



**THE EXPERIENCES OF CAREGIVERS ON THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR  
CHILDREN'S LEARNING DURING COVID-19: THE CASE OF VLAAKLAGTE  
NUMBER 2, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

**A research Report presented to**

**The Department of Social Work**

**School of Human and Community Development**

**Faculty of Humanities**

**University of Witwatersrand**

**In partial fulfilment of the requirements**

**For the degree Master of Arts in Social Work by CW and RR in the field of School Social  
Work**

**By**

**BONGI ZANELE MATSHIANA**

**JUNE 2024**

**Supervisors: Profs Jennifer Watermeyer and Edmarie Pretorius**

## DECLARATION

I, Bongi Zanele Matshiana, hereby declare that this research report is entirely my own original work, generated without the help of others and that all sources utilized in the study have been correctly and appropriately recognized and cited. I additionally declare that steps have been taken to ensure that the publication of this work does not go against academic standards or ethical principles defined by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand (Non-Medical). I further attest that I have never submitted this research paper for a degree or exam to another university.

**Student number:** 2515396

**Research Ethical Protocol number:** SW23/10/02

**Signature:**  \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** JUNE 2024

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation to Professor Jennifer Watermeyer, my supervisor. Your mentorship has been invaluable, providing me with guidance and motivation throughout my research journey. Your insightful feedback has enabled me to enhance and refine my work, and I am truly thankful for your unwavering support and encouragement to consistently strive for excellence.

I am immensely grateful to Professor Edmarie Pretorius for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout my journey. Your dedication in helping me has been greatly appreciated.

To my parents, Mr. Jacob Matshiana and Mrs. Lettie Matshiana, thank you for encouraging me in all my pursuits and inspiring me to follow my dreams. My siblings Thandi, Phindile and Nelly thank you guys for your selfless support, your encouragement and emotional support made me realize my potential to be the best version of myself. I am really blessed to have you guys as a family.

To my best friend Martha, thank you for your undying support and encouragement.

To my son Jaden, I started this journey when you were just a year old my boy. You were my motivation and the reason I kept going to complete my degree. Mommy did this for you!

To all the participants of the study, who are the caregivers of Vlaaklagte, I want to express my sincere gratitude for sharing your experiences with me. Your voluntary participation was crucial to the success of this research project, and I am immensely grateful for your involvement. I truly appreciate each one of you. Thank you so much and God bless you!

To my Colleagues Vusi and Dimakatso thank you so much for your support and encouragement.

I would like to express my gratitude to the staff and school principal of Buhlebesizwe Secondary School for their warm welcome and collaboration with me in achieving my research objectives. Thank you so much for your support. Thank you for allowing me to use your school offices for data collection of my study, and for granting me the opportunity to work with the caregivers of your learners.

Lastly, I attribute my ability to endure in times of hopelessness to the unshakable support of the divine and my forefathers, for which I am immensely grateful.

<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>ii</b>

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **CHAPTER 1**

1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY	1
1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY	5
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	6
1.5 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	7
1.6 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS	7
1.7 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS	8
1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT	10

### **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

2.1 INTRODUCTION	12
2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.3 GAPS IN THE EXISTING LITERATURE	
2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY	20

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

3.1 INTRODUCTION	22
3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH	22
3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN	23
3.4 POPULATION, SAMPLE, AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE	24
3.5 SETTING/CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	26
3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	27
3.7 PRE-TESTING THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	28

3.8 PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND DATA COLLECTION METHOD	28
3.9 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS	29
3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF STUDY	32
3.10.1 CREDIBILITY	32
3.10.2 TRANSFERABILITY	33
3.10.3 DEPENDABILITY	33
3.10.4 CONFIRMABILITY	34
3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	34
3.11.1 VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION	34
3.11.2 INFORMED CONSENT	35
3.11.3 CONFIDENTIALITY	35
3.11.4 ANONYMITY	35
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	
4.1 INTRODUCTION	36
4.2 THEMES AND SUBTHEMES	36
4.3 THEME 1: TECHNOLOGY AIDED DURING COVID-19	37
4.3.1 SUBTHEME: THE USE OF INTERNET DURING COVID-19	38
4.3.2 SUBTHEME VIRTUAL LEARNING DURING LOCKDOWN	39
4.4 THEME 2: COVID-19 LED TO CAREGIVERS ASSUMING THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS	40
4.4.1 SUBTHEME: ROLE OF CAREGIVERS AS EDUCATORS	40
4.5 THEME 3: COVID-19 LED TO STRENGTHENING OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	42
4.5.1 POSITIVE FAMILY BONDS	42
4.5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY SUPPORT	43
4.6 THEME 4: COVID-19 HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE CAREGIVER'S PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONING	45
4.6.1 SUBTHEME: CHANGES IN DAILY HABITS	45
4.6.2 SUBTHEME: FEAR	46

4.6.3 SUBTHEME: STRESS	47
4.6.4 SUBTHEME: UNEMPLOYMENT	48
4.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER	49
CHAPTER 5: MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
5.1 INTRODUCTION	51
5.2 OVERALL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	51
5.3 DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY	52
5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY	55
5.4.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	55
5.4.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CAREGIVERS	56
5.4.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE	56
5.4.4 IMPLICATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	57
5.4.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY	58
5.4.6 IMPLICATION FOR POLICY	58
5.5 CONCLUSION	58
5.6 STRENGTHS OF STUDY	59
5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	59
5.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY	60
REFERENCES	61
Appendix A: Ethics clearance certificate	
Appendix B: Consent form for the participants in the study	
Appendix C: Interview guide	
Appendix D: Participants information sheet	
Appendix E: Gauteng Department of Education Approval letter	
Appendix F: School Approval Letter	

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **GENERAL ORIENTATION AND INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study is about the experiences of caregivers on their involvement in their children's learning and it was conducted in a rural area, namely Vlaaklagte Number 2. In this chapter, the background of the research study is presented. The effect Covid-19 had on the education system is presented. The urban and rural divide globally during the pandemic is explained. The problem statement and rationale for the study are presented. The research question aims, and objectives of the study are described. A brief overview of the research methodology applied is presented. The relevance of this study in social development is highlighted. The key concepts relevant to the study are defined.

#### **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

COVID-19 is a global pandemic that has affected many and claimed many lives globally with its high infections. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a vast majority of enrolled learners worldwide have experienced temporary school closures to promote social distance and slow the virus's spread (Viner et al., 2020). Those who were making the move from school to tertiary education, or from tertiary education to the workforce, encountered difficulties because the pandemic prevented them from completing their coursework and assessments as usual (Daniel, 2020). First-time learners were going to have a completely different learning experience than they did before COVID-19. Around 17 million learners in South Africa, ranging from preschool to high school, would have their education interrupted when school closures were announced on March 18, 2020 (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic was officially declared no longer a public health emergency by the WHO earlier in May 2023. The head of the UN World Health Organization has declared an end to COVID-19 as a public health emergency, stressing that it does not mean the disease is no longer a global threat (WHO, 2023).

Wuhan, China is where the coronavirus first appeared in December 2019. Over 229 million people were impacted by the COVID-19 virus, which also claimed over 4.70 million lives worldwide (October et al., 2022). According to the Department of Statistics South Africa (2022), the pandemic altered people's lifestyles as well as their educational experiences.

The global COVID-19 lockdowns and school closures have had a profound impact on education (Wills & van der Berg, 2024). In South Africa, these measures resulted in learners losing an average of 54% of their in-person learning time, while also experiencing higher rates of absenteeism due to the disrupted school schedules (Wills & van der Berg, 2024).

COVID-19 has presented direct and indirect threats to individuals, families, and communities globally with extensive effects on financial security, health, and well-being. They state that the pandemic has exposed existing inequalities, trauma, and economic fallout in rural areas. These authors further state that the impact of COVID-19 intensified existing socio-economic issues in rural areas as most of the people lost their jobs. The authors further stated that another challenge in rural areas was that rural hospitals were less able to handle an influx of COVID-19 patients because they tend to have fewer specialists and less technology and capacity (Naicker & Richter, 2022).

The lockdown measures included curfews, travel restrictions, both domestic and foreign, limitations on corporate activity, closures of schools and universities, and cancelation of events and gatherings in addition to limitations on population interaction and mobility. Consequently, COVID-19 and the lockdown measures that went along with it affected families in a variety of ways (October et al., 2021).

### ***1.2.1 EDUCATIONAL IMPACTS AND ECONOMIC ISSUES DURING COVID-19***

The pandemic left many people without income, and small businesses were forced to close. Many individuals lost their jobs as a result, and the unemployment rate increased rapidly. de Luca et al. (2020) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic was greatly a threat in rural areas presenting challenges that were worsened by low accessible financial resources, not easily accessible health services, and enormous isolation. The authors further stated that COVID-19 revealed a crucial role in social cohesion, local development, and mental well-being.

October et al. (2022) further stated that many families in South Africa are from low-income neighbourhoods, and the pandemic caused many people to lose their employment. The authors noted that reports of economic instability and an increase in the unemployment rate had resulted from this.

Food insecurity increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic in both urban and rural regions. This is because the food supply chain was disrupted, there were more physical and financial hurdles preventing people from accessing food, and there was a devastating rise in food waste as a result of labour shortages. Businesses all throughout the world were counting down the days until the pandemic passes and wondering how they will make up for the revenue they lost. The pandemic caused many people to lose their jobs, reduce their income, (Kholwa et al., 2022).

Mueller et al. (2020) stated that the physical and economic effects of the pandemic particularly threatened many rural populations. These authors further stated that compared to urban settings, rural areas typically experience higher rates of poverty, fewer employment options, and greater exposure to the labour market during the pandemic.

The pandemic meant caregivers had to be actively involved, take more responsibility for their children's learning, and keep them engaged in their academics by assisting them in school activities. Parents had to deal with their children's stresses and fears of the pandemic while also dealing with their fears and stresses. Bonilla et al. (2022) pointed out that during the pandemic, the parents were responsible for their children's learning development, and parental involvement was prioritized in the learner's education. They further stated that the economic and educational impact of the pandemic is a major concern, especially in low- and middle-income families where both parents and their children are struggling financially and academically.

The current study focused on the mental health of caregivers living in rural areas by exploring the experiences that the caregivers had in their involvement in the children's well-being during the pandemic. Joshi et al. (2021) stated that because of their helplessness and uncertainty, the pandemic had a significant negative influence on people's mental and psychological well-being. Russell et al. (2020) state that numerous disasters such as COVID-19 had a detrimental effect on

mental health and caused extended periods of elevated psychiatric symptomology, such as depression and anxiety.

They further state that children of extremely distressed caregivers or those caregivers who suffer from poor mental health outcomes because of the pandemic have worse parenting results as children. Caregivers have had personal experience of what they went through to assist with their children's learning during the pandemic. Therefore, this study explored the perceptions of the caregivers on what impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on them in terms of their well-being and what they had to deal with in their involvement in assisting the children with their academics in Vlaaklagte Number 2.

### ***1.2.2 THE EFFECT COVID-19 HAD ON THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM GLOBALLY.***

Daniel (2020) stated that the education systems faced challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments were forced to urge schools to stop providing face-to-face instruction to the majority of their learners because to COVID-19, forcing them to quickly transition to online instruction and virtual learning. The COVID-19 pandemic caused disruptions to learners' lives based on their educational path, program level, program completion point, and other factors.

Azubuike et al. (2021) stated that during the pandemic in Nigeria where they conducted their research, learners from urban areas who were from financially privileged households had more access to quality learning opportunities and resources. In rural areas, children who were from poor backgrounds had limited access to quality remote learning such as limited or non-availability of digital devices and internet services. People experienced fear and anxiety due to the pandemic. Many educators, parents, and learners were caught off guard by the abrupt change during COVID-19, which exposed some of the challenges and problems associated with greater parental participation while engaging and attempting to support their children in various degrees and forms of distant learning (Garbe et al., 2020).

### ***1.2.3 URBAN AND RURAL DIVIDE IN EDUCATION DURING COVID-19 IN SOUTH AFRICA***

The pandemic's forced closing of schools had an impact on how education was conducted and the approaches used for instruction and evaluation were impacted (Tarkar, 2020). Few private

institutions that offered online courses started implementing online teaching strategies. Learners were enrolled in such schools' online programs. Conversely, government and low-income private schools had closed and were without Internet learning resources and learners' learning was being hampered by it and with teaching taking place online, teachers, parents and learners faced challenges due to this transformation (Tarkar, 2020).

Rural families during the pandemic chose to complete tasks by hand and postponed demands for household amenities like mobile tablets, Wi-Fi connections, washing machines, dishwashers, and floor mops. But other slightly wealthier households felt compelled to purchase more smartphones or tablets to help their children with their online schooling (Joshi et al., 2021).

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the world, necessitating significant adjustments in people's daily lives and resulting in increased social isolation (WHO, 2022). Zhang (2021) stated that due to school closures during the pandemic, children's possibilities for classroom interactions that support positive learning behaviours was significantly reduced. Additionally, the pandemic has caused many children to experience negative feelings including dread and anxiety. The author further states that during the pandemic, the involvement of caregivers within the home environment was found to play a critical role in enhancing children's learning through various means such as practice, instruction, scaffolding, and providing a stimulating cognitive atmosphere. One of the parenting demands during COVID-19 was that parents had to plan new caregiving strategies, work, and education routines by compromising their time to attend to their own emotional experiences from the pandemic and self-care (Russell et al., 2020). Research on COVID-19 showed that caregivers were left with emotional and financial distress due to COVID-19. Being a caregiver during the pandemic meant one had to cater to one's child's emotional and financial needs to help them adjust to their academic and social life. Russell et al. (2020) stated that the anxiety and post-traumatic stress may have affected caregivers who felt increased caregiving responsibilities during the pandemic.

During lockdown, caregivers were required to take an active role in their children's education daily, as traditional in-person classroom learning shifted to an online format. As a result, caregivers assumed full responsibility for their children's well-being, including their health, study habits, and nutrition to promote an active lifestyle. Zhang (2021) stated that many children have had their education and learning interrupted by the pandemic, particularly preschoolers who's learning needs require caregiver assistance and who lack strong self-care skills. In his research, Zhang (2021) stated that there was a growing awareness of caregiver's involvement in facilitating children's learning and well-being during the pandemic and how caregivers have been engaged in their children's education during the pandemic. This author's findings state that lower family socioeconomic status, single parenthood, and large family sizes have been found to limit caregivers' home-based involvement during the pandemic.

In low and middle-income countries such as South Africa, there were psychosocial and environmental stressors that impacted the mental health and well-being of children and their families during the pandemic (Bloom et al., 2022). With the abovementioned COVID-19 impacts on caregivers, this study was conducted to explore the experiences of caregivers regarding their involvement in their children's learning during COVID-19. This study was done in a rural community. Rural communities faced greater challenges during uncertain situations like the COVID-19 pandemic and the mental health in these communities is often overlooked. The researcher did this study in this area specifically to understand the challenges caregivers in the rural areas faced during the pandemic and how the pandemic had an impact in their well-being. This study aimed to explore how caregivers in rural areas manage to cope with their children's education, taking full responsibility for ensuring their children are actively engaged in their studies while also safeguarding their well-being.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION.**

What are the experiences of caregivers when they engaged in their children's learning during COVID-19 in Vlaaklagte number 2, Mpumalanga?

##### ***1.4.1 AIM***

The proposed study aimed to explore how caregivers perceived and experienced their engagement in their children's learning during COVID-19.

#### **1.4.2 OBJECTIVES**

- To explore caregivers' experiences of how COVID-19 affected their children's well-being.
- To explore caregivers' experiences of how COVID-19 affected their own well-being
- To explore how caregivers reportedly managed to ensure their children were actively engaged in their academics at home during COVID-19
- To understand the strategies caregivers reportedly applied to assist their children with learning during COVID-19
- To explore the reported strategies caregivers applied to protect their children's well-being during COVID-19

#### **1.5 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

This study contributes to the existing knowledge base on how pandemics have an impact on caregivers' well-being. The study can also contribute to informing policymakers interested in including caregivers' involvement in learners' education in education policy initiatives. This study will also enable school social workers to provide more tailored support to learners and caregivers both now and for future pandemics.

#### **1.6 OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

Creswell et al. (2019) point out that the research methods for a particular project may include interviewing, observation, or the collection of textual or visible data. The researcher in this study used semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection. Creswell et al. (2019) point out that in semi-structured interviews certain open questions are asked, and these are followed by further probing and clarification. They further state that in semi-structured interviews, the researcher must pay attention to the responses of their participants so that the researcher can identify new emerging lines of inquiry that are directly related to the phenomenon being studied and explore and probe these lines.

The interviews had open-ended questions and follow-up probes with specific question content and order that would be different for all the interviewees. The researcher audio-recorded the interviews with the permission of the participants. The researcher conducted the interviews in a neutral public space which was the school their children attended. The duration of interviews took about 1 hour maximum. The researcher conducted the interviews in vernacular language which was IsiNdebele.

## **1.7 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

The following key concepts are relevant to the study:

### ***1.7.1 Caregiver***

Caregiver is a broader term, and it includes any person whom the child lives with, who provides daily care to the child who acts as the child's parent whether they are the child's biological parent or not. A caregiver can be a mother or father or another family member such as grand grandparent or an older sibling. (Better Care Network, 2024)

According to Chapter 2 of the (Children's Act of 2005) any person a parent or guardian who looks after a child is considered a caregiver.

In this study, a caregiver is referred to as a person who takes care of a child daily. The caregiver could be the child's parents, grandparents, foster parent, adoptive parent, or an extended family member, like an aunt or an uncle. A caregiver in this study can be either related or unrelated.

### ***1.7.2 COVID-19***

World Health Organization (2022) defined Coronavirus disease as an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They further state that people infected with the virus experienced mild to moderate respiratory illness and recovered without requiring special treatment. However, some would become seriously ill and require medical attention. Anyone could get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age.

October et al. (2022) further stated it was discovered that respiratory droplets from sneezes and coughs were the main way for the pandemic to travel between people. Shortness of breath, persistently strong coughs, and fever were among its influenza-like symptoms. This explanation of the concept was used for this study.

In this study, COVID-19 is a disease that is transmitted when people breathe in air contaminated by droplets containing the virus. It is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus as defined by WHO.

### ***1.7.3 Lockdown***

Lockdowns are an effective way of reducing the reproduction number of COVID-19 and controlling the spread of the disease in local communities (Huang et al., 2021). Stiegler and Bouchard (2020) stated that South Africa imposed on 23 March a strict lockdown on the population for three weeks and the lockdown was implemented on 26 March. At that stage, the number of official positive cases had risen to 554, without any deaths.

This lockdown included, among other things, the permanent closure of all public educational and training facilities as well as restrictions on social and economic activity across the nation, with the exception of vital services. It also included an instant travel prohibition, both domestically and internationally. People were urged to isolate themselves and remain indoors, with the exception of attending certain events and obtaining necessary supplies. Additionally, it was recommended that people refrain from making personal contact with others and practice good hygiene, such as donning face masks in public areas and washing their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer after handling other persons or objects (iRSA, 2020).

Ishmael et al. (2020) stated that the lockdown, according to the South African President, was meant to protect and save the lives of people in the country. In this study, lockdown affected the daily routines of people, and it affected the wellbeing of caregivers and their children. It affected education as schools and universities were closed. A shift from face-to-face teaching to online teaching took place which had an impact on people living in rural communities.

### ***1.7.4 Education***

Education is the socially constructed and governed process of continuously transmitting important social experiences from previous generations to another, enrolling in a training program inside the system of educational institutions is the primary means of receiving an education (Naziev, 2017).

In this study education is skills and knowledge taught and transferred to a learner from a qualified educator.

### ***1.7.5 Learner***

South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 defines a learner as any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of this Act.

In this study, a learner is a child going to school to acquire knowledge and skills.

### ***1.7.6 Remote learning***

A teaching method known as "remote learning" involves a teacher and learner who are geographically apart. Information is acquired using non-traditional teaching and learning approaches. The learning materials, which include exercises and tasks that learners are expected to do by a specific date, are provided to learners via mail (Moore, 2005).

In this study, remote learning is a system of education where learners study at home and communicate with their teachers about school tasks that need to be completed over the internet which includes WhatsApp,

## **1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT**

In Chapter One, information on the background of the study contextualizes the research study. The problem statement and rationale for the study are explained, and the research question, aim, and objectives of the study are presented. Key concepts relevant to the study are defined, and a brief overview of the research methodology applied is described.

Chapter two addresses the theoretical framework underpinning the research study and relevant literature relevant to the study is explained.

In Chapter Three, the research methodology and methods applied during the research study are described.

Chapter Four deals with the presentation and discussion of the findings.

In Chapter Five, the main findings of the study are discussed, the implications of the study are highlighted, the conclusion of the study is presented, and the strengths and limitations of the study are explained.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the literature review and the prevalence COVID-19 pandemic are explained globally and the theoretical framework concerning the study is explained. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on education systems is addressed. The gaps in the literature are mentioned.

#### 2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review discusses the concepts of the prevalence of COVID-19. The effects on the education system during the pandemic are discussed in this chapter and the gaps in existing research pertinent to this study are highlighted.

##### 2.2.1 IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN RURAL COMMUNITIES: GLOBAL AND SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXTS

###### 2.2.1.1 GLOBAL CONTEXT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching consequences on rural communities globally, impacting their mental health and social wellbeing due to the loss of income and coping mechanisms. According to Phillipson et al. (2020) the shift from outside to inside lifestyles, and the need for social distancing measures, disrupted social relations and structures, leading to an increase in physical isolation. For those living in rural areas, these effects were even more pronounced, as they were less able to maintain social contact online while adhering to social distancing measures. These authors further stated that the challenge during the pandemic was difficult for those who already experienced rural vulnerability, loneliness, and social isolation. It was crucial to recognize the importance of addressing these impacts and supporting those who are affected

According to Phillipson et al., (2020) the pandemic affected household incomes and rural businesses in every sector of Europe's rural economies, as well as charitable and community

organizations. The authors further stated that the pandemic was affecting rural communities directly when people fell ill, as well as indirectly due to social distancing restrictions put in place to slow the spread of the disease.

The COVID-19 pandemic had varying effects on different genders. Women were particularly affected by the virus due to their predominance in frontline occupations such as teaching, caregiving, and nursing. In Europe, women were often responsible for childcare, and the shift to home-schooling may create gendered implications within families (Phillipson et al., 2020).

Zhao et al. (2023) stated that in China, poverty-stricken areas in rural communities relied heavily on migrant work as a means of increasing income. Since 2013 in China, many households that had previously been lifted out of poverty have fallen back into it during the pandemic. Additionally, it has been observed that COVID-19 has had a more negative impact on the well-being of rural Chinese households when compared to those residing in urban areas. The economic shock of the pandemic has significantly affected the subjective well-being of rural households. Similarly, in Uganda, rural households have experienced a decline in their well-being since the epidemic lockdown, with their satisfaction with the quality of life decreasing significantly (Zhao et al., 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a severe disruption in the food supply chain, heightened physical and financial obstacles to food availability, and a disastrous rise in food waste due to labour shortages, all of which have made food insecurity worse in both urban and rural areas.

(International Labour Organisation, 2020).

#### *2.2.1.2 SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT*

COVID-19 impacted many aspects of life besides health, prolonged lockdown in South Africa exposed rural areas with weak and vulnerable economic foundations (Ebrahim, 2020). According to Ishmael et al. (2020) in the rural community of Vhembe District, households were facing compounded challenges during the pandemic due to limited income sources resulting from retrenchments and the shutdown of subsistence businesses. Individuals were experiencing depression and frustration from the fear of contracting the virus, spousal domestic abuse and the inability to meet home obligations, family disputes, and boredom resulting from movement restrictions.

During the pandemic, South Africa established the Social Relief Grant as a response strategy. The grant amounted to R350 per month and was given to unemployed individuals who did not receive any form of income to enable them to survive (Goodell, 2020).

According to October et al. (2021) many people experienced psychological effects from the social isolation brought about by lockdown restrictions because direct interpersonal interactions were forbidden by the social distancing and lockdown regulations, which left them with fewer opportunities to visit friends, neighbours, and extended family.

The persistent effects of COVID-19 on psychosocial support services resulted in incidents of xenophobia, racism, stigmatization, and unrest directed towards communities with a high COVID-19 case rate (Mbunge, 2020). During the pandemic, there were allegations of prejudice in the delivery of food donations for COVID-19 relief in South Africa. In addition, the loss of the primary breadwinner in families has resulted in significant during the pandemic, parents took on multiple roles and responsibilities including educating their children, working, and managing domestic burdens which had significant impacts on their psychosocial well-being. Some people avoided seeking medical care due to fear of infection or stigma (Mbunge, 2020).

During periods of quarantine and isolation, many people have experienced weight gain due to reduced physical activity and increased snacking this resulted in an increased risk for health issues such as obesity, hypertension, cardiorespiratory disorders, and mental health disorders. During the pandemic, parents took on multiple roles and responsibilities including educating their children, working, and managing domestic burdens which had significant impacts on their psychosocial well-being. (Mbunge, 2020).

## **2.2.2 PARENTAL STRESS DURING COVID-19: SOUTH AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL OVERVIEW**

### ***2.2.1 INTERNATIONAL OVERVIEW***

During the pandemic, parents took on multiple roles and responsibilities including educating their children, working, and managing domestic burdens which had significant impacts on their psychosocial well-being. Low and Mount (2021) research study focused on economic stress,

parenting, and the adjustment of children during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. They outlined how financial stress can have a negative impact on parents and the relationship they have with their children during COVID-19. They further point out how parents with psychological distress during COVID-19 felt agitated, impatient, and having difficulty relaxing due to financial stresses they have which affected their parenting during the pandemic. In their findings, they state that when parents are experiencing financial stress it will likely create more general psychological distress in the parent which might affect the well-being of the child.

Nazish et al. (2021) conducted a study on Covid-19 and their research focused on parental stress and parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan. Their findings are like those of Louw and Mounts. They point out how parents in stressful conditions during the pandemic and taking care of their children under a high degree of economic uncertainty are associated with an increase in parental mental health needs. In their findings, these researchers found that during COVID-19 a lot of parents suffered anxiety, depression, and high levels of stress due to the pandemic causing widespread human, economic, and environmental losses. Parents also experienced psychological distress related to concerns regarding the high rate of infection, financial insecurity, and unemployment. Low & Mounts (2021) study in the United States of America concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected families' lives and general well-being. According to their findings, financial stress has increased during the pandemic due to rising unemployment rates and unstable economies in the United States. However, the relationship between financial stress and the psychosocial adjustment of parents and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic has not been studied.

Many educators, families, and learners were caught off guard by this abrupt change during the pandemic, which highlighted some of the challenges and problems associated with greater parental participation as they engaged and attempted to support their children in varying degrees and forms of remote learning. The words online, virtual, and e-education and e-learning are identical with remote education and remote learning for the purposes of this research, even though numerous terminologies have been used in the field (Garbe et al., 2020).

Rousoulioti et al. (2022) stated that in research conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic, parental involvement had a consistently positive and meaningful impact on children's academic

achievement and overall well-being. These authors further state that the COVID-19 lockdowns have brought about a new perspective on parental involvement and mobility restrictions and social isolation measures implemented raised concerns regarding the psychological well-being of families. These authors concluded that lockdown during the pandemic was observed to cause increased stress and negative emotions among parents where parenting is concerned and that also had an impact on the mental health and well-being of their children.

Durastic and Bunjevac (2017) findings outline the positive impact that parental involvement has as a contributing factor to student success. They state that Parental engagement in a child's education starts at home when parents provide a supportive, safe, and healthy environment, as well as suitable learning opportunities and a good outlook on education.

Spinelli et al. (2020) stated that the well-being of the entire population was impacted by lockdown, including parents. The lockdown included a high prevalence of psychological discomfort linked to quarantine, such as despair, stress, impatience, and signs of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In the home environment, the educational and supportive role of parents became even more essential than usual. During the pandemic, parents were left with the responsibility to manage home-schooling and taking care of their children with very little preparation on how to manage home-schooling. The closure of schools and aftercare facilities caused children to have reduced learning opportunities, as well as a loss of interactions with their peers and with other important educational figures such as teachers (Spinelli et al., 2020)

Durastic and Bunjevac (2017) also highlighted the barriers of parental involvement, they state that many parents in today's world are too busy to attend school functions or regularly engage in their children's education because of the distractions and responsibilities of everyday life, low income, rigid work schedules, and language barriers. According to Singh et al. (2004) one of the obstacles to effective parental engagement is the low monthly income that some parents receive, which forces them to take on additional jobs and reduces the amount of time they can spend at home assisting their kids with their schooling.

During the pandemic, children and parents were spending more time together at home. However, two potential effects of stress arose, a spillover over which refers to the transmission of stress from work-related or financial issues to parenting, and a crossover which refers to the transmission of stress from one family member to another (Liu & Doan, 2020).

A crossover effect could happen when the psychological anguish caused by the COVID-19 pandemic spreads to other family members, such as children, and negatively affects their well-being. Problems could arise that spill over into the parenting setting (Liu & Doan, 2020).

### ***2.2.2 SOUTH AFRICAN OVERVIEW***

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) view parental involvement as an important component of education that can be attained both at home and at school. At home, parental involvement can take the form of reading aloud to the children and assisting them with their homework, as well as participating in school-based activities like attending parent-teacher conferences and educational workshops. These authors highlighted the value of teacher-parent interactions in fostering favourable academic achievements and saw family involvement as a beneficial addition to children's education.

October et al. (2022) stated that many families in South Africa originate from impoverished neighbourhoods, and a significant number of people lost their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study concluded that there had been a rise in both economic uncertainty and the unemployment rate during the pandemic and parental financial hardship resulted from this. They used the example of education going online to highlight how many children and families were disadvantaged by not having the necessary funds or resources. These results were seen by the researcher as one of the gaps that inspired the study because the researcher believes that little research has been done on how to improve the well-being of caregivers in rural areas and that caregivers' well-being has been neglected. The researcher viewed these findings as one of the gaps that motivated the research study where the researcher felt that the well-being of caregivers has been neglected in rural areas and that there has been little research done on how the caregivers' well-being was affected by the pandemic.

During the pandemic, parents were more likely to experience role tension as they adjusted to shifting work schedules and demands from their families. The resilience of their families may be

attributed to the fact that some parents experienced job loss, while others had stable employment but had to adapt to new responsibilities and duties, including working from home while taking care of children or homeschooling. It was impossible for parents and other caregivers to work while taking care of their children, or they had to try working from a distance. Their tension and worry increased as a result. Due to the pandemic, working remotely while the kids were at home presented a novel, challenging, and stressful situation. (Rich et al., 2022).

### **2.2.3 EFFECT OF COVID-19 ON THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN RURAL CONTEXTS INTERNATIONALLY AND IN SOUTH AFRICA**

According to the Varkey Foundation (2022), during COVID-19, most of the education took place in the home environment rather than the school campus, without the physical presence of teachers, meaning that parents and other caregivers had to play a more significant role in their child's learning and development than they have done traditionally. They further stated that the problem has also impacted parents and children who have found it difficult to obtain high-quality educational materials because a large percentage of learners lacked internet access and could not afford to purchase the equipment required for online instruction.

Beyond the loss of educational possibilities, learners faced a great deal of additional difficulties as a result of the global school closures. In many cases, the free meals that the schools offered to learners from low-income families were unavailable to them. (Varkey Foundation., 2022)

Parents faced issues in understanding the new methodology of teaching. Some parents were not very technologically literate. Thus, they were not able to guide their children to take classes online (Tarkar, 2020).

According to Mphahlele and Madingwaneng (2023) The COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant educational challenges for public schools in rural areas of South Africa. As a result, learners in these areas have been negatively affected in terms of their academic performance and progress. These authors further stated that these schools in rural areas lack modern technological resources, such as internet access and relevant technologies that could have facilitated teaching

and learning during the pandemic. These challenges have made it even more difficult for these schools to provide quality education to their learners.

#### **2.2.4 DIFFERENT SYSTEMS THAT ARE INVOLVED IN A CHILD'S EDUCATION AND BARRIERS WHEN CAREGIVERS, TEACHERS, AND THE COMMUNITY ARE NOT IN SUPPORT OF A CHILD'S EDUCATION.**

According to Durastic and Bunjevac (2017) effective collaboration among educational institutions, families, and communities can result in improved academic performance for learners and educational reforms. According to research, parents who are actively involved in their children's education provide a strong foundation for success (Sheldon, 2009). According to Sanders and Sheldon (2009) schools can only succeed when there is a strong foundation of respect and collaboration between the community, parents, teachers, and learners.

Improved academic and physical performance of the school might result from parents and administrators working together effectively. School administrators must motivate parents to become engaged and contribute to the school's accomplishment of its objectives (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014).

According to Epstein (2009) a collaboration between the community, family, and school should be developed for a variety of reasons, supporting learners' academic success is the primary goal of this kind of collaboration. Improved school programming and atmosphere, the growth of parental leadership and skill, helping families build relationships with other families and the school community and supporting educators in their jobs are a few more justifications. Keeping a solid and cordial relationship with schools and being actively involved in their children's education is important, as these reasons all highlight.

The demands and diversions of modern life frequently consume parents today. Some parents are unable to consistently participate in their children's education or attend school events due to limited income, rigid work schedules, and language challenges (Ho, 2009).

According to Hill and Taylor (2004) parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face many more barriers to involvement, including stressful living in impoverished neighbourhoods, limited resources, inflexible work schedules, and transportation problems. Educators feel that

when there is an issue at school, parents do not support the institution and do not punish their children. Teachers frequently feel that calling parents is a waste of time when they do not sense support from their parents (Flynn, 2007). The researcher is of the opinion that each of these groups (caregivers, teachers, and the community) has a unique and significant role to play in a child's education. Children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more when schools, families, and community groups collaborate to encourage learning. The assistance of caregivers is necessary since the school cannot revive the teaching and learning culture on its own.

### **2.3 GAPS IN EXISTING LITERATURE**

There has been a lot of research done on COVID-19 since 2020, but there is no, or limited research conducted regarding the experiences of caregivers and their involvement in their children's learning in South African rural areas. Research on the involvement of parenting during the pandemic has been done mostly on an international level (Nazish et al. 2021; Spinelli et al. 2020; Rousoulioti et al. 2022; Garbe et al. 2020). In South Africa research prior to the pandemic on parental involvement in children's learning was conducted by (Hornby and Lafaele 2011; October et al. 2022) did research on the impact of COVID-19 on caregivers but did not focus on the impact of COVID-19 on caregivers' involvement in their children's learning. This research study aimed to add to the body of research on the impact of COVID-19 research already done but with a focus on the experiences of caregivers and their involvement in their children's learning during COVID-19 and how the pandemic influenced the well-being and changed the lives of these caregivers. Although the focus of this research was limited to the Vlaaklakte Number 2 area in Mpumalanga. It might be necessary to do similar studies in other rural areas in Mpumalanga and nationally to contribute to the body of knowledge that can guide interventions for future pandemics.

### **2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK RELEVANT TO THE STUDY**

#### ***2.4.1 SYSTEMS THEORY***

Teater (2019) states that Systems theory is a multilevel approach to assess clients, be they individuals, families, groups, organizations, or communities. It looks at how the client systems function, behave, and present issues, as well as how influences from other related systems

interact with the client systems. The theory provides a framework for an assessment of an individual experiencing mental health problems by not only conducting an individual assessment of the client but also a holistic assessment of the system that impacts the client such as family, personal relationships, social support systems, physical environment community, policy and legislation and societal expectations (Teater, 2019).

According to Teater (2015) the goal of systems theory is to foster a positive person-environment fit, in which a person interacts and reacts to her or his surroundings in a way that promotes growth, development, and social functioning. Dallas and Draper (2015) state that the system approach emphasizes how actions in families and other connections are interdependent. Every individual is perceived to have an impact on others, who then have an impact on others, who then have an impact on the initial respondent. Consequently, any action is perceived as a reaction, and a response is perceived as an action. Thus, every action is perceived as a response, and every response is perceived as an action. These authors further state that central to systematic theory is the idea that a system has emergent characteristics. Interaction between two or more individuals involves them in a collaborative process of creating meanings and behaviours (Dallas & Draper, 2015).

Social Work License (2022) points out that Systems theory in social work is used in cases where contextual understandings of behaviour will lead to the most appropriate practice interventions. The author makes an example of mental conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety. The systems theory framework is suitable for this study because it aims to understand the holistic view of caregivers and the role and contribution, they made in assisting in their children's academics during the COVID-19 pandemic. Systems theory suggests that changes in one part of the system can have negative effects. During the time of COVID-19, there was a change in the lives of caregivers, some of the impacts that the pandemic had on the caregivers were the loss of employment, poverty in families, loss of loved ones, increased parenting responsibilities, financial demands on academic resources increased as learners had to move from face-to-face contact with the teachers to remote learning, the theoretical framework in this study will assist in understanding how these changes in caregivers lives had affected their well-being and mental health.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research design that was used to address the research questions that underpin this study. It describes the methodology that was used to determine the experiences of caregivers and their involvement in their children's academics during COVID-19. This chapter will also describe the sampling procedure used in this study and a description of the sample will be provided. The qualitative research design that underpins the study and techniques utilized to analyse the results will also be discussed. Finally, the ethical considerations of the study will also be addressed.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

A qualitative research approach was used in this study. According to Creswell et al. (2019) characteristics of qualitative research include its reliance on meaning-based data analysis rather than statistical forms, and its use of words rather than numerical data. Furthermore, according to Creswell et al. (2019) all qualitative research is naturalistic and concentrates on environments in which people interact naturally, understanding social life in terms of processes rather than static concepts.

Creswell and Poth (2018) describe qualitative research as a situated activity that situates the observer in the world and is composed of a number of materials, and interpretive acts that shed light on the world. According to Kumar (2011) the goal of qualitative research is to comprehend, elucidate, investigate, uncover, and make sense of the circumstances, emotions, perceptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and experiences of a specific set of individuals.

##### *3.2.1 ADVANTAGES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH*

- The qualitative research methodology generates an intricate and comprehensive depiction of the emotions, viewpoints, and encounters of the participants, while also deciphering the significance of their behaviours.

- A qualitative research methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of the human experience within certain contexts.
- In qualitative research, researchers engage in face-to-face interactions with participants through interviews, obtaining extensive and subjective data.
- Participants in qualitative research are afforded sufficient freedom to choose what is consistent for them, which leads to an easier understanding of complex situations.

### ***3.2.2 DISADVANTAGES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH***

- ❖ Sometimes, suitable understandings are overlooked in favour of meanings and experiences in qualitative research methodologies.
- ❖ The outcomes of a qualitative approach may not be given much sincerity by policymakers.
- ❖ The process of analysing the instances is time-consuming, and there are relatively few ways to extrapolate the findings to a broader population.
- ❖ The limited sample size poses a challenge to the generalizability of the research to the entire population, and the study's findings do not support a broader applicability to other scenarios.

Adapted from Rahman (2016) Advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research.

The qualitative approach was suitable for this study because the perceptions of caregivers were explored, and their perceptions shared were used to describe how they experienced their involvement in their children's academics during COVID-19. The participants were able to share their feelings, opinions, and experiences.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The researcher used phenomenographic research design principles in this study. Phenomenography is the study of how people experience, understand, or conceive of a phenomenon in the world around them (Larsson & Holmström, 2007). The researcher chose this design to explore the experiences that caregivers had in the engagement of their children's

learning during COVID-19. This research aimed to understand how caregivers experienced their involvement in their children's academics during the pandemic.

According to Larsson and Holmström (2007) open-ended interviews are part of the phenomenographic method of data collecting. Participants are encouraged to talk freely about their experiences during these interviews, and the in-depth conversations are tape-recorded and transcribed. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews in this study to collect data from the participants. The interviews were audio recorded with consent from the participants. The participants were encouraged to speak freely during the interviews and the researcher assured them that if they were not comfortable to continue with the interviews the interviews would not continue. The interviews in this study were semi-structured

### **3.3.1 ADVANTAGES OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

- Many researchers prefer to use semi-structured interviews because questions can be prepared in advance.
- This makes it possible for the interviewer to show up for the interview competent and ready.
- Participants can freely share their opinions during semi-structured interviews as well. Semi-structured interviews can yield qualitative data that is consistent and trustworthy.

### **3.3.2 DISADVANTAGES OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW:**

- Semi-structured interviews are time-consuming and intensive.
- Researchers must be able to ensure confidentiality.
- Careful preparations are required to avoid asking leading questions.
- Skills analysis is imperative to avoid misconstruing information.

Adapted from (Cohen, 2006) Advantages and disadvantages of the semi-structured interviews.

## **3.4 POPULATION, SAMPLE, AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES**

The population of this study included caregivers from Vlaaklagte Number 2, Females and Males between the ages of 18 years to 55 years. The study aimed to include 7-12 caregivers. Dworkin

(2012) points out that the sample size for the qualitative research method is much smaller than the one used in the quantitative research method, this is because in qualitative research methods, in-depth information and understanding are gathered and it also focuses on the meaning of a phenomenon. Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend that small-scale qualitative studies require a minimum sample size of at least 10-20 to reach data information power.

### *3.4.1 SAMPLING*

In selecting the sample for the study, the researcher used a non-probability sampling method. Creswell et al. (2019) define a non-probability sampling method as a method that does not make use of a random selection of population elements.

In this study, purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling method was utilized. Creswell et al. (2019) point out that purposive sampling is a method used in special situations where the sampling is done with a specific purpose. The study focused on the experiences of caregivers on their involvement in their children's learning during the pandemic therefore, the researcher targeted caregivers of school-going learners, and the caregiver ages were between 18 and 55 years old.

The inclusion criteria for this study were:

- Participants must be caregivers of school learners.
- The participants must be between the ages of 18 years to 55 years.

The exclusion criteria for this study were:

- Participants who are not caregivers of school learners
- Participants who do not meet the age criteria for the study.

#### *3.4.1.1 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS*

3.4.1.1 Table presents the demographic profile of the participants. The researcher was aiming for 10-20 participants but only got 8 participants.

**Table: 3.4.1.1: Profile of the Caregivers (N=8)**

Caregiver Pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Occupation
Neo	54	Female	School care worker
D	31	Female	Unemployed
P	43	Female	Unemployed
L	48	Female	School care worker
ZN	45	Male	Teacher
NN	38	Male	Administrator
MK	37	Female	Nurse
PS	36	Female	School care worker

Table 3.4.1.1 shows that there were two male participants and six female participants. The study consisted of eight participants, the eldest one was 54 years, three were in their 40s and four were in their 30s. The majority of participants were unemployed during the pandemic except for caregivers who were a teacher, administrator, and a nurse. These caregivers were employed during the pandemic.

### **3.5. SETTING/ CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

This research was conducted in Vlaaklagte Number 2, a semi-rural township located in the east of Mpumalanga Province. Most of the inhabitants are members of the Ndebele ethnic group. Apart from the Ndebele language, Sotho and Zulu are also spoken in the area. This is a low and middle socio-economic community. Few people in the area get land ownership for farming as the traditional council in the area is hesitant to give people land. There are still challenges of unemployment in the area, graduates are unemployed and some residents in the area are seeking employment. The community prioritises education and most of the youth in the area have completed grade 12 and some have university qualifications. The community has access to water and sanitation and there are schools as well which need proper infrastructure. There are two malls closely located in the area, one is Phola Mall which is a few kilometres from Vlaaklagte, and the other one is in Kwaggafontein which is also close to the area. Most of the

employees at these malls are people from Kwamhlanga, Vlaaklagte, Tweefontein, and Kwaggafontein so there are job opportunities created for the people of the surrounding areas of Vlaaklagte Number 2 and people from Vlaaklagte.

### **3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The research instrument that was used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews in this study to collect data from the participants. Semi-structured interview schedules are used to collect data on behaviours or experiences from the past or present. These provided participants the space and time to consider their opinions on a given topic (Cresswell, 2003).

Semi-structured interviews enable researchers to collect detailed information in a style that is somewhat conversational and thus enables the researcher to probe further. Creswell et al. (2019) point out that in semi-structured interviews certain open questions are asked, and these are followed by further probing and clarification. They further state that in semi-structured interviews, the researcher must pay attention to the responses of their participants so that the researcher can identify new emerging lines of inquiry that are directly related to the phenomenon being studied and explore and probe these lines.

The researcher prepared semi-structured questions related to the study. The questions were developed based on the existing literature as a guideline for data collection which was the area of knowledge to assist the researcher in developing questions. Local and international literature guided the researcher in this study. In international literature, Nazish et al. (2021) findings on parental involvement stated that economic uncertainties affected parent's mental health during the pandemic which made it difficult for the parents to cope with parenting. Spinelli et al. (2020) stated that the lockdown affected the whole population's well-being including parents who went through psychological distress as they were left alone to manage home-schooling and childcare with very little preparation on how to manage home-schooling.

In South African literature the findings of Hornby and Lafaele (2011) state that before COVID-19 viewed parental involvement as a positive contribution to children's education and they also outlined the importance of teacher and parent relationships so that positive academic outcomes can be achieved. October et al. (2022) findings state that parents losing their jobs during

COVID-19 were depressed and parents who worked from home which added the responsibility of full-time parenting caused an imbalance and this added to their anxiety and stress during the pandemic. These studies guided the researcher to develop an interest in the well-being of caregivers during COVID-19. The broad area that the researcher asked in this interview guide was the impact COVID-19 had on the caregiver's well-being during the pandemic this was done by exploring their experiences on the involvement of their children's learning during the pandemic. Refer to the interview guide (APPENDIX C).

### **3.7 PRE-TESTING THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

The research instrument was pre-tested before the data collection proceeded. Hurst et al. (2015) state that in qualitative research, a pretest typically consists of interviews with a group of people who share the same descriptions as the objective study population. The interview is conducted in a way that replicates the introduction of the data collection session and the types of study materials (consent forms, demographic questionnaires, interviews, etc.) that will be used throughout the process. Pretesting offers the chance to modify research materials and data collection techniques to make sure that pertinent questions are asked and that questions don't confuse or unnerve respondents by combining two or more significant concerns into one inquiry.

The researcher conducted a pre-test for the research instrument with two participants who were not included in the data collection of the study. The participants met the research study criteria, and they were similar in profile to the study participant group. Pre-tests were conducted to ensure internal consistency and clarity of leading questions. Based on the results of the pre-test, the researcher was able to gain insight into the estimated duration of the interview and the quality of data provided by participants. The researcher did not change the research questions on the interview guide after the pre-test. The questions remained the same.

### **3.8 PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

The researcher recruited the participants in the community of Vlaaklagte Number 2. In selecting the sample, the researcher asked the school principal of Buhlebesizwe Secondary School where the researcher is doing her Micro, Macro, and Mezzo practice if she could distribute the PIS and consent forms to the learners at the school to give to their caregivers. The researcher then made telephone contact with caregivers who showed interest in participating in the study. The

researcher made appointments with the caregivers on different days and times that were suitable for them.

The interviews consisted of open-ended questions and follow-up probes that were tailored to each interviewee's specific questions. The interviews were audio recorded with the participants' permission by the researcher. The interviews took place at Buhlebesizwe Secondary School with the school's permission from the Department of Education. The school was chosen as a neutral and convenient space, and the participants were familiar with the environment as their children attended the school. The interviews were conducted in vernacular. The researcher used IsiNdebele during the interviews and translated the interview guide for the participants into their language which was isiNdebele. Some participants would answer the interviews both in IsiNdebele and English. The interviews lasted less than 1 hour each and had a total average of 7 hours and 40 minutes length of the recordings. During face-to-face semi-structured interviews, nonverbal cues and gestures were observed to better understand caregivers' perspectives and these cues and gestures were noted by the researcher.

### **3.9 METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The researcher utilized the thematic analysis method for data analysis in this study. Braun and Clarke (2019) define thematic analysis as a technique for methodically locating, classifying, and providing context for patterns of meaning (themes) within a dataset. Braun and Clarke (2019) state that thematic analysis is an adaptable technique that gives the researcher multiple options for how to focus on the data. They further state that in thematic analysis, a researcher can legitimately concentrate on analysing meaning throughout the entire dataset or they can investigate a particular component of a phenomenon in great detail using thematic analysis. A flexible method that allows the researcher to focus on the data in numerous different ways. They further state that with the thematic analysis a researcher can legitimately focus on analysing meaning across the entire dataset, or they can examine one aspect of a phenomenon in depth.

They further state researchers can perceive and interpret shared or collective meanings and experiences using thematic analysis. Using this approach, one can find the commonalities in the way a topic is discussed or written about and interpret them. TA fits in perfectly with the research, as the focus of this research study focuses on the experiences of caregivers. The main

aim of doing a thematic analysis is to examine the patterns in the perceptions of the caregivers regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their well-being.

The goal of transcription is to turn an audio recording into a written record. This transcript then typically forms the basis for analysis, with which you primarily work on coding, topic development, and interpretation (Brown & Clarke, 2013). The researcher transcribed data by converting the audio-recorded interviews or spoken words into written text. The researcher translated the collected data to make interpretive decisions about what level of detail to include in the research report and how to represent the data accurately. The researcher translated the interviews by converting the participant's vernacular language which was IsiNdebele to English.

To identify the codes and themes the researcher follows the six steps of thematic analysis mentioned by Braun and Clarke (2006) who provide a six-phase framework for doing thematic analysis:

**Step 1: Become familiar with the data.**

Reading the transcripts several times is the first step in any qualitative study. The entirety research data set or data quantity should be well-known by the researcher. Along with any additional information the researcher might be using before continuing. It is important in this step that researchers write down thoughts and take notes.

The researcher recorded the interviews, and from the data collected, the researcher read the transcripts repeatedly to get familiar with the data and then identify similarities, differences, unfamiliar words, and interesting or surprising text or words that were noted down.

**Step 2: Coding**

This phase begins with organizing data meaningfully and systematically. Coding breaks down large amounts of data into small meanings. There are various coding techniques, and the one you choose will depend on your perspective and study objectives.

The researcher identified similarities, differences, and unfamiliar words in the data and then grouped them into codes.

**Step 3: Search for themes**

In this step, the codes were organized into broader themes that seemed to say something specific about this research question. In this step, the researcher does code for codes to identify similarities in the data.

The researcher created themes relevant to the study to make sense of and find meaning in the collected data.

Step 4: Reviewing for themes.

During this phase, the researcher reviewed, modified, and developed the preliminary themes that we identified in Step 3. At this point, it is useful to gather all the data that is relevant to each theme. The themes should be coherent and distinct from each other.

In this step, the researcher reviewed and modified the themes.

Step 5: Define Themes

This step determines the essence of each theme. What is the theme saying? If there are subthemes, how do they interact and relate to the main theme? How do the themes relate to each other?

In this step the researcher put more emphasis on the details of each theme and the concepts highlighting each theme, leading to the creation of detailed descriptions and names for each theme.

Step 6: Writing-up

This step is the endpoint of a research report, a journal article, or a dissertation. Writing up entails fusing the analytic narrative and (vivid) data extracts to tell the reader a compelling tale about the data and contextualize it considering previous literature.

In this step, the researcher began preparing the chapter of the research report related to presenting and discussing the findings in the final report. This entailed choosing appropriate extracts for analysis, discussing the analysis, and connecting to the theoretical framework underpinning the research study and supporting literature in the report.

### **3.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY**

Lemon and Hayes (2020) define trustworthy as criteria to evaluate qualitative research. Shenton (2004) talks about four criteria for trustworthiness, these are credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. These criteria assist in determining whether the research report is valid, reliable, and supported by evidence.

#### ***3.10.1 CREDIBILITY***

Credibility deals with questioning of whether the results are consistent with reality (Shenton, 2004)

Shenton (2004) points out the following provisions may be made by researchers to promote confidence that they have accurately recorded the phenomena under scrutiny:

- ✓ The research technique adoption is well established.
- ✓ Random selection of people to act as informants.
- ✓ Iterative questioning which includes the use of probing for detailed data collection
- ✓ Frequent debriefing sessions between the researcher and his/her superiors
- ✓ Background, qualifications, and experience of the investigator

Lemon and Hayes (2020) define credibility is the substitute for internal validity and is based on the truth value, which questions whether the researcher has established and expressed a particular degree of trust in the conclusions based on the phenomenon they are studying.

The study's target population was clearly defined, its sample design and scope were adequate, and its recruitment strategies were identified in order to maintain credibility. In order to gain the cooperation of the selected sample, rapport-building techniques (active listening, follow-up questions) were modified in order to gain the participants' trust. Additionally, the assurance of complete confidentiality and avoidance of any costs further helped to overcome reluctance or refusal throughout the recruitment process.

### ***3.10.2 TRANSFERABILITY***

Transferability is concerned with how much the study's conclusions may be applied to different situations and contexts, taking the place of the concepts of external validity and generalizability (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). The researcher provided a comprehensive explanation of the problem statement, the justification for the research study, its goals and objectives, and the research methodology to assure transferability.

### ***3.10.3 DEPENDABILITY***

Dependability addresses the issue of reliability. To ensure dependability, positivist researchers apply techniques that if their studies were repeated in the same context with the same methods, with the same participants then similar results will be obtained. To address the dependability issue, the process within the study should be reported in detail. This is by:

- ✓ Providing an explanation of the research design and implementation process.
- ✓ The operational details of data collection that pertain to fieldwork conducted.
- ✓ Reflective evaluation of the project: assessing how well the investigation was conducted

Dependability substitutes reliability and asserts that findings are distinctive to a specific time and place, and the consistency of explanations is present across the data (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). The researcher provided a detailed description of the procedures and research methodology used during data collection to ensure reliability in this study. The audit trail displays the interaction between the researchers and subjects so that the research is understood in terms of what was discovered and how it was discovered (Schurink et al., 2011). An audit trail is one of the strategies the researchers used for ensuring dependability.

An appropriately built audit trail will assist the investigator and others in reconstructing the study's execution, identifying the investigator's interpretations, figuring out how results and conclusions were arrived at, and making claims about the study's verifiability and dependability (Bowen, 2009).

### ***3.10.4 CONFIRMABILITY***

This concept is the qualitative researcher's concern with objectivity. This method focuses on ensuring that the research study findings are the results of the experiences and ideas of the participants.

Confirmability is the degree to which the phenomenon being studied is objective. It deals with whether the conclusions and interpretations are based only on the participants' real-world experiences and do not take the researcher's prejudices into account (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). To address confirmability, the researcher outlined the procedures followed throughout the data analysis process to show that the conclusions were derived from the data that was gathered.

## **3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### ***3.11.1 ETHICAL APPROVAL***

The researcher applied for ethics clearance from the HREC (non-medical) before the data collection process started. An ethics clearance certificate was achieved, and the protocol number is SW23/01/02 (APPENDIX A).

The researcher applied for permission to conduct research with a school from the Department of Education and approval to conduct the study was granted. A request for a permission letter was sent to the principal of Buhlebesizwe Secondary School to request permission to conduct the research with the caregivers of the learners of the school. The school granted the researcher permission. (APPENDIX F)

### ***3.11.2 VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION***

The fundamental ethical consideration of research is that participants should not be coerced into participating and informed that they are not in any way forced to be part of the study (Strydom, 2011). Potential participants should also be notified that if they wish to pull out during the study, they have the right to do that without being penalized or any consequences.

The study participants were informed clearly and concisely that their involvement in the research was completely voluntary. It was also emphasized that they could withdraw from the interview at any time without any negative consequences. Additionally, the researcher ensured that

participants were aware that if they felt emotionally or psychologically upset during the interview, the researcher would immediately stop the interview and schedule another time to continue. Before the commencement of the interview, the researcher had a thorough discussion with the participants regarding the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) to ensure a complete understanding of the study. (APPENDIX C)

### ***3.11.3 INFORMED CONSENT***

Participants were given written consent forms for them to sign that they agree to be part of this study and they are doing it voluntarily. The consent forms were written in English and translated by the researcher to the participants in IsiNdebele. Signed consent forms were returned to the researcher. (APPENDIX B)

### ***3.11.4 CONFIDENTIALITY***

Participants should be assured that their identity and their responses would always be regarded as extremely confidential and that they would not be made available to any unauthorized user (Creswell et al., 2019). The researcher ensured that she maintained the principles of confidentiality and privacy in every step of the research, by assuring participants that their identity or names will not be disclosed to anyone in the research write-up.

The participants were informed about confidentiality in this study. The researcher assured the participants that their data would remain confidential.

### ***3.11.5 ANONYMITY***

Every person has the right to privacy, and they can choose when, where, to whom, and to what degree to disclose their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Strydom, 2011).

Anonymity was assured to participants as the non-disclosure of any personal information concerning the participants, the organization, or locations in any processed data. This was ensured through the use of pseudonyms when using direct quotes in the research report.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has outlined the research method that was used in conducting the study. This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the research. This chapter presents the key findings based on the thematic content analysis. Aligning with the research aims and questions, the themes of this study are presented.

#### 4.2 THEMES AND SUBTHEMES FROM DATA ANALYSIS

Themes	Subthemes
Theme 1 Technology aided continuous learning during COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of the internet during the lockdown</li> <li>• Virtual learning during lockdown</li> </ul>
Theme 2 Covid-19 led to caregivers assuming the role of educators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of caregivers as educators</li> </ul>
Theme 3 Covid-19 led to the strengthening of family relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive family bonds</li> <li>• The importance of family support</li> </ul>
Theme 4 Covid-19 had a negative impact on caregivers' psychosocial functioning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in daily habits</li> <li>• Fear</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress</li> <li>• Unemployment</li> </ul>
--	--

#### **4.3. THEME ONE: TECHNOLOGY AIDED CONTINUOUS LEARNING DURING COVID-19**

The COVID-19 epidemic dramatically changed the way teachers and learners are taught from traditional to online versions, which have become a new form of education globally. Integrating technology became a priority to ensure continuous learning during lockdown. Caregivers perceived technology during the pandemic as an effective method to assist their children with their learning during the pandemic.

*“Manje kwakosa ngithembele ku Internet ngarhubhulula iincwadi neefundiso ezifundiswako ukuthi ngibenze bahlale banento ebayenzako emayelana neskolo nokuthi iingcondo zabo zihlahle ziberega ngabukela nomabonakude okhuluma ngezinto zeskolo ngabarhele bha njalo abantwana”*

*“So I had to rely on the Internet and downloaded workbooks and lessons so I could keep them active and their minds be stimulated and also watched education-based channels on TV and that is how I was involved in assisting them” (RESPONDENT 7)*

The use of remote learning as a management and coping strategy for the global education crisis during the pandemic is one of the mitigation strategies put out by governments around the world (Mhlanga & Moloji, 2020).

The caregivers in Vlaaklagte Number 2 stated that the teachers in this area communicated with them using the WhatsApp platform to give tasks for the learners to complete. It was stated that they were given tasks every week on Mondays to submit on Fridays. A shift from traditional classroom-based instruction to decentralized options was necessary due to the pandemic's education problem, with a strong emphasis on using digital technology to engage learners (Timmons et al., 2021).

#### **4.3.1 SUBTHEME: THE USE OF THE INTERNET DURING COVID-19**

According to the caregivers, the internet made it easier for them to complete tasks that were given to their children, and it also helped their children to understand their work much better as the internet is more informative. During data analysis, most caregivers thought the Internet was effective to them in assisting their children: *“Bengibarhelebha ngokungena ku Internet ngirhubhulule izinto ebafunda zona nebanikezwe zona ukuthi bazifunde. Ngaskhathi bensibonisana soke bese name ngiqhubeke ngimsetjhele okufundwako kuthi abe phambili ngeemfundo zakhe”*

*“I used to search on the Internet for whatever is relevant about the school activities given. Sometimes we would search together, sometimes I would search while he is in school so I can be a step ahead when doing the teachings”.* (RESPONDENT 1)

*“Iye, ngikhumbula ngiphenyulula iincwadi zokberegela zabo zesikolo ku Internet ukuthi bafundisise ekhaaya lokho ngikwenze name nangisekhaya nakuvaliweko iindawo zokberegela nge COVID-19. Ekuseni besenza iinfundo zabo zesikolo bengibarhelebha nabasekhaya ngoba bebasaya esikolweni kabili kathathu ngeveke”*

*“Yes, I remember downloading a workbook on the Internet to practice with at home while I was home during the COVID-19 lockdown. In the morning we would do their school activities, and I would assist when they were home because they would go to two or three times to school and be at home two or three times a week then the time when they were home I would assist them”* (RESPONDENT 4)

Though some caregivers could afford data to assist their children in their academics, these caregivers had to spend more money on data and Dstv for educational channels and that meant more financial responsibilities for them. Grobler (2022) research findings stated that the involvement of parents was essential during the pandemic in downloading material, providing data and devices to learners to watch video clips or listen to recordings explaining the learning content, and ensuring full learner engagement with instructional materials.

According to Mdepa (2020) only a privileged few benefitted from using technology to facilitate home-schooling during the lockdown. In this study three participants were included in these statistics as they were employed during the pandemic and they could afford. Millions of children from disadvantaged communities did not have the access and the funds to facilitate online

learning during the pandemic (Pillay, 2021). The findings from this theme were that even though technology was viewed as helpful during the pandemic, some caregivers who were unemployed during the pandemic in this study could not afford to buy data for the children to access the internet. These caregivers made financial contributions to other parents in the community as a group and rotated buying data for their children to complete school tasks during the pandemic:

*“Iye, besirhelebhana, nabo bebarhelebhana ngeemfudo zabo zesikolo. Khulukhulu nge Google ibarhelebhe khulu ukwenza umberegwabo wesikolo. Besitjhenthjhana njengabomakhelwana sirhelebhana ukjugthenga idata yabantwana bethu”*

*“Yes, we helped each other as neighbours, our children also helped one another to do schoolwork. Especially Google helped them to complete tasks. We would rotate on buying data for our children.” (RESPONDENT 6).*

This finding highlights the importance of maintaining good relationships with people close to you in terms of hardships like the pandemic and it also shows how these caregivers were willing to go the extra mile for their children to do well during the pandemic by assisting them as best as they can. Grobler (2022) stated that during the pandemic the teachers were dependent on parents not only for communication with learners but also for input on their learners’ progress. Caregivers highlighted how the Internet was effective to them and how they also depended on Google and YouTube to assist with their children’s learning during the pandemic.

#### **4.3.2 SUBTHEME: VIRTUAL LEARNING DURING LOCKDOWN**

Caregivers stated that media platforms such as YouTube made it easier for their children to study virtually as they would see the lessons being taught online as the lessons were physical like those at school:

*“Yebo, bekunesgaba kumabonakude, angikhumbuli kuhle kumabonakude amahlelo weemfundo,ngiqolise ngalokho. Bengiwabukela naye umntwanami amahlelo lawo angirhelebha khulu. Amahlelo afana ne YouTube ne Google werhubhululo besibukela wona ukuze sizwisise kuhle imiberego yesikolo”*

*“Yes, there was this channel on TV, I can’t remember the name of the channel, sorry about that. I used to watch it with him it assisted a lot. YouTube was expensive so I used Google to download workbooks and teach him where he does not understand” (RESPONDENT 5).*

In South Africa, the Department of Education made use of television and radio stations to offer virtual lessons exclusively to pupils during the lockdown. This was a response to the disturbances brought by COVID-19 in the country (Mhlanga & Moloi, 2020). South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), a public broadcaster, and DSTV channel 180 made educational programming available for learners. The national broadcaster also constructed two studios where the transmission of the virtual classes will occur. Lessons were being taught live and in real-time by teachers to learners in these studios. Virtual classrooms were used to instruct learners on what would be done in a physical classroom. Along with the programs, the government made lessons available for radio transmission on local stations across the nation (Mhlanga and Moloi, 2020)

#### **4.4 THEME TWO: COVID-19 LED TO CAREGIVERS ASSUMING THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS.**

During Covid-19 some caregivers worked from home while others continued with their daily employment. Working from home and going to work was a challenge during COVID-19 as it meant caregivers had to be responsible for their children’s learning and responsible for attending to their work. The second theme of data analysis is the assumption of the role of educators. Caregivers during data collection felt that they took on the roles of educators during the pandemic as they were the ones responsible for their children’s academic engagement.

##### **4.4.1 SUBTHEME: ROLE OF CAREGIVERS AS EDUCATORS**

Some caregivers during the data collection process mentioned that they had to take responsibility for being educators to their children. This was by ensuring that they communicated with teachers who were guiding them on the tasks that were supposed to be completed: *“Bengibamba utithjere wabo ngomtato ngoba bekafundiswa botitjhere abahlukileko. Besiba neskhati sikhulume nabotitjhere babo kuWhatsap eskhathini esinengi, uyabona”*

*“I used to call his teachers as he was taught by teachers that are different. We had a time where we will communicate with the teachers on WhatsApp most of the time, you see.” (RESPONDENT 1)*

Caregivers also made sure that those tasks were done on time by their children, and they also had to evaluate the schoolwork before they could hand it over to the teachers. The caregivers stated that it was hard work to engage their children to do homework and they realized how much work the educators have to put in, in ensuring that the children are engaging with their schoolwork and do well. Some of the caregivers in the study are illiterate and they struggled to assist their children in the learning. These caregivers depended on their neighbours who were knowledgeable or educated to assist with their children’s academics.

The pandemic closed off opportunities for face-to-face interaction between teachers and parents and caregivers took over in facilitating school tasks to their children. Formosinho (2021) stated that during the pandemic, teachers were compelled to use internet communication with parents due to the closed-door policy implemented by schools. Some caregivers stated that they encouraged study groups for their children in the area doing the same grades and they stated that these study groups were effective as the children assisted each other with their schoolwork and they progressed well. The caregivers stated that this strategy to keep the children active in their schoolwork was putting them at risk of infections, but they encouraged them to wear their masks all the time and sanitize and keep their distance as well in the environment they study in.

Zhang (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic forced many children to spend record amounts of time at home. Parents and other caregivers were primarily responsible for educating children, especially the preschoolers. The caregivers stated that they consulted with teachers during the lockdown and that had a good impact on their children’s learning and the children did well in their grades:

*“Ngomvulo, bebasnikela iimfundo ekosa bazenze abantwanaba, irhelebho labititjhere belilihle, belenza izinto zibelula kithi abazali”*

*“Monday, they gave us workbooks to work on with the children, The assistance from the teachers was good, it made things easier for you as a parent “(RESPONDENT 8).*

The caregivers stated that they had a good relationship with the teachers who were guiding them on how to work on the tasks that were given to their children. The pandemic increased the need for parent collaboration with both teachers and learners (Grobler, 2022)

#### **4.5 THEME 3: COVID-19 LED TO A STRENGTHENING OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.**

The caregivers stated that spending time with their children was overwhelming, but it created bonds with their children. They further stated that having to spend time with their children made them learn more about their children and the bond strengthened. According to October et al. (2021) globally, Covid-19 had an impact on many people's lives. The family is essential to the advancement of positive societal results. They further stated that the family supports sustaining development at all societal levels.

The caregivers stated that family support during the pandemic was important. Having to encourage each other and be there for one another strengthened their relationship with one another. Strong families further encourage and facilitate positive family outcomes and family well-being. This is demonstrated by the way a family functions, which involves giving its members a foundation of social identity, financial support, nourishing care, socialization, and protection to guarantee their successful development and adaptability to function and prosper in the larger society (October et al, 2021).

##### ***4.5.1 POSITIVE FAMILY BONDS***

The caregivers stated that their relationship with their children improved during lockdown. Some felt that the bond increased by doing school activities together and fun activities together strengthened their relationship. According to Zhang (2021) caregiver involvement also provides an important context for children's socioemotional development, and it also reflects their care for their children, which enhances positive caregiver-child relationships.

Communication in the family was impacted as the lockdown provided opportunities for families to share and talk about their emotions and feelings. As parents and children were spending more time together, this created opportunities to build stronger relationships among family members (October et al., 2021). The caregivers felt that the bond they had with their children built a more

open relationship: *“Imphumela emihle ngkvalwa bekukuthi iPhone ukwakha ubdlelwane nobantwanami ngafunda okunye ebengingakwazi ngaye,ngazi okunye okutjha bgaye nobudlelwana bethu baba ngobuvulekileko sakhona ukukhuluma noma yini”*

*‘Positive thing about lockdown would be that I was able to bond with my child and I learned a lot about him, I got to know him better and created an open relationship between us’*  
(RESPONDENT 5)

*“Iye,yona iCovid yaba nemphumela emimbi kithi soke nemaphilweni wabantu boke mara ke ngahlanye iqinise ubudlelwana bemindeni”*

*“Yes, as much as Covid was that bad and a lot of lives were lost but on the other side, lockdown has created more family bonds “(RESPONDENT 7).*

According to attachment theory children who have positive relationships with their caregivers are likely to see themselves as worthy of love, which may protect them from developing emotional problems (Zhang, 2021). *“Abantwana nabo balimala ngobulwelobu mara okuhle kwakhona kukuthi bebasemakhaya kwaba nobudlelwana obakhekako obuhle ngoba eskhathini esninengi sisemberegweni sihlala nabo iskhathi esincani mara nakuvalwako sazi kunengi ngabo saqcitha nabo iskhathi esinengi”*

*“The children were also affected by the pandemic. But the positive thing is that they were home and we bonded with them as most of the time we were working and only spent a little time with them but during lockdown, we got to know more about them and spent a lot of time with them”*  
(RESPONDENT 4)

#### **4.5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY SUPPORT**

The caregivers stated that the pandemic taught them the importance of family support. Constantly checking up on each other as a family was important and it felt like they were not alone but had a family that made them strong. They stated that without supporting each other as a family they would not have coped. *“Besisela yoke into ekuthiwa iyapholisa ukuzvikela ekugulenokhu besisela irhemere, garlic besigcugcuzelana bona sifuthe”*

*“We drank everything to protect ourselves from the pandemic, we drank ginger, garlic and we even motivated each other to [inhale] steam.” (RESPONDENT 4)*

The caregivers stated that the pandemic made them realize the importance of supporting one another. With the fears of being infected and the anxiety that they had about the pandemic,

support was one of the major priorities this was by constantly reminding one another about the importance of preventing the infection that was by steaming, making sure the environment was clean, eating healthy and supporting each other when other members of the families are in isolation. These routine activities may enhance the family by loving and supporting one another:

*“Besirhamula iinhlahla zokuvikela umthelelo womluluzana, besigcugcuzelana ukuthi sifuthe amahlandlana. Besigcobisa iSanitiser. Nakukhona ekosa aphume aye ngeentolo nofana aye ndawana thizeni besimkhumbuza kobana nakabuyako ambathe iimpahla eziskune angatheleli abantu ngokugula nagabe sekumbambile, bekukuhle ukwenza njalo njengomndeni”*

*“We drank medication for immune boost together and we encouraged each other to [inhale] steam now and then. We sanitized. When someone went outside to run errands, we reminded them that they should change clothes and wear clean ones to prevent infections, so it was good”* (RESPONDENT 6).

Gayatri and Irawaty (2022) their findings stated that parents and children, as a family coped with the pandemic together by setting a routine together and doing things that involved all members such as scheduling mealtime together, doing domestic chorus together, building good communication, having fun together, daily exercise, attention to regular hygiene, and sleep.

#### **4.6 THEME FOUR: COVID-19 HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CAREGIVERS' PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONING.**

The caregivers reported that they were psychologically affected by the pandemic. The caregivers stated that the death rate and high infections on the first wave of the pandemic affected them psychologically as they lived in fear for their lives and the lives of their families:” *Besihlezi siphila ngokuthukwa nokusaba. Bekuba ngathi silindele ukufa ngoba akakho ebekazi ukuthi uyokvuka namkhana njani ilanga elilandelako. Bekusibusiso esikhulu ukuvuka. Bengisaba nokuya eentolo. Bebingakhoni ukukhamba ibanga elide kunendlu yami nyana kunabantu endleleni nabangekho bengisabakhulu ngibuyele emuva.”*

*” We always lived in fear and anxiety. It’s like we waited for our time to die because no one knew if we were going to wake up the next day. It was a relief and blessing to wake up, I was even scared of going to the stores, I could not go a distance from my house unless there were pedestrians, if there was nobody I would return home.”* (RESPONDENT 3)

The COVID-19 pandemic affected people psychologically because the spread was uncontrollable, death rates increased day by day, life became a halt, and its control time was unpredictable (Akat & Karatas, 2020).

With its high infection and death rates, COVID-19 caused a worldwide psychosocial impact on mental health. In this theme, I will outline the experience of caregivers on the impact the pandemic had on their psychosocial functioning. During any outbreak of infectious disease, the population's psychological reactions play a critical role in shaping both the spread of the disease and the occurrence of emotional distress and social disorder during and after the outbreak (Serafini et al., 2020).

#### **4.6.1 SUBTHEME: CHANGES IN DAILY HABITS**

It took time to adjust to the new realities for caregivers, working from home, some being temporarily unemployed, homeschooling their children, and having less direct interaction with other family members, friends, and coworkers during the pandemic and it was difficult to adjust to the lifestyle changes. The caregivers felt their lives changed dramatically and they had to adjust to COVID regulations by keeping social distance, not interacting with their extended families, wearing masks, not having to go out often with friends or their children, and not performing their daily routines as they used to: *“Ngeskhathi somulwana ICOVID-19 ipilo yami yaphuquka ngendlela bengiphila ngakho kwakosa ngamukele indlela etjha esesipila ngayo ngomulwana lo. Izinto zoke ebengizenza zajama zijamiswa sisimo somulwana lo”*

*“During COVID-19 my life was disrupted that I had to adjust the new way to live. The things that I used to do were inconvenienced.” (RESPONDENT 7)*

*“Ipilo beyinzima nge Covid, ukuphila nomulwana khulukhulu ukujanjwa ukuthi sitjhidlane nokuba kude nemindeni yethu bekunzima ukuhlukana nepilo yakho oyijayeleko”*

*“Life was difficult during Covid, living with the pandemic, especially social distancing and being away from your loved ones. It was very hard and the separation from your normal routine” (RESPONDENT 8).*

The lockdown regulations included restrictions on interaction and mobility of the population, curfews, travel restrictions national and international-, business activity restrictions, closure of schools and universities, as well as the cancellation of events and gatherings. As a result, COVID-19 and its associated lockdown restrictions impacted families in different aspects of life

(October et al., 2021). The caregivers felt separated from their extended family members and felt deprived of their freedom to move from one place to another during the pandemic and this was frustrating to them in adapting to the new life.

#### **4.6.2 SUBTHEME: FEAR**

In their pandemic experiences, caregivers stated that they stated that they feared for their children's well-being as there was a time when they had to return to school after the lockdown ended. The fear of high infections among themselves, their children, and their immediate and extended families. Some of the caregivers feared death rates that were increasing each day during the pandemic. This had a negative impact on them: *Ukusaba ukuthi abantwana bami bangabathelela ngomulwana ukuthukwa kwenziwe nakubona iindaba kumabonakude otjhoko ukuthi eenkolweni izinga lokuthelelana likhulu kwenze sasaba khulu, abantwana nababuya eskolweni bengiobafaka ngekamereni amalangana ukuthi baphumule"*

*"The fear of my children being infected especially when we learn about Covid cases in schools had us have anxiety and I would let the quarantine for a few days and let them rest"*  
(RESPONDENT 6)

Serafini et al. (2020) stated that common psychological reactions related to the mass quarantine which was imposed to attenuate the COVID-19 spread are generalized fear and pervasive community anxiety which are typically associated with disease outbreaks and increased with the escalation of new cases together with inadequate, anxiety-provoking information which was provided by media. They further stated that the psychological reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic might vary from panic behaviour or collective hysteria to pervasive feelings of hopelessness and desperation which are associated with negative outcomes including suicidal behaviour (Serafini et al., 2020). The caregivers reported that their fears resulted in anxiety and social phobia. They stated that the pandemic was a life-threatening disease that made them anxious about what will happen the next day: *"Sasihlala kabhlungu sesi, sasihlala kabhlungu kuthy omunye nomunye bekazitjela ukuthy angazi ngemva kwamalanga ayingaki zobe ngisaphila na bowbala kuthy nangingaqeda ivekezako shukuthy ngiphumelele. Yazini woke Malanga nawvukako uyazbuza kuthy daram ngivukile, wezwa ukhohlela khohlela uthy rhan sekungiyona sowthatha izinto sowyasela amaswiri la"*

*“We always lived in fear and anxiety. It’s like we waited for our time to die because no one knew if we were going to wake up the next day. It was a relief and blessing to wake up when you had a frightening fever and we would drink all the preventative methods of COVID-19 like lemon”* (RESPONDENT 3). People kept their distance from one another, sheltered in place, and lived in fear, not knowing what challenges and perils the day or next days would bring, and if they or a loved one would survive the viral onslaught (Polizzi et al., 2020).

Some of the caregivers lost their family members and their fears aggravated. Some caregivers reported that they could not attend the funerals of their loved ones due to fear of being infected. According to Polizzi et al. (2020) several existing studies demonstrated that those who have been exposed to the risk of infection may develop pervasive fears about their health, worries about infecting others, and fear of infecting family members.

*“Nawuthy uzwile bathy uzbani bani see abhubhile kube worse, kube worse. Ngabhalelwa kungcwaba iinhlobo zami ngenca ende abantu abanengi babhubha”*

*” The trauma of hearing that someone you know has passed due to COVID-19 made the fear even worse. I could not attend the funerals of the people I know from my community and family members”* (RESPONDENT 3)

#### **4.6.3 SUBTHEME: STRESS**

Caregiver stress reportedly increased during the pandemic. According to the caregivers, they experienced financial stress, the stress in ensuring that their children’s well-being is protected, ensuring that their well-being is also protected, their full-time parenting during the pandemic, and that they always had to adhere to the COVID-19 restrictions to survive.

Serafini et al. (2020) stated that various psychological problems and important consequences in terms of mental health including stress, anxiety, depression, frustration, and uncertainty during the COVID-19 outbreak emerged progressively. The caregivers could not utilize the psychosocial services that are available in their community as methods of coping with their stresses during the pandemic. They depended on spiritual beliefs which supported them, especially through prayer as a coping mechanism: *“Ngokwengcondo ukugulokhu kusibangele umuzwa ngedwa ngoba bowungakhathaleli wena kuphela bewuqabangela namalunga womndenakho, besithatndaza sicela impilo sithemba ukuthi kuzokulunga”*

*“Psychologically the pandemic caused stress, a lot of stress as you are not only concerned about yourself but also your family members, we prayed as a family for good health and that kept us in the hope that all will be well.” (RESPONDENT 7)*

High infection rates, unemployment and fatality rates, financial losses, continuous lockdowns, forced quarantine, and restrictions on the movement of people caused by COVID-19, significantly change daily lives and ultimately lead to mental health problems. This brought uncertainties, acute panic, fear of contracting the virus, obsessive behaviors, post-traumatic stress disorder, stigmatization, anxiety, depression, and hoarding among others. *“ngeskhathi somulwana besingakhoni ukuba hlangana nabanye abantu njengoba sijwayele umuzwa ngedwa yokuthelelana, besingakavumeleki ukuphuma*

*“During the pandemic, we could not socialize as we normally do with the stressful thoughts of infections, we were not allowed to go out with the children so we could not move freely from one place to another and that was depressing” (RESPONDENT 4).* These problems have increased by number of COVID-related reported cases fuelled by restrictive access to psychosocial support services and lack of financial support (Mbunge, 2020)

#### **4.6.4 SUBTHEME: UNEMPLOYMENT**

Some of the caregivers in this study lost their jobs during the pandemic which made it even more difficult for them to provide and cater for their family members. Being unemployed increased stress for caregivers, technology had taken over during the pandemic and unemployed caregivers could not afford gadgets or data to assist in their children’s learning also caregivers had to provide food for their children during the pandemic which was a challenge without income. The pandemic had a significant impact in South Africa, particularly on low-income families who were faced with job loss and economic instability (October et al., 2021).

Some caregivers who were unemployed during the pandemic in this study stated that it was difficult to cater to their children’s needs in terms of their learning because they had to buy data or smartphones for their children with the Child Support Grant money, they receive every month. These caregivers had to compromise their children’s grants to buy school gadgets, and this meant they did not have money to buy food. One of the caregivers in this study took a risk by selling African beer which was illegal to sell during the pandemic to accommodate her child in buying

school gadgets and also provide food for her children: *“Eyenza ukuthy ngibone ukuthy vele angekhe ngikhone ukuphila so, umuntu engihlekisana naye bekangaberegi. ngaqalake ngafuna ipenapula ngadidiyela, ngathengisa ipenabula. Kulangathola khona ukuthy hayi daram nokho ngiyakhona ukuphila ngithenge nokudla ngendlini. Khona bekungasisemthethweni mara saphila ngemali ebengiyenza”*

*I had to come up with a plan to survive, my partner was also not working so I decided to make a Sorghum beer and sold it. I knew it was illegal, but life was better after that, we did not sleep on an empty stomach and I also fed my children with the income I made.” (RESPONDENT 2)*

Some caregivers depended on their extended families and neighbours for survival but due to the high rate of unemployment, it was difficult for them to be assisted during the pandemic. Across countries, parents who previously depended on families, churches, schools, and neighbors for caregiving support, financial help, and social interactions now found themselves cut off from these support systems during the pandemic (Weems et al. 2020). These factors increased stress levels for these caregivers.

*“Yebo, besingaberegi nokuthi ungabawa umakhelwana ukuthi akusize ngokudla ngeze wakhona ngoba naye usesimeni esifana nesakho somthlago”*

*“Yes, we were unemployed and even though you ask your neighbor for help she cannot assist as she is in the very same situation you are in” (RESPONDENT 6)*

#### **4.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

In this study, four themes emerged from the interviews conducted with eight respondents. COVID-19 protocols and restrictions changed the way people lived normally and it has affected daily routines and interpersonal relationships according to respondents. Caregivers reported that being unemployed and deployed from their workplace has affected them in a negative way as they could not provide for the family’s needs and it also impacted their support for their children where the school is concerned, some caregivers had to compromise in buying data or smartphones for their children with the Child Support Grant they receive monthly. Other caregivers sold alcohol illegally to provide for their children. Those respondents who could afford felt technology has played a positive role in helping them to assist their children with

school tasks, Google and YouTube have helped the respondents in assisting their children in completing tasks that were given by teachers at school. These caregivers had to spend more money to accommodate their children in online learning. Other respondents viewed the lockdown as an opportunity to bond with their children and strengthen their relationship with their children. They stated that they got to know their children better, and they were able to monitor their children's school progress.

## CHAPTER 5

### MAIN FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I summary the main findings of the study, Implications, Conclusions, Strengths, and Limitations of the study.

#### 5.2 OVERALL SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study have brought to light the fact that the coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of caregivers in Vlaaklagte Number 2. Based on the participants' experiences, it is evident that they have been experiencing heightened levels of anxiety and stress due to the high mortality rate and rapid spread of the virus. Additionally, the study has identified the added responsibility of the caregivers to support and encourage their children's learning which has been a challenging task for the participants. Overall, this study highlights the need for support and assistance to be provided to caregivers post-pandemic. Caregivers were left with the responsibility of facilitating learning for their children and promoting learning during the pandemic. Caregivers in this community formed an important part of the support structure during the pandemic by supporting each other, this was by assisting each other financially to buy data for their children to ensure that their children proceed with their academics and progress well.

Several caregivers experienced financial stress which made them feel helpless in assisting their children as they could not provide for some of the school gadgets as many of the caregivers lost their jobs. During lockdown, caregivers experienced the challenges of full-time parenting which proved to be exhausting for them. Caregivers had to constantly supervise their children and ensure that they followed COVID-19 protocols, which added to their stress levels with the risks of infections during lockdown.

The caregivers could not utilize the psychosocial services that are available in their community as methods of coping with their stresses during the pandemic, this was due to the lockdown as government facilities (Department of Social Development and Department of Health) that

offered psychosocial services were not operating during that time and they had no access to these services. These caregivers depended on spiritual beliefs for support, especially through prayer as a coping mechanism. The caregivers found technology to be a great method to assist with their children's learning during the pandemic, and they found Google to be most helpful.

### **5.3 DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

#### ***5.3.1 FINANCIAL INSTABILITY MADE IT HARD FOR CAREGIVERS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN ACADEMICALLY DURING COVID-19.***

Some caregivers who were unemployed during the pandemic had difficulty in providing for their children's needs where education is concerned. There were challenges in the affordability to accommodate their children in their academics such as buying data for their children as well as smartphones or gadgets that were required for online learning, and this was a challenge to their children. These caregivers had to use the little income they received like Child Support Grants to accommodate their children's learning.

This finding correlates with the findings of October et al. (2022) that in South Africa, many families come from poor neighbourhoods, and with the outbreak of COVID-19, and people lost their jobs. These authors concluded in their research that during the pandemic there was an increase in the unemployment rate and economic uncertainty. This in turn led to financial stressors for parents. They made an example of schooling moving online as many families and children were at a disadvantage as they did not have the required resources or finances.

Loss of employment has been cited as a contributor to elevated depressive symptoms (Posel et al., 2021). Literature indicates that during the (alert level 3) Covid-19 lockdown, higher depression scores were exhibited by adults who lost their jobs and those who retained their employment exhibited lower depression scores (Posel et al., 2021). Some caregivers in the study had to open risky businesses to have income and provide for their children.

Unemployment is still a global issue post-Covid-19. This means that unemployed caregivers are still under additional stress to cater for their children's academics. This is a risk of underperformance and school dropouts for learners who come from low-economic backgrounds and cannot afford school gadgets to complete school tasks. Children from poor backgrounds can

be demotivated from going to school or even drop out of school and be involved in criminal activities or take drugs. The Department of Education also has a responsibility to attend to such learners who are from low-economic backgrounds and make provisions for school devices, develop an increase in school performance, and decrease underperformance and school dropouts of children.

It may be beneficial for Social Workers in the area to consider implementing empowerment programs for caregivers. These programs have the potential to motivate caregivers to start their small businesses, such as vegetable gardens, to sell produce and support their families or make their own African-brewed beer and sell it which was also one of the caregivers' idea to have income to survive during the pandemic. This approach encourages caregivers to become independent and self-sufficient, which can ultimately lead to a better quality of life for themselves and their families.

### ***5.3.2 CAREGIVERS BECAME RESPONSIBLE FOR PROMOTING LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC.***

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique challenge for caregivers, who were tasked with facilitating learning for their children. Caregivers had to take on the role of teachers, motivating their children to remain engaged in their academic pursuits. However, some caregivers faced difficulties in procuring the necessary gadgets for their children to continue their studies, which understandably added to their existing stress levels.

Some caregivers in the study are uneducated, and they struggle to assist their children in completing tasks, and they depend on neighbours who were educated to assist their children. Caregivers also motivated their children to have study groups and those learners who understood the tasks given to help those who were struggling.

This finding emphasizes the importance of good relationships between teachers and caregivers and caregivers taking responsibility to be more involved in their children's academics post-COVID-19. Book readings, education workshops, and book assessments should be taken into consideration by The Department of Education, these will make caregivers aware of what their children are learning at school and teachers will be able to teach the caregivers how to assist their children if these are implemented well in schools then the caregivers will be well prepared and

should any pandemics occur in future then our caregivers will manage the responsibilities of being academic facilitators at home and this can have a decrease in their stress

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) have the same view as the researcher and perceive parental involvement is important for education and that it can be attained through both school-based and home-based activities, such as attending parent-teacher conferences and educational workshops, as well as reading aloud to their children and assisting them with their homework. These authors viewed parental involvement as a positive contribution to children's education and they also outlined the importance of teacher and parent relationships so that positive academic outcomes can be achieved.

### ***5.3.3 COVID-19 HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON CAREGIVERS' MENTAL HEALTH.***

The caregivers in the current study expressed fear and stress during the pandemic, primarily due to concerns for the health and safety of themselves, their children, and their families. According to Polizzi et al. (2020) those who have been exposed to the risk of infection during the pandemic may develop pervasive fears about their health, worries about infecting others, and fear of infecting family members.

In the aftermath of COVID-19, it is evident that caregivers continue to experience trauma, and the loss of loved ones has resulted in elevated stress levels. In expressing their feelings and emotions, the pandemic had an impact on the caregiver's mental health post-COVID-19.

Serafini et al. (2020) point out that during every infectious disease outbreak, the psychological responses of the population are crucial in determining the disease's transmission as well as the incidence of emotional distress and social disorders both during and after the outbreak.

In South Africa, there is a Mental Health Awareness Month which brings awareness to the importance of mental health. Social Workers in the area of Vlaaklagte number 2 can implement Mental Health awareness programs in the area which will motivate the caregivers to go for counselling services should they need psychosocial interventions. Group work for caregivers affected by the pandemic can also be beneficial to the caregivers.

### ***5.3.4 RESILIENCE OF THE CAREGIVERS AND COMMUNITIES***

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated caregivers and school-aged children to adapt to ongoing changes and uncertainty. Resilience is influenced by factors such as individual characteristics, self-regulation, self-concept, family conditions, and/or community supports that promote positive outcomes or reduce negative outcomes during challenging times (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Caregivers adapted from traditional way of learning to online learning during the pandemic to assist with their children's learning. Caregiver encouraged their children to have study groups in the community during the pandemic to keep their children engaged in the academics. To ensure that their children's academic needs were catered for, some of the caregivers started their own businesses to generate their own income to support their children.

## **5.4 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

### ***5.4.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION***

The recommendation for the Department of Education is:

- In future pandemics, the Department of Education should make provisions for school devices for learners who cannot afford gadgets to complete school tasks.
- It is recommended that the Department of Education make provisions for posts for school social workers who will be assisting the multi-disciplinary team in schools. The findings showed that there is a need currently for psychosocial services for learners and their caregivers as they are still dealing with the aftermath of the psychosocial fallout from the COVID-19 fallout. According to Brooks et al. (2020) individuals' well-being was severely affected by the lockdown, which increased stress, frustration, and depression. However, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder can persist for years after the confinement. According to Naff et al. (2020) certified mental health professionals who are school social workers assist a wide range of learner populations, families, schools, and communities and they offer behavioural, social-emotional, and mental health services that are supported by evidence. They further state that school social workers provide guidance, assistance, and training to educators and other school personnel on how to manage mental health concerns in a school environment.

- This study confirms that there are still mental health issues in South Africa that need more attention and the implementation of Mental health policies is highly required to assist such caregivers or any other citizens who are affected by it. Caregivers who have post-traumatic stress due to the pandemic and having access to mental health services to address mental health issues can be a preventative measure in avoiding high rates of mental health issues in future pandemics. Mental health care facilities in South Africa should be made accessible for those who need mental health care services.

#### ***5.4.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREGIVERS***

The recommendations for the caregivers are:

To provide comprehensive support to the caregivers of Vlaaklagte Number 2 it may be advisable to refer them to the Psychosocial Service Unit at a local hospital in Mpumalanga. This unit can assist them with the mental health challenges that they may encounter during their caregiving duties post the pandemic.

To involve school social workers in the multidisciplinary team. These school social workers will work with children, parents, teachers, school administrators, and the wider community to support the mental and emotional health needs of learners and their families.

School social workers have become key facilitators in connecting schools and parents to ensure that each student's basic needs are being met (Daftary et al., 2021). The school social worker's role in a school setting will be to foster strong relationships with parents to facilitate their support in their children's school adjustment. They will work diligently to alleviate family stress to enable the child to function more effectively in the school and community. School social workers will assist parents in accessing programs available to learners according to their needs and help them utilize school and community resources to ensure their child's success.

#### ***5.4.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE***

Looking at the findings of this study, it recommended that the Department of Social Development's school social workers in collaboration with the Department of Education consider providing education workshops for caregivers who are struggling to provide academic support

for their children, particularly caregivers who do not have formal education. Moreover, it is highly recommended that social workers implement mental health awareness programs in the region. To achieve this objective, it would be ideal for the Department of Social Development to take over this initiative. This will aim to address the mental health concerns of the caregivers in the area post-Covid 19. The awareness campaigns of psychosocial services that are rendered by Psychologists at Kwamhlanga Hospital which is the nearest Health facility for caregivers of Vlaaklagte Number 2, will aim at making the caregivers aware of the psychosocial services that they can access for free by Government institutions.

#### ***5.4.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH***

Further research is recommended as there is not much research done to address the caregivers' mental health issues. Further research can focus on the effectiveness of mental health programs post-pandemic that are recommended by the researcher on the main findings of the research implemented by Social Workers in Vlaaklagte Number 2.

#### ***5.4.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY***

The systems theory was utilized in this study to examine the experiences of caregivers and their involvement in their children's academics. The social systems (the school and children) are considered in understanding how they have an impact on a caregiver's life as an ecosystem. The social environment in this study is considered with all its influences to understand how these experiences of caregivers contribute to either dysfunction or their mental health and well-being.

The interdisciplinary approach utilized in systems theory aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of social problems by examining individuals within the complex systems that influence their lives. The present study aligns with this approach by focusing on the experiences of caregivers and their involvement in their children's academics by understanding the caregivers' perspectives on how COVID-19 affected their mental health, coping mechanisms, and overall impact on their lives, the study sheds light on the challenges faced by individuals during these unprecedented times.

#### ***5.4.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY***

While working with caregivers who are experiencing mental health issues, it is recommended that the Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Plan 2013-2020 be taken into consideration. This framework identifies important activities that are thought to be catalysts for further transforming mental health services and guaranteeing that high-quality mental health services are integrated at all levels of the health system, accessible, equitable, and comprehensive. This study motivates the Mental Health Act (17 of 2002) which aims to provide care, treatment, and rehabilitation for people who have mental health issues to be utilized when addressing the mental health issues of caregivers. The findings of this study confirm that there is a need for utilization of the Act.

#### ***5.4.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR FOSTERING RESILIENCE IN THE COMMUNITY***

To foster resilience in the community it is recommended that the renewed bonds be maintained between caregivers and the children which inadvertently enhances parental engagement in their children's educational processes.

With South Africa's high unemployment rate post-COVID-19, it is recommended that social workers motivate caregivers in the community to start small businesses to generate income to support their families.

Caregivers maintain good relationships with school educators in this community, this is to practice non-reliance on only educators to be involved in their children's learning.

It is recommended that social workers motivate the caregivers to utilise psychosocial services from the Department of Social Development and Department of Health in Vlaaklagte number 2 to maintain positive functioning to their well-being.

### **5.5 CONCLUSION**

The study has similar findings to the literature review globally and in South Africa. The experiences of the caregivers in Vlaaklagte Number 2 during COVID-19 in this study are arguably not markedly different than those living in other areas in South Africa. Recognizing that

the impact of COVID-19 intersects with previous and other forms of trauma this highlights the need for access to mental health services. As discussed in the findings, caregivers experienced trauma due to the pandemic and the responsibility of facilitating the education of their children fell on them. This study shows that unemployed caregivers struggled to cope with their situation and that had a negative impact on their mental health. With caregivers who had to work from home, and parent the children full time whilst facilitating learning with their children this had an increase in their stress level. The findings of this study show how the mental health of caregivers needs to be taken into consideration and they highlight the importance of access to mental health services. Social workers should implement mental health awareness programs in the region as previously recommended and liaise with the Department of Health in the area for referral of psycho-social services to address mental health issues for these caregivers.

## **5.6 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY**

The research study enabled caregivers to share their valuable experiences regarding their involvement in their children's learning during the unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is unique in its approach, as it has provided comprehensive insights into the experiences of caregivers and their involvement in their children's learning, while also considering their mental well-being. It is noteworthy that previous literature has emphasized the importance of parental involvement, and this study has provided valuable and practical insights on the subject.

## **5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- Small sample size used.
- The PIS was written in English, some of the caregivers could not read English, and that was a challenge.
- It might be necessary to do similar studies in other rural areas in Mpumalanga and nationally to contribute to the body of knowledge that can guide interventions for future pandemics.

## **5.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

- The researcher translated the PIS and the interview guide into the vernacular language during the interviews to ensure that the participants understood well.
- The face-to-face interviews were in detail and depth, and they achieved the purpose.

## REFERENCES

Akat, M., & Karataş, K. (2020). Psychological effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on society and its reflections on education. *Turkish Studies*, 15(4), 1-13.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.44336>

Azubuike, O.B., Adegboye. O., & Quadri, H. (2021). Who gets to learn in a pandemic? Exploring the digital divide in remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. *International Journal of Education Research Open*, 2, 2666-3740.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2020.100022>

Bakia, M., Shear, L., Toyama, Y., & Lasseret, A. (2012). *Understanding the Implications of Online Learning for Educational Productivity*. Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse.

Bloom, J., Lachman, A., Gaxo, E., Pillay, J., & Seedat, S. (2022). Child, adolescent, and caregiver mental health difficulties and associated risk factors early in the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. *Child Adolescent Psychiatry Mental Health* 16, 65.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-022-00499-2>

Bonilla, M.T., Camo, J.G., Landzaderas, R.A., Landzaderas, R.A., & Bonilla, A.H. (2022). Parental Involvement on Child's Education at Home during COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Humanities & Education Development*, 4(3) <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/jhed.4.3>

Bowen, G.A. (2009). Supporting a grounded theory with an audit trail: an illustration. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570802156196>

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. (1<sup>st</sup> Ed). London: Sage Publications.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2012) Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.) *APA handbook of research methods in psychology*

*Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological*, 2, 57-71. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004>

Brooks, S. K., Webster, R. K., Smith, L. E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G. J. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: *Rapid review of the evidence*. *The Lancet*, 395, 912–920.

Calear, A.L., McCallum, S., & Morse, A.R. (2022). Psychosocial impacts of home-schooling on parents and caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *BMC Public Health* 22, 119 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-12532-2>

Children’s Act 38 of 2005. Pretoria. South Africa. Government Printers. <https://www.gov.za/documents/childrens-act>

Clinton, J., & Hattie, J. (2013). New Zealand learners' perceptions of parental involvement in learning and schooling. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 33(3), 324- 337.

Connelly, L.M. (2014). Ethical considerations in research studies. *MedSurg Nursing: Official Journal of the Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses*, 23(1), 54.

Cohen, D. (2006). *Qualitative Research Guidelines Project: Semi-structured interviews*. Retrieved from <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html>

Creswell, J. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (2nd ed). London: Sage Publications.

Daftary, A.M.H., Sugrue, E.P., Gustman, B.D., & Lechuga-Peña, S. (2021). Pivoting during a Pandemic: School Social Work Practice with Families during COVID-19, *Children & Schools*, 43(2), 71–78. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdab005>

Daniel, S.J. (2020) *Education and the Covid-19 pandemic*, 49, 91-96. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09464-3>

Dallas, R., & Draper, R. (2015). *An Introduction to Family Therapy: Systemic Theory and Practice*. McGraw-Hill Education

de Luca, C., Tondelli, S., & Åberg, H. (2020). The Covid-19 pandemic effects in rural areas. *Tema. Journal of Land Use, Mobility and Environment*, 119-132.

<https://doi.org/10.6092/1970-9870/6844>

Department of Statistics South Africa. (2022). *How COVID-19 changed the way we learn*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.za/?p=15197>

Durastic, M., & Bunjevac, M. (2017). Parental Involvement as an Important Factor for Successful Education: *Research Insights and Challenges for Facilitating Critical Thinking*, 7(3), 137-153. <https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.291>

Dorin, H. (2011). E-learning tools for teaching and learning. *Journal Plus Education*, 7(2), 110-115.

Ebrahim, A. (2020). COVID-19 and socio-economic impacts in Africa. The case of South Africa. Pretoria: UNU-WIDER

<https://doi.org/10.35118/unu-wider/wbn/2020-2>

Epstein, J. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Westview Press.

Fergus, S., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2005). Adolescent resilience: A framework for understanding healthy development in the face of risk. *Public Health*, 26, 399-419.

Flynn, G. (2007). Increasing parental involvement in our schools: The need to overcome obstacles, promote critical behaviours, and provide teacher training. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 4(2), 23–30.

Formosinho, J. (2021). From schoolification of children to schoolification of parents? – educational policies in COVID times. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 29(1), 141-152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2021.1872677>

Garbe, A., Ogurlu, U., Logan, N., & Cook, P. (2020). COVID-19 and remote learning: experiences of parents with children during the pandemic. *American Journal of Qualitative Research* 4, 45-65. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/8471>

Goodell, J.W. (2020). Covid-19 and finance: Agendas for future research. *Finance Research Letters* 35, 1544-6123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.frl.2020.101512>

Greene, R.R. (2010). *Human behaviour theory and social work practice*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Transaction Publisher.

Grobler, A. (2022). Challenges for foundation phase teachers in interacting with parents during the COVID-19 pandemic: A case study of Mangaung primary schools, South Africa. *The African Journal of Information and Communication*. 29, 1-15.

<https://doi.org/10.23962/ajic.i29.13746>

Given, B., Sherwood. & Given C.W. (2008). What knowledge and skills do caregivers need? *Journal of Social Work Education*, 44,115-123.

Gayatri, M., & Irawaty, D. K. (2022) . Family Resilience during COVID-19 Pandemic: A *Literature Review*, 30(2), 132-138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807211023875>

Hill, N. E., & Taylor, L. C. (2004). Parental school involvement and children's academic achievement: Pragmatics and issues. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13(4), 161–164.

Hurst, S., Arulogun O.S, Owolabi A.O, Akinyemi R., Uvere E., Warth S., & Ovbiagele B. (2015). Pretesting Qualitative Data Collection Procedures to Facilitate Methodological Adherence and Team Building in Nigeria. *IntjQual Methods*. 53-64.

<https://doi.org10.1177/160940691501400106>

Ho, E. S. (2009). Educational leadership for parental involvement in an Asian context: Insights from Bourdieu's theory of practice. *The School Community Journal*, 19(2), 101–122.

Hornby, G. & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement in education: an explanatory model. *Educational Review*, 63(1), 37-52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2010.488049>

IRreport South Africa. (2020). *South Africa 21-day lock-down rules you need to follow or face jail time*. Retrieved from

<https://ireportsouthafrica.co.za/2020/03/25/south-africa-21-day-lock-down-rules-you-need-to-follow-or-face-jail-time>

International Labour Organisation. (2020). *Rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on enterprises and workers in the informal economy in developing and emerging countries*, Retrieved from

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_743032.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_743032.pdf)

Kumar, R. (2011). *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). London: SAGE Publications LTD

Howa, T., Cimi, A., & Mukasi, T. (2022). Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on rural livelihoods in Mbashe Municipality. *Jamba (Potchefstroom, South Africa)*, 14(1), 1361. <https://doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v14i1.1361>

Larsson, J., & Holmström, I. (2007). Phenomenographic or phenomenological analysis: Does it matter? Examples from a study on anaesthesiologists' work. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 2(1), 55-64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482620601068105>

Liu, C. H., & Doan, S. N. (2020). Psychosocial stress contagion in children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Clinical Pediatrics*, 59, 853-855.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0009922820927044>

Low, N., & Mounts, N.S. (2021). Economic stress, parenting and Adolescents' adjustments during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Family relations: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*, 71(1), 90–107. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12623>

Lemon, L., & Hayes, J. (2020). Enhancing Trustworthiness of qualitative findings: using leximancer for qualitative data analysis triangulation. *The Qualitative Report*, 25,604-614. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4222>

Leedy, P.D., & Ormrod, J.E. (2019). *Practical Research. Planning and Design*. (12<sup>th</sup> ed). Pearson Education Limited.

Ishmael, I. O., Musvipwa, F.M., Kinsley, A. E., & Raselekoane, R. (2020). COVID-19 lock-down socio-economic challenges faced by households in rural areas: *A Perspective from Vhembe District, South Africa*.54 (3), 761-798. <https://doi.org/10.5937/socpreg54-27482>

Maslo, C., Friedland, R., Toubkin, M., Laubscher, A., Akaloo, T., & Kama, B. (2022). Characteristics and Outcomes of Hospitalized Patients in South Africa During the COVID-19 Omicron Wave Compared With Previous Waves, *JAMA*, 327(6), 583-584.

<https://doi:10.1001/jama.2021.24868>

Mbunge, E. (2020). Effects of COVID-19 in South African health system and society: An explanatory study. *Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Reviews* 14 (6), 1809-1814. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsx.2020.09.016>

Mdepa, W. (2020). *I'm not against online teaching, but what about us?* Retrieved from <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2020-05-11-im-not-against-online--teaching-but-what-about-u>

Mhlanga D., & Moloi T. (2020). "COVID-19 and the Digital Transformation of Education: What Are We Learning on 4IR in South Africa?" *Education Sciences* 10 (7), 180. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10070180>

Moore, M. G. (2005). Blended learning. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 19(3), 129- 132. <https://doi.org/10.1207/s15389286ajde1903>

Mphahlele, K.M.A., & Madingwaneng, M.J. (2023). The Impact of COVID-19 on Education in South African rural public schools: A Psychosocial Approach. *African Journal of Development Studies*, 293-308.

<https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3649/2023/sin1a15>

Mueller, J. T., McConnell, K., Burow, P. B., Pofahl, K., Merdjanoff, A. A., & Farrell, J. (2021). Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural America. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. 118(1)

<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2019378118>

Naff, D., Williams, S., Furman, J., & Lee, M. (2020). *Supporting student mental health during and after COVID-19*. Richmond, VA: Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium. MERC Publications. Retrieved from

[https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/merc\\_pubs/112/](https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/merc_pubs/112/)

October, K.R., Peterson, L.R., Adebisi, E.R., & Roman, V.R. (2022). COVID-19 Daily Realities for Families: A South African Sample. *19* (1), 22. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19010221>.

Phillipson, J., Gorton, M., Turner, R., Shucksmith, M., Aitken-McDermott, K., Areal, F., Cowie, P., Hubbard, C., Maioli, S., McAreavey, R., Monterio, D, S., Newbery, R., Panzone, L., Rowe, F., & Shorttall, S. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for rural economies. *Sustainability*. *12*(10), 3973. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12103973>

Posel, D., Oyenubi, A., & Kollamparambi, L. (2021). Job loss and mental health during the COVID-19 lockdown: Evidence from South Africa. *PLOS One*, *16*(3), 1 - 15.

Polizzi C., Lynn S. J., Perry A. (2020). Stress and coping in the time of COVID-19: Pathways to resilience and recovery. *Clinical Neuropsychiatry*. *17*(2), 59-62

<https://doi.org/10.36131/CN20200204>

Pillay, I. (2021). The impact of inequality and COVID-19 on education and career planning for South African children of rural and low-socioeconomic backgrounds. *African Journal of Career Development*, *3*(1), 36. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajcd.v3i1.36>

Rahman, M.S. (2016). The advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in language “testing and assessment” research: A literature review. *Journal of Education and Learning*, *6*(1), 69-71. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p102>

Rich, E.G., Butler-Kruger., Sonn, I.K., Kader, Z., & Roman, N.V. (2022). Family resilience and the COVID-19 pandemic: A South African Study of Social Sciences *11*(9), 416. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11090416>

Rousoulioti, T., Tzagari, D., & Giannikas, C.N. (2022). Parents’ new role and needs during the COVID-19 Educational Emergency. *Interchange* *53*, 429–455.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10780-022-09464-6>

Russell, B.S., Hutchison, M., Tambling, R., Tomkunas, A.J., & Horton, A.L. (2020). Initial challenges of caregiving during COVID-19: Caregiver burden, mental health, and the parent–child relationship. *Child Psychiatry Human Development*, 51, 671-682.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-020-01037-x>

Serafini, G., Parmigiani, B., Amerio, A., Aguglia, A., Sher, L., & Amore, M. (2020). The psychological impact of COVID-19 on the mental health in the general population, *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine*, 113(8), 531–537, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qjmed/hcaa201>

Schurink, W., Fouché, C.B., & De Vos, A.S. (2011). Qualitative data analysis and interpretation. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. (pp.422) Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Sheldon, S. B. (2009). *In School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. (3rd ed.). USA: Corwin Press.

Spinelli, M., Setti, A., Lionetti, F., & Fasolo, M. (2020). *Parenting stress during the COVID-19: Socioeconomic and environmental risks and for implication for children emotion regulation*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12601>

Sapungan, G.M., & Sapungan, R. M. (2014). Parental involvement in child’s education: importance, Barriers and benefits. *Asian Journal of Management Sciences and Education*, 3(2), 42-48.

Strydom, H. (2011). Ethical aspects of research in the social sciences and human service professions. In De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. (pp.129). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Sheafor, B., & Horejsi, C. (2008). *Techniques and guidelines for social work practice* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson.

Social Work License Map. (2022). *Theoretical Approaches in Social Work: Systems Theory*. Retrieved from

<https://www.socialworklicensemap.com/social-work-resources/theories-and-practice-models/systems-theory/>

South African School Act, Act No. 84 of 1996. Pretoria, South Africa: Government Printers.

<https://www.gov.za/documents/south-african-schools-act>

Stiegler, N., & Bouchard, J. P. (2020). South Africa: Challenges and successes of the COVID-19 lockdown. *Annales medico-Psychologiques*, 178(7), 695–698.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amp.2020.05.006>

Tang, S. (2020). Singapore will enter a recession this year, ‘significant uncertainty’ over duration and intensity: MAS. CNA. Retrieved from

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/covid-19-economy-singapore-will-enter-recession-2020-mas-review-12683096>

Tarkar, P. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on education system. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, 29(9), 3812-3814.

Teater, B. (2015). *Social work theories: School for policy studies* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) University of Bristol.

Teater, B. (2019). *An introduction to applying social work theories and methods*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Bournemouth University Press

Timmons, K., Cooper, A., Bozek, E., & Braund, H. (2021). The impacts of COVID-19 on early childhood education: Capturing the unique challenges associated with remote teaching and learning in K-2. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 49, 887-901

<https://doi.org.10.1007/s10643-021-01207-z>

Varkey Foundation. (2022). *Parent-teacher partnerships: The need for renewed collaboration in the time of COVID-19*. Retrieved from

<https://www.varkeyfoundation.org/what-we-do/research/parent-teacher-partnerships>

Viner, R. M., Russell, S. J., Croker, H., Packer, J., Ward, J., Stansfield, C., Mytton, O., Bonell, C. & Booy, R. (2020). School closure and management practices during Coronavirus outbreaks

including COVID-19: A rapid systematic review. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 4(3), 397-404. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(20\)30095-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30095-X)

Weems, C. F., Carrion, V. G., McCurdy, B. H., & Scozzafava, M. D. (2020). *Increased Risk of Suicide Due to Economic and social impacts of social distancing measures to address the Covid-19 pandemic: A forecast*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.21601.45926>

Wills, G., & van der Berg, S. (2024). COVID-19 disruptions and education in South Africa: Two years of evidence. *Development Southern Africa*, 1-20. <https://doi/full/10.1080/0376835X.2024.2311711>

World Health Organization. (2022). *Corona virus disease (COVID-19)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

World Health Organization. (2023). *WHO chief declares end to COVID-19 as a global health emergency*. Retrieved from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136367>

## APPENDIX A




SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE  
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE PROTOCOL NUMBER: SW23/01/02

PROJECT TITLE The experiences of caregivers on their involvement in their children's learning during COVID-19: A case of Vlaaklagte Number 2

<u>INVESTIGATOR</u>	B MATSHIANA
<u>SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR</u>	SOCIAL WORK
<u>DATE CONSIDERED</u>	21 APRIL 2023
<u>DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE</u>	Approved unconditionally
<u>RISK LEVEL</u>	LOW RISK

EXPIRY DATE 25 APRIL 2025

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 25 APRIL 2023 CHAIRPERSON   
 (DR L PETERSEN)

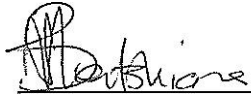
cc: Supervisor: Prof E Pretorius and Prof J Watermeyer

---

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and ONE COPY returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. B. S. Jones", written over a horizontal line.

Signature

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX B



### Consent Form

;/

**Title of project: The Experiences of Caregivers on their involvement in their children’s learning during COVID-19: A case of Vlaaklagte Number 2**

**Name of researcher: Bongzi Zanele Matshiana**

I, ....., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.                      YES                      NO

I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study                      YES                      NO

I agree that the interview may be audio-recorded                      YES                      NO



## APPENDIX C

**Interview Guide**

**The goal of the interview:** To explore the experiences of caregivers on their involvement in their children's learning during Covid-19: The case of Vlaaklagte Number 2

**Interview details:**

Time and date of the interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

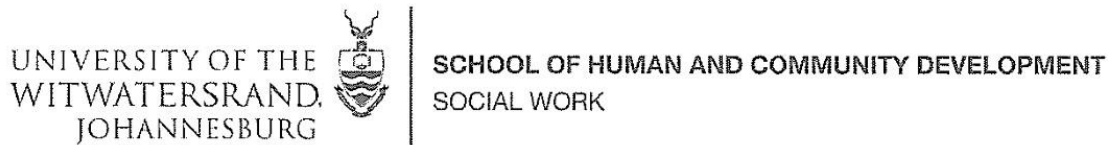
Audio recording: YES/NO

Confirmation of signed consent forms: YES / NO

**Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about what your life was like during COVID-19.
2. Can you share how your well-being was affected during the pandemic?
3. Can you tell me how your child's well-being was affected during the pandemic??
4. What strategies did you use to protect your child's well-being during the pandemic?
5. How did you ensure that your child is actively engaged in his/her academics during the pandemic?
6. How did you manage to assist your child's learning during Covid-19?
7. How did you cope with parenting during Covid-19?
8. Describe the family relationship during COVID-19.

## APPENDIX D



### Participant Information Sheet (PIS) for caregivers

Good day

My name is Bongzi Zanele Matshiana I am a Masters student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisors are Prof. Pretorius and Prof Watermeyer. I am conducting a research study about Caregivers. The study title is The Experiences of Unemployed Caregivers on their Involvement of the children's learning during COVID-19: A Case of Vlaaglagte number 2.

I am inviting you to take part in a single interview. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 30-40 minutes. The interview will take place at a convenient place, in person, at your chosen time during the day.

With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored in a password data cloud for 5 years and will be deleted after 10 years. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

Some of the questions asked may make you feel sad or upset. If this happens, I will stop the interview and continue another time. If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these are available free of charge at Kwamhlanga Hospital, Psychology Department. The name of the counsellor is Bathabile Mahlangu and the contact details for the counselling service are 0139479100.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email [hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za](mailto:hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za).

Yours sincerely,  
Bongi Zanele Matshiana

Signature



Researcher:

Bongi Zanele Matshiana [2515396@students.wits.ac.za](mailto:2515396@students.wits.ac.za)  
0736638497

Supervisor:

Prof Edmarie Pretorius, [Edmarie.Pretorius@wits.ac.za](mailto:Edmarie.Pretorius@wits.ac.za)  
Prof Jennifer Watermeyer, [Jennifer.Watermeyer@wits.ac.za](mailto:Jennifer.Watermeyer@wits.ac.za), 0117174578

## APPENDIX E



## GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/1/2

### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	14 February 2023
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2023– 30 September 2023 2023/40
Name of Researcher:	Matshiana BZ
Address of Researcher:	Stand no: 1958 Siyabuswa Section A
Telephone Number:	0736638497
Email address:	<a href="mailto:2515396@students.wits.ac.za">2515396@students.wits.ac.za</a>
Research Topic:	The experiences of caregivers on their involvement in their children's learning during Covid-19
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	1 Secondary School
District/s/HO	Ekgangala Distirct

#### **Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

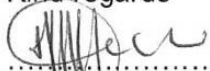
This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. The letter would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of the relaxation of COVID 19 regulations researchers can collect data online, telephonically, physically access schools, or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to wear a mask at all times, Social distance at all times, Provide a vaccination certificate or negative COVID-19 test, not older than 72 hours, and Sanitise frequently.**
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s has been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs, and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and cooperation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers, and learners involved. Persons who offer their cooperation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school program is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes, and telephones, and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers, and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study, the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings, and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a summary of the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Mr. Gungani Mukatuni

Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 15/02/2023

APPENDIX F

# BUHLEBESIZWE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

EMIS: 800001719  
ENQ:SITHOLE AC  
CELL: 082 860 1264  
Email :sitholeac@gmail.com



P.O. BOX 728  
KWAMHLANGA  
1022

## RE-MASTERS RESEARCH

To whom it may concern

This letter serves as permission for Miss Bongzi Zanele Matshiana to conduct her research study at Buhlebesizwe Senior Secondary School with the caregivers of the learners of the school

Yours in Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sithole AC', written over a horizontal line.

SITHOLE AC  
School Principal



