EXPLORING THE POST-COVID LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN WHO CONTINUED LEARNING IN ONLINE MODALITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Gladys Ode Williams

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

This study employed a hermeneutic phenomenology approach to explore the lived experiences of working parents of school children who transitioned to and continued online learning during and post-pandemic. Twelve parents were selected using criterion and snowball sampling methods, with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory guiding the study framework. Existing literature highlighted challenges faced by parents and schools during the pandemic, such as balancing work and children's education, connectivity issues, and dissatisfaction with school support and communication. Analysis of interview data revealed that despite ongoing concerns, parents successfully adapted to managing work and online education responsibilities. They reported satisfaction with their children's academic progress, citing support from schools and extended family, and organized social activities for their remote learners. The findings underscored Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, particularly the impact of family and school environments on child development within the micro and meso systems. Implications of the study suggest opportunities for parents, teachers, administrators, and districts to build upon successes and address areas needing improvement. Future research should expand on these findings by including more diverse samples in terms of race, economic status, and geographic location, and explore the perspectives of students and teachers, addressing current study limitations.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, online learning, parental engagement, parental involvement

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, my creator, from whom all good things flow! Your Grace carried me through this arduous process. Thank you, Lord, for anointing me with greatness and making me a pacesetter! I am in awe of You, and Your praise will continually be on my lips! I declare that I am YOURS forever!

I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Ode B. Ikoro. A man of exceptional intelligence and brilliance who wanted to obtain a doctoral degree but could not because of illness. Papa, this is for you! I know you are so proud of your baby girl!

To my amazing and stupendous husband, Dr. Gbenga Williams, who never got tired of helping me with the kids and house chores, and for his unwavering support even when it got tough. Honey, what would I have done without you? You're the BEST!

To my loving siblings, Gloria, Rosemary, Alex, Eddy, and Samuel, and my sister, Chichi for all the love, support, and encouragement! You guys ROCK!

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my awesome mother, Felicia Ikoro, and brother, Paul, who unwaveringly believed in my potential to achieve anything I set out to do. Your teachings and encouragement during your time on earth mean everything to me. I am eternally grateful!

To my awesome children, Gabriel, Gavin, and Giona, may you pursue knowledge throughout your lives, knowing that with God, nothing is impossible! Go forth and achieve great things! Mommy loves each of you so much!

To every mother, woman, and girl who desires to obtain a doctoral degree but sees impediments to that goal, let me encourage you, you can do it! Go get yours!

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List of Abbreviations

Academic Communities of Engagement (ACE)

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)

National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH)

Parental Efficacy-Scale (PES)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Parents have been instrumental in children's educational success (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Desforges & Abachar, 2003; Sylva et al., 2003). However, many studies revealed the multi-faceted challenges that parents experienced while their children continued education in online classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ashbury et al., 2020; Bond, 2020; Bubb & Jones, 2020). Chapter One provided a framework for my research study exploring the lived post-COVID-19 experiences of working parents of school children in middle school who continued learning in online modalities after the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter began by presenting background information on the challenges that COVID-19 posed to working parents of school-aged children. The study's problem, purpose, and significance were presented following the background. Finally, a list of key terms and a summary concluded the chapter.

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic brought several unanticipated challenges to education worldwide, resulting in online instruction for students (Francom et al., 2021; Garbe et al., 2020; Huck & Zhang, 2021). Teachers, students, and parents all experienced challenges such as technology and internet access issues, lack of support from school leaders, and children with disabilities falling behind academically the most (Bond, 2020; Yazcavir & Gargur, 2021). Surprisingly, about 75% of students had lesser engagement levels with remote learning than in-class learning, only 31% of teachers believed online learning was helpful to students, and teachers reported that only approximately 61% of their students would move to the next grade level (Goodrich & Namkung, 2020). School leaders also expressed displeasure with the issues

they encountered with not having all the resources they needed to fully meet the needs of students and staff (Hamilton et al., 2020). Although some leaders did prepare for the sudden transition to virtual learning by communicating with teachers and students constantly and providing laptops to them (Hayes et al., 2020). However, many studies found that the preparation made by school administrators was woefully insufficient in meeting the learning needs of all learners (Yazcavir & Gargur, 2021), including the learning needs of school children with special needs (Burketts & Reynolds, 2020; Hamilton et al., 2020; Pramling et al., 2020; Schafer, 2021; Smith et al., 2020; Yazcavir & Gagur, 2021). Consequently, parents were dissatisfied with the level of help they received from their children's schools (Bond, 2020; Yazcavir & Gagur, 2021) while struggling with the inability to act as paraprofessionals or co-teachers as expected by the student's school (Sampson et al., 2022). Furthermore, as COVID-19 progressed, parents experienced challenges with the increased screen time use of children and the resulting consequences of health and psychological issues among others (Armstrong, 2022; Carroll et al., 2020; Larivière-Bastien et al., 2022; Negata et al., 2020; Pandya & Lodha, 2021; Trabelsi et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021). Overall, parents played an essential role in student success while overcoming escalating challenges during COVID-19.

Historical Context

Before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, K-12 schools in America and most parts of the world provided education to students in physical classrooms (Garcia & Weiss, 2020), and parents were viewed as essential partners in children's academic achievement (Desforges & Abachar, 2003; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Sylva et al., 2003). Students spent most of their time at school and were taught by teachers who catered to their academic needs and provided

moral guidance. Students gained social and interpersonal skills through peer interaction (Bond, 2020; Huck & Zhang, 2021). The school environment also provided students with health, psychological, and meal services, which was especially helpful for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (World Bank, 2021). Furthermore, students with special needs had access to support staff in physical classrooms (Schafer et al., 2021), and school leaders were responsible for creating an equitable learning environment for students (DeMathews et al., 2020).

However, the learning environment changed as the sudden onset of the global health pandemic forced schools to move classes online (Huck & Zhang, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Reimers, 2020). The transition to emergency remote teaching (ERT) created many issues, including technology (Huck & Zhang, 2021; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021). Although schools in America have enjoyed incorporating technology into physical classrooms, and it has been used during emergencies like natural disasters, teaching with full-scale technology online was novel (Hinson et al., 2007; Huck & Zhang, 2021; Rush et al., 2014). The nature of the pivot seemingly left many schools unprepared to manage the challenges of teaching students online. As a result, teachers reported concerns about students' learning engagement and technology efficacy in online teaching (Cardullo et al., 2021; Franco et al., 2021; Hamilton et al., 2020). This concern for their technological competence was not a new problem, as this deficiency had historically been an issue in teacher training programs (Foulger et al., 2017). Although some studies reported that many teachers knew how to use technology and have taught online, they still did not feel prepared for 100% online teaching (Huck & Zhang, 2021; Trust & Whalen, 2020).

Furthermore, parents whose involvement in children's education had contributed to their academic achievement and built a stronger bond with the children's schools (Gestwicki, 2007; Rymanowicz & Schulz, 2021; Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014) reported struggles with children taking classes virtually as they had not experienced spending the amount of time the new challenge presented (Lee et al., 2020; Reimers, 2020). As a result, parents were expected to help teachers keep children focused during class even though their attention was often divided between more than one child and other engagements, an experience different from before the COVID-19 pandemic (Ribeiro et al., 2021). Parents engaged actively in activities such as monitoring, teaching, assistance in the use of technology, rendering emotional support, and financial commitment to ensure the adequate performance of students during distance learning (Sonnenschein et al., 2021) and even though parents had always performed most of these duties, the burden became significant during COVID-19 pandemic (Andrew et al., Brom et al., 2022; Villadsen, 2020).

Parents who had school children with special needs or disabilities also expressed displeasure with the lack of support from the children's schools (Asbury et al., 2020; Schafer et al., 2021; Yazcavir & Gurgur, 2021). More so, principals who usually had clear directives from their districts before the pandemic expressed dissatisfaction with demands from school officials even though the difficulties that online learning posed had been researched before the pandemic occurred (Archambault & Larson, 2015; McAlister & Graham, 2016; Moore-Adams et al., 2016; Orit et al., 2021). While schools attempted to develop adequate distance learning opportunities for students, overall well-being may have been overlooked.

Social Context

The social aspects of the parental role in education have been fundamental to children's academic, social, and overall well-being (Chen, 2022; Ilmanto et al., 2020). Parents value their involvement and engagement in their children's education and desire to see positive benefits (Rymanowicz & Schulz, 2021; Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014), and these benefits require the help and partnership of schools addressing concerns that parents have, such as lack of time (Chen, 2020). However, the COVID-19 challenges prevented schools from offering the support parents desired from their children's schools (Yazcavir & Gurgur, 2021). Parents expressed displeasure with the social isolation, inappropriateness of online learning, especially for children with special needs, the poor inactivity of students, and the increased time children were spending online (Misirli & Ergulec, 2021). Also, parents reported an inability to understand and effectively assist their children with schoolwork (Novianti & Garcia, 2020; Sari & Manningtyas, 2020; Slovacek & Cosic, 2020) and did not have the social support they desired for their children (Misirli & Frgulec, 2021) and themselves (Hafidz et al., 2020).

Despite the challenges, parents still took on supervisory and mentoring roles (Apriyanti, 2021; Garbe et al., 2020; Hafidz et al., 2020; Novianti & Garcia, 2020). Also, they were expected to motivate their children and provide a loving and conducive environment to aid their academic growth (Ilmanto et al., 2020). It is therefore necessary to understand the post-COVID-19 experiences of parents who allowed their children to continue learning online, considering the social role and involvement that parents play in their children's education and the challenges they experienced.

Theoretical Context

Theories of parental experience or involvement in their children's education revealed parents' essential roles in the academic success of school children, among other factors. The academic communities of engagement (ACE) framework posits that a student's cognitive, affective, and emotional engagement is first affected by the course environment, which is comprised of the school administrator, counselor, teachers, and peers. Second, it involves the student's community, including their parents, siblings, and friends (Borup et al., 2020). The ACE 2020 framework focused on these communities in both online and blended school environments, an expansive view of Borup's (2014) adolescent communities of engagement, which focused only on online communities of engagement. A study that explored the effect of these communities on student engagement revealed that students are more engaged in in-person learning as there are more opportunities for interaction with people in their learning environment; however, these communities of engagement can be beneficial in online learning settings and should be encouraged and implemented (Spring, 2018).

Similarly, Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) posits that a child's development is complex and shaped by the interaction of relationships in five different environments. However, the microsystem, which is the first environment, is viewed as the most influential level of connection in a developing child's life as it involves the immediate settings where the child identifies, such as family or home, neighborhood, peers, and the school where the child attends (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) can potentially enhance students' educational outcomes and academic performance, which can be achieved through the concerted efforts of teachers and school

administrators to establish an optimal learning environment and foster collaboration with parents (Taylor & Gebre, 2016). Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge the influence of external factors such as peers, extracurricular activities, and the community in which the child resides on their academic success. Additionally, the pivotal role of parents in nurturing a positive relationship between students and educators should not be underestimated (Hoover & Sandler, 1997; Taylor & Gebre, 2016). Thus, this study examined the experiences of parents whose children continued learning in an online learning modality guided by ecological systems theory (Brofenbrenner, 1979), which provides additional expansion of the theoretical concepts building on the theory's current foundation.

Problem Statement

The problem is that parents of middle school children in remote learning environments struggle to balance work and education needs. Several research studies have shown that the sudden transition to online learning during the pandemic led to more parental engagement in their children's education but exposed many challenges that parents experienced (Agaton & Cueto, 2021). Those challenges included availability issues, capacity to manage work and homeschooling roles, educational level as demonstrated in their ability to understand children's lessons, and parents' technical knowledge of e-learning gadgets (Daniela et al., 2021). Parents also had challenges with poor internet connectivity and struggled to control their children's addiction to the internet after classes, leading to worry for their children's health and social well-being (Demir & Demir, 2021). Further, the drive for student autonomy created a lack of learning motivation as social interactions were depleted and parents struggled to balance family, business, and school priorities (Zacolletti et al., 2020; Camacho et al., 2021). Such social-emotional

development was a challenge as financial obligations continued for parents while managing multiple roles in their child's or children's education (Lessy et al., 2021). Despite the struggles, some parents have chosen to continue the online learning environment for their children. Thus, this study aimed to fill the gap in research that examines parental decisions to remain in a distance learning program post-COVID-19.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the post-COVID-19 online learning modality experiences for parents of middle school children in an urban area in the Southeastern United States. For this research, post-COVID-19 online learning modality experiences are generally defined as experiences that parents have with their children learning synchronously or asynchronously using technology tools such as laptops, phones, and the internet to enable teaching and learning (Huck & Zhang, 2021; Orit et al., 2021; Zhu & Liu, 2020). The theory guiding this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as it provided the framework for exploring the experiences of parents who allowed their children to continue learning online despite the concerns and challenges met during the initial online modality development.

Significance of the Study

This research study is significant in that current studies have not yet explored the lived post-COVID-19 experiences of parents whose children continued with remote learning after the pandemic (Huck & Zhang, 2021). However, many studies conducted during the pandemic exposed the many challenges parents, students, teachers, and schools experienced (Huck & Zhang, 2021). This section explores the study's theoretical, empirical, and practical significance.

Theoretical

This study is theoretically significant in that there are studies that have explored the importance and benefits of collaboration between the school and home environment in the academic success of a child through the lens of the academic communities of engagement framework (ACE) (Borup et al., 2014; Borup et al., 2020). While the ACE framework shows the importance of the relationship between parents and teachers in meeting students' affective, cognitive, and behavioral leads (Borup et al., 2014; Borup et al., 2020), it failed to address other factors like the effect that the economic condition of parents, and other familial relationships can have on parental engagement and involvement in children's education. My study explored the experiences of working parents in supporting student's academic success through the lens of the different systems and factors within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Empirical

Parents played a more prominent role in educating their children by acting as co-teachers even though they lacked the expertise in that capacity (Ilmanto et al., 2020; Sari & Manningtyas, 2020). Parents also faced the challenges of social isolation that their children experienced, the poor inactivity of children, concerns over the amount of time that children were spending online (Misirli &Ergulec, 2021), and the risks of health and psychological problems (Armstrong, 2022; Carroll et al., 2020; Larivière-Bastien et al., 2022; Negata et al., 2020; Pandya & Lodha, 2021; Trabelsi et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021). Even further, parents had trouble understanding their children's homework requirements and, as a result, failed to provide the necessary help (Novianti & Garcia, 2020; Sari & Manningtyas, 2020; Slovacek & Cosic, 2020). More so, parents

experienced the burden of managing their economic needs (Lessy et al., 2021), work, and supervising their children, especially for parents that had more than one child learning remotely (Novianti & Garcia, 2020; Slovacek & Cosic, 2020) among other myriad challenges. This study revealed how working parents respond to remote learning children's educational needs, how they experience school support for remote learning, and how parents integrate familial support systems for remote learning children's educational needs in the post-COVID-19 era.

Practical

Practically, this study may expose deficiencies in parental engagement in their children's education and the effectiveness of the relationship between the home and school in improving student engagement in the post-COVID-19 era. The findings from this study can significantly affect decision-making for parents who may still be considering moving their children to virtual school. The results could help schools offering post-pandemic remote education to learn and improve on providing better remote learning experiences for parents and students, especially if the challenges that those parents had during the pandemic have been resolved or addressed by both parents and their children's school. Furthermore, findings from this study could enlighten school leaders and education policymakers on the challenges that persist for parents of online school children after the pandemic and some of the barriers that might be preventing working parents from fully engaging in their children's online education. The insights gleaned from this study could lead to better understanding, communication, and more support for working parents to help them better drive their children's engagement and academic achievement in online learning.

Research Questions

One central research question and four sub-questions guided this study. The questions focused on the experiences of working parents of middle school children in an online learning environment. The first and second sub-questions focused on parents' response to their children's academic and social needs in a remote learning environment, and the third and fourth sub-questions sought to know the support that working parents receive from their children's school and family members in a remote learning environment. The sub-questions for this study were guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as the theoretical framework for this study.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of working parents of middle school children in remote learning environments?

Sub-Question One

How do working parents respond to children's educational needs when learning remotely?

Sub-Question Two

How do working parents experience school support for children's educational needs when learning remotely?

Sub-Question Three

How do working parents meet the social needs of their children in a remote learning environment?

Sub-Question Four

How do working parents integrate familial support systems for remote learning children's educational needs?

Definitions

1. *COVID-19* - A new coronavirus that was discovered in 2019 (Porkrel & Chhetri 2021).
2. *Online learning* - Learning synchronously or asynchronously using technology tools such as laptops, phones, and the internet to enable teaching and learning (Orit et al., 2021; Zhu & Liu, 2020).
3. *Pandemic* - A large-scale outbreak of a communicable disease (Porkhrel &Chhetri, 2021).
4. *Parental engagement* - The participation of parents in their children's educational experiences (Smith, 2022).
5. *Parental involvement* - The participation of parents in school-related activities that impact the academic and social-emotional well-being of their children (Park & Holloway, 2018).

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the post-COVID-19 online learning modality experiences for parents of middle school children in an urban area in the Southeastern United States. This chapter guided the study's background information on the challenges that parents, students, and schools experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, I discussed the historical, social, and theoretical aspects of this study, as well as the study's significance. Following the significance, I presented the problem and purpose statements that led

to the presentation of the research questions that guide this study as developed using Bronfennbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Finally, a presentation of the study's terms was provided to guide the reader through this study, focusing on the lived experiences of parents of middle school children who chose to continue online learning post-COVID-19.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A systematic literature review was conducted to explore the post-COVID-19 online learning modality experiences for parents of middle school children in an urban area in the Southeastern United States, who continued their education online after the pandemic. This chapter presented a review of the current literature related to the topic of study. The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) guiding this study was discussed in the first section, followed by a synthesis of recent literature on the COVID-19 experiences of parents of online school children. Also, the different themes that emerged in the pandemic literature surrounding online education experiences for parents and their children were addressed. Ultimately, a gap in the literature was identified, presenting a viable need for the current study.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in qualitative research informs the study. It also provides a lens through which the questions about the problem under study are developed in addition to data collection on the study, analyzing the data, and interpreting the result (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The theory that informs this study is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. In 1979, Urie Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems theory. The theory focuses on the effect of social interaction on a child's development and the belief that everything in a person's surrounding environment influences the development of the individual. This theory posits that a child's development is complex and shaped by the interaction of relationships in different settings such as family, school, economic, political, cultural values, social, laws, and customs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The immediate and more significant environments influence a child's

development, and these environments are classified into five systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem is viewed as the most critical level of relationship in a developing child's life as it involves the immediate settings with which the child identifies, such as family or home, neighborhood, peers, and the school the child attends (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). During COVID-19, the different factors within the microsystem were disrupted, causing parents to experience challenges they had not experienced before the pandemic (Huck & Zhang, 2021). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted children's interaction in the microsystems because they could not socialize with their peers as before the pandemic (Huck & Zhang, 2021). Unfortunately, children continuing in online education after in-class learning resumed could face similar challenges.

The mesosystems involve the processes that interact in the various microsystems where an individual exists (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). To understand human development, a person must comprehend how the activities in one microsystem, such as the family, can affect an individual's interaction in another microsystem, such as a school. The exosystem includes structures that influence the development of an individual through interactions with other individuals in that system, even though the individual is not directly in that system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem involves the interaction among and between the diverse micro, meso, and exosystem.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) captures the macrosystem, which is further influenced by the meso and exosystems as the expectations or roadmap that society has for a particular culture or subculture in which the structure of a family in a mesosystem could be influenced by the culture that a family imbibes and exhibits. Consequently, the norms, beliefs, and values significantly

affect a society's religion, culture, and socioeconomic system, which in turn influences how individuals view the future (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). Bronfenbrenner (1979) later added that the chronosystem describes the effect of time and events experienced by individuals on their development as environmental changes occur in the individual's life. Consequently, the interaction of the four processes of human development, such as person, process, time, and context, influences human development and needs to be understood (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017).

This research is focused on the micro and meso systems, as they directly influence a child's development. The microsystem is the most influential in that an individual's psychological and behavioral changes directly result from this system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Interactions within the microsystems can affect an individual separately and cumulatively (Crawford, 2020), as evident in the experiences of students, parents, and schools during the pandemic, guiding the significance of this study. Also, in the mesosystem system, a person's various microsystems interact and exert influence over one another rather than operating independently. A mesosystem is essentially a system of microsystems and can positively foster and strengthen the relationships within the microsystem if properly channeled (Guy-Evans, 2023).

Related Literature

The sudden emergence of the global health pandemic in early 2020 presented many challenges for education (Bond, 2020; Bubb & Jones, 2020; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021; Trust & Whalen, 2021; Yazcavir & Gurgur, 2021; Zuo et al., 2021). As a result of the pandemic, schools transitioned to online learning, causing many technological, social, and emotional challenges for students, teachers, school leaders, and parents (Demir &Demir, 2021; Ilmanto et al., 2020; Lessy

et al., 2021; Sari & Manningtyas, 2020). Before the pandemic, school officials and families had never experienced the nature of such a disruption and did not have significant research to guide them (Harris & Jones, 2020).

Furthermore, schools pivoted to online learning quickly, so there was no time to properly prepare for the sudden change (Means et al., 2021). As a result, many teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their preparedness for teaching students online (Trust & Whalen, 2020), confusion over which pandemic school policies to follow, and the support they received from the leaders (Hodges et al., 2020; Huck & Zhang, 2021). Similarly, parents experienced many challenges. They struggled with supporting their children's learning online as they had other competing priorities (Bubb & Jones, 2020), a lack of cooperation between them and their children's teachers or school, and concerns for the health and mental well-being of their children (Ashbury et al., 2020) due to the increased screen time requirements for children to learn in an online environment (Armstrong, 2022; Carroll et al., 2020; Larivière-Bastien et al., 2022; Negata et al., 2020; Pandya & Lodha, 2021; Trabelsi et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021).

This literature review presents findings on studies conducted on education during the pandemic and the gaps that necessitated this study. This review also describes the challenges presented by the pandemic and among parents of school children. Some of the themes from the studies include screen time use, health concerns, internet and technology access issues, parental stress, lack of motivation and student engagement, and parents struggle with balancing work and parental duties, among other concerns.

Screen Time

Screen usage was a significant concern for parents during the pandemic (Armstrong, 2022; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021; Nagata et al., 2020). Marking a sudden shift in the daily routine of a global audience, families and academic institutions adopted remote learning infrastructures to ensure continued education despite associated difficulties (Gelir & Duzen, 2022; Smith et al., 2020). Embracing remote learning and prolonged school closures extended children's two-hour recommended screen time (American Academy of Pediatrics, n.d.). Since students were exposed to technology throughout a class, it increased children's overall use of digital technology and screen time (Carroll et al., 2020; Nagata et al., 2020; Pandya & Lodha, 2021), and it became increasingly difficult for parents to refocus children's attention. In particular, during the pandemic, playing video games among children increased by 51%, and smartphone usage increased by 42% (Armstrong et al., 2022). The increase in children's screen use during this period was due to having additional free time outside of traditional school hours (Carroll et al., 2020). More findings revealed that 87% of parents reported children's frequent use of screens, causing some parents to consider scheduling screen times to reduce it. However, others believed their child had to connect more via increased screen access (Carroll et al., 2020).

The rationale for allowing children to connect more was due to the physical separation the pandemic created when schools moved entirely online; children needed to communicate with friends **(**Larivière-Bastien et al., 2022), and the overall mental benefits of connecting via screens (Seguin et al., 2021). Interestingly, the development of social competence in childhood and adolescence is directly related to good-quality friendships and relationships (Larivière-Bastien et al., 2022). However, it is essential to note that although parents were concerned about excessive

screen time, this was also a concern parents had even before the pandemic (Auxier et al., 2020). Before the pandemic, children between the ages of eight and 12 spent over four hours on screens in entertainment, and those between 13 and 18 spent over seven hours on their digital devices (Korhonen, 2021). The usage also includes time used for homework (Korhonen, 2021). Still, the pandemic exacerbated the worry as usage increased (Armstrong et al., 2022).

Interestingly, the increase in screen time for children during the pandemic might also be attributed to parents not having enough time to juggle multiple responsibilities and probably ignoring the critical role of supervising children (Novianti & Garzia, 2020). As a result, the level of parental engagement or supervision provided to children during the pandemic was dependent on factors such as time, parental education, age, and gender of the child, among others (Ribeiro, 2021; Sari & Maningtyas, 2020), and to a large extent consistent with themes that emerged from studies on screen time during the pandemic such as socioeconomic factors, financial constraints, and media literacy among parent (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Al et al., 2021; Amanor et al., 2020; Bol et al., 2020; Bond, 2020; Bzour et al., 2022; Daniela et al., 2021; Eyimaaya & Irmak, 2020; Lubis & Lubis et al., 2020; Sari & Maningtyas; 2020). Notwithstanding, concerns expressed by parents can be resolved by implementing a family media use plan because parents are best positioned to support their children through effective communication and interaction (Eyimaaya & Irmak, 2020).

Socioeconomic & Financial Factors

Income, education, and career choice affect parents' ability to manage their children's screen time during the pandemic (Bol, 2020; Eyimaaya & Irmak, 2020). In addition, there were immediate needs for social distancing standards that needed to be connected with the duty of

effectively regulating screen time for children, especially on the part of parents (Bol, 2020; Eyimaaya & Irmak, 2020). As a result of the pressing financial concerns accompanying the pandemic, less attention was paid to monitoring children's screen time limit, especially for mothers struggling financially (Eyimaaya & Irmak, 2020; Lee, 2022). Interestingly, low socioeconomic status was more associated with prolonged screen time (Eyimaaya & Irmak, 2020; Lee, 2022) and the demands of jobs with family life (Crook, 2020; Götz et al., 2020). Furthermore, the challenges of screen time might have stemmed from a parent's level of education, which will usually affect the rate at which a parent understands the parenting and supervisory roles expected of them (Bol, 2020).

Media Illiteracy Among Parents

The lack of familiarity with screen technologies during the pandemic was a significant issue for parents (Lubis & Lubis et al., 2020). Consequently, parents' media illiteracy resulted in poor monitoring of children's screen time use because some parents struggled to adapt to digital learning tools (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Amanor et al., 2020; Bzour et al., 2022; Parczewska, 2021) and their inability to operate the technologies (Lubis & Lubis et al., 2020). Understanding digital or online learning gadgets became imperative for parents to be effective in helping and monitoring their children (Novianti & Garcia, 2020). However, access to technology and readiness for remote learning were significant issues, among other challenges parents faced when schools transitioned fully to online learning (Bond, 2020; Bzour et al., 2022). Nonetheless, parents need to gain the requisite knowledge of e-learning (Amanor et al., 2020) potentially through preparation from the government, availability of devices, technology training for

teachers, internet availability, and providing more help to low-income families, especially during online education (Bzour et al., 2022).

Health Concerns

A significant concern for parents during the pandemic was the health risks it posed due to the online education system (Armstrong, 2022; Lee, 2020; Olive et al., 2022). Psychological and physical impairments caused by prolonged screen time in children and adolescents have been the crux of much research in the related area (Francom et al., 2021; Santos et al., 2023). Research has shown that children not receiving in-class education are at risk of developing health issues (Verlenden et al., 2021). Against this background, parental concerns about their children's health issues have not been unfounded (Trabelsi et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021), and this goes beyond just the health concerns for children but also parents of school children (Olive et al., 2022).

Children Health Issues

Staring more at technology screens led to the detrimental effect of learning virtually during the pandemic, which extended to areas such as a reduction in physical activities and an increase in sedentary behaviors, weight gain, sleep disturbances, and behavioral problems (Rundle et al., 2020; Sultana et al., 2021; Trabelsi et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021). Sleep disturbances were more pronounced during weekends because children spent more time on screens (Olive et al., 2022). Also, the digital shift puts children at risk of obesity, depression, lower quality of life, and many behavioral changes, including children with disabilities (Diaz, 2020). Boredom, irritability, and frustration were significant behavioral changes (Lee et al., 2021). Furthermore, prolonged exposure to screens has raised concerns about eye health, with reports of digital eye strain and myopia progression (Lee et al., 2021). Apart from this study, the

emerging eye health issue necessitates further research and measures to mitigate potential long-term effects on children's visual health (Lee et al., 2021). Moreover, balancing health and behavioral changes amidst the commitment that parents' paid jobs required was a significant concern during the pandemic (Olive et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the rise of electronic communication and digital media as growing cultural trends has led to heightened mood disorders, suicidal thoughts, and behaviors (Twenge et al., 2019). More so, the decline in sleep duration was also an adverse effect of the imminent rise in digital media and e-learning materials that formed the core of remote learning during the pandemic (Twenge et al., 2019). Prolonged screen time may have created a cohort effect on younger people. Two nationally representative surveys of U.S. adolescents in grades eight through 12 and national statistics on suicide deaths for those aged 13 to 18 showed that adolescents who spent more time on new media, including social media and electronic devices such as smartphones, were more likely to report mental health issues (Bakour et al., 2022; Twenge et al., 2019). On the contrary, adolescents who spent more time on non-screen activities, including physical and social interactions, sports and physical activities, attendance of religious gatherings, and print media, were less likely to report mental health issues (Twenge et al., 2018). Therefore, parents had to deliberately factor in physical activities, such as scheduling outdoor activities, to mitigate health concerns (Carroll et al., 2020).

Interestingly, the 2016 - 2017 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) showed that time spent on screen is associated with being overweight or obese. Therefore, physical activity is recommended to combat unfavorable increases in obese BMI among U.S. children and adolescents aged 0 - 17 (Bakour et al., 2022). Similarly, an analysis of the data derived from the

2016-2017 NSCH compared the effect of low physical activity on children with Down syndrome, a chromosomal disorder characterized by intellectual instability, congenital heart disease, sleep apnea, and visual and hearing impairments. The study revealed that children diagnosed with Down syndrome were 45% less likely to participate in physical activity and 52% less likely to participate in sports than children without physical or health-related diagnoses (Diaz, 2020), which worsened during the pandemic (Amatori et al., 2022). These statistics further fueled pressing concerns of parents over their children's well-being following the shift to a condition that necessitated extended screen use (Musa et al., 2022; Rundle et al., 2020; Sultana et al., 2021; Trabelsi et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021).

However, since some studies show the detrimental effects of prolonged screen time on children during the pandemic, the transition to remote learning has improved physical activities and family bonding among siblings and parents (Seguin et al., 2021). Even more, increased screen time was seemingly a medium for efficiently juggling work-at-home demands since children were preoccupied with other things. Parents showed more concern about the sustainability of the change rather than the overall physical and psychological effects of quarantine protocols covered by several researchers (Seguin et al., 2021). Research on the influence of screen time on children needs to be investigated to see if it could provide mental health benefits to children because it allows them to socialize with family and friends (Seguin et al., 2021).

Parents Health Issues

The health concerns of prolonged screen time extended beyond the barriers of how it affected the child alone. Parents, too, were shown to be majorly affected (Olive et al., 2022).

While parents expressed their concerns about how screen time affected their children's psychological and physical well-being, parents also experienced poor sleep quality and physical activity during the pandemic (Olive et al., 2022). Compared with pre-pandemic data, this led to poorer mental health conditions, signifying increasing difficulties in regulating children's screen time.

Additionally, decreased physical activity increased sedentary behavior, which indicates both poor mental health conditions and cardiovascular disease (CVD) among parents and children (Olive et al., 2022), as well as cardiometabolic illnesses, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure among children and youths (Musa et al., 2022). On the other hand, a weak correlation exists between prolonged screen time and future risk involving poor cardiorespiratory fitness, poorer cognitive development, lower education attainments, poor sleep outcomes, or risk of metabolic syndrome in adolescents (De Oliveira & Guedes, 2016), even though pandemic studies on the health risks show otherwise (Olive et al., 2022; Trabelsi et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021*).* However, adolescents engaged in non-screen activities had fewer mental health issues (Twenge et al., 2018), and parents who used indoor and outdoor spaces to continue physical activities to mitigate health issues for their children (Eyler et al., 2021).

Parental Stress

Parents experienced stress during the pandemic (Benassi et al., 2020; Brik et al., 2022; Giannotti et al., 2022; Janualt et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2021; Skjerdingstad et al., 2021; Spinelli et al., 2021). Such stress is partly due to an increased engagement in motivating and supervising children's education (Giannotti et al., 2022; Rehman & Poobalan, 2021; Susilowati & Azzasyofia, 2020). In addition, due to the restriction in mobility and social isolation, parents

experienced psychological stress components, which included irritability, depression, anxiety, stress, and post-traumatic stress symptoms (Spinelli et al., 2021). These were found to have impaired the ability of parents to perform their roles satisfactorily, thus leading to dyadic parenting stress, a situation where there is a perceived mismatch between resources available to perform parental roles and the actual demands of parenting (Spinelli et al., 2021).

More so, the stress parents experienced resulted in an impaired parent-child relationship, leading to behavioral and emotional difficulties in the child (Lehmann et al., 2022; Spinelli et al., 2021). However, the microsystem school environment, which the pandemic deprived students of, mitigated the psychological issues that some students experienced (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lehmann et al., 2022). Notably, the reactions to destress among children varied as the same depends on the quality of parenting and support rendered by the parents during the pandemic (Spinelli et al., 2021). The level of chaos in a home also seemed to affect parents' perception of stress during the pandemic (Spinelli et al., 2021). As such, parents living in chaotic environments recorded high-stress levels, leading to less positive parenting in parents with adolescents (Donker et al., 2021). However, feeling connected to family, friends, and neighbors influenced psychological well-being favorably in varying degrees (Landmann & Rohmann, 2022).

Although parents reported heightened stress levels during the pandemic confinement, women experienced such stress more than men during adverse events, with a spike in anxiety levels by over 49.5% (Benassi et al., 2020). Working women with children experienced more stress than those without children (Benassi et al., 2020). Mothers experience stress more than fathers, even before and during the pandemic (Giannotti et al., 2022). Furthermore, inconsistencies with parents' expectations regarding a particular issue and the financial

constraints that pervaded the pandemic period were identified as triggers of parental stress, which was deemed a precursor to child externalizing behaviors (Giannotti et al., 2022). However, the pressure from economic hardship experienced by women started before the pandemic (Benassi et al., 2020). Themes such as the age of the children and type of parent, work and home life balance, psychological vulnerability, and availability of resources, among others, are common themes in the literature that contribute to parental stress.

Age of Children and Parent Type

Parents of younger children experienced elevated mental stress levels due to an increased need for supervision among dependent children (Giannotti et al., 2022; Susilowati & Azzasyofia, 2020). Similarly, there were high-stress levels among younger parents who had younger, more dependent children needing increased parental involvement, a situation that had to be managed with accruing financial needs within the period (Skjerdingstad et al., 2021). Such evidence could also mean that adolescents and parents of adolescents experienced higher stress levels in comparison with parents who had younger children. Therefore, adolescents' mental health decline raises concerns (Brik et al., 2022). Additionally, parents with multiple children were more vulnerable to parental stress (Johnson et al., 2021; Wamsey-Nanney et al., 2021) than anxiety and depression (Johnson et al., 2021).

Single parents had more cases of depression and anxiety than married or cohabiting parents (Johnson et al., 2021), and parents experienced higher stress levels in extended family arrangements, while children showed lower anxiety levels in extended family arrangements (Brik et al., 2022). More so, women and mothers with multiple children especially encountered higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression than fathers (Brik et al., 2022). Since social support is a

necessary protective factor that could aid parental resilience or attempts to adapt to the pandemic (Johnson et al., 2021) and social engagements were limited during the pandemic, a rise in stress among all parents may have been expected by scholars investigating such topics. Furthermore, parents with preexisting psychiatric conditions experienced greater stress levels during the pandemic (Johnson et al., 2021) and parents with unfavorable childhood experiences, which may have affected their parental skills (Hails et al., 2022).

Women of color and those with low social-economic status experienced more stress coping with their children's education during the pandemic, which negatively affected their children's behavior (Johnston et al., 2021; Robertson, 2021). Only 52% of Black women had enough income to meet their basic needs, in contrast to 78% of White women, which showed the ultimate struggle of Black women in managing their households and children (Robertson, 2021). Moreover, many Black women faced severe social isolation during the pandemic (Robertson, 2021). Despite these findings on other factors that heightened stress during the pandemic, many studies point to the fact that the pandemic was a significant stressor for parents (Hails et al., 2022). A significant predictor of parental stress was anger expressed by parents toward their children (Johnson et al., 2021). Confinement in homes gave room for irritation; some parents became angrier at their children during the pandemic (Johnson et al., 2021).

Work and Home Life Balance

Triggers of parental mental stress were also derived from the imbalance experienced between work and home needs, such as remote learning requirements, which also affected children (Giannotti et al., 2022; Susilowati & Azzasyofia, 2020). Significantly, differing stress levels among families did not change given their socioeconomic status (Giannotti et al., 2022);

however, family stressors increased to heightened levels following the unavailability of resources to address arising needs adequately during the pandemic (Johnson et al., 2021). Notably, a higher stress level encountered during the pandemic among socio-economically disadvantaged families led to unemployment, poor educational qualifications, and inadequate income, resulting in child anxiety (Brik et al., 2022). Following this development, it is vital for further research to be conducted concerning how long-term strategies can be developed to address the concerns in mental health services (Brik et al., 2022), as family stress theory posits that exposure to new risks disrupts regular family routine, a situation which jeopardizes family equilibrium (Malia, 2006).

Psychological Vulnerability

Psychological vulnerability owing to the new challenges of the times was felt, especially among women, leading to a decline in mental health and maladaptive coping strategies for parents and children (Johnson et al., 2021). Greater levels of stress in this regard served as inroads to abusive and violent parenting (Johnson et al., 2021). Furthermore, tremendous parental stress was linked to anxiety and depression (Johnson et al., 2021). Interestingly, higher psychological stress levels were recorded among parents who strictly complied with the stay-at-home orders, restricting social interactions, debunking the results of most pieces of literature that parental roles are associated with parental stress, especially among women as opposed to men. Rather, gender gaps differ according to cultural distinctions (Johnson et al., 2021). However, self-efficacy and social support were pointed out as protective factors that could aid parental resilience and guide parents as they face challenges (Johnson et al., 2021). Additionally, decreases in psychological distress among parents were attributed to the quality of shared co-

parenting relationship (Giannotti et al., 2022; Susilowati & Azzasyofia, 2020) and the family as a protective factor against stress (Donker, 2021).

Struggle with Learning Tools

Parents struggled to adapt to digital learning tools during the pandemic (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Amanor et al., 2020; Bzour et al., 2022; Parczewska, 2021), and the need to understand digital or online learning gadgets became imperative (Novianti & Garcia, 2020). Digital learning tools, including digital learning management systems such as Google Classroom, ClassDojo, Moodle, and Canvas, are reliable mediums for distance learning (Novianti & Garcia, 2020). However, learners' preparedness, teachers' preparedness, IT infrastructure, management support, school culture, and preference to meet face-to-face are factors affecting teachers' and parents' readiness to transition to e-learning (So & Swatman (2005). Furthermore, internet access and lack of IT knowledge were barriers that caused a problem in transitioning to e-learning among students (Amanor et al., 2020; Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020).

More so, the barriers among parents with inadequate resources to purchase e-learning gadgets and financial issues heightened the inequality gap in the availability of e-learning materials, especially among families of low socioeconomic status (Daniela et al., 2021). Parents' lack of technical know-how and e-learning gadgets to assist their children also contributed to the issue (Amanor et al., 2020; Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020). Approximately 88% of parents who participated in the Amanor et al. (2020) study lacked the requisite knowledge of e-learning, resulting in a lack of parental support in children's education, which served as an in-road to poor academic performance. Considering the frequent presence of children within the confines of the home following the closure of in-person classes, increased attention to students' psychological

and physical growth may have been expected. Unfortunately, students lacking good parental support missed out on the necessary factors for the full development of a child during the pandemic (Amanor et al., 2020). Common themes emerging from the literature on the struggle with learning tools include internet connection (Bond, 2020; Bzour et al.; Demir & Demir, 2020), access to e-learning gadgets and parents' financial situation, and the benefits of learning tools.

Internet Connection

Internet connection posed a significant obstruction for 70% of parents of school children (Demir & Demir, 2021). Also, studies on the experiences of parents, students, and teachers during the pandemic found that access to technology and readiness for remote learning were significant issues, among other challenges, when schools transitioned fully to online learning (Bond, 2020; Bzour et al., 2022). Consequently, future studies need to include preparation from the government, availability of devices, technology training for teachers, internet availability, and providing more help to low-income families, as these factors have not yet been discussed in the research (Bzour et al., 2022).

Online Learning Gadgets and Parents' Financial Status

During the pandemic, online learning gadgets and parents' financial status were issues (Amanor et al., 2020; Daniela et al., 2020; Zuo et al., 2021) even though 55% of parents, representing most of the research participants in a study, purchased online learning gadgets, indicating proper technological support (Daniela et al., 2021). This disparity in technology is attributed to parents' financial situation (Amanor et al., 2020). Despite this difference, other factors are responsible (Bzour et al., 2022), and other factors could also be responsible if more

information were gathered from some participants who declined to participate in the study (Amanor et al., 2020). Although parents and students experienced these challenges, online learning produced some benefits. For example, students and parents simultaneously acquired technical knowledge during online learning (Dwijuliani et al., 2021) to overcome some challenges.

Benefits of Learning Tools

Learning tools produced some benefits during the pandemic because online learning is not bound by time and space; thus, students could access lessons without physical convergence at a specific point (Abramson, 2021; Almahasees, 2021; Dwijuliani et al., 2021). Moreover, schools organized learning socialization among parents to instill a proper understanding of their child's curriculum and e-learning gadgets (Dwijuliani et al., 2021). Consequently, learning socialization increased parents' inclusion in their children's education (Abramson, 2021; Dwijuliani et al., 2021). In addition to creating a technologically fit generation, online learning gave children a sense of independence, responsibility, and organization, as self-supervision became a primal concept (Abramson, 2021; Dwijuliani et al., 2021). These values became apparent when there was a need to submit assignments and meet deadlines (Dwijuliani et al., 2021).

Despite these benefits, more recommendations from past studies point to the need for schools to provide training to parents on how to use digital tools (Amanor et al., 2020; Daniela et al., 2021) and provide technical and financial support to parents, especially to economically disadvantaged parents (Agaton & Cueto, 2021). It is essential to reduce technical issues and provide no or low-cost internet connections to families of low socioeconomic status to support

learning (Demir & Demir, 2021). Furthermore, by fostering digital skills, promoting digitally supported environments (Chiu et al., 2021), and encouraging government partnerships with telecommunication companies, leaders may be more successful in making internet access more affordable to make internet access much more affordable (Amanor et al., 2020) while responsively developing a stronger sense of motivation among the users.

Motivational Issues

During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents faced numerous challenges, including their children's diminishing motivation for learning and their struggle to motivate them, resulting in various issues for students (Camacho et al., 2021; Chiu et al., 2021; Lessy et al., 2021; Zacollette et al., 2020). Extensive research has been conducted to explore the constructs of motivation and the associated theories (Gottfried, 2019, 2023a; Graham, 2020; Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2020; Zacolletti et al., 2020). Notably, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) was employed to examine children's motivation during the pandemic, revealing the adverse effects of the shift away from traditional learning environments and the physical absence of teachers and peers on students' academic motivation (Huck & Zhang, 2021; Zacolletti et al., 2020). Consequently, the pillars of competence, connection to their environment, and the need for autonomy, all central to the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), were negatively influenced, leading to reduced motivation levels (Gottfried, 2023; Huck & Zhang, 2021; Zacolletti et al., 2020).

Therefore, enhancing a child's competence, autonomy, and connection to their learning environment may influence their motivation positively (Zacolletti et al., 2020). In addition, addressing children's psychological needs, particularly relatedness, emerged as a significant factor in children’s mental well-being (Chiu et al., 2021). The abrupt disruption of education

during the pandemic disrupted students' competence, relatedness, and autonomy needs, resulting in increased stress and anxiety levels (Camacho et al., 2020). However, social support was identified as a critical avenue for fulfilling a child's psychological needs (Chiu et al., 2021; Zacolletti et al., 2020). Unfortunately, the absence of such support led to heightened anxiety among students and increased mental health stress, placing additional burdens on parents navigating the challenges of the pandemic (Chiu et al., 2021; Zacolletti et al., 2020). Consequently, students exhibited diminished academic motivation and poorer academic performance (Camacho et al., 2021; Ginsburg et al., 2020).

Stronger teacher-child relationships and increased social support positively affected children's motivation (Chiu et al., 2021; Zacolletti et al., 2020). Social support is essential in creating a stable environment where a child's basic psychological needs can be met, as the self-determination theory outlines (Deci & Ryan, 1985). While no direct link is established between fellow students' support and a child's motivation based on parents' perceptions, students' perceptions may differ from those of parents if their opinions are sought (Camacho et al., 2021). However, social support is crucial for students' motivation and academic achievement (Bunte et al., 2020; Larivière-Bastien et al., 2022). Nonetheless, there was an ongoing debate regarding the responsibility for motivating students, with some asserting that motivating children primarily lies with parents (Lessy et al., 2021) and students themselves (Dwijuliani et al., 2021), mainly when adequate support is available from their immediate surroundings (Farudah et al., 2020). Key themes such as low academic achievement, the roles and responsibilities of parents and students in motivating children, and the strategies employed to maintain children's motivation for learning in a disrupted educational environment are found in student motivation during the pandemic.

Low Academic Achievement and Consequences

The effect of low academic performance and learning loss during COVID-19 extends beyond immediate concerns even though reasons such as student dissociation with teachers (Bueno, 2020; Engzell et al., 2021; Kosman, 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Sintema, 2020; Spitzer & Musslick, 2021) and environmental distractions for students are among triggers of low academic performance during the pandemic (Giusti et al., 2021). Prolonged academic disruptions can lead to learning loss, achievement gaps, and adverse long-term effects on students' educational outcomes (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). The effects are particularly pronounced for vulnerable populations, including low-income students and those with learning disabilities or limited access to resources (Huck & Zhang, 2021; Reardon, 2020). Low academic performance contributed to heightened stress levels, anxiety, and a decline in mental well-being among students (Loades et al., 2020; Kosman, 2021). However, self-responsibility can mitigate the effects (Dwijuliani et al., 2021).

Self-Responsibility

Academic motivation during synchronous or asynchronous e-learning is a question of independence and self-responsibility as students must consider factors such as the desire to succeed, future hopes and aspirations, as well as an appreciation of learning, which could be intrinsic or extrinsic (Dwijuliani et al., 2021). However, creating variations in exciting activities around learning, building a conducive learning environment, and developing mediums to encourage the learning child can foster increased child motivation (Hernawati et al., 2020). Furthermore, creative measures among teachers and parents, such as creating illustrative video lessons, increased student engagement and motivation for learning for students who could not

access class due to internet issues (Hernawati et al., 2020). Also, the provision of a conducive learning atmosphere, including a strong internet connection, timely assessment of given exercises, giving good commentaries on a child's work, as well as creating a healthy competitive and collaborative atmosphere are factors that could increase the motivation or enthusiasm to learn (Dwijuliani et al., 2021). When motivated to learn, students can quickly achieve learning goals (Faridah et al., 2020). However, some studies placed the responsibility of students to stay motivated on parents (Lessy et al., 2021; Rousoulioti et al., 2022; Valorosso et al., 2022).

Parent Responsibility

Throughout the pandemic, the importance of parental involvement in children's education has also become increasingly evident (Gurgur & Yazcavir, 2020). Unfortunately, few families are in a position to be more involved in their children's schooling (Martin & Sorensen, 2020). The absence of such involvement presents a unique set of challenges for stay-at-home parents or those without the educational credentials to guarantee children's academic success in school (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). However, students' motivation issues still burden parents to motivate children to learn (Lessy et al., 2021; Rousoulioti et al., 2022; Valorosso et al., 2022). Ensuring children stay motivated toward academic work meant that parents supported motivation to learn (Carbonilla et al., 2022).

However, there were increased possibilities for a child to be distracted at home (Huck & Zhang, 2021; Lessy et al., 2021). This desire to fuel the interest of the learning child was interrupted by factors such as the inability to use e-learning gadgets, poor parent-teacher communication, financial difficulties, and failure to juggle supervisory roles with employment demands (Lessy et al., 2021). These factors led to increased anxiety among students and

signified increased mental health stress, which was beyond the parents' control when facing the new challenges that accompanied the pandemic. Poor academic motivation led to poor performance among the students. However, social competence and emotional maturity are the core of a child's socio-emotional development (Lessy et al., 2021; Spiedel, 2023). Building these core values may be the responsibility of the parents; hence, their role in a child's development is vitally formative (Lessy et al., 2021; Salavera et al., 2022). Also, a child's development extends to the child's psychosocial, emotional, and physical needs (Lessy et al., 2021).

Parenting patterns such as permissive, authoritative, and democratic parenting were identified as patterns parents could employ to help children (Lessy et al., 2021; Salavera, 2022). Being closely connected to how motivated a child stays, parenting patterns can influence a child's motivation and interest in academic work. In this regard, suitable and proper parenting could improve students' motivation and interest (Lessy et al., 2021). Therefore, socio-emotional parenting influences a child's motivation and learning interest level (Lessy et al., 2021). Similarly, motivation affects a child's academic interest (Carbonilla et al., 2022; Cook, 2020). Regardless of the parenting pattern adopted, ensuring that children remain motivated to ensure positive educational outcomes was seen as a major preoccupation of parents during the pandemic (Lessy et al., 2021). Additionally, some factors improved children's motivation (Chiu et al., 2021).

Strategies for Motivating Students

A learning environment that catered to the psychological needs of children and maintained their motivation with the transition to online classes was an essential need (Chiu et al., 2021; Lessy et al., 2021). Also, promoting technologically supported environments, enriching

teachers' ability to apply motivational theories to improve learning environments, and supporting teachers' well-being concerning job satisfaction boosted student motivation (Chiu et al., 2021). Creating such environments hinged on recognizing the challenges parents and students experienced that might have prevented them from staying motivated. Furthermore, the ability of parents to build children's independence in learning helped improve children's motivation for learning (Cook, 2020). Parents' ability to act as role models to children, counseling the children, and serving as friendly teachers boosted children's motivation for learning (Carbonilla et al., 2022).

Furthermore, establishing clear communication channels between parents, teachers, and school administrators was crucial in reducing the concern over students' motivation and low academic achievement concerns (Ginsburg et al., 2020; Lo, 2020; Vegas & Ronfeldt, 2021). Regular updates on curriculum changes, instructional strategies, and student progress can help alleviate concerns and ensure ongoing support (Ginsburg et al., 2020). Additionally, providing parents with resources and training to navigate remote learning platforms effectively can enhance parents' ability to support their children's academic progress (Lo, 2020). Collaboration between schools and parents is seemingly another essential strategy. Schools can involve parents in decision-making processes, seeking their input and feedback to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment (Vegas & Ronfeldt, 2021).

Engaging parents through virtual parent-teacher conferences, workshops, and support groups can foster a sense of community and shared responsibility for students' academic success (Vegas & Ronfeldt, 2021). Moreover, targeted interventions to address learning loss and mitigate the effect of educational disruptions are vital (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Implementing catch-up

programs, tutoring, and academic support services can help bridge the gaps caused by remote learning (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Even further, individualized educational plans and accommodations should be provided for students with special needs to ensure equitable access to education (Reardon, 2020).

Parents Inability to Act as Teachers

The immediate closure of schools during the pandemic compelled parents and children to spend long hours together (Aragao, 2022; Huck & Zhang, 2021; Kerr et al., 2021). Consequently, parents were performing dual roles as teachers and parents (Villadsen et al., 2020; Yildiz et al., 2022; Zohiro et al., 2022), creating great difficulty in balancing professional and academic obligations for children (Susilowati & Azzasyofia, 2020). As such, parents' time with children increased, but some parents experienced a sense of guilt for not meeting the educational demands (Misfud, 2021). Interestingly, parent's experiences vary according to gender, socioeconomic status, and other factors (Collins et al., 2020; Crook, 2020; Villadsen et al., 2020; Zamarro et al., 2020). About 58% of parents with school-aged children were involved in homeschooling on weekdays during the lockdown (Villadsen, 2020). Among the parents, 64% were mothers, while only 49% of fathers engaged in this category (Villadsen, 2020). Interestingly, 63% of parents with a degree or more were also in this category, relatively higher than 49% for those with lower levels of education (Villadsen, 2020). Mothers spent one and a half hours more than fathers on homeschooling (Andrew, 2022; Aragao, 2022; Villadsen, 2020). Furthermore, working parents during the lockdown spent on average, over one hour less on homeschooling than parents not working ((Villadsen, 2020; Xue & McMunn, 2021), and parents

with a child of primary school age in the household typically spent nearly two hours more on this activity than those whose children were of secondary school age (Villadsen, 2020).

Time spent by parents in other interactive activities apart from regular homeschooling showed that mothers of preschool children spent over six hours daily on interactive activities with children compared to an average of three hours spent among fathers (Villadsen, 2020). Similarly, mothers of primary school-aged children spent more time on interactive activities with their children, about three and a half hours, than fathers who spent just under two hours (Brom et al., 2020; Villadsen, 2020). Furthermore, the percentage of working women who quit jobs to care for children increased from 27.3% to 32.1% as the pandemic wore on compared to men who did not experience any change in this regard (Heggeness & Fields, 2020). These statistics are represented below (see Table 1). The differences in time spent among parents represent the varying gender reactions following the need of parents to engage in their children's education actively (Andrew et al., 2022; Aragao, 2022; Brom et al., 2020; Villadsen, 2020). The need to support children in acting as teachers (Rasmatadila et al., 2020; Watts & Pattnaik, 2022; Zohiro, 2022) and address the risk of parents abandoning their jobs and parental duties led to different challenges (Adams & Todd, 2020; Villadsen, 2020).

Table 1

Statistics of Time Spent with Children During the Pandemic Based on Gender

	Total (%)	**Women (%)**	**Men (%)**
Parents Involved in Homeschooling	58%	64%	49%
Education Level - Degree or More	63%		

Time Spent on Homeschooling (hours) - Mothers		+1.5 hrs.	
Interactive Activities Time (hours) - Preschool Children		+6 hrs.	+3 hrs.
Interactive Activities Time (hours) - Primary School-Aged Children		+3.5 hrs.	+2 hrs.
Percentage increase for parents who quit jobs to care for children		27.3% to 32.1%	12.3% to 12.1%

Note. Data provided by Heggeness and Fields (2020)

Challenges of Acting as Teachers

Parents were expected to perform the role of teachers, such as explaining class lessons to children and helping with their homework, but the experience was full of issues (Watts & Pattnaik, 2020). The increased time spent with their children created an over-reliance on parents, especially in younger children in areas where they were expected to do things for themselves (Watts & Pattnaik, 2022). Parents experienced limited knowledge of what their children were taught in school, issues with online learning gadgets, internet connectivity issues, little time to assist their children, and a lack of patience (Zohiro, 2022). Furthermore, parents who needed help understanding the class lesson and could not assist their children created more burdens for teachers (Rasmatadila et al., 2020). Parents did not have the skills to develop the learning experience teachers made for their children in physical classrooms (Rasmatadila et al., 2020). Consequently, they experienced an uptick in externalizing behaviors from their children (Watts & Pattnaik, 2022).

Risk of Abandoning Work and Parental Duties

Due to the burden of juggling work and the demands of children's education, parents, especially mothers, were at risk of abandoning the economic means to care for their families (Villadsen, 2020; Zamarro et al., 2020). Alternatively, parents prioritize work over supervising their children's learning, abandoning their children to older siblings or leaving them to care for themselves (Adams & Todd, 2020). The situation where parents placed higher importance on their jobs instead of overseeing their children's education might have been altered if parents had the choice of enrolling their children in after-school programs, as some did before the pandemic (Major et al., 2023) or if they could seek assistance from other family members (Cowan, 2020).

Parents' Dissatisfaction with Teachers and School Leaders

Parents expressed dissatisfaction with the assistance received from teachers and school leaders (Al Hadhrami & Saadi, 2021), especially regarding school children with disabilities (Yazcavir & Gurgur, 2021; Asbury et al., 2020). School-aged children with disabilities had challenges with technology (Smith, 2020) and suffered an academic decline in online learning (Burketts & Reynolds, 2020). Schoolchildren with special needs could not participate in the EBA television lessons made available to all students, and teachers failed to provide feedback on assignments on a worksheet (Yazcavir & Gurgur, 2021).

. Consequently, parents felt frustrated with teachers' or schools' lack of support to aid their children's learning and teachers failing to provide feedback to students on assignments on a worksheet (Yazcavir & Gurgur, 2021). Furthermore, several students did not attend online classes consistently (Yazcavir & Gurgur, 2021), and over 70% of school children with hearing loss experienced issues using technology equipment online, even though most schools provided a

blended learning option (Schafer et al., 2021). Children with hearing loss received better support in physical classrooms from therapeutic staff compared to online learning (Schafer et al., 2021). Also, even though some school districts did not consider the learning disparities for students with special needs in online education during school closures and did not plan accordingly, the lack of preparation was due to the sudden emergence of the pandemic (Burkett & Reynolds, 2020). Regardless of the modality, school leaders and teachers are responsible for creating an inclusive learning environment for students with special needs (DeMathews et al., 2020; Gargiulo & Bouck, 2020).

However, creating an equitable learning environment became impossible when teachers expressed frustration with little support from school leaders (Diliberti, 2021) and were unprepared to instruct students with special needs online (Yazcavir & Gurgur, 2021). Also, teachers could not satisfy parents in their children's education because they faced unique challenges during the pandemic (Smith, 2020). A study on teacher efficacy during the pandemic revealed that 68% of the teachers had never taught online, 66% had taught online, and 55% had taught in online and face-to-face classroom formats (Trust & Whalen, 2020). More so, teachers were unprepared for the different challenges online learning presented, such as the issues of students' internet connectivity problems, the right strategy or tools to enable teaching, lack of clear policy direction from the government, and changing instructional design to fit the needs of learners (Trust & Whalen, 2020; Bzour et al., 2022).

However, other studies contradicted parents' dissatisfaction with teachers and school leaders during the pandemic in that even though school leaders supported teachers and students, some teachers lacked the technological competence to teach online (An et al., 2022; Kavravic &

Kesim, 2021). Also, principals catered to the social-emotional needs of their teachers through constant communication and provided resources but could not meet the nutritional and technology needs of some students because of transportation issues (Hayes et al., 2021). While circumstances may be unforeseen during the pandemic, there is an expectation that leadership roles are fulfilled during a crisis (Kwatubana & Malaodi, 2021).

Moreover, given the unpredictable nature of crises that can swiftly disrupt an entire school and hinder its functioning, it is imperative for school administrators and leaders to proactively establish preventive measures, readiness protocols, response strategies, and recovery plans (Balseviciene & Sinkariova, 2013). This readiness ensures the school's resilience in unexpected crises (Balseviciene & Sinkariova 2013). Additionally, preparing for crisis can be accomplished, as evident in a school that implemented a day for virtual teaching in 2006, continued doing so before the COVID-19 pandemic, and was technologically prepared for the transition (Christensen & Alexander, 2020). Therefore, if school leaders and teachers had the opportunity to prepare for the crisis, it would have prevented parents from feeling dissatisfied with the preparation (Yazcavir & Gurgur, 2021). Interestingly, school leaders need crisis management and the importance of incorporating crisis management into both preservice and in-service training for education leaders (Grissom & Condon, 2021). However, teachers and school administrators experienced their own challenges.

Teachers' Pandemic Challenges

The concept of 100% remote learning was introduced to teachers during the pandemic, which resulted in the use of several new technologies to teach students through online platforms (Leech et al., 2022; Pelser et al., 2022). This change raised many challenges for teachers,

especially in K-12 education (An et al., 2022; Christakis, 2020; Nugroho & Haghegh, 2021) and the quality of education provided to students (Spitzer & Musslick, 2021). One of the significant challenges faced by K-12 teachers was the lack of student participation and engagement in class (An et al., 2022; Huck & Zhang, 2021). In the case of remote learning, teachers did not have face-to-face interactions with all the students, which widened the homework gap (An et al., 2022; Bunte et al., 2020). The homework gap is the lack of connectivity and support students require to complete their school tasks at home (An et al., 2022; Bunte et al., 2020). Teachers faced difficulty engaging all the students simultaneously and encouraging them to participate in the online teaching-learning process during class due to the inability to see or interact with all the students (Daniel, 2020).

Another challenge faced by K-12 teachers is the lack of technological access and knowledge for all students (Young et al., 2020; Nazir & Khan, 2021). The digital divide among students during the pandemic was significant because it was divided into access to technology and effective use (Hall et al., 2020). Although many institutions provide students with digital and Wi-Fi devices, most are unaware of how to use the devices (Nazir & Khan, 2021). Furthermore, the pandemic created severe burnout for K-12 teachers due to increased demand, needing teachers to learn and use new technological mediums and be available for students' inquiries outside regular school hours (Rubilar & Oros, 2021). This increased demand was true even though teachers had experienced challenges learning new technology in the past (Johnson et al., 2016).

However, remote learning demanded that K-12 teachers created digital videos, PowerPoint presentations, and e-notes for the students (Rubilar & Oros, 2021). Also, teachers

had to work round the clock to attend to students' questions without any time restrictions, leading to increased stress and workload for the teachers (Rubilar & Oros, 2021). In addition, K-12 teachers experienced the challenges of accommodating the needs of overly demanding parents, learning new technologies, and re-establishing student schedules (Rubilar & Oros, 2021). However, peer support from fellow teachers helped to mitigate the stress teachers experienced (An et al., 2022).

School Leaders' Pandemic Challenges

One of the significant challenges was the lack of skills, experience, abilities, and resources for introducing and implementing remote learning (Mookan, 2022). Kindergarten to 12th-grade school administrators were accustomed to working through traditional or on-campus methods (Mookan, 2022). Still, the sudden change in learning methods demanded that they focus on their learning and the development of advanced educational means (Aytac, 2020). Such digital incompetency posed a significant administrative problem to schools in helping students effectively (Aytac, 2020). School administrators observed a lack of enthusiasm among teachers for conducting live lessons, a noticeable lack of motivation among students for learning, and challenges in parents' ability to effectively encourage their children's learning (Aytac, 2020).

Another challenge faced by school administrators was communicating information to teachers, parents, and students to provide support (Asbury et al., 2020; Yazcavir & Gurgur, 202) even though other studies reveal that school leaders communicated and provided support (An et al., 2022; Hayes et al., 2021; Kavravic & Kesim, 2021). However, when all communication was conducted through online mediums, there was limited ability to assess and monitor the provision of ongoing educational information, and it became a challenge for school administrators to

disseminate timely and effective instructional knowledge to the respective parties, especially students (Johnson et al., 2016). School administrators also experienced significant physical and mental stress due to managing the pandemic and ensuring students' and staff's safety, which posed a considerable challenge for staff to work efficiently (Upadyaya et al., 2021). The stress and isolation brought on by the pandemic may be the cause for the rise in school administrators' propensity toward internet addiction (Aytac, 2020), as loneliness is associated with the COVID-19-related quality of life and strongly predicts internet addiction (Ekyana et al., 2021).

Summary

In summary, a review of different literature on this study revealed that parents worldwide experienced a myriad of challenges during the pandemic. Still, no study has yet investigated the experiences of parents who allowed their children to continue online learning after COVID-19 at the time of this research, thereby creating a gap. Parents expressed concerns over the issues of increased screen time use by their children and the ensuing health and psychological problems (Armstrong, 2022; Carroll et al., 2020; Larivière-Bastien et al., 2022; Negata et al., 2020; Pandya & Lodha, 2021; Trabelsi et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021). Furthermore, there were challenges in which parents struggled with their children's learning tools and, as a result, failed to provide the needed educational support to their children (Agaton & Cueto, 2021; Amanor et al., 2020; Bzour et al., 2022; Parczewska, 2021) as well as other issues that led to parental stress (Benassi et al., 2020; Brik et al., 2022; Giannotti et al., 2022; Janualt et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2021; Skjerdingstad et al., 2021; Spinelli et al., 2021) during the pandemic. However, other studies contradict some of the challenges that the pandemic caused (Carroll et al., 2020; Christensen & Alexander, 2020; Crook, 2020; Dwijuliani et al., 2021; Götz et al., 2020; Kavravic & Kesim,

2021; Landmann & Rohmann, 2020; Villadsen et al., 2020). It is, therefore, essential to explore the experiences of parents whose children continued online education after schools reopened to determine if parents can better juggle work with their children's education if they receive more familial school support. Furthermore, this research could provide insight into areas where schools and family education policies could adopt or encourage parental engagement.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the post-COVID-19 online learning modality experiences for parents of middle school children in an urban area in the Southeastern United States. This chapter presented the study design, its relevance to the construct, and the research questions guiding the study. Furthermore, I described the setting and participants, my position related to the interpretive framework and philosophical assumptions, and the procedures and data collection methods that were used. Also, I discussed my role, the procedures for the research study, and the data collection plan. Lastly, a summary is presented at the end of the chapter.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used to examine the post-COVID-19 online learning experiences for parents of middle school children in an urban area in the Southeastern United States. Qualitative research is distinguished by its scrutiny of real-world phenomena within the context of the subjects examined. This form of investigation relies on data collection via methodologies such as interviews, observations, written records, personal notes, and document analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The design of qualitative research endeavors involves identifying and exploring salient themes inherent in the acquired data. Subsequently, the research findings are meticulously reported, revealing the investigator's underlying assumptions and potential biases. This approach also entailed the identification of gaps in the existing body of knowledge and the articulation of the study's contributions to the extant literature within the

relevant field. Moreover, it involved the advocacy for potential changes based on the research outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Also, using a qualitative design, I attempted to make sense of the meanings people attributed to their experiences within their natural environments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research designs effectively revealed information about the problem or phenomenon under investigation (Friedensen et al., 2017). Furthermore, qualitative designs gave researchers the ability to interpret human experiences (Jackson et al., 2007) and to see human involvement as the main element of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative designs also provided the ability to consider the personal role of researchers and participants in the research process and the social construction of reality that occurred because of studying a phenomenon (Stake, 1995).

Specifically, this research employed a hermeneutic phenomenological study of the construct. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach emphasizes interpreting and making sense of human experiences from the individuals' perspective, aiming to capture the subjective reality as they perceived it (van Manen, 2014). Researchers using hermeneutic phenomenology sought to delve into the rich and complex layers of human experience, recognizing that these experiences were deeply contextual and influenced by various factors in the lives of individuals (van Manen, 2014). Furthermore, hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledged the interconnectedness between the researcher and the participants, understanding that the researcher's interpretation was shaped by their background, biases, and preconceptions (van Manen, 2014). As such, this approach encouraged reflexivity and acknowledged the subjective nature of knowledge construction and the need to interpret participants' experiences intelligibly without suppositions (van Manen, 2014).

Choosing hermeneutic phenomenology as a research design offered me a rigorous methodological framework using interviews, focus groups, and document analysis to explore and interpret the post-pandemic lived experiences of the parents whose children continued their education virtually. Also, it allowed me to uncover deep insights into the meaning and essence of those experiences within their specific context (van Manen, 2014). The triangulation of data obtained through the different means of data gathering provided rich data that revealed themes relevant to this research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1990; 2014).

Research Questions

Five research questions guided this hermeneutic phenomenology study. The questions provided answers to the remote learning environment experiences for parents of middle school children in an urban area in the Southeastern United States who continued learning in an online modality after the pandemic. The questions consisted of one central question and three sub-questions.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of working parents of middle school children in remote learning environments?

Sub-Question One

How do working parents respond to children's educational needs when learning remotely?

Sub-Question Two

How do working parents experience school support for children's educational needs when learning remotely?

Sub-Question Three

How do working parents meet the social needs of their children in a remote learning environment?

Sub-Question Four

How do working parents integrate familial support systems for remote learning children's educational needs?

Setting and Participants

Obtaining permission for the site and recruiting study participants are vital aspects of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The setting must allow for effective data gathering with obtained permission before using the setting for the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Likewise, individual participant consent information must be made available to the participants, detailing their right to participate at will, the reason for the study, and any risks they could experience because of their involvement in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This section provided more details on the setting for the research and the study participants.

Setting

The setting for this research was in an urban area in the Southeastern United States. The urban area in the Southeastern United States has a population of 544,928 people (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Furthermore, the region is racially diverse. About 24% of the population is White, Blacks make up 64% of the population, 4% is Asian, American Indian, and Native Hawaiians are less than one percent of the total population in the urban area of the Southeastern United States. Also, over 48% of the residents have a bachelor's degree or higher and are 25 years and older. The median household income is about $62,000 annually, and over 66% of the residents in the

urban areas in the Southeastern United States are employed. However, more women are in the labor force than men (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). This urban area in the Southeastern United States experienced the COVID-19 lockdown, which required schools to educate students remotely like in other parts of the United States. However, many families were given the choice of virtual learning during the pandemic and post-pandemic, and the families chose to continue remote learning post-COVID-19 in an urban area in the Southeastern United States making this an ideal location to explore the lived experiences of these families (Georgia Virtual, 2024).

Participants

The participants in this research study were working parents of middle school children in an urban area in the Southeastern United States who continued their children's education virtually after the in-person teaching restrictions were lifted. The participants were parents of one or more middle school-aged children who transitioned to online learning during the pandemic and have continued to date. Participants were employed in a part-time or full-time position in any modality. Modalities of work environments included in-person, part-time remote, or full-time remote. Participants were at least 18 years of age or older and of any identified gender. Using criterion and snowball sampling, I recruited individuals through social media post who met the criteria of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which sought to know their experiences in the post-COVID-19 era with having children learn completely online. Then, participants who were recruited through criterion sampling were asked if they knew anyone that met the criteria of the study and would be interested in participating. Seven parents who met the criteria were initially recruited and then snowball sampling was applied to recruit the remaining five participants. The rationale for using both criterion and snowball sampling techniques was to solicit participants

who met the criteria from the initial participants who are less than the required sample size (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Pseudonyms were given to the participants to protect their identities.

Recruitment Plan

The nature of my study warranted selecting participants who could provide the information for the post-COVID-19 experiences with children studying online after the pandemic. Participants were recruited following IRB approval (see Appendix A). I used criterion and snowball sampling to recruit the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Criterion sampling involves selecting participants who meet specific criteria and snowball sampling asks other study participants to refer those who meet the criteria of the study, especially when the sample size is less than the required number during the initial recruitment efforts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Participants must be able to provide rich information on the research topic (Patton, 1990, 2002). Thus, the participants were working parents of middle school children who chose to continue their child's education online after in-person classes resumed, and they were 18 years or older. The sample pool only included working parents of middle school children attending virtual schools in an urban area in the Southeastern United States. The study sought 12 – 15 working parents who read the study information sheet before collecting data (see Appendix B).

I created a social media post specifically for groups of parents in the urban area of the Southeastern United States who met the criteria of my study, such as having children in virtual schools and invited them to participate (see Appendix C). The social media post provided an overview of the study, including the topic of the study, the design, and the duration of individual and focus group interviews. Participants who met the criteria for the study were asked to contact

me to provide their contact information so I could follow up and schedule an interview (see Appendix C). Also, screening questions were used to ensure the participants met the criteria of the study (see Appendix D).

Researcher Positionality

My motivation for conducting this study stemmed from my experience as a working parent of school children who transitioned to virtual learning during the pandemic and the challenges that occurred because of the transition. Consequently, I desired to know if some of the challenges I witnessed persist in the lives of working parents of middle school children in the urban area of the Southeastern United States post-pandemic. Also, I sought to know the parents' motivation for choosing to continue with online learning modality for their children after in-class learning resumed, and if findings from my study could expose and lead to more effective solutions for those parents. I value exposing areas of deficiencies and recommending solutions. Researchers always bring their values, assumptions, and beliefs that influence what they choose to research and how to achieve it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This section will further discuss the values, assumptions, and beliefs in the interpretive frameworks and philosophical assumptions sections.

Interpretive Framework

The interpretive framework that guided my research is post-positivism. Post-positivist researchers seek to study constructs through a series of logically related steps that lead to obtaining different perspectives from the participants, which involves rigorous data collection and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This interpretive framework is structured and includes identifying the problem of the study, generating questions relevant to the topic, collecting data,

obtaining the results, and writing the conclusions from the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, the objective of a researcher using a postpositivist framework is to acquire answers related to the topic or construct being investigated from the realities of multiple participants and rigorously analyze the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Consequently, my study aimed to seek answers to the research questions that would reveal the post-COVID-19 experiences of working parents of middle school children who continued education online after the pandemic restrictions to in-person learning were removed. As a result, the questions of this study asked parents of middle school students, school representatives, and family members to explore their actions to meet their children's educational needs in online learning modalities post-pandemic. My goal is to add to the body of knowledge.

Philosophical Assumptions

There are philosophical assumptions influencing my choice for this study, my view of the world, and, ultimately, the experiences of my study participants. These assumptions include the ontological, epistemological, and axiological. The three assumptions are discussed below.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumption involves how people view reality differently (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The ontological assumption I employed in my study is postpositivism. Postpositivist researchers employ a scientific approach to research inquiry, which involves taking logical steps and the views of different individuals toward determining the existence or lack thereof of a problem, even when prior knowledge of the issue exists (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Similarly, I believe in taking logical steps to investigate a problem and getting different people's views before concluding, even though I may have prior knowledge of the situation, such as the

challenges during the pandemic. Furthermore, I anticipated that I would experience the diverse views of the study participants during the research because I believe people view things differently and exhibit multiple realities (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, my goal was to report the different realities of the participants in the study. How a participant sees or interprets the construct under study could differ from how another participant views the same construct or questions about the inquiry, leading to different themes emerging from the research data or findings. Consequently, I reported on those different themes and the resulting perspectives on the research questions of my study.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemological assumption involves what is regarded as knowledge, the rationale for claims made about knowledge, and the relationship that exists between the researcher and the construct under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since evidence obtained from research participants is subjective, I bracketed out any bias or rationale that could affect the research findings and was open to gaining new perspectives from the participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I ensured that the research findings accurately reflected the participants' viewpoints on the construct (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used direct quotes to guide readers to participants' lived experiences while interpreting the participant message with great understanding due to the close relationship I built with my participants through time spent in one-on-one and focus group interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Axiological Assumption

Axiological assumption pertains to my values' role or effects on the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a researcher, my values could affect my interpretations of the

findings. My belief centers on providing people with the motivation and support they need to succeed. I also advocate for extending such support to individuals who care for others and play a vital role in the success of those under their care. However, I did not allow these values to cause bias or affect the accurate reporting of the research findings. My plan to avoid bias was achieved by bracketing any values or beliefs affecting the research and being open to a fresh perspective on the construct under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Also, I was aware that my experiences or knowledge of challenges that parents experienced during the pandemic may be different for the participants in the post-COVID-19 era. Therefore, bracketing opinions, biases, or perceptions surrounding the research topic has been found effective in helping researchers engage in research inquiries devoid of their own bias in interpreting the study's findings (Moustakas, 1994).

Researcher's Role

A researcher plays a role in the research as a human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, I was mindful of any biases or assumptions that could influence the study and made them known or bracketed them by being open to gaining new insights from participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). It was also essential to state why I was conducting this study. My desire to explore this study came from news reports that some parents have chosen to continue their children's education virtually after in-person classes resumed. I have no known conflicts of interest in the research on the post-pandemic experience of working parents juggling their work and children's online schooling. However, I experienced some of the known challenges working parents experienced during the pandemic due to children learning online. I bracketed those experiences, assumptions, and biases I may have to discover fresh

perspectives from the parents experiencing this phenomenon in the post-COVID-19 era. Also, I did not know any participants or work with the school district where the participants live.

Procedures

Obtaining the necessary permissions before beginning a research study or collecting data is a significant factor in developing an ethical analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1990). Before obtaining data from participants, I sought Liberty University's IRB approval to use human subjects in my research (see Appendix A). After obtaining the IRB approval, I recruited participants. Participants were recruited through social media, and the post was posted in groups located in an urban area in the Southeastern United States with parents who have children learning online (see Appendix C). The setting for my research was an urban area in the Southeastern United States. As a result, there was no request for site permission because the participants for my study were not recruited from a school or a specific organization. Participants were asked to contact me and provide their contact information for follow-up if they were interested in participating in the study. Participants who contacted me were further screened to ensure that they met the criteria of the study (see Appendix D)

Before scheduling any interviews or collecting data, the study information sheet was sent to parents who decided to participate in the research to read about the study and their rights (see Appendix B). The study information sheet provided information on my research such as the topic, the rights of participants to consent to participate in the study, the participants' rights to withdraw from the study at any stage of the study, whom to contact at Liberty University if participants encountered any issues or desired to report any concerns, how the data collected

through interviews would be stored, and the steps that would be taken to protect participants' identities.

. Once the study information sheet form was received, I scheduled a 30-60-minute interview with individual participants and a 90-minute focus group interview. Interviews were conducted through Zoom, a teleconferencing tool as detailed in the data collection plan section. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the data was analyzed for similar and dissimilar themes according to the steps in the data analysis section. This study obtained triangulation through obtaining data from individual interviews, a focus group, and document analysis, specifically, schools' documents of support provided to parents (van Manen, 1990). Participants who took part either in a one-on-one audio-recorded Zoom interview or in a Zoom audio-recorded focus group interview were given a $50 Visa gift card as compensation for participating in the study. The transcript of the interview was provided to the participants for member-checking to verify the accuracy of the information obtained during the interview, which took about 15 minutes to complete.

Data Collection Plan

Collecting data is essential to a research study and can be meticulously achieved through different forms (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2014, 2016; Yin, 2014). Obtaining various data sources allows for better data triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2014, 2016; Yin, 2009). As a result, this study employed three data collection methods. These methods included individual interviews, a focus group, and document analysis. Individual interviews were conducted first to gain individual participant perspectives as each parent described the experienced phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). Next, the focus group was

conducted to allow participants the opportunity to exchange ideas and recall additional perspectives of their experiences (van Manen, 2016) working while choosing to continue remote education for their middle school student. Finally, document analysis was further used to support triangulation of the data by exploring the notifications of school support and collaboration with parents toward remote learning provided by schools for remote students and families (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This section of the chapter further explored the data collection plans for each method.

Individual Interviews

Interviews were used as the main source of qualitative inquiry to gather data for my research study, which provided opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016; Yin, 2009). Data gathering through interviews provided the opportunity or avenue for me to gather information and comprehend the phenomenon that pertained to the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2016). The interview also allowed the study participants and me to interact socially one-on-one (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Consequently, I was aware of the appropriate place for my interviews physically to allow for confidentiality and modality to support the feasibility and accessibility of the interview to be conducted (van Manen, 2016). I was friendly with the participants to win their trust. I scheduled a conducive time for the interview, allowed enough time for the interview, maintained focus on the post-pandemic experiences of the parents of middle school children and the research questions, and recorded the interviews (van Manen, 2016). Additionally, the interviews were conducted with the parents via Zoom one-on-one for 30 - 60 minutes. The interview was semi-structured, using open-ended questions that began with what, why, and how,

which generated answers to the research phenomenon and allowed for follow-up questions based on the responses from the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) and evaluated by expert reviewers before conducting the interview. Additionally, the interview was recorded using a Zoom recorder. The individual interview questions follow.

Table 2

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your experiences as a working parent of a middle school child in a remote learning environment from the first year to the current year. CRQ
2. How do you support your remote learning child's needs outside of the classroom requirements? SQ1
3. As a working parent, what do you do to ensure that your child is learning the concepts of the school subject? SQ1
4. What communication approaches do you use with your remote learning child to explore their educational experience? SQ1
5. Describe how the school initiates communication regarding your child's academic progress. SQ2
6. Describe the kind of communication you utilize in connecting with your child's school. SQ2
7. What resources does your child use to be successful in the remote learning classroom? SQ2
8. What social resources does the school provide to your remote learning family? SQ3

9. What challenges do you experience in providing social outlets for your remote-learning child? SQ3
10. Describe the opportunities your child receives in co-curricular activities as a remote learner, such as physical education, art, media center, and music. SQ3
11. In what ways does your extended family support your decision to continue remote learning? SQ4
12. Describe how your family's attitude toward remote learning has changed over time. SQ4
13. Describe your extended family's involvement in your remote learning child's experience. SQ4
14. What else would you like to add to our conversation today about remote learning that we have not already discussed? CRQ

The interview questions were developed to provide data for answering the post-pandemic experiences of working parents with children in online learning. Further, the interview questions also provided answers based on the theoretical framework of this study in determining the interaction of the forces in the microsystem, such as family, school, and community, that are instrumental in the successful development of a child. Bronfenbrenner (1979) viewed the microsystem as the most impactful level of relationship in a developing child's life as it involves the immediate settings with which the child identifies, such as family or home, neighborhood, peers, and the school where the child attends.

Focus Group

I conducted a focus group interview for my study because focus groups provide an avenue for the researcher to interact with different study participants simultaneously and

encourage participants to talk about the construct under study (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, it gave me the ability to analyze statements made by participants as ideas were exchanged (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Frey & Fontana, 1991; van Manen, 1990). Furthermore, focus group interviews also led to better data triangulation or allowed me to compare answers shared in individual interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1990; Yin, 2009). However, it was essential to ask questions about my study, keep timing, ask follow-up questions, and pay attention to people not answering questions like others in the group (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1990). The focus group interviews were conducted via Zoom at an agreed-upon time. The interviews were 60–90 minutes and recorded using Zoom's recorder. All participants were invited to participate in the focus group. I began the focus group interview by developing a sense of rapport with my participants. Then, I engaged in the focus group questions beginning with the first question and explored opportunities for follow-up questions. After each question was answered, I closed the meeting asking if anyone had additional information they would like to add that had not already been shared. All focus group questions were evaluated by field experts. See Table 3 for the focus group questions.

Table 3

Focus Group Questions

1. What is the most challenging part of supporting your remote learner? SQ1
2. What do you value most about the remote learning modality? SQ1
3. What is the school's most helpful resource to support your remote learner? SQ2
4. Describe the cadence of communication that has been the most helpful in supporting the remote learning process. SQ2

5. What is the most effective social program the school has provided to support your child's remote learning? SQ3
6. What are two recommendations you would give to improve the remote learning experience? SQ3
7. What has been the most helpful support for your remote learner that you have received from extended family members? SQ4
8. What are the most significant challenges you have receiving support from family as a working parent of a remote learner? SQ4
9. What else would you like to add to our conversation today about remote learning that we have not already discussed? CRQ

Each focus group question was chosen based on the factors of the study's theoretical framework in determining the interaction of the forces in the microsystem, such as family, school, and community, that are instrumental in the successful development of a child as well as the benefit of the strength of the relationships in the exosystem and meso system. Bronfenbrenner (1979) viewed the microsystem as the most impactful level of relationship in a developing child's life as it involves the immediate settings with which the child identifies, such as family or home, neighborhood, peers, and the school where the child attends. Furthermore, more data or information could be obtained from participants in a focus group interview that may not be divulged in a one-on-one interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Krueger & Casey, 2014; Morgan, 1997).

Document Analysis

Document analysis is among the different forms of research data, and it is important

when using documents as a means of data collection to identify the type that is pertinent to the research study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Crewell & Poth, 2018). It is also important to seek permission to view documents that may not be readily available to outsiders or for public consumption, especially those belonging to an organization (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, I requested and analyzed documents such as school support documents that detailed the plans that school leaders put in place to support parents and their remote learning families. The documents were electronic copies. Documents were requested at the beginning of the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 4

Document Analysis Form

Date	
Participant	
Document Type	
Key Words	

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an important part of the research process after gathering data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2016). The data analysis section detailed plans for the analysis of data that was gathered for this study. The plan for analyzing individual interviews, focus groups, and

document analysis was discussed. Furthermore, synthesizing the data from the three sources of data collected for this study was addressed.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The success of analyzing data involves making adequate early preparation starting from the beginning of the study (Bazeley, 2013; van Manen, 2016). Furthermore, Wilcott (1994) provided a guide to data analysis, such as identifying some information when describing it, identifying dissimilar themes or patterns, and displaying findings using tables and graphs, and interpreting the meanings of participants' lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). Writing memos or memoing findings has provided a more precise picture or understanding of participants' statements in the transcribed interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al., 1994; van Manen, 1990). The data collected from this research was stored on a removable disk and kept in a safe drawer inaccessible to others. The data was transcribed verbatim and read several times, and then shared with the participants to confirm the accuracy of their responses before coding it to gain an understanding of the information (Bazeley, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1990) and interpreting the findings based on the data gathered from the participants (van Manen, 1990). All identifiers were removed to conceal the participants' identities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While reading the interview transcripts, I took notes or kept a memo of ideas that came to mind to avoid forgetting important information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data was then coded or put into categories to identify general similar themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1990). Furthermore, the themes derived from the codes were interpreted as I am expected to draw meaning from the data I gathered (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; van Manen, 1990) and then synthesize and report the findings (Bazeley, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen 1990).

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

The data collected from the recorded focused group interview was transcribed verbatim (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transcribing interviews verbatim helps to avoid ethical issues of misrepresenting participants' words (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2016). Therefore, the transcribed interview was read several times and then shared with the participants to confirm the accuracy of their responses before coding it to gain an understanding of the information (Bazeley, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1990) and interpreting the findings based on the data gathered from the participants (van Manen, 1990).

The transcribed data is stored on a removable disk and kept in a safe drawer inaccessible to others. All identifiers were removed to conceal the participants' identities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While reading the interview transcripts, I took notes or kept a memo of ideas that come to mind avoiding forgetting important information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data was then coded or put into categories to identify general similar themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1990). Furthermore, the themes derived from the codes were interpreted as I am expected to draw meaning from the data I gathered (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; van Manen, 1990) and then synthesize and report the findings (Bazeley, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen 1990). These steps in the data analysis process showed the process's deliberate nature and the relationships between the various aspects of a research study (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

Document Analysis Data Analysis Plan

After obtaining the documents of school support for online learning from the parents, I read the documents and took notes to help identify codes or themes relevant to the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The identified codes or themes were categorized. I also assessed if the

information in the documents aligned with the information obtained through the interviews and focus groups. The documents obtained for analysis were stored in a locked drawer in my residence to protect the data from unauthorized access. Any information that could lead to exposing the identity of the participants was removed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Properly storing participants' information is important to protect the participants' identities and avoid ethical issues or harm that could affect the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Synthesis

Synthesizing data is an essential part of research, especially considering the overwhelming nature of making sense of the copious amount of data a researcher obtains during the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 1980; van Manen, 2014). Therefore, synthesizing the findings from the one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and document analysis would avoid duplicating themes or codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2014). The codes and themes obtained from the transcribed interviews and document analysis enabled the comparison of similar codes and themes and excluded duplicates. Also, it is important to consider codes that emerged from comparing the research data (Creswell & Poth, 2018, van Manen, 2014). I ensured that I used lean coding to identify categories of themes and the themes that were part of the findings that answered the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen 2014). Furthermore, the identification of the codes and themes were done manually to become further engaged in the communication presented by my participants to support a sense of closeness (van Manen, 2014).

Trustworthiness

Four criteria determine the trustworthiness of a research study. This study achieved trustworthiness through these four qualities: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Creswell & Poth, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, different aspects of this study contributed to the trustworthiness of this research study.

Credibility

Credibility involves the accuracy of research findings or interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One of the ways in which the credibility of research findings is achieved is through data triangulation. Data triangulation is using different data sources in a research study to corroborate or confirm the information from the various data sources (Creswell, 2013). This study used one-on-one interviews, a focus group, and document analysis to achieve triangulation. Furthermore, the participants were asked to check the transcribed interviews and confirm the information they provided during the interview. Member checking of the transcribed interviews increases the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

Transferability addresses the external validity of the study findings or the generalizability of the study to other settings or similar settings (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, only the readers of the research findings can determine its transferability based on the information a researcher provides (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a researcher, I helped the readers to determine the transferability of the study results by describing the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A thick and rich description provides a clear picture or description of the setting, participants, data, and the phenomenon the participants are experiencing, which could

help them make that determination (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, transferability can be addressed by describing general ideas to more specific concepts, interconnecting details from the study, and using participant quotes (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a result, this study used participants' quotes to describe and give a first-hand account of their experiences as working parents of online learners in the post-pandemic era. This study aimed to add to the body of knowledge by potentially allowing future researchers the opportunity to build on the study, apply the study findings to other contexts, and extend the theoretical basis of this study.

Dependability

Dependability shows consistency in the findings and the ability to replicate them (Lincoln & Guba, 2018; Patton, 2015). I kept the audit trail of the research data, such as recorded and transcribed interviews. I also organized the memos or notes taken during rereading and data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 2018). Also, Liberty University's dissertation committee and the director of qualitative research thoroughly audited the research process and findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability reveals the authentic nature of the research without any additions or exclusions of what was found during the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). A researcher can achieve this by using direct quotes from the participants, as it is essential to hear the participants' voices in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The triangulation of data from the three sources of data collection, such as individual interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, and keeping an audit trail of the recordings and notes led to confirmability. Additionally, I provided the transcribed interviews to the participants to confirm

the accuracy of the data based on the answers they provided. This is called member checking, which lends credence to the truthfulness of the transcribed data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

Before starting the study or collecting data, I obtained IRB approval from Liberty University. Identifying information such as names of participants and the setting or specific location of the study were not revealed or used. Pseudonyms were used instead to protect their confidentiality. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study. They were also informed of their rights as participants to participate or decline participation before the study started or at any time during the study, and who to contact in the event of any issue, which was all on the study information sheet.

Participants were informed of the benefits of participating in the study. This participation would help the readers and me comprehend the experiences of working parents of middle school children attending classes online in the post-pandemic era. Furthermore, participating in the study could reveal if challenges experienced during the pandemic have been resolved or if issues still need to be resolved. The participants were also informed of the risk of being identified or exposed, especially by participating in the focus group interview. However, participants were advised to adhere to the confidentiality of other participants' identities (Crewell & Poth, 2018). Data collected from research participants is password-protected and stored in a locked cabinet. All data from the research study will be destroyed after three years of the study.

Permissions

Before conducting this research study, I obtained Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to involve human subjects in my research (see Appendix A).

However, I did not need site permission because my potential research participants were not pooled from any specific school. Instead, the participants were recruited through a social media post (see Appendix C), and participants interested in participating in the study were emailed the study information sheet before the interviews (see Appendix B). The study information informed the participants of what the study entailed, their right to participate or decline to participate, and who to contact when they have questions about the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Other Participant Protections

Participants were asked to share personal information such as their names. Therefore, I used pseudonyms to protect research participants' identities. They were also provided with the study information sheet, which detailed information on the study, participants' right to participate and withdraw from the study at will, and Liberty University contact information in the event participants had concerns or questions they could not discuss with me (see Appendix B). Printed data or transcripts of interviews are stored in a locked cabinet, and the electronic files of such data are password-protected to avoid unauthorized access. Another ethical consideration I was mindful of was conflict of interest. I avoided sharing my experience as a working mother of school children who learned virtually during the pandemic so that I do not influence participants' answers on their post-COVID-19 virtual school experience.

Summary

In summary, this chapter presents the qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study design to explore the lived experiences of working parents of middle school children in remote learning environments. The chapter explains my positionality about the philosophical assumptions and the interpretive frameworks that could affect the interpretation of the findings in

this study. Furthermore, data collection methods such as one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis were explained. Additionally, Chapter Three details how each data collection method was analyzed. Finally, chapter three ended with exploring the trustworthiness of the findings and ethical considerations surrounding this research inquiry.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the post-COVID-19 online learning modality experiences for parents of middle school children in an urban area in the Southeastern United States. This chapter begins with a brief description of the participants. The chapter proceeds with the presentation of findings in narrative themes and sub-themes derived from semi-structured individual and focus group interviews and documents outlining support provided by the children's school to online learning families. Furthermore, it includes responses addressing the research questions. Finally, a summary concludes the chapter.

Participants

This study's participants included two men and 10 women. All participants identified as Black except one female who identified as White. The participants reported their area of residency as an urban area in the Southeastern region of the United States. In addition, each participant reported having a middle school-aged child who transitioned to online learning during the pandemic and continued online after in-class learning resumed. The participants ranged in age from 24 to 44 years and were employed in different work modalities such as remote, hybrid, and in-office. A description of the participants is provided in the next section of this chapter, in addition to a table that provides a summary of the participant demographics (see Table 11).

Amy

Amy is a 25 to 34-year-old Black woman who lives in an urban area in the Southeastern region of the United States. She is divorced and has two children. Amy's oldest child is a remote learner. However, her younger child resumed in-class learning after the pandemic restrictions

were lifted. Amy works part-time remotely, so she can better supervise her child. In addition, Amy reported putting her college career on hold rather than continuing her education due to personal reasons.

Joe

Joe is a 25 to 34-year-old Black man. He works full-time in a hybrid work modality as a data analyst. He is married with two children. Joe's wife works part-time remotely. Joe and his family live in an urban area in the Southeastern region of the United States and his oldest child attends school online. Joe reports that he is very involved in his son's online learning.

Dina

Dina is a 25 to 34-year-old Black woman who works fully remote part-time. Dina is a freelance writer who specializes in writing academic articles. She is also a transcriptionist. Dina is married to a psychologist who works full-time and partly remotely. Dina has a bachelor's degree and has only one child who schools online.

Olivia

Olivia is a 35 to 44-year-old Black woman. She has a bachelor's degree and works full-time hybrid. Olivia is a hotel manager and has been in that role for six years. She is a single mother of a 13-year-old daughter who is in middle school and attends school online.

Charlie

Charlie is a 25 to 34-year-old Black man. He works part-time remotely as a customer service representative. Charlie's wife works full-time in an in-person office setting. Charlie is very involved in his daughter's online education. In addition, since Charlie's parents live close to his residence, they are very involved in raising their grandchild. Charlie appreciates his parents'

involvement in his child's education, especially how they celebrate every academic progress and milestone his daughter achieves.

Erika

Erika is a 25 to 34-year-old Black woman who is a single mother of one child. She works full-time as an administrative assistant and lives in the Southeastern region of the United States. Erika has a great relationship with her mother and relies on her for help with her daughter's online education, especially as she works in the office.

Jane

Jane is a 25 to 34-year-old White woman who works remotely and is married. She has two children who go to school online. Jane chose to work remotely so that she could better monitor her children's online education. Jane engages in a lot of research to find supplemental educational materials to support her remote learners.

Lily

Lily is a 35 to 44-year-old Black woman. Lily works full-time remotely as a data analyst and is married. Lily and her husband have two children. Lily's children were learning online during the pandemic and continued learning in the same modality after pandemic restrictions were lifted. The decision to continue online learning for her children stems from Lily and her husband's desire to help the children improve academically.

Mia

Mia is a 25 to 34-year-old Black woman with a bachelor's degree. She is an administrative coordinator who works full-time in the office and has been doing so for four

years. Mia is a single mother with a 13-year-old daughter. Her daughter is in middle school and currently attends school online.

Ella

Ella is a 25 to 34-year-old Black woman and a college graduate. She is a nurse and works full-time in a doctor's office. She is married with two children. Ella's husband is employed full-time as well. Ella's children transitioned to online learning during the pandemic and continued in the same modality after in-class learning resumed.

Pat

Pat is a 35 to 44-year-old Black woman. She works full-time remotely and is married. Pat and her husband are blessed with three children. Two of Pat's children resumed in-class learning after the pandemic restrictions were lifted, while her 12-year-old schooled remotely. Pat and her husband decided to keep her middle school-aged child in remote learning to be more focused and improve academically.

Leah

Leah is a 25 to 34-year-old Black woman. She works as an insurance sales agent and works part-time remotely. Also, Leah is a single mother and has three children. Leah's oldest child schools online, and the younger ones have not started school yet. Leah mentioned that she works part-time online so she could supervise them.

Table 5

Participants

Participants	Age Range	Parent Work Modality	Marital Status	Children Learning Mode	Race
Amy	25-34	Remote	Single	Online	Black
Joe	25-34	Hybrid	Married	Online	Black
Dina	25-34	Remote	Married	Online	Black
Olivia	35-44	Hybrid	Single	Online	Black
Charlie	25-34	Remote	Married	Online	Black
Erika	25-34	In-office	Single	Online	Black
Jane	25-34	Remote	Married	Online	White
Lily	35-44	Remote	Married	Online	Black
Mia	25-34	In-office	Single	Online	Black
Ella	25-34	In-office	Married	Online	Black
Pat	35-44	Remote	Married	Online	Black
Leah	25-34	Remote	Single	Online	Black

Results

The results from this study include the identified themes and sub-themes that emerged from the individual interviews, focus group, and document analysis on the lived experiences of working parents of middle school-aged children in online learning in the post-pandemic era. Five themes and 11 sub-themes were identified. One outlier was also described. The results are presented in detail in the next section of this chapter (see Table 13)

Table 6

Themes & Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes		
Adaptation	Psychological Adaptation	Physical Adaptation	Lingering Challenges
Parental Obligation	Supervision	Child Well-being	
Academic Achievement	Concern for Academic Progress	Parental Satisfaction	
Communication	Mode of Communication	Communication Approach	
Support	School Support	Family Support	

Adaptation

Adaptation to the reality of participants' children's continuation of online learning after the pandemic is a prevalent theme among the participants' lived experiences. Participants often described the necessity of work-life balance with their children's online education. Participants expressed that they were psychologically and physically adapting to life after the pandemic. One participant, Ella, stated, "We have adapted to the challenges, so it's not a big deal like the first time." Also, verbs, adjectives, and phrases such as adjusted, coped, easier, better, easy, adapted, and "gotten used to it" were used to describe their present realities. These realities have both psychological and physical dimensions. Although almost all the participants seemed to have adapted, lingering challenges continue to be part of their daily lives like meeting the demands of work and supporting their online learners.

Psychological Adaptation

Participants expressed views on their post-pandemic psychological adjustment as working parents of schoolchildren learning virtually. This is due to the time between when the pandemic hit and now. It is also a result of accepting the fact that the experience is no longer novel. Therefore, their mental adjustment has helped the parents cope better. Jane also said, “It was a tiresome experience because I had to multitask. Now, I can say, it’s no more tiresome.”

Physical Adaptation

In addition to psychological adaptation, almost all participants mentioned that they have adjusted or are now coping better with the physical demands of working and having children who are schooling online. Parents can do their jobs, have time for their activities, and assist the children with school responsibilities. For instance, Joe shared, “We have had better flexibility in terms of scheduling and pacing, and allowing us to be able to align our child's education to our own, individual needs.”

Lingering Challenges

Parents also expressed that they have faced the same challenges they experienced during the pandemic despite revealing that they had adapted to them. Eleven out of the 12 participants mentioned that they are still experiencing some challenges juggling work and children’s online education. Ella stated, “Sometimes we do face technical issues. Internet connection might be poor.” Even further, Jane shared, “It is hard to assist my child with homework when I don’t understand the subject.” Amy also shared her perception of lingering challenges when working during the same time as her child is required to be at school online, “It’s [the lingering challenges] supervising the child, especially when you’re at work.”

Parental Obligation

Participants discussed elements of parental obligation. All the parents mentioned the need for and importance of being involved and engaged in helping their children as they continue in online learning. Mia said, "As a working parent, you know I have to go work. So, I ensure that [my child] attends classes when I am at work, making sure that she's in class, she's participating without the games, without any distractions." Also, the parent participants shared the need to perform those duties despite being working parents and the challenges they sometimes experience in creating social activities for their children. Lily mentioned, "Time is my challenge," when planning to create social activities for her child. Two sub-themes emerged from the lived experiences of my participants surrounding parental obligation: supervision and child well-being.

Supervision

Parents discussed the need to supervise and monitor their children as they continue online learning in the post-pandemic era. Parents see the need to monitor their children's learning to correct unwanted behaviors. They also supervise to ensure that the child is concentrating in class. Olivia said, "I'm monitoring him as much as they are being taught online. Yeah, as parents, we have to be there." Dina also mentioned that she monitors her child to ensure he is paying attention in class.

Child Well-being

Parents were concerned about the well-being of their children in the online learning environment after the pandemic. They wanted to ensure that no major issues could affect the child's ability to stay focused or motivated to learn. Parents also wanted to know if their child

had any concerns so they could help resolve the issues. Amy reported, “I ask questions about his well-being. I asked if he enjoyed the lesson and how it was. I just make sure that you know he's open to telling me his experience, and how he felt during classes.”

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement was a salient theme that the study participants discussed. All 12 participants mentioned how their child was doing in virtual learning. Parents discussed their concern for their children’s academic progress and their satisfaction with the progress the children are making academically. Consequently, they review their children’s assignments to ensure they complete class and homework. Joe said, “I go through his work to make sure that he has done maybe the assignment or he’s following through with what the teacher told them.” Concern for academic progress and parental satisfaction with their children’s academic progress emerge as sub-themes under this theme.

Concern for Academic Progress

Parents are concerned about their children’s academic progress and are willing to offer help. As such, they make themselves available to give such assistance. Parents do this by sourcing materials that could help their children do well academically. Parents also gauge their children's understanding of materials taught in class through question-and-answer sessions. Furthermore, they assist their children with homework assignments and supplemental educational materials. Erika said, “When my child needs assistance with what she doesn’t understand, I go out of my way to get enough materials for her.”

Parental Satisfaction

Parents expressed satisfaction and pride in their children's academic success. This is because parents see the progress the children have made. Also, the parents know that the remote learning environment has not been detrimental to their children's academic progress. All participants mentioned being satisfied or happy with their children's academic progress in the online learning environment. Leah described her satisfaction with her child's progress, saying, "Irrespective of the fact that it's remote learning, my child's performance is still excellent, so we are fine with it."

Communication

Communication is beneficial in helping parents seek, obtain, give, and receive information from their children and teachers and was a common theme across the three data sources. Parents reported communicating with teachers and the school regularly using various mediums. Amy said in connecting with her child's school, "It's a regular update which involves email, or sometimes announcements about certain information or upcoming assignment and deadlines things that will be important to him…from their teacher." Furthermore, parents mentioned the approach to initiating communication with the children about their learning experience in the online classroom. Ella stated, "We normally communicate because having a face-to-face communication I'm always able to get immediate feedback from him, and I can also judge whatever he's saying by just observing his facial expressions." The mode of communication and communication approach are the identified sub-themes and discussed below.

Mode of Communication

Participants used different modes of communication to connect with their child's school. These modes of communication included emails and phone calls. Furthermore, these modes of communication allow parents to easily contact their children's schools when they need to make inquiries about their children's education. Olivia said, "If I want to inquire on anything I can. Also, I can send them emails. Apart from that, I can use their office number to call directly."

Communication Approach

All 12 participants mentioned the communication approach used to explore their child's learning experience. Parents engage in face-to-face communication with their children. They ask questions to obtain information on what they learned and if they comprehend what was taught in class. Dina described her approach as "Face-to-face communication. That is asking him what he learned, whether he understood, and asking him to maybe demonstrate for me what he was taught on that day."

Support

Parents value the support they receive from their children's school and extended family members. Support was also a prominent theme across all three data collection methods. All participants reported receiving both social and academic support from their children's schools to enable them to support their online learners. Parents found the support beneficial in helping them support their remote learning families. Charlie reported, "The school holds open events that provide us parents and caregivers an opportunity to meet with the teachers and then learn and understand the curriculum more and the academic expectations, and then ask questions about it."

However, only 10 out of the 12 participants stated that extended family members provided support. The two sub-themes generated from support are described below.

School Support

The social and academic support schools provide to parents is important in aiding parents to support their remote learners. All 12 participants specified the support their children's schools provided to them. Lily mentioned, “My child's school provides website and apps, educational apps for my child's learning… and art exhibition once a month and it’s quite helpful.” Furthermore, Ella shared an email from her child’s school detailing the support the school would provide to parents. On technical support, Ella’s child's school stated that they would “provide information on technical support service available to troubleshoot issues…” However, despite parents' support from their children’s schools, almost half of the participants want the schools to make some changes to improve the learning experience for their remote learning families. Lily would like to see an increase in the frequency of communication from her child’s school from twice a month to “once a week.” Moreso, Charlie advised, “I think the school should be flexible in their curriculum, allowing for adjustments. It’s too structured for me.”

Family Support

Family support was beneficial to the participants and their online learners. Most participants discussed the kind of support they received from family members. The extended family members helped supervise the children and gave words of encouragement. They also shared that family members were available to help. Furthermore, the parents discussed their appreciation for their extended family's support. Joe asserted, “My mother makes sure that the child attends class and concentrates when I'm not around. So, I would say, that's so beneficial.”

Olivia also stated that she has family members who are “teachers” who provide support to her child.

Research Question Responses

Synthesized participant experiences provided answers to the research questions. This study included the central research question and four sub-questions. The answers reflect the themes identified after analyzing the data. In addition, direct quotes from the participants support the responses developed to each research question.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of working parents of middle school children in remote learning environments? The participants' perspective is that they have adapted to the challenges experienced during the pandemic. Also, the experience is no longer new to them. As such, it is much easier now that the children have continued in remote learning post-pandemic. Furthermore, parents have been able to juggle work, home responsibilities, and the child’s online education more effectively. Erika mentioned that it was difficult. Ella said, “Having a child in online school needs you to juggle meetings, deadlines, and household chores…it wasn’t easy, but with time, I coped, and it’s amazing.” Also, Erika described her experience managing her child’s online education and her work as “pretty challenging,” but things are better now.

Sub-Question One

How do working parents respond to children’s educational needs when learning remotely? The 12 participants revealed the importance of meeting the learning needs of their remote learners. Parents viewed the role as an obligation pertinent to children performing well academically. As a result, parents did whatever was necessary to ensure that they met the

learning needs of their children. Parents reported assisting their remote leaners with homework assignments and providing supplemental educational materials. Additionally, parents shared that they ensured their children have internet and learning tools or "laptops" to aid their learning. Joe asserted, "I make sure that the Internet connection is okay before joining class so that by the time my child is joining class, he doesn't experience challenges while attending class." Jane and Dina also mentioned that they use online resources to support their remote learners. Dina shared, "I use online resources to support my child's learning depending on the subject and the assignment."

Sub-Question Two

How do working parents experience school support for children's educational needs when learning remotely? Working parents believe that school support enables parents to help their remote learners succeed academically. Also, it provides a more seamless online learning experience for children. The support the schools provided included scheduled meetings. During those meetings, teachers give parents reports on their children's academic progress. Teachers also discuss with parents areas they need their partnership to improve their child's academic progress. Olivia mentioned, "We have the virtual parent-teacher meeting that we always hold, twice a week for the teachers to give us the updates on their progress and where we need to work on as parents."

Sub-Question Three

How do working parents meet the social needs of their children in a remote learning environment? Working parents take the social needs of their remote learners seriously. This is because the participants are concerned about the mental well-being of the children since there is

limited face-to-face social interaction. Also, parents deem it necessary to create social activities since the pandemic has ended. Therefore, parents find ways to allow their children to interact with friends. Olivia reported that she has created activities for her child to interact with friends since the pandemic is over. Amy quipped:

> I make sure that I just don't cage him at home all the time. I make sure I allow him to interact with other children his age. I take him to the playground to have a good time and have fun with other people.

Sub-Question Four

How do working parents integrate familial support systems for remote learning children's educational needs? Parents reported receiving support from familial support. Ten out of the 12 participants received support from extended family members. Parents greatly welcomed and appreciated extended family members' support to assist their remote learners. Leah reported how her family supports her, "They call my child, encourage him, give him words of encouragement, and also help him with, you know, materials that he needs. They help with research and recommend learning sites." Also, Amy described her mother's support for her remote learner "My mom comes around to supervise my child when I'm not there. She talks to him and encourages him."

Summary

In summary, five themes emerged after analyzing the individual interviews, school documents, and focus group data on the experience of working parents of school children who continued learning online after the pandemic. The parents who participated in the study have adapted to their children learning online and believe it is easier juggling work and children's

online learning compared to the pandemic era. Parents feel obligated to supervise children's education and ensure their well-being. As a result, they were involved in their children's academic achievement and supported through helping with homework, creating social activities, and expressing satisfaction with the children's academic performance. Also, parents can communicate with their children's school through email or phone; parents use different communication approaches to gauge their child's learning. Furthermore, parents overwhelmingly received support from the children's school, and most of them received support from family members. However, most participants expressed facing some of the same challenges experienced during the pandemic, such as managing their time effectively, having internet issues, and worrying about their child getting distracted at home.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the post-COVID-19 online learning modality experiences for parents of middle school children in an urban area in the Southeastern United States. This chapter will include the interpretations of my study findings. Also, the implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodological implications, limitations and delimitations of the study, and recommendations for future research will be discussed. Finally, a summary of this study is provided at the end of the chapter.

Discussion

The discussion section summarizes the themes generated from this study and discusses the findings relating to the developed themes. The interpretation of the findings in this section is also supported with empirical and theoretical sources. Furthermore, I discuss the implications for policy or practice, the limitations and delimitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The themes generated after data analysis show that the working parents of middle school-aged children have adapted physically and psychologically to the challenges they experienced during the pandemic regardless of some of the challenges they still face. Parents feel responsible for supervising their children, creating social activities, and ensuring the children's psychological, physical, and academic well-being. Furthermore, the participants' ability to communicate with their children and the schools they attend helps them to discuss concerns and receive feedback. Parents also value the support they receive from family members and their

children's schools, which positively affects their overall experience.

Interpretation of Findings

The hermeneutic phenomenology framework allows me to interpret the study findings (van Manen, 2014). Therefore, I provide three interpretations of my study's results. The interpretations include parental role expectations and adjustment, the importance of school support, and the appreciation for familial support.

Parental Role Expectations and Adjustment

Parents have internalized the expectations of their roles as they have adjusted physically and psychologically to the routine of working and supporting their remote learners in the post-pandemic era. Chirs said:

> When the pandemic started, it was very difficult. My wife and I had to share the responsibilities of assisting our child. But now it has gotten better. We have a better rhythm juggling work responsibilities and our child's education.

Research has shown that parents become more comfortable fulfilling their duties or roles based on accepting their roles as parents and the expectations from others (Ilmanto et al., 2020; Roy & Giraldo-Garcia, 2018).

Furthermore, the experiences and challenges as widely researched during the pandemic (Ashbury et al., 2020; Bond, 2020; Bubb & Jones, 2020; Francom et al., 2021; Garbe et al., 2020; Huck & Zhang, 2021; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021; Trust & Whalen, 2021; Yazcavir & Gargur, 2021; Zuo et al., 2021) and navigating those challenges prepared the parents and enabled them to juggle work and their children's online learning post-pandemic. It also increased parental

engagement and involvement, which positively affects children's academic success (Gestwicki, 2007; Rymanowicz & Schulz, 2021; Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014).

Additionally, parents see the need to ensure their children's well-being by creating social activities for the children to socialize with friends, as parents are fundamental to the social-emotional and overall well-being of their children (Chen, 2022; Lessy et al., 2021; Ilmanto et al., 2020), and social isolation is detrimental to the mental well-being of children (Almeida et al., 2021; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021; Yazcavir & Gargur, 2021). Peter mentioned:

> I ask my child and her friends about the activities they would like to do, and I create them. It is important that my child is interacting with her friends so that she won't feel bored or isolated socially.

Although the parents reported adapting to the challenges experienced during the pandemic, 11 out of the 12 participants mentioned lingering challenges such as Internet connection issues and time management among others. Olivia shared, "For me, it's a bit hard because I have to multitask with my work." However, the current challenges do not seem to be a huge burden or deter the parents from continuing their children's online education rather, they showed a sense of satisfaction and a great level of comfort. Jane mentioned that remote learning allows her to "manage their time." Peter said it gives his child "access to education from anywhere." Amy shared:

> I would like to say that it's flexible. You know you have the time to talk to your child, especially when you feel he or she is not following. Also, you feel he's safe, especially in times like COVID-19. You have the reassurance that your child is okay.

Furthermore, the parents seem to exhibit parental self-efficacy (PSE). PSE is the belief that one has the competence and will be able to successfully perform parenting tasks (Bandura, 1977, 1997, 2002; Glatz et al., 2023), which, in this case, may have stemmed from the parents' ability to overcome those challenges due to similar experiences during the pandemic (Glatz et al., 2023). Nonetheless, almost 50% of the participants want to see some improvements and, as such, recommended changes that their children's schools could adopt to make their remote learning experience more seamless. Charlie wants to see a more "flexible curriculum." Lily desires "at least a weekly communication" cadence from her child's teacher, and Jane recommends that "teachers should give daily updates on the wellbeing of the child in case the parent is not able to monitor the kid's daily progress."

Importance of School Support

The support schools provide to parents can determine the level of satisfaction parents have toward the school (Al Hadhrami & Saadi, 2021; Yazcavir & Gargur, 2021), and the collaboration between the home and school is instrumental in the development of children (Borup et al., 2014; Borup et al., 2020; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parents in this study seemed very satisfied with the children's academic achievement and the support their children's schools provided them. This is because parents can easily communicate with their children's schools and teachers, and the schools have scheduled meetings with parents and provide educational assistance to them. Amy reported, "I communicate with my child's school through email and phone calls. They have a parent-teacher meeting that happens once a month. We discuss the progress of the child. The meeting is communicated through email." Another parent, Lily, said, "My child's school provides websites and apps, educational apps for my child's learning."

As a result of the support, parents feel confident in the school's ability to meet their remote learners' academic needs and assist them in supporting their children's online education. However, some participants desire changes from their children's school so they can have a better online learning experience. Amy said, "Everything is going well, but maybe the school should record class lessons and send it out so that in case a learner doesn't understand something very well, he or she can go back to it." This concern could be an implication for teachers' practice and school policy on recording class lessons, especially in schools that do not record class lessons.

Appreciation of Familial Support.

The presence of family support appears to be an important assistance that most of the participants experienced. It seems some of the parents may have asked extended family members to assist with their remote learners and are pleased with the support they receive. Ella said, "On days when I have lots of work, and I'm not able to make it home on time to be there for my child during class, my mom and sometimes my sisters fill in for me and give me reports on how he's learning.' Also, Charlie reported:

> What my parents and extended family have done to help me is celebrating every milestone as my child progresses. They acknowledge and then celebrate every academic achievement and progress she makes. This goes a long way for her and us.

Research studies have shown that familial support has a positive effect on the academic progress of children (Chakraverty et al., 2018; Onuma et al., 2022).

Implications for Policy and Practice

This current research reveals some implications for parents, teachers, administrators, and school districts. The policy implications are discussed under the appropriate headings. Also, the

implications for practice are discussed accordingly.

Implications for Policy

There are implications for policy for school administrators and school districts. The findings from this study reveal areas that school administrators could look into. Likewise, there are areas that school districts could address. These areas involve school leadership that may involve policy changes and authority during an uncertain time, such as, the pandemic.

School Administrators. School administrators are responsible for providing leadership and supporting teachers, parents, and students to improve morale and academic outcomes. Administrators should continue to help teachers build on the successes that teachers have achieved with these parents and other parents in similar settings. School administrators could also encourage teachers to report concerns from parents that require their attention. For instance, some parents want their children's teachers to record and send class lessons to the students after class so they can review them to gain more clarity on what was taught in class. This may require policy change from school administrators if there is a policy against recording class lessons, which would enable teachers to do so and may improve the online learning experience for the families. However, if the policy change is beyond the authority of the school administrators, they could seek help and approval from their school district leaders, who may be responsible for changing the policy.

School Districts. The implication for school districts from this study is to address issues that school administrators may not have the authority to change or put in place. The areas of concern may require policy change from school districts. Recording class lessons may be within the school district's authority to permit schools permission to record. Additionally, school

districts should continue to provide the needed support to schools to enable them to improve the experience for online learning families.

Implications for Practice

Implications for practice exist for parents, teachers, and school administrators based on the results of this study. A closer look at each stakeholder's role and lessons learned is essential. These implications may enable the stakeholders to continue in areas of strength and improve where weaknesses exist. The implications are discussed in the following sections.

Parents. There are personal and institutional implications for working parents of online school children in this study, and it might be relevant to parents in similar settings. Parents need to understand that they may be unable to avoid the challenges or burdens that come with juggling work, home, and their children's online education. Some parents mentioned time management as an issue they are experiencing. Therefore, this could be an area for those parents and those experiencing the same issue to seek help on how to better manage time. Parents should also continue to lean on the support of extended family members, as most of them reported the benefit of familial support. Furthermore, parents may need to communicate concerns or any improvement they desire to the teachers so that they can address them if they are within their purview or report them to the school administrators if the concerns are beyond their authority. For instance, a parent recommended increasing the frequency of communication with her child's teacher to at least once a week. This is a concern that the teacher may be able to address.

Teachers. This study reveals implications for teachers. Parents have a unique role in bridging the gap between students, themselves, parents, and the school administrators. Therefore, teachers must maintain constant communication with parents and report any concerns they may

have about any students to their parents. Also, most of the parents appreciated the support they got from their children's teachers and school. However, some parents mentioned recording class lessons, making them available to students, and giving them daily progress reports on their children. Teachers could improve in those areas if they are lagging or if they can address those concerns. Furthermore, teachers should report concerns from parents that require resolution from school administrators.

School Administrators. School administrators can affect changes that teachers may not have the power to resolve. Consequently, the implication for them from this study is to continue to support teachers with any resources they need to effectively teach online learners and provide support to parents. Also, school administrators should be actively involved in demanding from teachers any concerns they may encounter in the online teaching environment as well as concerns from students and parents that require their attention. Doing so may enable school administrators to address those concerns promptly for the parents in this setting or other settings.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

This study has both empirical and theoretical implications. The empirical and theoretical implications compare the findings' results with the pandemic literature and the theory that guided this research. Both implications are discussed in the following sections.

Empirical Implications

This study has empirical implications and has added to the existing body of research because the study has provided insights into the experiences of working parents of middle school children who continued in the online learning modality after the pandemic. Comparatively, the study's findings show that most parents have become accustomed to their children's online

learning and are not finding supporting their remote learners as difficult as during the pandemic (Ashbury et al., 2020; Bond, 2020; Bubb & Jones, 2020; Francom et al., 2021; Garbe et al., 2020; Huck & Zhang, 2021; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021; Trust & Whalen, 2021; Yazcavir & Gargur, 2021; Zuo et al., 2021). Also, parents are fully engaged and have the support of extended family members, which they did not experience during the pandemic (Gestwicki, 2007; Ilmanto et al., 2020; Roy & Giraldo-Garcia, 2018; Rymanowicz & Schulz, 2021; Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014).

Parents also have more support from their children's school, which they find satisfying compared to the support they received during the pandemic (Al Hadhrami & Saadi, 2021; Yazcavir & Gargur, 2021). Furthermore, most of the parents did not encounter difficulty organizing social activities for their children, unlike during the pandemic when social interaction was greatly limited (Ashbury et al., 2020; Bond, 2020; Yazcavir & Gargur, 2021). More so, the parents expressed satisfaction with the improved communication from the children's schools compared to the pandemic when some studies reported that parents did not receive satisfactory communication from the children's schools (Asbury et al., 2020; Yazcavir & Gurgur, 2021). However, it is important to note that this study did not uncover parents' concerns over the increased screen time compared to the issue during the pandemic (Armstrong, 2022; Carroll et al., 2020; Larivière-Bastien et al., 2022; Negata et al., 2020; Pandya & Lodha, 2021; Trabelsi et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021) or concerns over the health of their children as widely reported during the pandemic (Rundle et al., 2020; Sultana et al., 2021; Trabelsi et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021).

Theoretical Implications

This study has theoretical implications because Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, which guided this study, informed the problem of the study and provided the lens through which the research questions were developed. Analysis of the results shows that this study aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, especially the micro and meso systems, which show the influence of the interaction of relationships in different settings such as family, community, and school on the development of an individual. Therefore, students can achieve academic progress with the help of teachers and school administrators to create the environment and form partnerships with parents (Taylor & Gabre, 2016), as evident in parents' satisfaction with their children's academic success and the support received from their children's schools in this study.

Also, another theoretical implication relates to school administrators acknowledging and encouraging the important roles parents play in strengthening the relationship or interaction between students and teachers (Hoover & Sandler, 1997; Taylor & Gebre, 2016) and the motivational benefit it could provide to students (Chiu et al., 2021; Zacolletti et al., 2020). This study revealed that parents initiated communication with their children's schools regularly and communicated with the children to glean information on their well-being. Furthermore, involved and engaged parents can have positive effects on children (Gestwicki, 2007; Rymanowicz & Schulz, 2021; Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014) such as increasing social interaction for the children by creating social activities for them as evidenced by the results of this study.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study has limitations and delimitations, providing insights into the researcher's

inclusion and exclusion criteria and variables beyond my control. Specifically, limitations are variables or aspects of a study that a researcher can control such as the type of population to study, the geographical location of the population, and the participants' age among others (Creswell &Poth, 2018; Miles, & Scott, 2017; Ross & Bibler, 2019). Delimitations are factors that a researcher excludes from the study like participants who failed to meet the age, geographical, or other pertinent requirements of the study (Miles & Scott, 2017). Future studies could address these limitations and delimitations. This section of the chapter reveals the limitations and delimitations.

Limitations

This study was limited by the small sample size and the geographical location because the study only included 12 participants who were chosen from only one geographical area of the United States. This study would be more generalizable if it included more geographical locations in the United States and other parts of the world since the pandemic was a global issue. Another limitation of the study was the race of the participants. Only one out of the 12 participants identified as White; the rest of the participants identified as Black. There is a possibility that the experiences of parents from other races may be different. Another major limitation of the study is not including the students in the study. As a result, the findings did not provide any first-hand account of the experiences of the children and could not determine if the children were happy with online learning in the post-pandemic era. This is an area that future studies could explore. The research did not consider the economic status of the participants or limit the participants to one type of work modality. Full-time, part-time, hybrid, and remote workers were included, and no unemployed parent was part of the study Future studies could investigate those areas.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to working parents of middle school-aged children who are 18 years or older, who live in an urban area in the Southeastern part of the United States, and whose children continued learning in an online modality after the pandemic. The study did not invite parents who were not working, did not have a child in middle school who transitioned to online learning during the pandemic and continued after in-class learning resumed, and did not live in an urban area in the Southeastern part of the United States The reason for choosing these parents is because there's a gap in the post-pandemic literature on the experiences of this class of parents. Therefore, it was important to research the parents' experiences after in-class restrictions were lifted. Also, I wanted to know how working parents support their online learners, how their children's schools support their remote learning families, how the parents meet the social needs of their children, and how they integrate familial support for their remote learning families. I gained valuable insights into the parents' experiences through the data collection.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several recommendations based on the findings of this study. Future research studies should use a qualitative approach to recruit a larger sample size of working parents who are racially diverse and from different geographical locations to determine if that would yield similar or different results. Also, future studies could do a comparative analysis of the experiences of parents from low and high economic status whose children are schooling online. This may produce some interesting findings. A qualitative and case study approach could also be used to gain insights into the experiences of the students and teachers. Furthermore, a longitudinal study could be conducted with the same parents and students to determine if the

findings uncover changes in their experiences. Finally, a systematic review of all studies on this topic could be conducted to help the public know what is already known and what is not yet known about this topic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a hermeneutic phenomenology approach was used in this qualitative research study to explore the lived experiences of working parents of school children who moved to online learning during the pandemic and continued in the same modality after pandemic restrictions were lifted. A review of pandemic research on parents' experiences found that parents of school children and schools experienced several challenges including the difficulty of juggling work and children's school, internet connectivity issues, and dissatisfaction with the support and communication from school, among others. After analyzing the data obtained from the interviews, results revealed that the working parents have adapted to the responsibilities of juggling work and their children's online education despite some lingering concerns. Also, parents report experiencing satisfaction with their children's academic progress due to the support from their children's school and extended family members; and are creating social activities for their remote learners. The results of the study align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory, especially the micro and meso systems which show the effect the family and school have on a child's development. This study presents implications for parents, teachers, school administrators, and school districts to continue to build on areas of progress and make improvements where needed. Furthermore, future research studies should investigate the experiences of working parents using more racially diverse and larger sample size, include more

geographical areas, investigate parents of low and high economic status, and explore the experiences of students and teachers, which are limitations of this study.

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Appendix A

Liberty University IRB Approval

April 8, 2024

Gladys Odewilliams
Heather Strafaccia

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-422 EXPLORING THE POST-COVID LIVE EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN WHO CONTINUED LEARNING IN ONLINE MODALITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Dear **Gladys** Odewilliams, Heather Strafaccia,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application per 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 described in your IRB 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.(ii). 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:
Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents, **which you must use to conduct your study,** can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

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, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Consent

Title of the Project: Exploring the Post-Covid Live Experiences of Parents of Middle School Children Who Continued Learning in Online Modality: A Phenomenological Study

Principal Investigator: Gladys Ode Williams, Doctoral Candidate School of Education, Liberty University.

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study: You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and be a working parent who has a child learning online after in-class learning resumed. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

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

The purpose of the study is to understand the post-COVID-19 online learning experiences for working parents of middle school children.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Take part in a one-on-one audio-recorded Zoom interview and take part in a Zoom video-recorded focus group interview. It should take approximately 1.5 hours to complete the procedures listed.
2. Verify the accuracy of the transcript of the interview, which will take about 15 minutes to complete.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society may include exposing deficiencies in parental engagement in their children's education and the effectiveness of the relationship between the home and school in improving student engagement in the post-COVID-19 era. The findings from this study can significantly affect decision-making for parents who may still be considering moving their children to virtual school. The results could help schools offering post-pandemic remote education to learn and improve on providing better remote learning experiences for parents and students, especially if the challenges that those parents had during the pandemic have been resolved or addressed by both parents and their children's school. Furthermore, findings from this study could enlighten school leaders and education policymakers on the challenges that persist for parents of online school children after the pandemic and some of the barriers that might be preventing working parents from fully engaging in their children's online education. The insights gleaned from this study could lead to better understanding, communication, and more support for working parents to help them better assist in driving their children's engagement and academic achievement in online learning modality.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

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

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with people outside of the group.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked drawer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. The researcher will have access to these recordings.

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

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. At the conclusion of the one-on-one interview and focus group interview, each participant will receive a $50 Visa gift card by mail or electronically based on each participant's preferred delivery method. Email or the mailing address of each participant will be requested for compensation purposes; however, they will be collected by email at the conclusion of the focus group interview to maintain your confidentiality.

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.

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

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

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

The researcher conducting this study is Gladys Ode Williams. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at godewilliams@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 IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is 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/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Printed Subject Name

_____

Signature & Date

Appendix C

Recruitment Social Media Post

ATTENTION VIRTUAL SCHOOL PARENTS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to understand the post-COVID-19 online learning experiences for working parents of middle school children. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and be a working parent who has a child learning online after in-class learning resumed. Participants who meet the criteria will take part in a one-on-one audio-recorded Zoom interview and take part in a Zoom video-recorded focus group interview. It should take approximately 1.5 hours to complete the procedures listed. The transcript of the interview will be provided to you to verify the accuracy of the information obtained during the interview, which will take about 15 minutes to complete. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please provide your information so that I can contact you to schedule an interview. A consent document will be emailed to you one week before the interview and you will need to sign and return it at the time of the interview. Participants will be given a $50 Visa gift card as compensation.

Appendix D

Screening Questions for Research Participants

1. Do you work part-time or full-time in an in-person, hybrid, or fully remote capacity?
2. Do you live in an urban area in the Southeastern United States?
3. Are you a parent of one or more middle school-aged children?
4. Was your child learning in-person, moved to online learning during the pandemic, and has continued learning virtually after the pandemic despite the resumption of in-class learning?
5. What is your gender?
6. Which category best describes your age in years? (a) Under 18 years (b) 18-24 years (c) 25-34 years (d) 35-44 years (e) 45-54 years (f) 55-64 years (g) 65 years or older
7. What is your race? (a) White/Caucasian (b) Black/African American (c) Hispanic/Latino (d) Asian/Asian American (e) American Indian/ Alaskan Native (f) Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander (g) Another Race (h) Prefer Not to Answer

Appendix E

Individual Interview Questions

Table 3

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your experiences as a working parent of a middle school child in a remote learning environment from the first year to the current year. CRQ
2. In what ways do you support your remote learning child's needs outside of the classroom requirements? SQ1
3. As a working parent, what do you do to ensure that your child is learning the school subject concepts? SQ1
4. What communication approaches do you use with your remote learning child to explore their educational experience? SQ1
5. Describe how the school initiates communication regarding your child's academic progress. SQ2
6. Describe the type of communication you utilize in connecting with your child's school. SQ2
7. What resources does your child use to be successful in the remote learning classroom? SQ2
8. What social resources does the school provide to your remote learning family? SQ3
9. What challenges do you experience in providing social outlets for your remote learning child? SQ3

10. Describe the opportunities your child receives in co-curricular activities as a remote learner, such as physical education, art, media center, and music. SQ3
11. What ways does your extended family support your decision to continue remote learning? SQ4
12. Describe how your family's attitude toward remote learning has changed over time. SQ4
13. Describe your extended family's involvement in your remote learning child's experience. SQ4
14. What else would you like to add to our conversation today about remote learning that we have not already discussed? CRQ

Appendix F

Focus Group Interview Questions

Table 4

Focus Group Questions

1. What is the most challenging part of supporting your remote learner? SQ1
2. What do you value most about the remote learning modality? SQ1
3. What is the school's most helpful resource to support your remote learner? SQ2
4. Describe the cadence of communication that has been the most helpful in supporting the remote learning process. SQ2
5. What is the most effective social program the school has provided to support your child's remote learning? SQ3
6. What are two recommendations you would give to improve the remote learning experience? SQ3
7. What has been the most helpful support for your remote learner that you have received from extended family members? SQ4
8. What are the most significant challenges you have receiving support from family as a working parent of a remote learner? SQ4
9. What else would you like to add to our conversation today about remote learning that we have not already discussed? CRQ

Appendix G

Document Analysis Form

Table 5

Document Analysis Form

Date	
Participant	
Document Type	
Key Words	