels, including other related educational theories. The corresponding literature portion will have four key sections discovering the committed involvement of all stakeholders in children's character education. This literature review details the theoretical frameworks and related literature, and concluding with a summary.

Theoretical Framework

The primary theoretical framework undergirding this research was Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system, in which this literature review studies the parental experiences with their students' character education. This theoretical framework was applied to utilize the five

ecosystem levels: (a) microsystem, (b) mesosystem, (c) exosystem, (d) macrosystem, and (e) chronosystem. Through this framework of these ecosystem levels, other theoretical frameworks find roots in students' character education and development. Some of these other educational development theories emerging from this research literature review include the following: Kolb's (1975) experiential learning theory, Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, and Piaget's (1936/1952) stages of cognitive development theory. These theories are connected and find their places in the five levels of the human ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development framework utilized a constructivist development model, with humans as the active participants sharing in the experience. In this theory, there was an attempt to understand the experience with an effort to acquire the proper skills for environment adaptation (Shelton, 2018).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the ecology of human development involves the progressive scientific-based studies of mutual adaptations throughout life. Environmental settings vary from minor to larger contexts per person. These adaptations are between actively developing humans with their ever-changing environments. Humans are not just passive recipients of their environment but active participants with continual environment adaptation to their ecosystem levels. Another labeling of this ecosystem is the "Person-Process-Context-Model" (PPCT) with systematic relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1993; Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018). Another researcher coined this ecology of human development as *develecolology*. This *develecolology* term studies the development processes between living beings and their environment, focusing on the organismal and context changes over time (Shelton, 2018).

The other critical theoretical framework interconnecting this research with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology development levels was Kolb's experiential learning theory (1975). This experiential learning theory applies directly to the field of education and many other professional fields. Morris (2020) explained that Kolb emphasized that personal experience is a requirement for authentic learning. The definition of a concrete experience is learning by actually performing the learned task. The substantial experience begins with reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and bold experimentation (Kolb, 1984; Morris, 2020). The experiential learning process requires total reflection and analysis

Kolb (1975) is the primary theorist of the experiential learning theory, although he had many predecessors who realized experiential learning has many benefits. Piaget (1928/2009), Dewey (1929), Lewin (1935), and Rogers (1951) used experiential learning to engage and propel their research and work in education. However, Kolb (1975) established a sound theory that explained why learning from experience is a practical pedagogical approach while also identifying the learning cycle and profiles within the experiential learning process (Kayes, 2002; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Fry, 1975; Watson et al., 2019). Piaget's (1936/1952) stages of cognitive development theory are more fixed to a child's physical growth: sensorimotor stage (birth to 18-24 months) creating object permanence; preoperational stage (2 to 7 years) creates symbolic thoughts; concrete operational stage (7 to 11 years) formulates logical thought; and the formal operational stage (ages 12 and up) with the development of scientific reasoning. According to this theory, all these stages are universally applicable across all cultures (Burman, 2020; Piaget, 1936/1952; Tourmen, 2016). The medical doctor and a pioneer in children's education, Montessori (1949/2012), stated that "from 0 to 6 is the most important part of life, and this applies to character development also" (Montessori, 1949/2012, p. 206).

Interconnected with Piaget's (1936/1952), Kolb's (1975), and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theories, Bandura (1977) explained that his social learning theory is rooted in the self-efficacy theory. This concept of personal expectations influences the person's self-efficacy by impacting cognitive development and practical functioning changes. *Efficacy* is the power or ability to produce a specific effect. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's efficacy. The primary factors affecting a person's self-efficacy are their experiences, modeling, social persuasion, and physiological influences. These expectations come from performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal. Social learning theory is the same as a social cognitive learning theory. Self-efficacy engages the cognitive processing of the efficacy built into received information and behavioral changes (Bandura, 1977; Cheng et al., 2016; Yoon, 2019).

In relationship to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, Lev Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) theory transpired in the area "between a student's ability to perform a task under adult guidance and/or with peer partnership, which steers the student's ability to solve problems independently" (p. 102). Vygotsky's theory stresses the collaboration of knowledge and human experiences for cognitive development. Researchers indicate that the most considerable difference between Piaget (1936/1952) and Vygotsky (1978) is that Piaget promulgates that children are socialized while growing up, but Vygotsky argues that children develop to become individuals as they are growing up into adulthood (Atak, 2017; Piaget, 1936/1952; Vygotsky, 1978).

In another second phase, Bronfenbrenner (1992/2005) renamed his ecological model the *bioecological model* for human development. According to Bronfenbrenner (1992/2005), this term better reflects the proactive role children play in their development. Furthermore, this

bioecological model term stresses biological influences on children's development.

Bronfenbrenner provided a more profound dynamic process and added further descriptions to the levels to avoid perceiving that development is entirely dependent on the child. This idea brings to light that a child develops in participation with their changing context or environment. Many ecosystem levels are overlapping, adaptable, and nested in their various contexts, directly and indirectly, influencing children's holistic development through social interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1992/2005; Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

Related Literature

In relationship to the five ecosystem levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the related literature section will cover other vital areas of this research study. The related literature will include the five ecosystem levels and their relationship to the development of character education: (a) microsystem, (b) mesosystem, (c) exosystem, (d) macrosystem, and (e) chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Furthermore, these key facets are foundational in understanding students' character education and holistic educational development: (a) parental and family involvement, (b) teacher and school involvement, (c) community involvement, and (d) student family background. Research and discovery of the foundational stones involved in children's character development enable a greater capacity to build strong character in the lives of all students (Williams et al., 2017). All the stakeholders must collectively work together to understand their roles and responsibilities with children's character development. Furthermore, they should seek to understand stakeholders' roles and responsibilities too. This mutual understanding will encourage deeper collaboration and teamwork among all stakeholders (Malin et al., 2017; Shubert et al., 2019; Robinson, 2017).

Microsystem of Children's Character Development

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the microsystem involves the closest childhood relationships, which directly influence the child's holistic development. These childhood relationships include parents, family, and friends. The ecology model emphasizes that the child is at the center of the microsystem with critical aspects of influence from daily life and nearest social environments. In this regard, researchers with a biblical framework will argue that Christ is the center and the divine author of all developmental ecosystems. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen." (English Standard Bible, 2001, Romans 11:36). One of the problems in any theory is the explanation of human development in the absence of God and biblical perspectives. Many of these theories still exist as universally respected truths and discoveries (Getu, 2018; Peitsch, 2018). However, researchers with a truly biblical worldview in keeping faithful to the Word of God know that all theories must come through the lenses of Holy Scripture. "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (English Standard Bible, 2001, Psalm 119:105).

Bronfenbrenner (1989) described "a microsystem as a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (p. 227). This microsystem is a pattern of specific working components influencing human development from infancy, childhood, and beyond. The system has interrelated and interdependent aspects to this human development system. The system is the organizational process as a whole, dynamically abstract, and understanding that the microsystem requires a person to practically view the operation. One critical component is the human experiences of those in the development system. If the component does not impact the child's experiential development, the component is not considered significant in the child's microsystem.

Furthermore, the microsystem operates in a setting with specific physical characteristics. The critical components of any child's microsystem are their roles, activities, and relationships (Shelton, 2018).

Humans share dynamic multiple experiences in their environmental settings. A greater focus on the process emerged in Bronfenbrenner's ecology theory. In the development of the ecosystem theory, Bronfenbrenner (1992) gave more substantial attention to the individual's development than just to the particular system of development. This development process includes proximity, context or environmental settings, and seasons. The physical proximity of the influencing experiences, and the frequency of the experiences over time, are all key development factors. All these elements must be evaluated at every ecosystem level to fully understand children's development. Studying the proximal processes with various consequences to development in various environmental settings gives another strategy for analyzing both genetic and setting components with their contribution to childhood differences in their holistic development (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

In the microsystem, the early childhood settings should focus on building positive relationships between children, parents, educators, and their educational settings. In the realm of character development, every person within the proximity of the child's life plays various roles. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that "a role is a set of activities and relations expected of a person occupying a particular position in society, and of others in relation to that person" (p. 85). One person may hold multiple roles in a child's development at the microsystem level. Each of the relations and activities influences the shaping of children's character. A person may carry the multiple roles of parent, teacher, and doctor in a child's life. Children learn their roles at home, school, and in society during this developmental process. Depending on the setting, children's

multiple roles may be a son or daughter, student, community member, or even a child (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

Mesosystem of Children's Character Development

Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that the mesosystem is the second human developmental level of influence. Bronfenbrenner (1994) clearly defined the mesosystem by stating that it "comprises the linkages and process taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person" (p. 1645). The term *meso* carries middle, which means that the mesosystem is neither the smallest nor largest in the ecosystem. The mesosystem is multiple microsystems. Every human may have multiple microsystems but can only have one mesosystem. This mesosystem level depicts interconnections between two or multiple settings in which a human participates. These settings can include family, school, and the local church, impacting child development. The mesosystem is multiple microsystems interacting together and containing many different dynamic experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hayes et al., 2017; Koller et al., 2019). Parental and family involvement in the younger years of child development context gives an example of two microsystems with the home and child's age dynamic connecting. These interactive links between family and early childhood settings are vital in the child's future development. They are critical factors in character formation, linguistics, personality, and mental-emotional health issues (Bronfenbenner, 1979; Cowie, 2019; Hayes et al., 2017; Shubert et al., 2019).

In this mesosystem stage of development, the settings, daily habits, and family within the child's home life provide attractive opportunities for spontaneous growth and learning. Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) recognized this concept with the closer the relationship equating to stronger influences on the child's life. Vygotsky's ZPD finds roots in

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which emphasizes closer relationships in society influencing the person's perceptions, behaviors, self-efficacy, and locus of control (Eun, 2019; Yildirim et al., 2020). In the light of children's character education, this mesosystem level emphasizes the critical development and educational connections in building the other three levels. Without a solid foundation, future adjustments and modifications may not be possible at other levels. Often, positive and negative experiences at the mesosystem level seep into various settings and contextual environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) stressed that understanding the ecosystem of another person, wisdom, and discernment must be applied, as an individual has multiple unique microsystems with various settings. This practical application reveals a multiplication of ecosystem factors influencing the child's development at the mesosystem level. The relationships and linkage between the settings and individuals are paramount for ecosystem development research. Discovering their communication, differences, and similarities are all critical research components. When the settings are conducive to human growth, this mesosystem provides vital support for child development. However, the mesosystem is not permanent and may transform as the settings dynamics change. The settings may change in their relationship or through additional settings placed in a person's development or loss of settings (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

In Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystem, transitions occur in the settings' realm, creating opportunities for new settings. Various direct and indirect links between settings may not become essential or non-applicable in a child's development as they grow older or through the dramatic life change. The interactive nature and quality of these relationships shape the child's mesosystem. From a school standpoint in early childhood, these settings should apply moral character education, integrity, self-control, mindfulness, compassion, interactive communication,

critical thinking, and essential life skills with a strong emphasis on positive development.

Parents, schools, and stakeholders must all work together to achieve the best results for childhood development into adulthood (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

Exosystem of Children's Character Development

Bronfenbrenner (1979) pushed to the forefront some of the less visible, unnoticeable, and other distant influences on children's holistic development. This exosystem includes choices made by settings managers, school quality, and other informal or indirect connections (Hayes et al., 2017). Effective communication at all levels is paramount and may often go unseen at this level. Styles and methods are imperative in effectively communicating accurate messages. These practical communication concepts ring loud amid conflict resolution between multiple microsystems, which may positively or negatively influence children's character education (Clapper & Rice, 2017). Conditions at this level impact the welfare of parents and adult family members involved in the child's life. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized that these contextual settings do not necessarily require a young student's participation at the exosystem level. If the parents work in stressful or stress-free environments, their professional climate affects their communication with their children.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) described the exosystem as the composition of "the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives" (p. 1645). Exosystem engages the individual's settings, focusing on essential aspects of their development in that setting. Moreover, the exosystem is the setting's relationship with each other and the individual's mesosystem. The exosystem's settings impact the events in the mesosystem. They can guide the individual in their

exosystem settings too. These settings in the exosystem may be directly or indirectly connected. Through intermediate links, the indirect links connect through another individual in the particular setting the person is experiencing development. In this exosystem process in children's character education, second-order networks develop through people who influence a child's development but never meet face-to-face with the child. These complex and diverse linkages create a type of small-world effect on human development (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

Depending on the setting in the exosystem, some settings may yield a more powerful influence on a child's life. Bronfenbrenner (1979) often referred to these types of settings as "power settings" (p. 255). How these power settings connect to the mesosystem dramatically influences the potential of human development. The participants form the power level in these settings from the original setting who can direct the distribution of essential resources and make critical decisions impacting the individual's development. These power-setting decisions influence those other people who may take necessary actions and advocate positions for the development of the individual. More powerful communications equate to a more influential setting for the individual. In understanding children's development, various settings and individuals have a more or less powerful influence on the child's holistic growth. Children's character education requires every stakeholder to understand their roles and responsibilities, ensuring appropriate use of power and zero tolerance for abuse of power. Depending on the situation and settings, a particular individual may become the more vigorous advocate for the child's development. The pursuit of favorable social policies impacting children's development is one area of advocacy in the exosystem influencing the other systems. Children's character education requires a developmentally supportive ecosystem through which the exosystem

settings are wisely competent and compassionate toward the developing child and all the vital stakeholders in their life (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

Macrosystem of Children's Character Development

Bronfenbrenner (1979) proclaimed that the macrosystem was the final context for influencing children's development in the original four ecosystems. This level focuses on the societal and cultural influences indirectly and directly shaping the youth. Much of this level is outside children's control, but the choices made at this level significantly impact their development and growth. The cultural context of every society powerfully guides the course of children's lives. At this macrosystem level, societal leadership at various levels makes critical decisions impacting many generations. These decisions include educational policies that guide children's development and character education. For example, educational policymakers and school commission boards decide many students' curricula and teaching methods. The curricula and pedagogical practices shape the hearts and minds of all students in those particular schools (Chuang et al., 2018; Hayes et al., 2017).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) original definition of macrosystem consisted of the regular cultural environments with commonalities found throughout the other systems. The macrosystem is a type of blueprint for the society describing the general culture or the subcultures. Typical patterns found by people and settings create the cultural nature of the macrosystem with their ideas, decisions, and outcomes. Each setting pattern variation from another setting pattern is a particular macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1994) went on to further expand the macrosystem definition by stating it is the "overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture or subculture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, lifestyles, opportunity structures, hazards, and

life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems" (p. 1645). The key to this larger subsystem is the commonalities across various settings throughout a larger environment (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework stresses that a person is consistently absorbed in the macrosystem. In children's development, the macrosystem engulfs their entire life. The broad interlinking of cultural dynamics impacts all their settings and participants. Children cannot simply escape their macrosystem but require changes in all the other subsystems to see some changes at the macrosystem level. If the moral character is not a priority practiced by participants in the child's culture, the development of the child's character must overcome more challenges. Many microsystems include educators, administrators, students, curricula, exams, and activities in the school setting. Among specific communities, the schools may carry similarities and typical rationales for implementing their practices. The school's common culture is the macrosystem. A plethora of new microsystems usually leads to a new macrosystem and brings a shift in the culture. In developing children's character, all stakeholders should understand the common macrosystem. Furthermore, they should try to make necessary positive adjustments to the microsystems. This action will assist in creating a new macrosystem (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained that macrosystems do not have clear lines as they overlap with other macrosystems. Multiple macrosystems may exist even in one household or one neighborhood. Conflicts and problems can arise as a blend of macrosystems dwell among each other. As macrosystems change and evolve, people in these macrosystems may resist these changes. Consistent macrosystems tend to have less abrupt conflict as development is more predictable and accepted by the participants in these settings. Blended macrosystems in

multicultural settings require greater understanding and skill sets for the development of all. However, the macrosystem does not produce the development but it is the context of the development. Additionally, the macrosystem does not include all things in the entire ecosystem. The macrosystem is only the consistent similarities, not the actual community or setting. Parents and other stakeholders should view the macrosystem as a facilitator of children's development. Positive lasting changes to the home, school, and community culture require positive changes in the microsystems going upwards through the ecosystem framework (Jeynes, 2019; Shelton, 2018).

Chronosystem of Children's Character Development

In 1986, Bronfenbrenner introduced the additional chronosystem level to show the constant changes across all levels throughout different seasons. Changes from a lower school grade level to a higher grade level are an example of a chronosystem and mesosystem simultaneously. The time chronology and the point in history experiences in childhood determine much of the influence on them. Students studying in different decades or centuries will have different experiences. The importance of historical dimensions in the ecosystem levels and the development of children is a critical component. Character education does not stay the same with a particular time or culture but continually changes delivery methods and context (Pinkerton, 2021). However, the core principles of character education should never change. The unchangeable and universal character values based upon the biblical Christian character must remain a constant source of eternal light for all generations (Cox & Peck, 2018; Erdvig, 2020). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (English Standard Bible, 2001, Hebrews 13:8).

Bronfenbrenner (1994) described the chronosystem as the encompassing "change or consistency over time not only in characteristics of the person but also the environment in which that person lives" (p. 1646). Time is a critical factor in human development as it directly influences all ecosystem levels. The changes in people, settings, and cultures are all moving through time. Chronosystem reflects upon all the types of changes in any society. These slow or fast changes may be social, technological, political, and educational in the realm of time. Throughout the process of time, adaption may be rapid or slower by these societal facets. Past, present, and future is the chronosystem undercurrent time model influencing the microsystems, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. New ways of communication, thinking, and acting requires critical adaptive abilities for people to function in their evolving settings. Too many rapid changes in any ecosystem may inhibit people's abilities to learn new practices and ways of living. These rapid changes may create increased stress and anxiety for the people in these settings (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

In researching child development, the researcher must strive to comprehend the various dimensions and levels involved in the child's ecosystem. At the chronosystem level, children encounter all forms of constant changes at each level through their time from childhood to adulthood. Parents and stakeholders involved with their children's character development must not lose sight of time. At the very beginning of infancy and childhood, there must be proactive measures to instill moral character development in the child. The positive and negative character traits learned in childhood build a lifetime foundation for the child and carry over into adulthood. Unfortunately, there is no reversing of time on this earth, as changes can only occur in the present and future (Jeynes, 2019; Shelton, 2018). From a biblical perspective, we are all commanded to be "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (King James Bible,

1769/2017, Ephesians 5:16). Character education is from the womb-to-the-tomb approach, with much of the permanent development occurring in childhood. The chronosystem concept enables researchers and stakeholders to understand the entire ecosystem of children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Shelton, 2018).

Parental and Family Involvement

Research has shown over time that parental and family involvement is critical for students' success in every grade level (Schneider & Coleman, 2018; Shubert et al., 2019). According to the researchers Blandin (2017) and Jezierski and Wall (2019), the operational definition and parental involvement components impacting student achievement remain a crucial area of research. In much of the research literature, there are trends with uneven results from various data collection forms. Different research methods produce various critical parental involvement factors creating gaps in the literature. Parents and guardians influence their students in multidimensional ways. The direct support students perceive from their parents or guardians affects their achievements (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Sha et al., 2016). Research does indicate there is a critical gap in the research on parental involvement with their student's education process producing higher academic achievements partnering with Christian education (Blandin, 2017; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). The current traditional methods for engaging families are too narrowly defined and frequently fall short of meeting the family-school partnership objectives in children's holistic education (Kzyar & Jimerson, 2018).

In further analysis of parental commitment with children's character development from a biblical perspective, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) and Piaget's (1936/1952) theories carried biblical overtones with human ecosystems and cognitive development stages. All four stages of cognitive development are between birth to 11 years old. These developmental stages correspond with

most Jewish and early Christian families in the Bible, which viewed 12 years old as the coming-of-age celebration with entry into young manhood or womanhood. In those days, and not until modern times, the term "teenager" and "adolescence" did not exist within the public and academic vocabularies. According to the Bible, there are simply the categories or terms of infants, children, young men and women, and older men and women. According to Jewish biblical customs, a young boy will need to celebrate their 12th birthday with a "bar mitzvah," meaning "son of commandment" in Hebrew. In modern times, this coming-to-age celebration has shifted from 12 to 13 years old, including both boys and girls. This celebration ordination included a special ceremony, combining reading the Holy Scriptures and praying with microsystem influencers of their childhood (Horwitz, 2019; Shoham, 2018). Coming from a traditional Jewish family, Jesus Christ went to a biblical elementary school attached to His local synagogue. Jesus celebrated His bar mitzvah as He grew up from childhood to manhood. Character and moral education occurred in the homes, schools, and synagogues (Brand et al., 2015; Longman et al., 2013; Packer et al., 1982). "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man" (English Standard Bible, 2001, Luke 2:52).

There is a considerable need for additional studies on parental involvement in their student's educational process (Duppont et al., 2019; Lv et al., 2019; McKenzie & Jensen, 2017; Schneider & Coleman, 2018). Research indicated that, over time, parental involvement is critical for students' success in every grade level (Lv et al., 2019; McKenzie & Jensen, 2017; Schneider & Coleman, 2018). The proactive relationship between the school and parents is critical in the lasting gap solutions. Although previous studies show the parents and school relationship effectiveness involving the students' educational process, the family and school's Christian faith impact on students' education needs further exploration with more extraordinary discoveries

(Cox & Peck, 2018; Getu, 2018; Jeynes, 2015). The definitions and characteristics of parental involvement that most influences students' academic achievement remain a crucial area of research. In much research literature on this issue of parental involvement, there are inconsistent results and examination of the data collection. Whether the research studies were qualitative or quantitative, identifying the critical influences of parental involvement is a gap in the research literature (Blandin, 2017; Jeynes, 2019).

Critics point out that the gap in the lack of parental involvement produces statistically adverse side effects on student GPAs, standardized testing scores, and high school graduation rates (Chung et al., 2020; 2019; Lv et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2018). The research results indicate that parents' involvement with their students is instrumental during the K-12 years of education (Chung et al., 2020; Jeynes, 2007). Most current research resonates between school and family factors as the major proponents of the gaps in student achievements. This research framework restricts the studies to school and home life without finding the other root causes (Jeynes, 2015; Wong et al., 2018). Others highlight that the moral duty of providing all students with equal opportunity to accomplish academic achievement requires total effort from all groups involved in the students' educational process (Blandin, 2017; Chung et al., 2020).

Other proponents of parental involvement stress that the parent's influence on their students and their educational process is multidimensional (Alexander et al., 2017; Chung et al., 2020; Sha et al., 2016). The perceived support from the students' parents directly affects the students' academic achievements and interest in various fields of study. More than the family background and socioeconomic status (SES), parental involvement in their student's educational process is a more robust prediction of their academic achievements (Alexander et al., 2017; Sha et al., 2016). Others mention a critical gap in the research on parental involvement with their

student's education process producing higher academic achievements. This gap is in the phenomenon from parents' perspectives in their efforts to work together with Christian schools. A critical problem occurs when parents are not engaged in their children's education, and schools desire to increase student academic achievement with parental participation. In previous research discussions, there exists a disputed impact of the home and school life parental involvement on students' academic success (Blandin, 2017; Chung et al., 2020; Jeynes, 2019).

Teacher and School Involvement

Bronfenbrenner (1979) expressed that microsystems dwell in schools and daycare systems depending on the level of human involvement. Researchers support this concept, especially in developing regions where education is a means of release from deadly poverty (Jeynes, 2019; Jeynes, 2009; Kim, 2018; West et al., 2017). For those families who can send their children to school, these schools and educational institutes become primary homes with the standard boarding school systems. These schools primarily influence the child's holistic development and core character formation. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development theory and Piaget's (1936/1952) theory on the stages of cognitive development, elementary schools are the epicenter of character development and education.

Researchers in favor of Christian school education explain that the school and home equip students with the necessary moral compass for life. This character education should create greater biblical holiness in students' hearts, souls, and minds (Cox & Peck, 2018; Getu, 2018; Oxley, 2021). Moreover, the research emphasized that the character principles found in the Bible directly connect with the disciplines in the schools' academics and are necessary for students to achieve their fullest potential inside and outside the classroom (Bachrach, 2021; Getu, 2018). Character education in schools and homes leads to more extraordinary achievements for

elementary school students and further education. Proper character development by the schools and teachers sets up their students for lasting success in life. Studies reveal that when the schools and educators promote biblical character principles, this virtuous action creates positive behavioral and academic effects in students' lives (Cox & Peck, 2018; Holik & Sanda, 2020; Jeynes, 2019; Jeynes, 2009).

The influence of character education (PreK-12) biblically-based education on student impact requires advanced research. This student character development begins at the foundations of elementary education. Moreover, Christian schools (PreK-12) focus on changes in personal behavior through character education based on the Holy Bible. Before changing American national laws back in 1962, the Bible was the primary gold standard book for moral and character education. For over 300 years, American education in all K-12 schools has interconnected roots in the Bible and is a requirement for character education (Cox & Peck, 2018; Jeynes, 2019; Jeynes, 2009). The Bible clearly explains that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Proverbs 9:10). Children's character development requires the home and school to work together to create the best environment for their growth. Academic success connects with character development at every grade level (Schneider & Coleman, 2018).

In further understanding the development of character education and school involvement, some researchers highlight that the higher corruption levels in any society equate to higher poverty levels. Christian schools and biblically-based education can yield significant results in societal character transformation. Researchers discovered that higher societal corruption leads to lower character development and lower standards in educational systems (Hanscamp, 2016; Monyake, 2018; Zheng et al., 2018). Statistical analysis from the Global Corruption Perceptions

Index (Hanscamp, 2016) ranked from 175 nations on their various levels of poverty and corruption in which the higher corrupt countries usually lead in the experience of higher poverty. This index revealed a strong correlation between a nation's corruption and poverty. Researchers found that those countries established upon biblical principles had lower corruption and poverty levels (Hanscamp, 2016; Zheng et al., 2018).

Proponents of Christian schools argue that proper character education is rooted in Christian biblical education. Christian school educators need to teach character education in all their classrooms. Christian school (PreK-12) leaders are directly responsible for the academic and character outcomes of their graduating students who live based on the character of Christ as the ultimate measure of their school's success (Cox & Peck, 2018; Jeynes, 2019; Oxley, 2021; Wilhelm & Firmin, 2008). Christian educational schools motivate students to abandon undisciplined and destructive personal behaviors. Christian education prioritizes a solid work ethic, which overcomes the students' family background and socioeconomic status. In comparison to the works of worldwide literature, the Bible is the best literary work in history (Cox & Peck, 2018; Jeynes, 2019). Christian education adds to the overall common good of all types of communities. Christian school educators must teach and live out the biblical moral principles (Hanscamp, 2016; Oxley, 2021).

According to the Bible, Christ is the foundation of all lasting and eternal knowledge. The Bible says, "He is before all things, and in Him, all things hold together" (English Standard Version, 2001, Colossians 1:17). Genuine Christian education focuses on obedience to Christ and His Word as the center of all quality education (Cox & Peck, 2018; Maitanmi, 2019). When students are disciplined to follow Christ at younger ages, they usually perform better in academics and their personal life. A foundation is needed to rightly function in society with the

strong moral character given through a biblical worldview education (Getu, 2018; Maitanmi, 2019). Academic research points to the fact that the more robust and individual's biblical literacy, the more successful the individual is inside and outside the classroom (Cox & Peck, 2018; Jeynes, 2009; Oxley, 2021). Schools must reframe, assess, and strengthen their partnership approaches with students' families (Kress & Elias, 2020; Kyzar & Jimerson, 2018).

Community Involvement

The exosystem level stresses that various cultures and regions of the world have different communication styles and methods. These communication styles go beyond the diverse languages but carry over into tone and body language. Some operational aspects of communication are only cultural dynamics, but other communication aspects can be harmful or beneficial depending on the contextual methods and effects. A toxic work environment can lead to a toxic home environment creating toxic child character development with lasting effects (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Buser et al., 2020). Another example of an exosystem level is the creation of open access to quality education for those children who have no access. This action gives more significant interaction between children's microsystems and empowers more opportunities for moral character development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

Research stressed that school, family, and community must work together to create the best possible student outcomes (Epstein, 2018; Kumar et al., 2018). Children are genuinely dependent on the virtuous character of all the stakeholders invested in them. The child's development is not an isolated, one-time event but a series of collective experiences through multiple influential people in their lives. The positive partnership between all partners in children's education must work together as a functional team. Proactive listening and

communication between all these stakeholders determine the direction of children's character development (Epstein, 2018; Jeynes, 2019; Kumar et al., 2018; Wassell et al., 2017). Lasting school and community partnerships need to pursue together a full-service school climate. These full-service schools include academic development, health, and social welfare services. These school and collaborative community actions breed more robust character development for all stakeholders (Kress & Elias, 2020; Valli et al., 2016).

Researchers asserted that schools must engage their communities with an updated solid curriculum, dynamic pedagogy for their students, and proper assessments and exams. Organized schools need to pursue constant improvements in their conduct and community involvement. The community on all leadership levels should support the schools with positive partnerships (Epstein, 2018; Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). Schools and families must work in collaborative teamwork to ensure the best educational opportunities. Furthermore, schools need to provide interactive homework enabling further teamwork with the students' families. Student character development is not just one institution's duty but the duty of the whole community to work together for the children (Epstein et al., 2021; Pruett et al., 2019). West et al. (2017) revealed that the schools' educational approach should cooperatively engage their students, encourage partnerships between educators and families, and develop mutual respect for all members of the school community. School leadership, teacher, and family relationship must all work together to maximize the character education opportunities for their students (Epstein et al., 2021; Pruett et al., 2019; West et al., 2017).

Student Family Background

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology of human development stressed that the child learner and their learning environment cross-connect in the early years of childhood education. All four

capabilities of Kolb's (1975) experiential learning cycle can manifest in this microsystem stage. Depending on the childhood experiences and education, concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation, and reflective observation are critical for children's character formation (Kolb & Fry, 1975; Kolb, 1984). At this micro level, children develop linguistic abilities in various settings where their closest adults communicate with and among each other. Both Bandura's (1977) and Vygotsky's (1978) theories stressed this concept of proximity in social-cognitive development and self-efficacy. For better or worse, those closest to the child in their childhood years will significantly impact their holistic development and character education (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978).

At this microsystem level, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that children learn to investigate in environments where educational discovery is a cherished value and the school curricula foundation on these values. Hence, virtuous moral character education is paramount in the schools and curricula (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018). Educationalists and theorists with a truly biblical worldview believe that the Bible contains the highest eternal levels of character education, being foundational to school curriculums (Getu, 2018; Pietsch, 2018; Schultz, 2003). The Bible proclaims that, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Proverbs 1:7). According to the Bible, Christ Himself is the perfect eternal embodiment of all character education, knowledge, and human development. "In whom (Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (English Standard Bible, 2001, Colossians 2:3).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) contended that cultural influences need identification to understand children's development truly. For example, many children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not pursue the science, technology, and mathematics (STEM) fields as they

progress in their education. This economic factor must not be overlooked but understood from the macrosystem level. The children who progress in these educational fields go further into the STEM career fields. The macrosystem level climate in the school and home is paramount to ensuring student success in these fields (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Wolfe & Riggs, 2017). Families, schools, and communities must work together to encourage practical support for them.

Zaff et al. (2016) and Gubbins and Otero (2020) indicated that the students' SES is a crucial factor in determining the students' academic achievements and holistic character development. Those with lower SES students have higher school dropout rates, lower grades, and lower academic achievements. However, few research studies on children's moral education and achievement exist with SES statuses in developing regions of the world. Even a low SES status in a developed nation can be an extremely high SES status in a developing nation. The perceived obstacles to character education by the parents of the students should give greater awareness to all stakeholders. Showers and Kinsman (2017) state that lower family SES equates to lower student success and development. Parental expectations for their K-12 students intertwine with their SES status in society. Approximately 14% of K-12 students living in lower SES homes complete college-level education. However, K-12 students from higher SES homes have a four-times higher percentage of a college education. The research proposed that families with lower SES usually have students earning lower academic achievements, higher school dropout rates, and fewer school graduations. This academic achievement gap among students from lower SES homes creates real challenges for all educational stakeholders, both inside and outside the schools (Betawi, 2020; Zaff et al., 2016). However, other research indicated that parental education levels significantly impact children's cognitive development more than their SES background (Rindermann & Ceci, 2018).

Other research critics emphasize that there is a need for additional research on the impact of the students' family SES and background. However, most researchers agree that parental SES is vital to academic success and character development. Children from higher SES parental backgrounds have greater access to educational resources to increase their chances of academic achievement and development (Anguiano, 2004; Xie et al., 2020; Zaff et al., 2016). Other investigators (Jeynes, 2019) mention that families with the common denominator of lower SES usually have students with lower academic achievements, higher school dropout rates, and lower graduation rates. This academic achievement gap among students from lower SES homes creates real challenges for all educational stakeholders, both inside and outside the schools (Kumar et al., 2018; Zaff et al., 2016).

Moreover, most educational research recognized that the phenomenal academic achievement gap appears pronounced among some students from lower SES family backgrounds. The disparity gap between students from lower SES families with those from higher SES families continues to plague the educational systems creating wider academic achievement gaps. These wider gaps negatively impact the students' academic and character development (Blanding, 2017; Dicataldo et al., 2020; Ye, 2018). Children from lower SES backgrounds have lower literacy and language skills with oral development. A child's more extensive vocabulary development creates more vital academic bridges, comprehension, and personal confidence.

Showers and Kinsman (2017) indicated that the student's family SES is a crucial factor in determining the students' K-12 education and future college success. According to research studies, the lower the family SES, the lower chances of the students completing their higher secondary education (Jeynes, 2019; Showers & Kinsman, 2017). Other researchers describe the

SES student achievement gap as a genuine concern as the minority student achievement gap and their holistic development. The two gaps with the SES levels are driving contributors to student academic achievement and development. According to most research, there is a confirmed present reality of an SES student academic achievement gap with connections to the minority student population. A key indicator that highlights student academic achievement gaps is high school graduation rates (Jeynes, 2015; Jeynes, 2019; Ye, 2018). Particular research emphasizing parental expectations for their K-12 students revealed that they powerfully associate with their SES status in society. Presently, only 14% of K-12 students from lower SES homes graduate from college (Showers & Kinsman, 2017).

High school graduation is a critical academic accomplishment to ensure future college graduation and higher-income employment job opportunities for all students. Research revealed that underachievement in college stems from high school students from lower SES family backgrounds with connections to their childhood (Jeynes, 2019; Lee et al., 2015; Ye, 2018). Quality character traits, such as honesty, are linked to the child's SES background. Studies generally find that higher SES homes value honesty more than lower SES homes (Blue et al., 2018). Lower self-efficacy, competence, and lower quality friendships tend to be stronger in students from lower SES backgrounds. Lower SES family homes trend toward the lower pursuit of academic achievement and character development (Crocetti et al., 2018). Advocates stress that students from different family SES backgrounds gain higher academic achievement in faith-based schools focused on holistic character development (Cox & Peck, 2018; Hatchimonji et al., 2020; Jeynes, 2019).

Other detailed research on this vital subject explained that the students' parental SES and family background are among the largest facilitators or obstructions for students' high school and

college academic achievements. According to research studies, 60% of higher SES home graduate students complete their college degrees. Students from lower SES homes have higher chances of going straight from high school to lower-income jobs and never going to college. However, students from higher SES homes have a four-times higher percentage of attending college after high school graduation (Jeynes, 2019; Showers & Kinsman, 2017). Research showed that students are significantly impacted outside of school at the elementary school level based on their SES level. Those children from lower SES tend to lack access to quality education and the societal relationships required for success. In developing regions, this SES factor becomes more influential on children's academic and character development (Kim, 2018; Ye, 2018). One of the many obstacles hindering academic and character education is the SES status of the students.

Summary

This literature review addressed the central research question about parental experiences with their students' character education. Another focus of this literature review was to explore the factors and obstacles influencing students' character education (Jeynes, 2019; Kumar et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2016; McKenzie & Jensen, 2017; Schneider & Coleman, 2018). The theoretical framework was in five sections based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) five ecosystem levels. The corresponding literature portion is the four key sections discovering the involvement of all stakeholders in children's character education. These sections included the parent involvement, community involvement, school involvement, and the child's family background.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the child's closest microsystem is their parents and family. However, other microsystems, such as schools and daycares, maybe just as familiar, depending on the situation. The mesosystem involves the relationship and communications, and

interactions between the microsystems. In elementary education, this mesosystem includes the interaction between parents and teachers. The exosystem engages outside influences created by the adults, such as school educational policies or curriculum modifications. In the fourth level, the macrosystem signifies the influential distant factors. These distant factors are the societal worldviews and cultural values. The final ecosystem is the chronosystem, which engages the historical time of children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018).

Biblical character education and parental involvement play an important role in shaping the children's character and holistic success. The student's family background and SES are critical factors in their character development and achievement. Biblically-based education develops a Christian worldview in students who will become future leaders in all professions worldwide. Most research supported the foundational educational philosophy that more vital biblical education (K-12) equates to more substantial student academic achievement and character development should encourage all educational leaders to teach the Bible in their schools. However, further studies need to understand in more detail the other critical variables contributing to positive student academic achievements and strong morals. Additional credible research to understand the other factors impacting students' academic achievements and character development needs further pursuit (Jeynes, 2009; Jeynes, 2019; Lerner, 2018; MacDonnell et al., 2021).

Critics note that there are some limitations in this research about parental involvement as most of the literature does not give any learning data from the different informal student educational opportunities. Much of the data gathered by researchers correlate with the other possible variables left out by design. Further research involving parental involvement needs to be

conducted with more interconnected variables to increase the validity and reliability of the research results (Bunnell et al., 2018; Jeynes, 2019). Supportive researchers admitted that many limitations are in the research due to sample sizes. There exists a need for a greater spectrum of solid statistical analysis for K-12 students to understand the more significant impacts of parental involvement and biblical character development (Bunnell et al., 2018; Jeynes, 2019). Moreover, there are limitations in analyzing the value of character-based education as there is not much literature comparing the statistical impacts on global levels (Jeynes, 2015). There exists a shortage of research conducted using mixed-method studies in the existing literature (Blandin, 2017; Jeynes, 2019).

Other critics point out that the research is limited in not showing the lasting student achievement effects of the informal and formal learning processes. The most effective family involvement methods need thorough research with more credible explanations into the practical applications for the parents (Chung et al., 2020; Shai et al., 2016). In collective comparison, researchers argued that there are limitations to this topic due to the only a few available longitudinal studies providing evidence for the strength of the relationship between students' academic achievement and parental involvement over time. Typically, the available meta-analysis studies are cross-sectional studies. Furthermore, there is no standard type of parent involvement scale utilized with a systematic method for the research studies, creating various measurements. Nonetheless, researchers can view the reliable patterns in the present and past studies, revealing the importance of parental involvement in their student's educational achievements and character development (Gubbins & Otero, 2020; Jeynes, 2019; Kim & Hill, 2015).

The educational researchers support the concept of moral character education, which increases the success rates of children and future educational achievements. Higher character development encourages positive economic and social blessings for all of society (Jeynes, 2019; Zaff et al., 2016). Multiple researchers agree that the global crisis of student underachievement is multilayered and needs multiple effective strategies to find lasting victory (Blandin, 2017; Jeynes, 2019; Kim, 2018). Proponents for vital Christian education emphasize that Christian biblical schools (K-12) contribute to the overall common good of society, and educators need to live out the biblical moral principles (Cox & Peck, 2018; Hanscamp, 2016).

The purpose of this research study was to understand the parental experiences with their students' character education. The research study sought to address and fill the gaps in the existing literature by conducting research in a developing region of the world. Researchers emphasized that most available research on this particular subject does not cover children's character education, their development, and family involvement in developing regions of the world (Betawi, 2020; Gubbins & Otero, 2020; Jeynes, 2019; Kim, 2018). This research study will address the literature gap on the relationship dynamics encountered between families, schools, and communities in developing children's character.

Due to the multi-demographic environment and groundbreaking contextual region of this research, this study sought to yield a variety of literature advancements in the field of children's character education. The research addressed the best character education principles and practices influencing the students' success. Furthermore, this research discovered the best ways to encourage involvement from all stakeholders (Epstein, 2018; Jeynes, 2019; Kyzar & Jimerson, 2018). The research utilized a transcendental phenomenological design approach, as this study determined to comprehend the parents' experiences with their elementary school students'

character education. In this research, the human phenomenon focus strived to disregard everything that stresses predispositions or personal biases to address the current research literature gaps (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this research study was to understand the parental experiences with their student's character education. This chapter's primary focus was the methods utilized in this phenomenological qualitative study. In chapter three there is a discussion of the design, research questions, site, participants criteria, procedures explanation, the researcher's role, the data collection method, and how the data will be analyzed. The completion of this chapter involves an argument on the trustworthiness of this research study. In the final sections of this chapter, any ethical considerations are addressed in detail, followed by a summary.

Research Design

This transcendental phenomenological qualitative research studied the parents' experiences with moral character education of their elementary school students. A qualitative design enables researchers to investigate why something has happened within intricate critical issues surrounding human beliefs and behaviors (Kelly, 2016). Understanding the parental experiences with their children's character education best fits this qualitative phenomenological research design. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), a qualitative phenomenological study encompasses participants with lived experiences, concepts, or phenomena requiring further research. Moreover, this study engaged in continual social construct changes with new interpretations and various forms of social justice. A phenomenological study strives to restrain personal biases and preconceived speculations about human experiences, emotions, and influences on a particular research situation. As mentioned by Moustakas (1994), phenomenological principles endorse the validity of a scientific investigation when the knowledge pursued is arrived at through accurate portrayals that make it possible to comprehend

to a certain level the abstracted meanings and substances of the lived experiences. The participants' beliefs, ideas, and judgments are vital aspects of this phenomenological research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From Husserl's (1913/1983) research philosophy, descriptive phenomenology developed into a research approach. This particular approach keeps its philosophical foundations while supporting ontological and epistemological requirements (Giorgi, 2012; Leigh-Osroosh, 2021; Moustakas, 1994, Vagle, 2018).

From a historical perspective, this phenomenological method seeks to comprehend human experiences through this method. Following a similar path to Husserl, Schutz (1899-1959) attempted to comprehend the meaning revealed during actual lived experiences. This type of understanding usually contains an element of the ambiguous and concealed. Schutz promoted that investigational phenomenological studies seek to comprehend attached experiences without biased assumptions. Ignored personal prejudgments and inferences do not stop these types of phenomenological studies to the furthest extent possible (Gros, 2017; Sousa, 2014). From a first-person perspective, phenomenological research studies a human phenomenon within the background of human experiences and situational awareness (Gros, 2017; Rump, 2018).

The transcendental phenomenological design approach is applicable for this research topic as this study sought to comprehend the parents' experiences with their elementary school students' moral education. These lived experiences were the human phenomenon for this research study as this approach strives to jettison everything that stresses prejudgments or personal biases with a robust philosophical component (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moustakas (1994) emphasized that transcendental phenomenology embraces obstacles as the researcher seeks to describe things as they exist with meaning comprehension, understanding the principles of the lived phenomenon with personal self-reflection. Other approaches will not fit this type of

specific investigation study. The phenomenology approach investigates participants' experiences and the essence of these experiences in light of the shared phenomenon (Giorgi, 2012; Leigh-Osroosh, 2021; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2018).

Research Questions

This qualitative study was guided by one central research question and two sub-research questions.

Central Research Question

What are the parental experiences with their elementary school students' character education?

Sub-Question One

What are the critical factors experienced by the parents influencing their elementary school student's character education process?

Sub-Question Two

What are the obstacles experienced by the parents hindering their elementary school student's character education and development?

Setting and Participants

This phenomenological study was in a Christian elementary school in South Asia. This diverse location had various cultures, tribes, religious beliefs, and languages. The participants included at least 12 parents of students studying in elementary school.

Setting

The setting selected for this research study was purposeful, practical, and dynamic because it was a Christian elementary school in South Asia. The setting was purposeful because this type of phenomenological research is not performed nor available in this region of the world.

From a practical standpoint, South Asia was an accessible location for the researcher. This setting was dynamic, since this location was uniquely diverse in languages, cultures, and tribes. For this research study, the pseudonym for this Christian elementary school was “Liberty School.” This region utilized English as the primary language for education, and this elementary school followed this practice. The student body and parents at the Liberty School were eclectic, with families representing multiple tribes, languages, cultures, and beliefs. The school’s diverse demographics reflected an excellent setting for a research study on this topic of character education. During this study, the student body was female 55%, male 45%, and genuinely multiethnic with over 12 different tribes and over 12 different languages represented at the school. This particular school believed strongly in the importance of character education and the holistic growth of their students in a region of the world that is still needing development. Most of the available research on this subject does not cover the parental perspectives and their children’s education from developing world regions (Jeynes, 2019; Kim, 2018).

At the Liberty School, the school leadership was well trained in the field of education and provided continual training for all their teachers. Through teamwork and cooperation, they all worked together to provide the best character education for their students. The Liberty School followed the regionally accredited secular curriculum, but they had implemented character education training and biblical principles throughout their classes. Although their regional curriculum was not biblically-based, they did have daily Bible classes and morning chapel services for all the students. During the school chapel services, they sang and taught Christian worship songs and Bible verses to all the students. Most of the school leadership and teachers professed to be Christians. Moreover, they began the school day with prayer, began each class with prayer, and ended the school day with prayer. The school leadership used the Bible as the

foundation for their students' character education.

The student body and parents at Liberty School were eclectic, with families representing multiple tribes, languages, cultures, and beliefs. The school's diverse demographics reflected an excellent setting for a research study on this topic of character education. Furthermore, the families were a blended economic status. As a typical elementary school in the region, the students range from three-12 years old, and parents were between 25 to 45 years old. The parents' economic status of their students at the school ranged from lower to higher income levels for this area, with an average of middle-income level families at the school. Throughout this research study, the information provided kept the school unidentifiable by applying pseudonyms for both the institution and participants.

Participants

The request was made to the lead school administrator to recommend at least 25 parent participants from the school to participate in this study. Among these 25 participants, selection of the first 12 parents who agreed to be part of this research study became the participants. These 12 participants were parents of the school's students with their home children's ages ranging between one-17 years old. The selected 12 participants' average age was 25-45 years old, with a balanced mix of female and male participants. The parents' economic status ranged from a balance of lower to higher income range, creating quality and purposeful research environment. The request was made for participants to represent at least six different tribes and languages to give a quality mix of research demographics. All the participants received protection by agreements in the research ethics and Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures. All 12 participants had pseudonyms and concealment of other identifying information, which protected their privacy and identities for this research study.

Researcher Positionality

As a researcher for this study, my philosophical assumptions are axiological due to my biblical moral values. My ethical assumptions as an epistemological researcher enabled me, as the researcher to view the participant's perspective from their level in this investigation with an understanding of their perception of truth. The ontological investigation supports the concept that others perceive reality from different perspectives. In this research study, I reported the differences as themes created and gathered together from the research. This research method ensured details by experiencing inductive, developing, and formation of the data collection. These research assumptions were subjective and perceptive to the participants portrayed through multiple perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study aimed to inform the readers of parental experiences with those involved in their children's moral education.

Interpretive Framework

For this research, I conducted a transcendental phenomenological study because character education has declined over the years around the world. My interpretive framework for this research study was pragmatism with a biblical worldview. Moral education is foundational to every child's life and involves many critical stakeholders. As a developing pragmatist, I sought to find solutions for problems in a reasonable, practical method that engages the environments of what is occurring and existing at the time of the situation. However, this pragmatic interpretative framework does not neglect or attempt to change the eternal biblical truths applicable to all past, present, and future societies. Praise God for creating us all in His Image (Genesis 1:27) with innate human freedoms and liberties under His eternal designs and frameworks. In the research process, viewing the world with only one perspective does not allow researchers to properly conceptualize and engage the world around them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although I appreciate

other interpretive frameworks and their various research applications, I leaned towards a pragmatic and biblical approach for this research study.

Philosophical Assumptions

The three vital philosophical assumptions are *ontological*, *epistemological*, and *axiological*. Explaining these philosophical assumptions provides a basic understanding of their core concepts. Reflection of each philosophical assumption in light of the researcher's worldview grants the reader a more thorough understanding of this qualitative research study.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumption embodies the philosophical concepts of personal beliefs and reality. According to this ontological assumption, researchers conducting studies understand that others perceive that reality from different perspectives. In alignment with this ontological assumption, the researcher reported the differences as themes created and gathered from the research study. Moreover, various ontological views of the participants gave crucial details, as participants had their shared universal realities and multiple realities connected with their perceptions. This critical information assisted the readers in understanding participants' realities concerning the researched phenomenon and results. This qualitative research method sought to discover the details by experiencing inductive, developing, and formation of the data collection. These research assumptions are subjective and perceptive to the participants portrayed through their multiple perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Epistemological Assumption

The researcher's ethical assumptions are epistemological, which enable the researcher to view the participant's perspective from their level in this investigation with an understanding of their perception of truth. The epistemological assumption engages what constitutes knowledge,

how knowledge claims are justified, and the relationship between the research substance and the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a Christian father and educator, the researcher highly values character education and development in all his children. This type of qualitative study was subjective as it sought to understand the parental experiences with the character education of their children. The knowledge gathered from the research study was from the parents' subjective experiences. However, critical common themes found from the collected research data provided a better understanding of their shared experiences related to the phenomenon.

Axiological Assumption

This axiological philosophical assumption finds a foundation in moral values and ethics. These values and ethics depend upon concepts of achievement, philosophical value theory, and other forms of ethics (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The axiological assumption of the researcher enables him to keep his biblical convictions. However, this assumption keeps the researcher from influencing the participants or the results of this phenomenological study. This type of qualitative study aimed to understand the experiences of the parental participants concerning their children's character education. However, the researcher has personal biblical moral values based upon the eternal nature of God and the Bible. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever" (English Standard Bible, 2001, Isaiah 40:8). Jesus Christ said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (English Standard Bible, 2001, Matthew 24:35). The researcher believes the eternal truths of the Bible are universally applicable to all times, places, and peoples. According to this biblical worldview, character education is foundational to the life of all children and their holistic development.

Researcher's Role

In the researcher's role, I believe with biblical conviction that parents and guardians should be actively involved in their student's holistic education and development. I believe schools and homes should do their best to provide biblical character education for their children and students according to the Word of God. "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (English Standard Bible, 2001, Proverbs 22:6). Genuine virtuous character education must be based on biblical principles and morals, enabling students to gain a biblical worldview. As with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I believe the Kingdom of God belongs to children (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). Due to my experiences as a father and educator, the burden of my heart was to study the parental experiences in connection to this critical research topic with a pursuit to discover further the best practical ways to provide the highest quality character education for elementary school students. I believe elementary school education is the foundation for all present and future education.

Due to my years of involvement in education, my personal experiences and moral beliefs find their foundations in the Bible. All participants and any research information were kept fully anonymous and confidential. Moreover, my role as the researcher was to understand the participants' experiences without personal predictions and unnecessary research controls (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). I understood that the researcher was merely the human instrument in this investigation. For this research study, I collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data with a qualitative phenomenological approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My philosophical assumptions played a part in this research, but I conducted this study with integrity and professionalism.

Procedures

The required procedures for gathering the necessary research permissions were completed for this study. All the necessary copies of the permission letters are in the appendix section. Moreover, the recruitment plan described the research study details following the qualitative phenomenological research provided by Moustakas (1994). A specific recruitment letter was provided to request and gather the required parental participants for this research study. The school received notifications about the necessary research updates, and the researcher sought their approval in any required study areas.

Permissions

The researcher secured a written approval letter from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for permission to conduct this research study and attached the IRB approval letter in the Appendix section (see Appendix A). Other essential items were listed correctly in the appendix section. The research interview questions for the participants (see Appendix B), survey part one and part two (see Appendix C), and focus group questions (see Appendix D) were listed as part of the study for this research. The volunteer parental participants will signed the informed consent forms before starting any research investigation (see Appendix E). The researcher requested the school leadership through a research permission request letter to conduct this research delivered in person to their school office (see Appendix F) and secured a school permission letter from the school administration (see Appendix G). The researcher sent out a printed recruitment letter to potential parental participants in the school (see Appendix H). All potentially identifiable data was kept confidential and concealed on the documents.

Recruitment Plan

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), purposeful sampling enables an increased

understanding of the research problem and sufficient quality control for a research study. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling enables participants to have the same experiences in this phenomenological study. For this research study, participant selection occurred because of the potentially useful data they could bring to the study. Purposeful research participants were selected to share their parenting experiences with their elementary student's education. In qualitative phenomenological research, a sample size of five to 25 participants is sufficient to experience the same phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). Before this primary research study, piloting the questions was conducted using at least two volunteer parents selected from the lead administration. This brief piloting of the questions ensured the interview questions were clear, applicable, and understandable to the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The researcher provided the printed and electronic recruitment letter copy to the school's lead administrator for recruiting the parental participants. The researcher gave these selected 12 participants the first survey before the interview and enabled enough time for completion. The researcher gave the second survey for the participant's completion before the focus group meeting. The researcher scheduled the focus group session and interviews at the convenience of the parental participants. Only after all the consent forms were completed and received from parental participants, including approval from the lead school administrator, did this research study continue with full approval. Before embarking on this research study, the researcher piloted the questions with at least two participants to confirm that the interview questions were clear, understandable, and appropriate for data collection. The researcher collected data from the parental participants after adjusting the survey and focus group questions. The researcher planned for approximately two to three weeks for data collection. All collected research information relevant to this study was made available to the school administration for approval.

Data Collection Plan

The researcher collected data primarily from interviews, surveys, and focus groups for this qualitative research study. The researcher's journal notes created a written format for data analysis and reflection throughout the study. Before conducting the primary interviews, the researcher piloted the questions to ensure all the interview and focus group research questions were understandable and relevant for this study. After piloting the questions, the researcher moved forward with the one-on-one interviews. After the interviews, focus groups with the parental participants were conducted using focus group research questions.

Further surveys provided during this research study enabled the participants to respond in a personal and written format. Personal journal notes were documented throughout the research study. This systematic data collection approach with interviews, focus groups, surveys, and journal notes enable the researcher to perform their study with the highest credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kallio et al., 2016, Kelly, 2016; Moustakas, 1994).

This research study used individual interviews, surveys, and focus groups to collect data to aid in understanding the parental experiences with their elementary student's education. According to Moustakas (1994), extended interviews are the most common method to collect data for the qualitative phenomenological research method. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the researcher mentioned that all the essential data with necessary details, descriptions, and reflective documented notes during the research process were in a secure location. The researcher used all the computer security features, passwords, and locking mechanisms and safeguarding all data collection. Data collection forms utilized in the gathering process applied secure protocol sheets for these methods. Once collected, the recorded and transcribed data were coded for accuracy and then placed in categories to identify the common themes (Belotto, 2018;

Creswell & Poth, 2018; Locke et al., 2020).

Creswell and Poth (2018) described the triangulation process as a proven research method for data collection. Triangulation applies various models, data sources, and methodologies within the researched phenomenon. Triangulation requires the researcher to carefully review the collected data through diverse methods to achieve a more precise, valid qualitative explanation of the participants' responses. This triangulation method applies multiple methods in pursuing data collection on the same research topic. Data collection through this triangulation process was a tactical research method of assuring the validity of this study. The application of triangulation supports valid and accurately transferable data between the participants and the researcher (Moustakas, 1994; Obaid & Gul, 2016; Rooshenas et al., 2019). The researcher achieved triangulation through interviews, surveys, and focused groups and keeping reflective journaled documentation. As the researcher, identification of the common themes, patterns, concepts, and other collective understandings were sought. According to Moustakas (1994), the focus group occurred through individual written text and accurate structural descriptions. The researcher conducted interviews using semi-structured questions with all interviews and focus groups recorded through a recording device followed by verbatim transcription. The researcher sought to organize all the collected data through NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Q-DAS) and utilized synthesized phenomenological analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maher et al., 2018).

Surveys

Moustakas (1994) stressed that the importance of surveys is a critical component in research data collection. Surveys enabled the researcher to collect data from the participants through their answers to the questions. The research participants received the affirmation that

their contributions were valuable as added knowledge to the research topic. Surveys bring out the clarification of meanings provided in the questions. During research surveys, the participants could add to the research data with their experiences. In creating surveys, they can range from a few focused questions with the participants to profound questions about the research topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Clary et al. (2021) stressed that all surveys should be easy to understand and respect participants' time. In addition, the surveys should seek to pursue relevant data and honesty from the research participants. The participants were requested to keep their responses to no more than four sentences, and were free to leave the study or not fill in all the answers. Reminders were given to the participants that all responses were kept confidential with no wrong answers. Surveys can play a vital part in the communication between parents and schools. Open communication is critical in surveys, empowering all stakeholders in students' education to grow together for more effective educational methods and results (Ma et al., 2016). Quality family and school communication are paramount in student development (Schneider & Coleman, 2018). The first survey was provided to the participants before the in-person interviews, and the second was given to participants before the focus group meeting. The different times and questions between the two surveys enabled the researcher to understand the participants' experiences better. The first survey emphasized the central research question, while the second sought to understand more about the two sub-research questions.

Survey Questions Part I

1. Tell me about your relationship with your student's school and character development.

CRQ

2. What information do you receive from the teacher concerning your student's academics

and character education? CRQ

3. What communications do you have with your student's school? CRQ
4. What relationship will you create with your student's school to promote their academic growth and character development? CRQ
5. How important is it for you to be involved in your student's education and character development? CRQ
6. What influence do you have with your student to motivate them with strong moral character, integrity, and academic growth? CRQ
7. What has been the best inspiration for the virtuous character development and academic achievement in your student today? CRQ
8. How often do you discuss with the school about your student's academic and character development? CRQ

Survey Questions Part II

1. What are some examples that you can give of your involvement in your student's educational and character development in school? SQ1
2. What kind of examples reflect your commitment to your students in educational and character development activities at home? SQ1
3. What are examples about your student's school that are positive for both you and the students? SQ1
4. How do the teachers involve parents and students for character development from lower economic backgrounds? SQ1
5. What will assist you to actively participate more in your student's education and character development? SQ2

6. How often do you meet together with your student's teacher? Do you discuss together about your student's character development? SQ2
7. What future problems may you encounter if you are not involved in your student's education and character development? SQ2
8. How do you overcome these obstacles encountered with your student's character development and education? SQ2

The survey part one questions sought to address the central research question. What are the parental experiences with their elementary school students' character education? In the second survey, questions one through four sought to understand further sub-research questions one and five through eight to learn more about sub-research question two. All the survey questions provided some answers for each of the research questions. However, the deliberate focus was on each research question. Santiago et al. (2016) highlighted that parental trust in the school is instrumental in creating strong relationships between the family, students, and school.

Survey Data Analysis Plan

Survey data analysis was conducted on the data collected upon completing all the participant surveys. The researcher collected the data from interviews, focus groups, and surveys considered on the same level with all significant statements that were listed that revealed or gave understanding to the way the parental participants experienced the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moustakas (1994) identified this process as horizontalization as the reduction process in phenomenological studies. The researcher created a textual description of the participant's experience with the phenomenon (Belotto, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Locke et al., 2020). The researcher applied epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and structural descriptions. The researcher gave a composite essence description of the participants'

lived and previous experiences. These participant statements were grouped into larger units of information or themes through the utilization of a spreadsheet. The researcher read these significant statements several times, used the process of elimination or bracketing, and coded them according to their common themes. This process allowed the researcher to evaluate the experiences of each participant while looking for common themes among the parental participants.

The researcher used the reduction or elimination method for data collected from each participant. This data analysis method enabled the researcher to perform cross-checks over the data and seek to reduce the elimination of repetitive, redundant, and ambiguous data statements. If the researcher saw multiple angles presented by various participants, this data was analyzed and documented to understand the shared experiences of the phenomenon further. The researcher completed the data bracketing, which allowed further reduction of unnecessary data. The researcher's prejudgments were restrained and kept in check as the researcher sought to discover the meanings of the participant's experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Furthermore, the researcher utilized NVivo Q-DAS to connect the collected data into common themes. The data collected through the surveys was placed into themes through this data analysis software. Through the use of NVivo Q-DAS, the researcher applied the coding method. Coding was used for structure and order with data analysis because of the large amounts of data that were collected, as this allowed for the collection of common themes, which was vital for this research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maher et al., 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Sohn, 2017).

Individual Interviews

After piloting the questions with at least two participants, all parental participants completed a survey, followed by one-to-one interviews. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the application of the one-to-one interviews had the interviewer and interviewee be in the exact physical meeting location. This data collection method created higher response rates and more profound information on the research topic. In differentiation from the survey questions, the interview questions enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences through verbal in-person questions and answers. This type of verbal research communication was critical for the researcher and participants. By nature of design, interviews were conversational and open-ended in their approach. During the interview process, any misconceptions were clarified whenever they occurred (Moustakas, 1994).

These interviews provided a key source of data collection for this research. The researcher conducted the interviews after school hours in the classrooms with the school tables, chairs, chalkboards, and whiteboards, which made it easier for all the participants as most lived near the school. This data collection process began with one-on-one open-ended questions. The interviews were semi-structured and in-depth in nature. These interviews lasted about 30-45 minutes, with several sessions for about three to four days per week for at least three weeks.

Open discussions were encouraged during these one-on-one and semi-structured format interviews. All interviews were backed up with audio recordings and written journal notes. These types of questions provided a more profound quality for qualitative research. It was paramount that interviewees be free to share their experiences during the interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kallio et al., 2016). The listed open-ended questions sought to target and answer the research questions. These interview questions were pursued to identify several themes from all the

research questions with particular focus on the primary research question: What are the parents' experiences of their elementary school student's character education? According to Yeong et al. (2018), an Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework was used for the interview questions. IPR requires several steps, including the proper connection between the stated interview questions and proposed research questions. Moreover, the researcher encouraged an inquiry-based conversation receiving feedback on these protocols with all the interview questions.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please briefly introduce yourself with your education and career background. CRQ
2. What is your definition of a character or moral education? CRQ
3. What are your experiences with your student's school activities and character development? SQ1
4. In what ways do you participate in your student's education and character development? SQ1
5. Describe the importance of your student's education and character development? SQ1
6. What are the most important experiences you have with your children's school and character education? SQ1
7. How do you feel about working with your student's teachers? SQ1
8. How do your student's teachers and school leadership promote character education? SQ1
9. What character education methods do you perform at home with your children? SQ2
10. What tools do you use in the character education development of your children? SQ2
11. How are you involved with your children's class assignments and character development? SQ2

12. What practical suggestions do you have to create stronger student character development both at home and school? SQ2

Questions one through two sought to find general knowledge about the participants and their perspectives on character education. In questions three through six, the objective was to collect further data about the parental experiences with their student's character education. These questions brought new insights into the school and home experiential relationship with character education (Kallio et al., 2016; Patton, 2002; Zahavi, 2017). Questions seven and eight focused more on the schoolteachers and leadership relationship with the parents from the parental experiences. The additional questions nine through eleven brought the parental home experiences with their students. The final interview question was pursued to gain practical feedback for both the school and home developed from parental experiences (Jeynes, 2019; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

These 12 open-ended interview questions sought to discover parental experiences with their student's education and moral development. All the questions were pursued to engage the parents in a straightforward qualitative approach. This approach positively guided the interview process pursuing to understand the parental experiences without prejudgments or harmful accusations. These qualitative questions sought to discover the participant's experiences rather than establish their characteristics (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Irarrazaval, 2020; Kallio et al., 2016; Patton, 2002; Zahavi, 2017). Through the researcher's interviews and reflective journal notes, the researcher sought to understand the participants' experiences and thinking processes. The key themes emerged from the research during this textual description of the participants' experiences. This textual description sought to find the collective phenomenon and the participants' practical

experiences, and describing all forms of the researcher's recorded data with interpretation. Through this process, themes emerged from the content and structure of the data. This data analysis included verbatim recordings with properly applicable interpretations. The way or "how" of these experiences was given structural descriptions and assisted in understanding the participants' essence of the lived experiences with the attachment of meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher summarized the essence of the participants' phenomenological experiences, which was the primary purpose of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Dorfler & Stierand, 2020; Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, the researcher provided a composite description created to reveal the essence of the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This composite description technique allowed the researcher to uncover the heart and center of this qualitative study investigation. Moreover, the researcher was able to impart phenomenon insights. By bracketing or epoché, the researcher could observe the interconnected relationships with less interference from the researcher's personal beliefs or judgments. The researcher used his journal notes in his interactions with the participants to assist him in capturing the true essence of the experiences with a more significant elimination of his human interference that may influence the research results.

In connecting the common themes, the researcher used the data analysis process software of NVivo Q-DAS. This data analysis followed a synthesized phenomenological analysis suggested by Moustakas (1994) called NVivo, which uses the Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Q-DAS). The researcher used NVivo Q-DAS in analyzing the audio and video from interviews, focus groups, surveys, and the unstructured textual notes from his journaling (Bunnell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maher et al., 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The use of NVivo

Q-DAS continues to expand every year with new technology, enabling researchers to perform data analysis faster and more complexly (Paulus et al., 2017; Robins & Eisen, 2017). Through the use of NVivo Q-DAS, the researcher applied the coding method. Coding was used for structure and order with data analysis because of the large amounts of data that were collected, as this allowed for the collection of common themes, which was vital for this research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Sohn, 2017). The researcher ensured the data triangulation to ensure that the participants' experiences validated the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Obaid & Gul, 2016; Rooshenas et al., 2019).

Focus Groups

Creswell and Poth (2018) mention that these questions should be fashioned to understand the focus group's human experiences. Richard et al. (2021) stress that focus groups are not just social club groups gathering together to discuss politics. Focus groups are specially formed to create group dynamics according to size, agendas, and configurations with specific procedures. Online focus groups have their benefits, but in-person focus groups bring a more substantial human essence to the participants to the shared experiences (2021; Synnot et al., 2014; Woodyatt et al., 2016). Throughout the research process with interviews and focus groups, transparency and replicability were crucial to successful qualitative research (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Richard et al., 2012). In the focus group, participants should be supportive of each other. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), focus groups create less tension and put the participants more at ease to answer the questions. Typically, they feel more comfortable in dialogue, and the focus group composition is vital for research data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The focus group included the two groups of six participants together for about 45 minutes. The researcher gained IRB approval for all focus group questions and interviews as with all data collection methods. Discussion time per question was scheduled for 5-10 minutes without pressuring the group but gave the focus group sufficient time to answer each question with valuable data. The questions were presented through a PowerPoint by a projector on the whiteboard, allowing all participants to see the questions visibly simultaneously. This focus group sought to add to the triangulation research process. The five focus group questions were used to answer the three research questions further.

Focus Group Questions

1. What do you like best about the school that encourages character education for your students? CRQ
2. What do you think about school training classes that will assist you to understand how to get involved in your student's character development? SQ1
3. What do you think will create a stronger learning environment and character development at home and school? SQ1
4. What are your parental experiences with their student's education and character development? CRQ
5. What is your greatest need to assist with continued growth with character education in your children's school and your home? SQ2

All five focus group questions sought to answer further the central and sub-research questions based upon parental experiences with their children's moral education (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Questions one through three sought to understand parental perspectives about character development for their students at school and home. Question four

pursued a greater understanding of character development from parental experiences (Richard et al., 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The final question requested practical feedback from the parents' perspectives for the school and home while seeking to address sub-research question two further. These qualitative questions promoted respect for the participants and opened them to the following two questions that followed their experiences.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

These in-person focus group questions brought a more substantial human essence to the participants and encouraged the parents to openly discuss their experiences (Richard et al., 2021; Synnot et al., 2014; Woodyatt et al., 2016). According to Schneider and Coleman (2018), feedback from critical stakeholders created communication bridges and development with student education. Similar to the surveys and individual interviews data analysis plan, this focus group plan applied NVivo software to group the collected data into key themes. Through this data analysis approach, the data collected through the focus groups continued the application of themes established during the survey and individual interview data analysis. Furthermore, the researcher applied the coding method through data analysis software with surveys, interviews, and focus groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maher et al., 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Sohn, 2017).

The researcher collected the data from surveys, interviews, and focus groups considered on the same level. All significant statements listed were revealed or given to understand how the parental participants experienced the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moustakas (1994) identified this process as horizontalization as the reduction process in phenomenological studies. The researcher gave a composite essence description of the participants' lived and previous experiences. A spreadsheet grouped these participant statements into larger units of information or themes. The researcher read these significant statements several times, used the process of

elimination or bracketing, and coded them according to their common themes. This process allowed the researcher to evaluate the experiences of each participant while looking for common themes among the parental participants. The researcher created a textual description of what the participants experienced with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher used the reduction or elimination of data method for data collected from each participant and ensured data was placed correctly into common themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Data Synthesis

According to Moustakas (1994), there are seven critical steps for data analysis and synthesis with transcendental phenomenological research studies. In analyzing the material, the researcher followed the methods and research procedures provided by Moustakas. These analysis steps included textual descriptions followed by structural descriptions. Other analysis steps included horizontalization, essence, reduction, and elimination with epoché or bracketing. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), Husserl (1913/1983) and Moustakas (1994) promoted bracketing to take a new perspective of the experienced phenomenon with less interference from personal biases or previous experiences.

The researcher organized the data by transcribing interviews, surveys, and notes from the researcher's journaling. The researcher synthesized the data analysis into primary themes. The researcher gathered data for all the participants without biases, reduced the data to meaningful statements, and placed them into key themes. These themes were data groups harmonized with specific labels for standard categorization and identification. In addition, a textual description enabled the interpretation of the primary data characteristics with detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences, followed by the analysis procedures of horizontalization, essence, bracketing, and themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). This qualitative research

study generated vital themes depicting the essential qualities of participants' experiences as a phenomenological study in their student's education and character development.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is fundamental in creating and investigating the research results of any qualitative study. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are the critical elements of trustworthiness. As a Christian researcher, the researcher firmly believes all things should be done with excellence and trustworthiness for the glory of God. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, 1 Corinthians 10:31). Trustworthiness gives credence to the investigation quality and assures reliability to the readers. Other researchers can study and utilize trustworthy materials with greater confidence. The increase in trustworthiness increases the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the research findings (Cloutier et al., 2021; Connelly, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stewart et al., 2017).

Creswell and Poth (2018) described memoing as a process of developing the ideas written or typed as data. This written data is gathered and analyzed by the researcher. Journalizing for memoing was a standard tool and protocol for this qualitative research. In the researcher's journaling, he accurately recorded the actions and human experiences the participants shared with the researcher. The researcher wrote journal notes after each interview and the focus group meeting. This memoing was derived from the interviews and the focus group. Memoing was the accumulation of all the researcher's written thoughts accurately recorded concerning his perception of the participants' visible, verbal, or non-verbal indicators. This memoing method can be used among other data gathering methods to establish data sets. These data sets reflected the researcher's thoughts during the data collection process. This

memoing provided a distinctive form of data collection than just using participants' descriptions (Stewart et al., 2017).

Creswell and Poth (2018) described the audit trail process as providing accounting records of information that are maintained about the specific transactions. An audit trail is significant because it tracks data back to its origin and provides transparency and defense of records for compliance, record integrity, and accuracy. This audit trail method provides research transparency with a records argument for compliance, record integrity, and accuracy (Carcary, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Audit trails confirm credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Ang et al., 2016). The researcher used this audit trail system to protect against any data misuse. Additionally, this method ensured the security of sensitive and essential research data. Triangulation validated the information collected through various methods, such as interviews and focus groups (Cloutier et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2017).

The researcher employed member checks to ensure the audio and video recordings were transcribed from the interviews and the focus group meeting. This data was returned to the participants for their review and approval. This process increased the reliability of the researcher's study because it established the necessary confidence and trustworthiness in the study's findings to dismiss any faulty readings. Member checking occurred immediately after the study to increase credibility and dependability. Member checks gave the participants the relevant feedback that improved the accuracy, validity, and transferability of the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This transcendental phenomenological study collected the primary data source from interviews, surveys, focus groups, and journal notes. Through the data triangulation, the source validation increased for the study. During triangulation, it confirmed the validity of the research

data through the use of one or multiple methods in topic data collection. Triangulation ensures the validation of these research findings and enhances credibility through data cross-checking and cross-referencing. The various data collection methods enabled substantiating evidence. This process revealed different vital themes. The researcher facilitated data triangulation validation by cross-verifying three data collection sources through interviews, focus groups, and notes from the researcher's journal (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stewart et al., 2017).

Credibility

Research credibility refers to the magnitude to which the research findings accurately explain reality. In research, credibility highly depends on the quality of the researcher's information collected and analyzed. Foundational qualitative methods were used to establish credibility. These methods were not limited to meetings with participants. In creating research credibility, triangulation enabled the researcher to substantiate the data collection from these sources enabling verification and authentication of the manifestations inside these qualitative methods. These data analysis time-tested methods included reflective journal notes, memoing, audit trail, member-checking, and triangulation (Cloutier et al., 2021; Connelly, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stewart et al., 2017).

Transferability

Transferability is another necessary feature of qualitative research. Research transferability ensures that the findings in one context with one study may apply to another context and study. Creswell and Poth (2018) mention that transferability defines the degree to which research can be transferred to other texts. Moreover, transferability reveals how research validation outcomes pertain to the phenomena. The transferability creates a thorough job of defining the critical research context and the assumptions. Transferability gains fellow

researchers' respect and support for the study's researcher by providing accurate context details. Moreover, the researcher of the study needs to give precise descriptions of locations and participants in the study and be transparent with the data analysis and trustworthiness with all credibility (Connelly, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Dependability

Dependability and confirmability provide data stability throughout the research study under various environments. With qualitative studies, dependability and confirmability have roots in reliability with quantitative studies. The researcher sought to be consistent throughout the research study. The researcher used an audit trail to ensure dependability, examining the research process and data analysis. Consistency, repeatability, and reliability are critical to producing quality research studies. The ability of the researcher to confirm the research study and analysis assisted in legitimizing the findings. Research dependability and confirmability were gained through triangulation, memoing, audit trails, and member checks (Cloutier et al., 2021; Connelly, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent to which the study's findings are shaped by the research participants and based upon the researcher's personal biases, self-interest, and desires (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability ensures that findings are transferable between the researcher of the study and the participants with thick necessary descriptions. Although reliability is vital in any research, confirmability seeks dependability. This dependability understands that the results will be subject to change and instability. From a naturalistic perspective, the researcher pursued confirmability as the goal. This pursuit of confirmability is different from just objectivity informing the data value. Both dependability and

confirmability were established through auditing of the research process. The application of audit trails aids in confirming credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Ang et al., 2016; Carcary, 2020).

Ethical Considerations

In all types of research, ethical considerations are nonnegotiable and imperative. The researcher ensured to respect the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants. All the participants were well informed about their consent to the research. They understood that withdrawal from the research process might be accomplished at any time. If possible harm to the researcher or the participants may occur, the IRB was to be notified immediately (Burles & Baily, 2018). The application of security codes to computer records and securing passwords ensured the participants' confident privacy. A computer was used to store collected data. This research data was kept secure with a dynamic password and frequently updated to limit any form of a data breach. The research data was protected on a portable drive and locked in a safe. The researcher was the only one to access all the collected data and ensured it was safeguarded. After three years, the data will be deleted and destroyed for all forms of data storage. The identity of all participating agencies, participants, students, and anyone connected with this research study was recognized only through pseudonyms, keeping with the best confidentiality. The identity coding system was used to match the pseudonyms of all participants and will be kept in a securely safe location. All the data collection procedures and transcribed notes were provided to participants after the completed research data analysis. Participatory research enabled the participants to be active partners through their contributions to this research study (Burles & Baily, 2018; Jackson-Hollis, 2019; Montreuil et al., 2021).

Summary

This study sought to further understand the parental experiences with their elementary student's education through a transcendental phenomenological research methodology (Moustakas, 1994). This qualitative research method addressed all three research questions in the study. The research participants were parents and students in South Asia's same diverse elementary school. The researcher's position with his interpretive framework, philosophical assumptions, and the role was to describe the research. The procedures, permissions, and recruitment plan to conduct this research study were provided with practical aspects. A clear data collection plan was presented with surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups, followed by data synthesis plans. The data was synthesized according to key themes as recommended by Moustakas. Finally, research trustworthiness was given clearly in connection with credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical considerations. The trustworthiness of this research study followed strict ethical considerations, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. In this trustworthiness pursuit, memoing, member checking, audit trails, and triangulation tools were utilized with excellent standards.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study's central purpose was to understand the parents' experiences with their children's character education at an elementary school in South Asia. The involvement of parents and all key stakeholders is critical in the student's academic and character development (Cox & Peck, 2018; Getu, 2018). Research revealed that positive parental involvement in their students' K-12 education highly influences their children's holistic success in life (Jeynes, 2019). This chapter describes the participants' demographics, surveys, interviews, focus groups, the research questions, and the key common themes based on the research questions. The chapter concludes with the data analysis results as gathered from the investigation of this research study with a combined findings depictions, which describes a synthesis of the meaning and essence of children's character education.

Participants

In this research study, 12 parental participants graciously volunteered their time to share their experiences with their children's character education. Thankfully, the volunteers participated in the research surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The elementary school in South Asia granted permission to utilize their classrooms for the research interviews and focus groups. The participants represented diverse ages, occupations, tribes, languages, and economic backgrounds. Furthermore, these parental participants had children of various ages and grade levels in the school. Most of the participants were involved in their children's character education. Pseudonyms were used during the research to protect and conceal the participants' identities. Table 1 below depicts the demographics of the parental participants who partnered with the researcher in this study.

Table 1*Participant Demographics*

Pseudonyms	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	Occupation	Marital Status	Number of Children
Matthew	42	Male	Asian	Church Staff	Married	2
Mark	43	Male	Asian	Artist	Married	3
Luke	35	Male	Asian	State Officer	Married	3
John	30	Male	Asian	Teacher	Married	3
Paul	39	Male	Asian	Software Engineer	Married	3
Tabitha	45	Female	Asian	Homemaker	Married	3
Sarah	41	Female	Asian	Homemaker	Married	5
Leah	27	Female	Asian	Civil Engineer	Married	2
Rachel	38	Female	Asian	Teacher	Married	3
Deborah	42	Female	Asian	Teacher	Married	2
Vashti	37	Female	Asian	Teacher	Married	1
Ruth	33	Female	Asian	Homemaker	Married	3

Matthew

Matthew was a 42-year-old married father of two children at the school and worked on staff at his local church. He held a bold posture but remained humble in his responses. Matthew had an even tone and made particular emphasis on job market competition. He stressed that all education should make children well equipped in the global job market. Excellence in quality education is paramount. Although he appreciated the character education method the school utilized, he emphasized job preparation more. He enjoyed the parent-teacher meetings and encouraged them to be more frequent. He explained that many people in the region achieve various levels of education but do not get jobs or successful jobs that make a good living for their families. Matthew was considered middle income in his society. However, he did not own much by way of property and assets. He had an overall positive view of character education at the school.

When asked about the definition of character education, Matthew emphasized the actions towards others. According to Matthew, they try to instill good moral character at home in their

children. However, they felt parents generally do not have much control over children's character development in the school. He emphasized that corrupt friendships at school can heavily influence children's behavior. Matthew believed that "prayer and academic studies" are essential to living a successful life. During the recent school lockdowns that forced all schools in the region to online education, Matthew and his wife had to give their children particular focus and quality care. He felt that many children go behind in their studies due to the school lockdowns. Matthew stressed that parents must "prioritize" their time and values to overcome challenges.

Mark

Mark was a 43-year-old artist, business owner, and a married father of three children. Two of his three children were in the school, while his youngest child stayed home with his wife, a homemaker. Mark was well-educated with several degrees, including two master's degrees, and he was a business entrepreneur. Mark was considered middle to upper economic class in his society and came from a well-respected family. He was very blunt and communicated with boldness and honesty about what he knew about the school. He felt that character education needs a more robust focus in both homes and schools. Mark strongly believed that character education, in essence, is knowing and acting upon the differences between right and wrong behavior. Concerning character education, Mark stated, "I think it is the most important duty of parents to make our children into good moral citizens." He tried to discipline his children at home, corrected them, and encouraged high communication with them.

Regarding the school, Mark did not hear much from the teachers or school and feels more needs to be done for parental involvement. However, he admitted that he has disengaged from the school leadership and teachers. Mark mentioned that there are some parent-teacher meetings

but does not find them fruitful and believes his feedback was ignored on many different levels. He did mention his children's previous school with more substantial approval for parental involvement but still decided to keep his children in the current school for academics and location. He recommended the school do more to engage parents and listen to their opinions. Furthermore, Mark believed schools should do more to prepare children for future professions and leadership opportunities.

Luke

Luke was a 35-year-old government officer in his state and a married father with three children. He had two children in the school while one stays home with his wife and grandparents. Luke was a high achiever in his family, both in education and job. Luke was considered the higher economic status in his society as he built his own home and purchased several cars. As a government officer with the state government, he carried many responsibilities and was in charge of many governmental employees. Luke had a science education background, and the researcher could hear some of his analytical responses reflecting his background. However, he wished the school could do more through character education and parental involvement. He believed more parent-teacher meetings would benefit all. The few school events were okay, but they were mere spectators and not active participants. Luke tried to lead his home spiritually with nightly prayers and Bible reading with his children.

Luke believed that "knowing the Bible" is essential in quality character education. He teaches his children to respect elders, school leadership, and teachers. This virtue of respect is founded in the Bible and extends beyond just the home life with family. As the belief of many participants in the school and region, Luke was forced to be more involved with his children's academic education and character development during the school lockdown periods. The online

method for elementary school students is lacking in many areas, and schools never experience this situation with limited resources. As a parent highly involved in his children's character education, he found it necessary to "practice what I teach from the Bible."

John

John was a 30-year-old married father of three children in the school and works as a teacher in a local high school. He was considered from a lower to the middle-income background. He made much eye contact and hand motions with his responses. John's joyful personality was found in every answer, and he tried to take positive approaches to life. He liked the parent-teacher meetings and used various electronic communication with his students' teachers. John emphasized that moral teaching is essential both at school and at home. He loved nature and enjoyed taking his children on local nature walks. Although John was not much involved in the school, he tried to spend time with his children when returning home from his duties. He believed character education is not just in the school classrooms but holistically in all of his children's development. John's wife is a homemaker, and he is the primary wage earner for his family. This dimension was prevalent in this society.

In connecting with his children and school, John believed that parental involvement and open communication with the school is valuable for all stakeholders. Furthermore, he expressed that parents should take on active roles in their children's academic and character development. John held to the belief that parents need to take a "big picture" character education perspective and always look for the best ways to improve the next generation's moral character. He described that sometimes parents might get too focused on their children making high test scores in school and focusing less on their character development. John advocated that parents must be committed to their children and give them the best opportunities to succeed in all areas of life.

Paul

Paul was a 39-year-old software engineer and married father of three children in the school. He was educated with a computer degree, professional experience, and education, carrying a firm, analytical demeanor. Paul maintained eye contact throughout the interview. Paul truly believed that character education is holistic. Character education was not just in the school but also in the home and community. Although he spent his day at work earning a middle-higher income for his family, he tried to spend his evenings with his family. Paul saw the evening time as vital for the spiritual development of his children. They concluded each day with prayers and highly stressed spending quality time with his children.

Parent-teacher meetings were a treasured time for Paul as they enable him to have pure and professional interaction with his children's teachers. Whenever he did go to the school, it encouraged him to see the school leadership and administration present for their duties. He explained that in some schools, this is not the typical environment. Whenever Paul could not help with certain homework subjects for his children, he hired a tutor to come to his home and teach his children. Paul "finds time to be the biggest challenge concerning obstacles and challenges." He explained that "we only get so much time in life. With the limited time, I have to overcome this time obstacle." Paul expressed that children grow up very fast and do not wait for parents to figure things out. He strongly advocated that every day spent with our children is a special gift from God and must be utilized with loving wisdom.

Tabitha

Tabitha was a 45-year-old married mother of three children and works as a homemaker. Only two of her children were in the school and live with her at home. Her eldest child was from

a previous marriage, a student at another school, and lives with her grandparents. Tabitha spoke relatively low in volume and carried a humble personality. She took time to think and reflect on her questions. However, her answers were short, without great details and analysis. Some eye-to-eye contact was made in the interview, but she mostly looked away to think about her answers. She emphasized character education in the school by way of school chapels and Bible classes. Parent-teacher meetings at the school are significant because they provide an avenue for fresh dialogue with their teachers. Tabitha made a serious effort to teach her children at home during their homework sessions. She loved her children and wanted “only the best for them.” She tried with her husband to have nightly prayers and Bible studies with their children.

Sarah

Sarah was a 41-year-old mother of five children and works as a homemaker. Four of her children were students in the school. Sarah's husband was the primary income provider for their family, and they are considered to have a higher income status in society. Sarah gave short, intelligent answers and carried a quieter public personality. She enjoyed homemaking and teaching the children at home too. As a family, they have nightly prayers and Bible study together. She considered character education to be vital for her family and society. Sarah approved of the school's academic and character education. She spoke highly of the school leadership and teachers' efforts to instill character education in her students. The school morning chapel services and Bible classes brought many benefits to her children's spiritual development.

Leah

Leah was a 27-year-old civil engineer and married mother of two children. One of her children is a school student, and one stays at home with the assistance of full-time babysitters. Leah was very positive, mannerly, and carried herself with dignity. Leah and her family were

considered to have a higher income background for their society. She loved the school's focus on character education, and the school's leadership was a significant factor in making character education a priority. Leah trusted the school leadership and engaged frequently with them. She found the parent-teacher meetings to be essential but placed a greater emphasis on her positive relationship with the school leadership. Leah loved the Bible classes and chapel service for her child at the school. She believed her child was a better person because she was a student at the school. She tried to have nightly prayers with her children for character education and development at home. Leah praised the school's leadership efforts to instill quality academic and character education in all the students. In the future, Leah plans to enroll her youngest child in the school.

When addressed about parental involvement, Leah emphasized her effort to make meals for her children and spend time with them. She found "interaction" with her children to be the most incredible tool in developing their character. Leah noted, "many positive changes" since her child became a student at the school. Some of these changes in her child included more loving actions, joy, discipline, communication, and excitement about life. According to Leah, the most significant challenge she faces in her children's character development is "time." She believes that time is minimal with them. In trying to limit the children's "screen time" on electronic gadgets, Leah found it challenging when she was simultaneously working and controlling their mobile phone use with the babysitters.

Rachel

Rachel was a 38-year-old school science teacher and married mother of three children. She has two children in the school. During her interview, Rachel was quiet and short in her answers. She firmly believed parents should encourage their children and be highly involved in

their education. This involvement is in their character and academic development. Rachel stated that “parents must lead by example. The school should involve parents more with their students and encourage them to do homework together at home.” She worked with her children after her teaching duties and took care of the home. She believed the school was trying to instill character education through chapel services and Bible classes. These classes gave moral teachings and stressed traits they tried to teach their children at home. As a family, she prayed for her children at night and talked to them about their day.

In response to questions about character education with her children, Rachel stressed that “building their character and honesty is important for them.” She further explained that “moral development’ is the real heart of character education. She sees the necessity of parents actively working with their children’s teachers for the best character results. Rachel believes that the home and school must work together with consistent and honest communication. This two-way communication should always invite positive parental and school engagement. Parents must ask their children moral and practical questions to find their topics of interest. Rachel thinks that quality time spent with her children is vital for a healthy relationship between the children and parents. Furthermore, she pointed out that parents must take on proactive roles and responsibilities for their children’s holistic development.

Deborah

Deborah was a 42-year-old married mother of two children and a school language teacher. Her eldest high school-age child lived with her parents in a different location due to financial constraints and limited household income. Deborah's youngest child is a student in the school and lives with her at home. Her husband worked part-time in a lower-wage job which required her to work as a teacher. She enjoyed teaching and working with children. Her family

was considered lower-income, but they did not have many expenses with a smaller household and outside family support system. During the interview, she was quiet and short with her answers. She emphasized the need for "love and kindness" in character education. Due to her busy schedule, Deborah is not much involved in the school programs but did know they teach Bible classes and conduct chapel service. As a parent, she wants to be more involved, but the timing factor is always an issue for her schedule.

When asked about her opinion concerning character education, Deborah stated that "education is very important." She believed all students must learn "kindness, patience, and respect." These specific virtues are considered most important in children's character formation for Deborah. In reflection upon parental involvement, she tried to help her children with their homework and pray with them. Even though the eldest child lives with her parents, Deborah stressed spending quality time with both her children. Her youngest child required more personal attention in their relationship, but she talked on the phone daily with her eldest child. Deborah found the school's parent and teacher interaction meetings to be helpful in understanding her children's progress. She discussed their academics, strengths, and weaknesses with her children's schoolteachers. Deborah tried to understand her children's needs, desires, and dreams daily.

Vashti

Vashti was a 37-year-old mathematics schoolteacher and a married mother with one child in the school. However, she lived with her elder parents as Vashti's husband abandoned her and their daughter without child support. Vashti dealt with many family and medical issues. She supported her elder parents too. Due to her busy schedule, Vashti paid for additional home tutor services to assist with her child's homework. She carried a strong and humble personality, but her answers were short and brief. Her emphasis was on character education requiring a quality

connection between the child and parents. Parent-teacher meetings were essential to her, but timing and frequency were crucial too. Vashti stated, "Yes, the school is responsible for this character development, but the home carries greater responsibility with the parental connection. Honest and open feedback should be encouraged with all children from the parents."

Vashti explained that she tries to use counseling and communication with her child at home to promote character education with her child. She set up specific rules at home to ensure good order and discipline with her child. In her perspective, character education must remain consistent and guided by self-control. Vashti believes parents need to be friendly with their children and maintain healthy respect. Moreover, she expressed that children should be able to discuss any topic or issue with their parents. If there exists communication hesitation between children and parents, she described this hesitation as a need to build more substantial trust levels with each other. Vashti promoted "openness" and "quality interaction" in the relationship between her and her child.

Ruth

Ruth was a 33-year-old homemaker and married mother of three children who are students in the school. Her full-time homemaker life kept her very busy and required high parental involvement. Ruth found the morning chapels and Bible classes at the school to be highly treasured in the character formation of her children. She prays with her children every night and teaches them. She believed character education and development very important. Ruth stated, "that all children should grow up to be good humans and productive in their societies." Ruth also stated, "The parent-teacher interaction meetings are helpful for her family." She gave and received feedback from her students' teachers. However, she wants the school to encourage

more involvement from the parents. She found the school leadership and staff friendly, setting the tone for student character development.

In promoting her children's vital character education and moral development, Ruth stated, "You need to have a love for them as the biggest tool." She stressed that children know deep inside if they are loved or not loved by their parents. In any relationship, she explained that "love" was the crucial virtue that builds the bridge of trust and strong communication. When we discussed the most significant obstacles faced by Ruth as a parent in her students' character education, she described the "time problem" and the need for more robust "time management." She expressed that all parents get the same 24-hour day, and proper time management helps her spend the best quality time with her children. In her description, Ruth stated, "Good time management is a must for parents and good self-discipline to model for the children." She firmly believed in proactive parental involvement and not just waiting for a problem or crisis to occur inside or outside the home.

Results

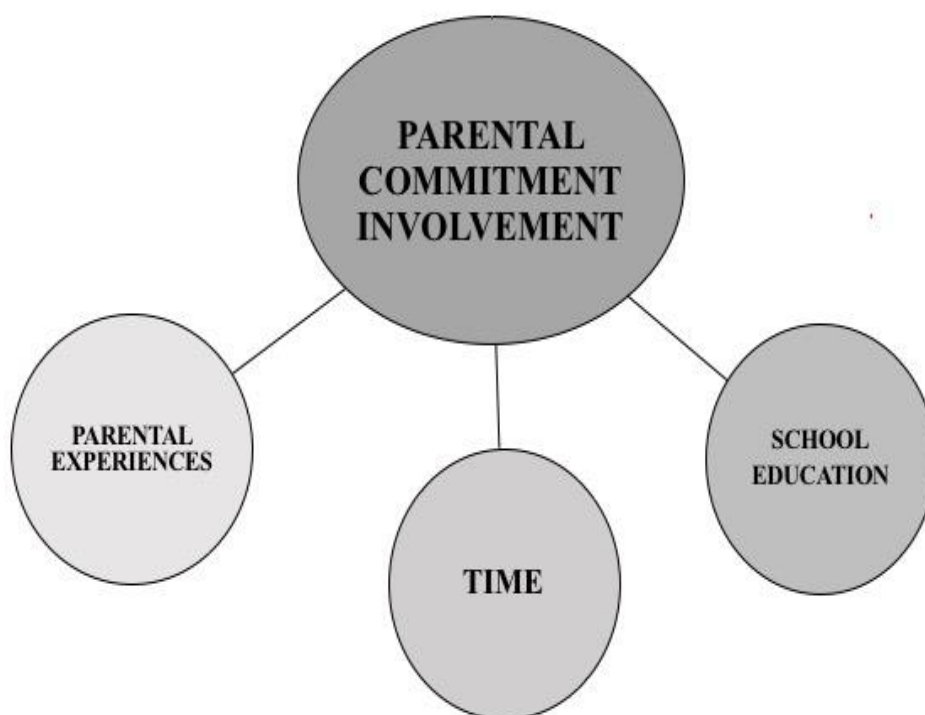
This results section addressed the research questions' answers developed through the progression of themes. These themes were gathered from the surveys, interviews, focus group meetings, and journal notes. The research data was coded through NVivo Q-DAS, and data analysis was accomplished by sieving all the necessary documents. Each research question was answered through data provided by the parental participants. During the data analysis, three unique expected themes and one unexpected development evolved from the research. During the data analysis, with a careful reading of each word and phrase, horizontalization was applied to find the leading and common words throughout the research data (Moustakas, 1994).

Developing Themes

The data analysis came from the surveys, interviews, focus group meetings, and journal notes. The parents' experiences with their children's character education were described using coding and themes. During this data analysis, three common themes emerged, along with one unexpected theme. All these developing themes were linked together throughout the data analysis. The three expected interconnected themes were parental commitment/involvement, parental experiences, and school/education. Other subthemes were discovered directly relating to the primary themes in these three common themes. However, the one unexpected theme found in the data analysis was time. See Figure 1.

Figure 1

Developing Themes



Surveys

A total of two surveys were administered and provided to the 12 parental participants. The first survey was given at the beginning of the individual interviews. The second was given to the participants just before the focus group meeting at the school. These surveys were integral in gathering necessary research data from the parental participants based on their own experiences in written format. Both surveys had critical information concerning the parent's commitment and experiences with their children's character education. In order to determine the survey's validity and reliability, piloting the questions was conducted using two volunteer parents selected from the lead school administration. Both surveys contained eight open-ended questions for the participants to answer according to their personal experiences.

Interviews

The 12 semi-structured, open-ended questions guided the data collection process during individual interviews with the participants. These interview questions addressed the central research question, followed by the sub-research questions. Before conducting the interviews, a research consent form was signed by all the 12 participants. These interviews were at an elementary school in South Asia and after regular school hours. All the interviews were recorded on the researcher's laptop computer. The interviews were all completed within two weeks. Most of the parents who participated in this research study were greatly interested in their children's character education. Some participants responded with tremendous passion and detailed answers, while others were more reserved and shorter. Each interview was conducted and completed within 30 minutes.

Focus Group

All 12 of the parental participants could attend the focus group meeting at the elementary school. Before the focus group meeting started, all the participants were given time to fill out the

second survey. The focus group meeting took about 40 minutes to complete and was recorded on the researcher's laptop. In the meeting, the participants engaged in open-ended questions geared toward this research study's central and subsequent questions. At the beginning of the meeting, there was some hesitancy to answer the questions, but this hesitancy quickly evaporated as they encouraged and interacted together. Each of the parent participants was allowed to answer each of the five focus group questions. When one parent answered a question, other parents could engage freely and openly about their experiences. This open and welcoming environment enabled further detailed data collection from the participants for the research study.

Journaling

The researcher's journaling was written immediately after the individual interviews and the focus group meeting with the participants. Through the journaling process, the researcher collected data notes through the researcher's observations and reflections. These detailed data notes were based on the researcher's perceptions of the parental participants. Journal notes were accomplished through active listening and paying attention to their moods, behaviors, and body language. Data analysis of the journal notes enabled further understanding of the participants' experiences for this research study.

Codes and Themes

In Table 2 below, the codes and themes are listed in an understandable format based upon the participants' critical statements discovered from the surveys, interviews, the focus group meeting, and journal notes. Three anticipated themes appeared with several subthemes, and one unanticipated theme came to light in this research process. In guiding the research results, the central and subsequent research questions were the vital drivers for this study. Table 2 below describes the open codes and themes embodied in this research study:

Table 2*Open-Codes and Themes Table*

Open-Codes	Open-Code Appearances Across Data Sets	Themes & Subthemes
Parental Involvement	165	Parental Commitment/Involvement
Children/Students	99	
Activities	31	
Character Development	29	Parental Commitment to God, Prayer, and Bible Reading
Bible	43	
Prayer	41	
God	13	Parental Commitment to Home
Home	45	
Environment	6	
Help	28	Parental Experiences
Positive Experiences	39	
Love	23	
Morals	31	Children's Moral Development
Needs	16	
Encourage	11	
Discipline	23	Unconditional Love for Children
Character Education	37	
Chapel	11	
Academics/Classes	37	School/Education
School	101	
Teach	26	
Teachers	56	School Commitment to their Students
Interaction	52	
Leadership	16	
Learn/Understand	18	Home and School Relationship
Communication	36	
Homework	26	
Time	43	Time
Important	44	
Study	12	

Note. Adapted from “Spirituality in School Counseling Practice and Implications for School Counseling Education” by Yocum, R., Silvey, R., Milacci, F., & Garzon, F., 2015, *Journal of Academic Perspectives*, 3, pp.18-19. Copyright 2015 by the Journal of Academic Perspectives.

Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis was conducted through data synthesis, identifying important statements, discarding insignificant statements, and grouping them into several categories. The significant statements were coded into themes through the application of NVivo Q-DAS. The themes were garnered through the data analysis of surveys, interviews, the focus group, and the scanning of journal notes. All the data was transcribed into Word documents during this data processing and uploaded into this NVivo Q-DAS system. This thematic analysis found three common themes, several subthemes, and one unexpected theme.

Theme One: Parental Commitment/Involvement

In the data analysis process, the first theme of parental commitment/involvement answers the subsequent research question one: What are the perceived critical factors experienced by the parents influencing their elementary school student's character education process?

The parental participants in this research study understood that parental commitment to their children's character education remains a critical factor in their children's holistic character development. Sarah stated, "All parents must be committed to their children's education and character development for the best outcomes." John said, "Character education is the way they see things with heart and eyes." Communication and interaction between parents and children remain a vital channel for character growth. Leah stated, "interaction, communication, and prayer with my child" are the most important tools for character development. Moreover, Leah advocated, "We must set proper boundaries as parents and be in control of our homes." Paul explained that parents "need to be more involved and take the time necessary to teach their children."

Additionally, the first theme of parental commitment/involvement answers the subsequent research question two: What are the perceived obstacles experienced by the parents hindering their elementary school student's character education and development?

The parental participants all agreed that the modern-day technologies and gadgets can have positive or negative affect on children's character development. Most of the parents recommended extreme caution and limitations for their children in this area as simple gadgets have the capability to expose them to a whole new world of wickedness. Paul stated, "Very challenging in this modern-day society with all the gadgets and technology available to all. Even the simple village children have access to smart phones these days opening up the door to all kinds of opportunities, problems, and addictions. We must be very biblically smart as parents in these last days." All the parents and students recently endured mandatory pandemic lockdowns requiring for the all the students to do online studies. This season of time was very challenging for all the parents and their children. Mark stated, "During the online classes due to the pandemic, my kids did not pay any attention to the classes, and they loved to run around."

Another key obstacle is the negative influences at home and school but most of the parents felt they did not have enough direct control over their school's influences. Matthew stated, "We at home teach them, but sometimes at school they behave differently. Friends and other students can influence each other." Luke said, "At home, we pray together and try to practice what we preach from the Bible." Vashti stated, "School leadership and teachers must ensure good character development is taught in the school." Rachel enjoined, "We as parents must be good role models to our children." Matthew determined, "You need prayer and studies for success." However, most of the parents were content with the school's approach of character development and spiritual emphasis but desire for the school to continue growing in this area.

Subtheme One: Parental Commitment to God, Prayer, and Bible Reading

Most of the parents laid a heavy emphasis on keeping God first in their homes, praying, and reading the Bible with their children. Sarah stated, "Many other parents and we try to have daily Bible studies and prayers at home with our children." Even after coming home from work, Luke enjoined, "I read the Bible and pray for them." Rachel shared, "The best thing is to have a family prayer meeting every night. I usually lead many of these meetings in my home." Some parents opened up about their desire to do more spiritual activities at home. Matthew stated, "We fathers need to do a better job leading our homes in prayer and Bible study. Sometimes we just make excuses."

Subtheme Two: Parental Commitment to Home

Many parents stressed the need for parental commitment to provide their children with a safe, orderly, and loving home. John shared, "It is very important we teach them, have good interactions together, and raise them up in good character." Sarah stated, "We have to work with them and keep them on schedule to maintain a disciplined life." Leah communicated, "Trying as parents to make a committed time at home for our children, to teach them good moral lessons, and spiritual things are important." In order to maintain a healthy home and children's character development, Mark stated, "When something is wrong with our children's behavior, they need discipline and communication with them."

Theme Two: Parental Experiences

Through data analysis by coding and synthesizing key themes, the first and second themes of parental commitment/involvement and parental experiences deliver the answer to the central research question: What are the perceived parental experiences with their elementary school student's character education?

The participants shared a wealth of experiences concerning their children's character development. Deborah stated, "We all need to work together and fulfill our God-given duties and be a blessing." Parents found that engaging in their children's homework and activities promoted more profound character development experiences with their children. Rachel shared, "The best experiences are letting the children describe their topics and the times they get to engage with their schoolwork." Most parents believe that honest and sincere communication with their children is essential for their character growth. Additional subthemes emerged through these parental experiences themes.

Subtheme One: Children's Moral Development

All the parental participants believed that children's moral development was essential in their character education. Mark stated, "I think it is the most important, make into a good moral citizen. It will make them, and shape-wise decisions is the most important." Most parents believed they should be proactive in protecting and promoting moral values. Luke enjoined, "We must be careful as parents to strictly monitor the movies we let them watch and songs they listen to at home. Much of the entertainment today is awful and ungodly. We must ensure they watch and listen to Christian stuff."

Subtheme Two: Unconditional Love for Children

All the parents believed that love and kindness go a long way to encourage character development in their children. Deborah stated, "It is important they learn kindness, patience, and respect." None of the parents claimed perfection but did endorse being consistent and admitting their mistakes to their children as needed per the situation. Tabitha shared, "We should be fast to ask forgiveness from our children too. Even teachers should confess their mistakes and never try to hide them. This increase in honesty and love will change many things." The parents strongly

encouraged truthfulness and unconditional love for their children. Vashti articulated, “More truth and love are great needs.”

Theme Three: Education/School

The education/school theme provided further answers to the central research question: What are the perceived parental experiences with their elementary school student’s character education?

While all the parental participants for this research study were involved in their children’s character education at various degrees and levels, these parents did mention that not all the schoolteachers and parents were committed to the children’s character education. Matthew stated, “I have seen the principal and teachers friendly to all the children.” He explained that this encourages a good environment for the students and their families. However, Mark feels that some of the “schoolteachers do not even care” about their children’s character education and academic growth. He admits that the parent teacher interaction meetings are helpful but believes they do not take to heart his feedback. Most of the parents do feel their voices are heard by the school leadership and teachers. They find the parent teacher meetings to be helpful, insightful, and beneficial for all. Ruth stated, “I find the parent teacher meetings important and valuable.” Tabitha expressed, “Nothing against the school. Only positive things at this point. Many good lessons we are learning over time.”

In regard to further parental experiences with the school, Luke stated, “even if we see something, they listen to teachers before parents.” Luke further shared, “that is why I feel that more Bible teaching and moral values from the school is important.” In order to help with this effort to encourage and improve home and school relationship to promote character education, Deborah articulated, “I think school training classes by the school would be a great idea, but the

timing of the training will be important.” Paul stated, “Notes sheets should be given each class or a working notebook with some of the questions and answers already filled out for them.”

Basically, some parents want further training in character education from their children’s school and gain a deeper relationship with their children’s school.

The education/school theme provided different answers to the central research question: What are the perceived parental experiences with their elementary school student’s character education?

While all the parental participants for this research study are involved in their children’s character education at various degrees and levels, they did mention that not all the schoolteachers and parents were committed to the children’s character education. Matthew stated, “I have seen the principal and teachers friendly to all the children.” He explained that this encourages a suitable environment for the students and their families. However, Mark feels that some “schoolteachers do not even care” about their children’s character education and academic growth. He admits that the parent-teacher interaction meetings are helpful but believes they do not take to heart his feedback. Most parents felt the school leadership and teachers hear their voices. They found the parent-teacher meeting helpful, insightful, and beneficial for all. Ruth shared, “I find the parent-teacher meetings important and valuable.” Tabitha articulated, “Nothing against the school. Only positive things at this point. Many good lessons we are learning over time.”

Regarding other parental experiences with the school, Luke stated, “even if we see something, they listen to teachers before parents.” Luke further shared, “that is why I feel that more Bible teaching and moral values from the school is important.” Some parents want future training in character education from their children’s school and a deeper relationship with their

children's school. In order to help with this effort to encourage improved home and school relationships to promote character education, Deborah determined, "I think school training classes by the school would be a great idea, but the timing of the training will be important." Paul expressed, "Notes sheets should be given each class or a working notebook with some of the questions and answers already filled out for them."

Subtheme One: School Commitment to their Students

The vast majority of the parents believed that the school was committed to their students. Matthew stated, "Good qualities in the school is the morning chapel services." When asked what do you like best about the school, for your student, regarding character education? Sarah shared, "The school must continue with the morning chapel services and Bible teachings to reinforce these moral character teachings." Ruth expressed, "The morning Bible teaching does reflect what we are trying to teach at home with our children." Leah articulated, "I like to ask my children what they learn in school, and they usually mention the morning chapel services. I think this has a big impact on their character development."

Subtheme Two: Home and School Relationship

The home and school relationship were viewed as significant in developing their children's character education. Rachel stated, "It is very important we work the teachers. We get to learn our children's behavior in school." Sarah vocalized, "We need more of Christ in our schools and homes." Matthew shared, "I told them we are living in a competitive world, so you must study hard and if your foundation is not good and everything with being corrupt." The parents made some recommendations to strengthen the home and school relationship.

Tabitha stated, “I recommend the school give more Bible lessons for us to study at home and the school. This action will help build a better partnership in our children’s moral character and spiritual development.”

Outlier Data and Findings

In this research study, there was one critical outlier data and findings. The important outlier finding was an unexpected theme of *time*. This unexpected theme was discovered in the data and came to the forefront.

Outlier Unexpected Theme: Time

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, an unexpected outlier theme of *time* emerged from the research. The word *time* frequently became prominent with many appearances, as expressed by the participants. In the research data, *time* usually appeared near the word *important* and was linked together in the exact participant phrases. What do you think will create a more robust learning environment and character development at home and school? Mark stated, “Time management at home and school for character development. We make time for the important things in life.” Paul enunciated, “We have to overcome this limited time obstacle. The children are growing daily; they do not wait for us to get older; we do not want time wasted, and we want to be special with our children every day.” Fathers and mothers find this unexpected theme of time critically important in the children’s character education. Ruth shared, “We make many excuses even as mothers at home do not take the necessary time for these spiritual things every day. However, they are just excuses, and we are all given the same 24 hours in a full day.”

Regarding children’s character education in the home and school, Sarah stated, “Time given by all stakeholders is vital for successful character development.” The parental participants all found agreement with the need for time to be wisely spent with children both at home and

school. Matthew expressed, “Sometimes we just make excuses.” Moreover, they frequently linked time with spiritual development founded on the Bible, prayer, and solid moral teachings. They believed that the school carried a vital ethical responsibility in taking the necessary time to instill character education and good morals in all students. The participants stressed that the homes and schools should take the time to work together for their children’s character education. Mark stated, “We must make time for the important things in life.”

Research Question Responses

The research questions for this study denoted themes and codes. Each research question was addressed during the in-person research data collection methods. Confidentiality was maintained with each participant. Specific answers discovered through the participant responses, written codes, and themes were analyzed with pertinent details.

Central Research Question

The central research question for this study was the following: What are the parents' experiences with their child's character education? This central question was answered by the expected theme of parental experiences with the subthemes of children's moral development and unconditional love for children. The shared parental experiences created a phenomenon from their surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings. Most of the parental participants were open in sharing their experiences and perspectives. During the research, personal observations and journal notes were written about each participant and the research interactions with them. Most parents found the school chapel services and Bible classes critical to their children's character education. Most parents highlighted the Bible teachings, songs, and prayers as highly impactful on student moral development. Ruth stated, "The morning Bible teachings reflect what we are trying to teach at home with our children."

All the parents relayed this common experience concerning unconditional love for their children. Vashti said, "Parents and teachers are very important to encourage good moral behavior and training of our children. We must all lead by example, by our actions and words." Parents expressed that love is action and words for their children. A parent's unconditional love for their children will lead to an unconditional commitment to their children. Love is commitment, and this type of love should always want the best for the child. The parents emphasized that they must lead and love their children by example. For many parental participants, their perfect example was their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Matthew stated, "We really need to pray more and get God's help for everything. With God, all things are possible."

Sub-Question One

The first sub-question in this research study was the following: What are the perceived critical factors experienced by the parents influencing their child's character education process? All of the parents did perceive that parental involvement and commitment to their children's character education was a vital factor in their children's character development. Although all the participants did believe that the school bears much of this responsibility in the children's character education, they place a heavier weight and focus on their children's home life. Common key practical factors in their children's character education were keeping God first in their home through daily prayer and Bible readings. Most of the parents highly appreciated the elementary school's Christ-centered activities of morning chapel services, Bible classes, and prayers with their children.

The parents held a strong belief that "the school life should reflect the home life" and vice-versa. Leading by virtuous and moral example was another critical factor emphasized by the parents influencing their children's character education. All stakeholder involvement in the

child's life perspective was a common verbal expression of the participants. Every person and institution involved in the child's life had various degrees of influence on their character education. However, they did place a stronger emphasis on the child's home life followed by their school life and local church life. Christian spiritual environments were another key factor directly impacting their children's character development, which was strongly expressed by all the participants.

Sub-Question Two

The second sub-question in this research study was the following: What are the perceived obstacles experienced by the parents hindering their child's character education and development? One of the common obstacles experienced by the participants they perceive as hindering their children's character education was the rise in rampant immoral wickedness with "the lack of Christ in the homes and schools". Most of the parents believed that faithfulness to God through tangible expressions of prayer, singing Bible songs, and the Bible reading creates a better environment for children to positively grow in their moral character. Most parents believed that the disconnect between homes and schools through the lack of Christ, commitment, and communication with each other is another character development detriment for the children. Although many of the participants were satisfied with their children's school, some strongly believed there needs to be stronger communication and interaction between the school and parents.

The ever growing "abuse and misuse of technology" was another key obstacle perceived to be hindering children's character education. Many of the participants lamented that "too much screen time" negatively affects children and does not produce resilient moral character. Most of the parents advocated for teaching the children "greater moral and self-discipline". In reflecting

on these obstacles, parents explained that the lack of properly disciplining children creates multiple problems. Homes and schools must develop proper boundaries, law, and order to give an optimal environment for student character growth. The parents believed they should work together with the school leadership and teachers for the best results in the children's character education.

Summary

In this chapter, the perceptions and experiences of the parental participants committed to their children's character education were the foundation for the findings of this research study. The chapter described the participants' demographics by listing their pseudonyms, age, sex, ethnicity, occupation, marital status, and several children. The chapter contained the data analysis results gathered from this research study's investigation with combined findings depictions. The data collection analysis included surveys, interviews, focus groups, and journal notes. Research findings and results yielded the discovery of the common expected themes, the subthemes, and an unexpected theme based on the research findings. Moreover, further reflection and description of the research questions were discussed based on the research findings. These research findings described a synthesis of the meaning and essence of children's character education in light of the parental lived experiences and perceptions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to understand the parents' experiences with their children's character education at an elementary school. The data collection process of this research study included surveys, individual interviews, a focus group meeting, and journal writings derived from the parental participants' lived experiences. According to the research analysis and findings, a discussion is developed on how the themes relate to the parental experiences as they engage with their children's character education at the school and at home, along with the research literature that engages these themes. Chapter Five summarizes this discussion section into five major subsections as the following: (a) Interpretation of Findings, (b) Implications for Policy or Practice, (c) Theoretical and Empirical Implications, (d) Limitations and Delimitations, and (e) Recommendations for Future Research. Chapter Five summarizes the critical research themes, the central research question, and the two subsequent research questions.

Discussion

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to understand parental experiences among those who are committed to their children's character education. This study utilized the transcendental phenomenological research method (Moustakas, 1994). It delved into the way the literature epitomized primarily through the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *Social Ecological Theory* in the way this theory related to the theoretical and empirical research. During the data collection phase from the participants' surveys, interviews, focus group meetings, and journal notations, four primary themes, and six subthemes appeared from the

research findings. The four primary themes were parental commitment/involvement, parental experiences, school/education, and time.

Interpretation of Findings

This section begins with a summary of the thematic findings, as previously discussed in Chapter Four, and is followed by a series of interpretations deemed significant by the researcher. These interpretations aim to generate new knowledge about parental commitment and their children's character education. Each interpretation will strive to show the connections between the research phenomenon, parental participants, setting, literature, and theories.

Summary of Thematic Findings

During this research study, three anticipated major themes emerged along with one unanticipated major theme in the thematic research findings. In these major themes, several subthemes stemmed from the primary themes. All these developing themes linked together throughout the research process. The three anticipated interconnected themes were parental commitment/involvement, parental experiences, school/education and the unanticipated theme was time. In these three major themes, other subthemes were discovered directly relating to the primary expected themes. Several interpretations found by the researcher stemmed from these thematic findings. These interpretations will be in reflection of the primary theoretical framework undergirding this research Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. This theory promoted that human development is divided five into different levels of natural environments. These five levels are the Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem, Chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

Microsystem Interpretation

Bronfenbrenner (1979) expressed that the microsystem involves the closest childhood relationships, which directly influence the child's holistic and character development. These childhood relationships include home and school environments with their parents, family, friends, and direct mentors. The microsystem interpretation of the research data and findings emphasizes this ecosystem level as paramount in the children's character education process. According to this research study, parental commitment at this level plays a foundational role in forming their children's moral character and life skills. In this microsystem, most parental participants stressed the importance of having a solid Christ-centered, biblical, and prayerful home life for their children. Parental commitment to God and home were common denominators in creating positive children's character development for the research participants. Furthermore, the parental participants believed that the school leadership and teachers were responsible for the school environment with their students. Love for God and others was a commonly expressed phenomenon shared by the participants as a critical factor in the character education of their children both in their homes and at elementary school.

Mesosystem Interpretation

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory (1979) explained that the mesosystem level engages with the relationships between a child's immediate environment. This mesosystem includes relationships between the family and the school (Kim & Riley, 2014; Shelton, 2018). The mesosystem is multiple microsystems, with every human potential having multiple microsystems. However, humans can only have one mesosystem. In this research study, this mesosystem level depicts the joining between two or multiple settings parents experience with children in their home and school. The mesosystem is multiple microsystems interacting together

and containing many different dynamic childhood experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hayes et al., 2017; Koller et al., 2019). This research study highlighted the shared phenomenon that multiple microsystems working together can create environments of positive changes and growth for children. According to this research study and the research literature, parental commitment in elementary school children context gives an example of two microsystems with the home and child's age dynamic connecting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cowie, 2019; Shubert et al., 2019). According to the researcher's interpretation, the parental interactive settings with their elementary school children in their home and at school are critically important in children's moral character formation.

Exosystem Interpretation

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), this exosystem includes choices made by settings managers, school quality, and other informal or indirect connections (Hayes et al., 2017). Bronfenbrenner (1979) stressed that the contextual settings do not necessarily require a young student's participation at the exosystem level. Suppose the work-life or home life for the parents, school leaders, and teachers is nerve-racking. In that case, the adults' professional climates affect the communication and psychological emotions with their children or students. Furthermore, the exosystem engages the specific person's settings and focuses on essential aspects of their development. This development is in their particular setting and mesosystem. In interpreting the exosystem of parental commitment and their children's character education phenomenon, second-order networks are created through people who influence a child's development. However, they never meet face-to-face with the child creating a type of small-world effect on their children's development (Hayes et al., 2017; Shelton, 2018). The power influence on the children's character education at home has many direct and indirect links to the elementary

school leaders and teachers. Overall, the parental participants were satisfied with the character development of their children in the school. However, they all believe there are areas of improvement for developing a biblically stronger exosystem for their children.

Macrosystem Interpretation

Bronfenbrenner (1979) proclaimed that this level focuses on the society's cultural influences indirectly shaping children's development. The children do not have control of their macrosystem, but their choices at this level significantly impact their holistic growth. The cultural context of every society powerfully guides the course of children's lives. Educational policymakers and school commission boards decide many students' curricula and teaching methods (Chuang et al., 2018; Hayes et al., 2017). In this macrosystem, the elementary school leadership's choices in curricula and the teacher's pedagogical practices greatly influence all the school children.

Furthermore, the parents, children, and schools encounter severe infrastructure and development factors daily. For example, most of the homes and schools in this region endure daily electrical power outages and other developing regional issues impacting daily living. As a culture with many sub-cultures for the research participants, there is a particular intrinsic value placed on character education for children. However, most of the parental participants in the daily society lack this biblical moral character, which devastates and plagues with moral corruption creating various adverse effects on their children's character education. "Do not be deceived: bad company ruins good morals" (English Standard Bible, 2001, 1 Corinthians 15:33). The word *need* kept recurring during the research data analysis phase, and critical needs were built into their cultural settings. This research setting created a shared participant phenomenon,

the familiar societal cry for the need for stronger children's character development at all levels in the ecological system.

Chronosystem Interpretation

Bronfenbrenner (1986) formed the next level to the ecological system of development called the *chronosystem* to interpret the continual changes across all ecological levels throughout different times. In historical experiences, the time chronology in childhood development determines much of the influence on them. Character development and education are not fixed with a determined time or culture but persistently change delivery methods and context (Pinkerton, 2021). Most of the parental participants highlighted “screen time” as a shared experience and common obstacle in their children’s character education. Accurately interpreting the chronosystem is paramount as children studying in the same elementary school in past decades will have different experiences than the children today and the children in the future. The growth of electronic gadgets and technology over time plays a critical role in shaping and molding children’s lives over time. This electronic gadget issue is also linked to the having enough “time” problem. Many of the parental participants admitted that they could spend more proper time and effort on their children’s character education.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This research study has implications for policy and practice concerning children’s character education. These policies and practice recommendations require various levels of commitment by all stakeholders. Some implications for potential changes in school policies include the involvement of the school administration and teachers with supportive compliance from their students’ parents or guardians. The implications for potential practice changes require more profound commitment actions for the school and home.

Implications for Policy

According to this research study and analysis, the school leadership may enforce a new policy for standard monthly parent-teacher interaction meetings with oversight from the school administration team. Currently, the school does have the policy of parent-teacher interaction meetings three times per year in the school classrooms. Many times, the discussion more focused on student academia and behavior. However, parents should be granted the opportunity to meet in a professional format with the school administration team and teachers monthly. The school administration may implement this new policy of monthly professional teacher meetings with the parents for the next academic year. The school leadership should guide these monthly meetings with anonymous parent feedback forms, a clear advance schedule for the monthly meetings, a strict time limit, meeting goals, and respect for all stakeholders.

The school should record clear, standardized topics of discussion, character education materials, and meeting notes. All the feedback and notes should be compiled in a reportable, logical fashion for the school administration to disseminate applicable information provided to the teachers. Parents should comply with this school policy with regular attendance at these monthly meetings at the school, bringing with them an open mind, a notebook to write notes, provide constructive feedback, and be open to feedback from the school. The school may provide a logbook of parental attendance. It may create a school policy requiring at least a 75% attendance rate by the student's parents, with at least one parent or legal guardian attending these meetings. These practical school policies may assist with more substantial school and parental commitment to their children's character education in this particular setting.

Implications for Practice

Regarding implications for practice, this research study revealed the need for the school and parents to work closely together to promote more vital character education for their children. Once the policy is put in place by the school for monthly parent and school short interaction meetings, this will pave the way for the practice of more frequent communications. Smaller practical doses of frequent short written communication between the school leaders and teachers with the parents should benefit all in this elementary school. This communication platform can be brief written messages in the student's current almanac notebook focused on the children's character development. The teacher and parents should sign these frequent communications with at least weekly signatures from a school leadership team member. This follow-up action seeks to ensure essential feedback and critical information communicated between all stakeholders.

While more concise frequent communication between the parents and this elementary school is a positive recommended practice, it may also be effective for other schools and settings. Advocates (Alexander et al., 2017; Chung et al., 2020; Jeynes, 2019) of higher parental commitment through practical involvement mention that parents can engage with their schools about child discipleship skills and increase their communication with their children's schools. Schools can encourage parental involvement in volunteer opportunities and create helpful discourse with parents about their contributions to their student's homework assignments. Furthermore, schools may encourage the parents or legal guardians to attend school educational policy meetings. Productive parent-teacher meetings build educational bridges between schools and homes (Affuso et al., 2016; Jeynes, 2019). Implementing these practices may create a more conducive environment for more vigorous student character development.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

In this section, the theoretical and empirical implications of this research study are brought under evaluation. The theoretical implications are concisely explained first from the research study, followed by the empirical implications. Previous research and this present research study are brought under the microscope to determine where they corroborate.

Additionally, this research study and previous research are compared to evaluate the ways they differ from each other too. From this research study, unique contributions to the theoretical and empirical implications are brought forth. Moreover, critical divergences discovered in this research are argued from the theoretical and empirical perspectives in this field of study.

Theoretical Implications

Character education philosophies evolved around the world from ancient times as a global phenomenon and moral code of conduct for many societies (Homiak, 2019). In the theoretical implications, parental commitment to their children's character education is founded in the earliest human writings and written text of the Bible (Genesis 1:27; Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system theory proposed that human development occurs at various levels. The interaction between a person and their environment significantly affects their conduct with their parents, family, school, and communities. In this ecological system, the mesosystem level engrosses the relationships between a child's closest and immediate societal environment. This mesosystem includes relationships between their family at home and school (Kim & Riley, 2014; Shelton, 2018). In this research study, parental participants shared this similar mesosystem phenomenon and shared experiences with their elementary school children. Although the time and settings are vastly different, the previous literature and theoretical philosophies merge in the cohesion of shared principles in this research

study. Most of the parental participants did see a need for character education for their children at home and school.

Throughout history, character education and development of children have been viewed as a collective impact from all strategic stakeholders invested in the child's life, requiring potential solutions influencing all of them (Sagrestano et al., 2018; Tilhou et al., 2021). The shared theoretical philosophy throughout time is that the children's home life is the primary foundation of their education and character development. Parents prominently shape the child's values, worldview, beliefs, perspectives, and character formation. For character education, morally ethical parental commitment is a family responsibility to proactively lead their children's holistic education process (Castro et al., 2015; Tilhou et al., 2021). However, school leaders and teachers share various responsibilities at the mesosystem level for children's character education (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this research study, the parental participants highlighted this theoretical concept of different duties and responsibilities by the home and school working together towards the best holistic outcomes for the children.

Empirical Implications

The empirical implications of parental commitment to their children's character education were lacking research studies in developing regions of the world. Most of the research on this subject focused primarily on developed nations and was conducted in these settings. In general understanding of moral education, the available literature stressed that social-emotional and character development (SECD) is the expanded concept of social-emotional learning (SEL). This conceptualization includes the collective promotion of student-level character virtues (Battistich, 2008; Elias, 2009; Hatchimonji et al., 2018; Weissberg et al., 2015). For those who understand the importance of children's character education in this field of study, the constant

growth of core SECD competencies remains paramount (MacDonnell et al., 2021). According to this research study and analysis, the proper understanding and systematic layout of these SECD competencies are lacking among many regional schools. Even when parental participants had their children in other schools, they did not express any of the SECD competencies highlighted in their schools. These SECD competencies can provide fundamental elements for children's character education and development (Yeager, 2017). Previous literature stressed that many researchers intellectualize educational-related parental commitment as a multidimensional paradigm. However, many studies do not contain much operational effectiveness (Affuso et al., 2016; Jeynes, 2019).

According to previous research literature, the schools that operate teacher-parent friendly policies can gain deeper pragmatic approaches. These sympathetic actions improve the collaboration between home life and school life with quality teamwork toward children's holistic development (Kumar et al., 2018; Robinson, 2017). Productive parent and school meetings build educational bridges (Affuso et al., 2016; Jeynes, 2019). Overall, the parental participants did mention the need for joint training classes at the school for their children's character education. These regular educational classes can even include follow-up, feedback forms, and practical methods for improving character education in the home and school. The school leadership should look into organizing a time for conducive classes for all without being a burden to the school or the parents. Several times per academic year, these character education classes should be semi-formal with guided discussions and educational material handouts. Moreover, the goal is to increase parental involvement in children's character education and holistic development by partnering with the school. Upon reviewing this elementary school's academic calendar, one character education class per academic term with three total for the academic year will be a good

start in the right direction.

Limitations and Delimitations

During this research study, all the schools just emerged from a long season of pandemic lockdowns throughout the region never experienced before in recent history. Some of the parental participants' responses reflected this recent lockdown situation, with at least one parent or another adult family member being forced to monitor their online school classes for the children from home. This situation forced heavier parental involvement and commitment to their children's education. However, parental involvement is more limited in scope during regular school classes. Most formal academic and character educational responsibility is placed on the school. When both parents work in various jobs, or the one parent at home cannot teach their children, most families with a budget ability to hire outside teacher tutors after school to handle their children's homework and study requirements at home.

There was significant variation in the participants' responses due to the demographic diversity in the sample collection sizes. The parental participants only had daytime students at the private elementary school, and no participants kept their children in boarding or public school. For families willing and able to afford such education for their children, boarding school is a common phenomenological experience in many South Asian homes (Kim, 2018). However, the school lockdown effect did create inflated values of mandatory proactive parental involvement in their children's education and character development that may not be existent during average home and school operations.

Recommendations for Future Research

This transcendental phenomenological study sought to understand the parental experiences with their student's character education. During this research study, many parents

expressed the need for more involvement and training in their children's character education at the school. The parents believed this will build more communicative bridges with their children's school and developing a stronger partnership with them. One area of further recommended research is to find the most effective ways to conduct parent-teacher meetings in Asia and developing regions. Some parents expressed the need for different formats and methods to conduct these meetings. Additional research studies with school leaders and teachers as the research participants may lead to discoveries yielding different results.

Another recommendation for future research is investigating the most effective methods for schools to create home character and education classes. These classes should not become human indoctrination camps but should be a vessel for seeking the best way to increase children's character development at home and in school. These classes should encourage positive and biblical parental commitment to children's holistic growth. Additional children's educational research studies should be conducted in developing regions with all the infrastructural and common access limitations. These research studies should try to study both public and private school education in developing regions.

Around the world, boarding schools are a more common educational practice in some regions than others with various qualities and dynamics. Not all boarding schools are the same experience for families, and various studies may yield different results. Furthermore, the lack of parental involvement among those children and students in boarding schools should be researched in greater detail. The results of these research studies may lead to more positive solutions with functional changes in children's educational practices and outcomes.

Conclusion

This transcendental phenomenological study purposed a greater understanding of parental experiences with their children's character education. The central phenomenon was generally defined as elementary school students' holistic moral character development factors. The research setting created a unique environment with the research conducted at an elementary school in South Asia mixed with diverse cultures, tribes, religious beliefs, and languages. Children's character education builds foundational life virtues and values, providing them with a moral framework (Jeynes, 2019; Ramos et al., 2019; Shoshani & Shwartz, 2018). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological system guided this research study through the various environmental systems and levels influencing children's development. According to the currently available research, this study is among the few found on this topic in developing regions of the world. The researcher found the time spent investigating and prayerfully trying to understand better this important subject of children's character education a worthy, powerfully life-changing, and perpetual biblical task. In emphasizing the importance of childhood character education, Montessori (1949/2012) stated the following:

Permit me to repeat, as a form of farewell, words which have helped us to keep in mind all the things of which I have been speaking. It is not a prayer, but rather a reminder, for our teachers, an invocation, a kind of syllabus, our only syllabus: Help us, O God, to enter into the secret of childhood, so that we may know, love and serve the child in accordance with the laws of Thy Justice and following Thy Holy Will (p. 300).

The research literature supported the truth that positive parental involvement affects children's character development and life achievements across various populations. Volunteer parental involvement and school programs organized by the school significantly affect students'

holistic growth (Cox & Peck, 2018; Jeynes, 2019). In understanding children's character education and parental commitment, there are real situations of illegitimate parents with the lack of loving commitment to their children, but not the problem of illegitimate children. All children are created in the image of God for His glory and eternal Kingdom (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). Thankfully, in this research study, most parental participants were committed to the children's character education at home and school. Many held a special honor for God, the Bible, and family. Elementary schools are called *primary schools* in several regions of the world. The significance of character education at the primary levels of childhood must be held in highly sacred esteem by all stakeholders as the foundational building blocks for human life. The prominence of moral character education and parental involvement is foundational in the lives of all children's development (Getu, 2018; Jeynes, 2019; Maitanmi, 2019).

Biblical character education and practice is an essential theme in the Bible, which is commanded in many passages for the home and all levels of society (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 1:7, 22:6; Matthew 7:20; Romans 5:4-5, 12:1-2; Galatians 2:20; 5:22-23; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Revelation 20:12). The word *heart* appears 925 times in the Bible with references to a person's character or inward personhood (Strong, 2010). Heart, soul, and mind are the three living components making up every person. Beyond just a research study, biblical character education for children in the home, school, and community tends to produce eternal blessings. Dabney & Varner (1979) stated, "The education of children for God is the most important business done on earth. It is the one business for which the earth exists" (p. 691). May we all prayerfully seek to glorify Christ in all things and teach the coming generations of God's Kingdom.

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Appendices

Appendix A

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 21, 2021

Joshua Barela
Amy Jones

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-374 CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND PARENTAL COMMITMENT: A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Dear Joshua Barela, Amy Jones,

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 46.104(d):

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(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) 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(s) 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 Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Please briefly introduce yourself regarding your education and career background.
2. What is your definition of character or moral education?
3. What has been your experience regarding your student's school activities and character development?
4. In what ways do you participate in your student's education and character development?
5. Describe the importance of your student's education and character development.
6. What have been the most important experiences you have with your children's school and character education?
7. How do you feel about working with your student's teachers?
8. How do your student's teachers and school leadership promote character education?
9. What character education methods do you perform at home with your children?
10. What tools do you use in the character development of your children?
11. How are you involved with your children's class assignments and character development?
12. How do you overcome the obstacles encountered regarding your student's character development and education?

Appendix C

Survey Questions Part 1 and 2

Survey Questions Part I

1. Tell me about your relationship with your student's school and character development.
2. What information do you receive from the teacher concerning your student's academics and character education?
3. What communications do you have with your student's school?
4. What specific positive interactions have you had with your student's school that promoted your student's academic growth and character development?
5. How important is it for you to be involved in your student's education and character development?
6. What specific positive interactions have you had with your student that motivated them to grow with stronger moral character, integrity, and grow academically?
7. What has been the most successful inspiration in developing virtuous character traits and academic achievement in your student to date?
8. How often do you discuss your student's academic and character development with the school?

Survey Questions Part II

1. What are some examples you can give of your involvement in your student's educational and character development in school?
2. What kind of examples reflect your commitment to your student's educational and character-development activities while at home?
3. What are some positive aspects of your student's school that are positive for both you and the students?
4. How do the teachers involve parents and students from lower economic backgrounds in character development?
5. What will assist you in actively participating more in your student's education and character development?
6. How often do you meet together with your student's teacher? Do you discuss your student's character development with his or her teacher?
7. What future problems might you encounter if you are not involved in your student's education and character development?
8. How can the school encourage you with regard to your student's character development and education?

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

1. What do you like best about the school, for your student, regarding character education?
2. What do you think about school training classes that will assist you in understanding how to get involved in your student's character development?
3. What do you think will create a stronger learning environment and character development both at home and school?
4. What have been your experiences, as a parent, with your student's education and character development?
5. What is your greatest need, in regard to your student's continued growth and character education, in school and at home?

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent

Title of the Project: Character Education for Elementary School Students and Parental

Commitment: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study

Principal Investigator: Joshua Barela, Ph.D. Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, have an elementary school student at the [REDACTED] in South Asia, and must have at least 1 child in the elementary school who has completed at least 1 full academic year. Participation in this research project is completely voluntary.

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

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to understand the parental experiences with their children's character education in order to further understand the holistic character development of children.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete two surveys, completing the first survey at the beginning of the study and the second survey towards the end of the research study, before the focus group. These surveys will only take 20 minutes to complete.
2. Participate in a one-on-one, individual interview with the researcher. The interview will last 30-45 minutes and will be audio-recorded. The interview will take place after school hours in the school classrooms.
3. Participate in a focus group with other participants. This focus group will take about 45 minutes to complete and will be audio-recorded. This will take place after school hours in the school classrooms.
4. Verify the accuracy of the interview and focus group transcripts. This process will only take about 15-30 minutes to complete.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

There are no direct benefits for participants.

Benefits to the community include an improved understanding about character education and parental commitment impacts on student character development.

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 your daily 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 survey responses will be anonymous. Participant interview and focus group responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in-person and where others will not easily overhear the conversation. The school name's and identity will be placed under a pseudonym and concealed for this research study.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked filing cabinet. The data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and all physical records will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

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. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. Survey responses will be anonymous and cannot be withdrawn once submitted.

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study prior to submitting the first survey, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation, and do not submit the survey. If you choose to withdraw from the study after the first survey has been submitted, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from the surveys, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Joshua Barela. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at [REDACTED] and jjbarela@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Amy Jones, at ajones17@liberty.edu.

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.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

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

Research Permission Request Letter

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for my doctoral degree. The title of my research project is *Character Education for Elementary School Students and Parental Commitment: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study*. The purpose of my research is to understand the parental experiences with their student's character education.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at [REDACTED] utilizing 12 parents for the research. All of the parental participants will receive permission to email or call me with their answers from the surveys. All the parental participants will be presented with informed consent information before participating in this research study. Their participation in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue their participation at any time.

If the parental participants agree to be in this research study, I would request them to do the following:

1. Complete two basic surveys completing the first survey at the beginning of the study and the second survey towards the end of the research study before the focus groups. These surveys will only take 20-30 minutes to complete.
2. Participate in a one-on-one individual interview with the researcher. Interviews will last no more than 45 minutes each and will be audio recorded. They will take place after school hours in the school classrooms.
3. Participate in a focus group with other parents. This focus groups will take about 45 minutes to complete. This will take place after school hours in the school classrooms.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Joshua Barela
Ph.D. Candidate

Appendix G

School Permission Letter



02 November 2021

Dear Joshua Barela:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled *Character Education for Elementary School Students and Parental Commitment: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study*, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at [REDACTED]. I grant permission for Joshua Barela to contact our parents to invite them to participate in his research study. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Principal



Appendix H

Recruitment Letter for Parental Participants

Dear Parent,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as of the part of the requirements for my doctoral degree. The title of my research project is *Character Education for Elementary School Students and Parental Commitment: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study*. The purpose of my research is to understand the parental experiences with their student's character education. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, must have an elementary school student at the [REDACTED] in South Asia, and must have at least 1 child in the elementary school who has completed at least 1 full academic year. Participants will be asked to complete two surveys, a one-on-one interview, participate in a focus group with other parents, and review the transcriptions of the interview and focus group. The interview should take about 30-45 minutes to complete, the focus group should take about 45 minutes to complete, and the surveys should take about 20 minutes to complete. The transcript review will take about 15-30 minutes to complete. Your name and other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but your information will remain completely confidential.

If you are interested in participating in this study, you can call me at [REDACTED], or email me at jjbarela@liberty.edu, to schedule the interview and focus group meeting, within two days. I will obtain your contact information, provide you the consent form and first survey to complete, and ask that you return them at the time of the scheduled interview.

The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent form and return it to me at the time of the interview, along with the first survey. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joshua J. Barela
Ph.D. Candidate