Qazi Waqas Ahmed

Parental Involvement in Education in Rural Pakistan

Children's, Parents', and Teachers' Perspectives

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND
PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

While a plethora of research has been conducted on parental involvement in children's education in developed countries, corresponding research in the developing world is scarce. Parental involvement in education refers to parents' support and commitment to their children's education (Epstein, 2018; Wilder, 2014). This doctoral research investigated the viewpoints of children, parents, and teachers on parental involvement in rural Pakistan. The use of a qualitative, multi-informant approach in three interrelated sub-studies yielded a multifaceted understanding of parental involvement in a rural collectivistic culture. Study I examined children's perceptions of their parents' role in their education, Study II explored financially and academically disadvantaged rural parents' narratives of involvement, and Study III investigated the views on parental involvement of teachers in rural state schools. Three types of interviews were conducted, focus groups (40 children), thematic interviews (10 teachers), and narrative interviews (12 parents) and the data were analyzed using thematic and narrative analysis.

The findings showed that children, parents, and teachers recognized the value of parental involvement in their children's education while also acknowledging several barriers to involvement. The informants' accounts revealed that rural families' vulnerable socioeconomic situation and adherence to local practices (e.g., early marriages, gender segregation and child labor) often constrained their involvement or it was interpreted as interference. A novel observation was the role played by the extended family in amplifying parental participation in children's education in a rural collectivistic culture. This factor has not been reported in studies conducted in the developed world or in individualistic cultures. In addition, parents' and teachers' accounts were sometimes conflicting; each finding fault with the other, resulting in a gulf between them that could negatively affect children's education. All three stakeholders (children, parents, and teachers) perceived parental involvement and responsibilities of parents and teachers differently.

Overall, the findings broaden understanding of "parental involvement" by presenting and highlighting diverse, often context-related challenges to involvement and the importance of the extended family in supporting parents unable to help children in their learning. To improve the situation, better teacher training, parents' better understanding of their responsibilities, assistance for low-income families, and more suitable and equitable ways of involving parents in their children's education are recommended.

Keywords: Parental involvement; Rural Pakistan; Children's education; Barriers; Extended family

ABSTRACT IN FINNISH

Vanhempien osallistumisen merkityksestä lasten koulutukselle ja heidän yhteistyöstään koulun kanssa on tehty runsaasti tutkimuksia kehittyneissä maissa, mutta kehitysmaissa näitä aiheita on tutkittu vähän. Tutkimuskirjallisuudessa käytetään usein käsitettä vanhempien osallistuminen (engl. parental involvement). Tällä käsitteellä tarkoitetaan vanhempien tarjoamaan tukea ja sitoutumista lastensa koulutukseen (Epstein, 2018; Wilder, 2014). Tässä väitöstutkimuksessa tutkittiin lasten, vanhempien ja opettajien käsityksiä vanhempien osallistumisen merkityksestä lasten koulutukselle ja heidän yhteistyöstään koulun kanssa Pakistanin maaseudulla. Laadullisen, moninäkökulmaisen lähestymistavan käyttö kolmessa toisiinsa liittyvissä osatutkimuksessa tuotti monipuolista ymmärrystä vanhempien osallistumisesta maaseudun kollektiivisessa kulttuurissa. Tutkimuksessa I tarkasteltiin lasten käsityksiä vanhempien roolista heidän koulutuksessaan, tutkimuksessa II tutkittiin taloudellisesti ja koulutuksellisesti heikossa asemassa olevien maaseutuväestön vanhempien kertomuksia osallistumisesta, ja tutkimuksessa III selvitettiin maaseudulla toimivien, valtion koulujen opettajien näkemyksiä vanhempien osallistumisesta. Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin kolmenlaisilla haastatteluilla: fokusryhmähaastatteluilla (40 lasta), teemahaastatteluilla (10 opettajaa) ja narratiivisilla haastatteluilla (12 vanhempaa). Aineisto analysoitiin käyttämällä temaattista ja narratiivista analyysia.

Tulokset osoittivat, että lapset, vanhemmat ja opettajat näkivät vanhempien osallistumisen tärkeyden, mutta samalla he nostivat esiin useita osallistumisen esteitä. Informanttien kertomuksista kävi ilmi, että maaseutuperheiden haavoittuva sosioekonominen asema ja paikallisen kulttuurin sanelemien käytäntöjen noudattaminen (esim. varhaiset avioliitot, sukupuolten erottelu ja lapsityövoiman käyttö) rajoittivat usein vanhempien osallistumista tai aiheuttivat tilanteen, jossa vanhempien osallistuminen näyttäytyy häiritsevänä. Uusi havainto oli se, että kollektiivisessa kulttuurissa laajennetulla perheellä oli tärkeä rooli lasten koulunkäynnin tukemisessa. Tätä seikkaa ei ole huomioitu kehittyneissä maissa tai individualistisissa kulttuureissa tehdyissä tutkimuksissa. Lisäksi vanhempien ja opettajien kertomukset olivat toisinaan ristiriitaisia; kumpikin löysi vikoja toisistaan, mikä loi heidän välilleen ymmärtämättömyyden kuilun. Tämä kuilu puolestaan saattoi vaikuttaa kielteisesti lasten koulutukseen. Lapset, vanhemmat ja opettajat näkivät vanhempien osallistumisen ja opettajien ja vanhempien vastuut eri tavoin.

Kaiken kaikkiaan tulokset laajentavat käsitystä vanhempien osallistumisesta esittämällä ja korostamalla erilaisia, usein kontekstisidonnaisia haasteita osallistumiselle. Lisäksi tulokset nostavat esille laajennetun perheen merkityksen sellaisten vanhempien tukemisessa, jotka eivät itse pysty tukemaan lasten oppimista. Tilannetta voisivat parantaa parempi opettajankoulutus, vanhempien parempi ymmärrys heidän velvollisuuksistaan, tuki pienituloisille perheille sekä sopivampien ja tasa-arvoisempien vanhempien mukaan ottamisen tapojen kehittäminen.

Avainsanat: Vanhempien osallistuminen, Pakistanin maaseutu, lasten koulutus, esteet, laajennettu perhe

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ORIGINAL ARTICLES

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This dissertation is based on three sub-studies published or accepted for publication in scientific peer-reviewed journals. The first author took the main responsibility for all phases of the study, from planning, collecting and analyzing the data to preparing the manuscripts. All co-authors had an advisory role in all three studies, making comments and suggesting changes. The articles are referred to in the summary section of the dissertation by their roman numerals, as Study I, Study II, and Study III.

FIGURE

TABLE

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Parents' Role in Education

Although children's education and success have been the main concern in both home and school, parents are considered their children's most influential early educators, as the child first listens, notices, and senses their parents' presence (Catsambis, 2001; Emeagwali, 2009; Weiss et al., 2009). According to Evans (2017), while children spend a significant part of the day at school, they spend even more time with their parents and on other activities at home. Thus, parents are considered to play a crucial role in their children's overall development, including their academic, physical, and social well-being (Ihmeideh & Oliemat, 2015; Wilder, 2014). Parents, as major stakeholders in their children's educational process, need to have sufficient knowledge, resources, and skills to identify and realize their children's educational needs and recognize their children's strengths and weaknesses (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Weiss et al., 2009). Parents who possess such expertise are likely to be expected to provide their children with appropriate assistance and motivation (Egalite, 2016). Previous research has shown that children's academic learning and achievement are sometimes measured through attributes of their school, the professionalism of their teachers, their academic grades, or the socioeconomic situation of their families (e.g., Barrett et al., 2019; Jones, 2019). Indeed, while all these factors contribute to children's successful schooling, a critical factor underlying children's academic attainment, cultivation of their social skills, regular attendance at school, and behavioral improvements is how well parents are involved in their children's learning at home and school (Aman et al., 2019; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Roy & Giraldo-García, 2018). This study focused on parents' role in their children's education, conceptualized as parental involvement in education (Epstein et al., 2009; Wilder, 2014).

Although parental involvement stimulates children's educational, emotional and social experiences, such involvement cannot be regarded as exclusively a task for parents; instead, meeting children's educational needs and encouraging them to achieve their goals are best realized through the collective responsibility of both parents and teachers (e.g., Emeagwali, 2009; Hakyemez-Paul, 2019; Pirchio, 2013). Conversely, parents sometimes criticize and mistakenly assume that children's education is the sole responsibility of the school and its teachers (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). However, research in the main supports the idea of shared responsibility (e.g., Epstein, 2018; Wilder, 2014; Orell & Pihlaja, 2020; Pirchio, 2013). Unfortunately, parents in developing countries such as Pakistan often lack the relevant expertise and thus often face challenges in recognizing and performing their duties related to their children's education (Aman et al., 2019; Kamal et al., 2022). Parents' lack of education, precarious economic conditions, lack of competence in guiding children, and lack of understanding can be considered some of the leading causes of preventing their effective involvement in their children's education (Ali et al., 2021; Kamal et al., 2022). Consequently, when children from such families fail to perform well in school, teachers often criticize their parents for inadequate or lack of involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Moreover, parents often do not prioritize involving themselves in their children's learning process and instead consider teachers as bearing the main responsibility for their children's education (Ashraf, 2019). Although teachers play an essential part in children's education, dismissing the importance of parental involvement will not help to build an ideal learning environment and raise the quality of education (O'Toole, Kiely & Mc Gillicuddy, 2019).

Parental involvement is based on several practical factors, such as a stimulating home environment, parental influence on children's behavior, and a positive parental attitude to school (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Wilder, 2014). The relevance of collaborative engagement between home and school cannot be dismissed, as teachers and parents mutually contribute to children's education, in terms of both desired and undesired outcomes (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020; O'Toole, Kiely & Mc Gillicuddy, 2019). Many experts in the field of family research have found that effective schools work together with parents, as children do not learn only at school; instead, they learn from other sources, such as their parents and other adults (e.g., Deslandes & Barma, 2018; Epstein, 2018). Parental interest facilitates children's better performance and achievement irrespective of their financial, educational, racial, or social background (Weiss et al., 2009). However, in developing countries, a frequently encountered challenge is a breakdown in communication between home and school (Ashraf et al., 2015; Yulianti et al., 2019), leading to a lack of cooperation that further widens the gap between home and school, with parents and teachers denouncing each other, especially when children do not perform well (Sylaj & Sylaj, 2020). Research indicates that education promotes confidence, and that uneducated or less educated people lack the confidence to communicate their views (e.g., Thangeda et al., 2016). This may, at least partially, explain why illiterate or less educated parents are unwilling to express their concerns or raise their children's educational problems

with the school. Eventually, such parents often lose interest in their children's education (Parveen Hussain & Reba, 2016).

This study drew on Epstein's framework of parental involvement, which is widely used in research on the role of parent's in their children's education (Epstein, 2018). It conceptualizes various types of parental involvement that help parents and teachers to assist children in curricular and extracurricular activities. The framework can potentially also assist school leaders and educators in planning and strengthening cooperation with parents on children's learning and development (e.g., Epstein, 2009, and 2001). This dissertation is positioned at the intersection of education and multidisciplinary family studies. It explores the viewpoints of children, parents, and teachers on parental involvement in children's education in the cultural and societal context of rural Pakistan.

Close examination of the previous literature indicates that awareness of parental involvement in developing countries, including Pakistan, has been relatively low and less widely practiced than in more developed countries (e.g., Ali et al., 2021; Mughal, 2020; Kim, 2020; Hasnat, 2015; Afridi, Anderson & Mundy, 2014). In developed countries, parental involvement means that all children, girls as well as boys, attend school and that parents participate in their children's learning both at home and at school, thereby furnishing them with equal learning opportunities and resources (e.g., Hill & Tyson, 2009). In contrast, in developing countries, parental involvement is practiced less or not at all (Pobbi, 2020; Hasnat, 2015), and where it is practiced, it is not comparable with how it is done in the developed world. These differences in parental involvement between the developed and developing countries are due to the differences between the two groups in educational policy, culture, and socioeconomic situation (Kim, 2018; Afridi, Anderson & Mundy, 2014; Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Exploring the viewpoints of children, parents and teachers on parental involvement can enrich understanding of the diverse factors impeding and facilitating parental involvement in children's education. Although several studies have been conducted on parental involvement, less attention has been paid to the issue from a developing country perspective (e.g., Kim, 2020; Hasnat, 2015; Afridi, Anderson & Mundy, 2014), especially in the context where parents' socioeconomic circumstances shape the destiny of their children (e.g., Ali et al., 2021; Hasnat, 2015). The vast majority of the world's population resides in developing countries, and compared to developed countries, a larger proportion of their inhabitants live in rural areas (World Databank, 2015).

Parents in rural developing countries are often unreceptive and do not contribute to or even show interest in their children's academic development (Sunbal & Jabeen, 2021; Aman et al., 2019; Ashraf, 2019). Some parents have a "don't care" attitude towards their children's educational activities at what is the most critical time of a child's development, and thus also for parental support (Sapungan & Sapongan, 2014). Parental involvement, which is considered essential for children's success in the developed world, is often neglected or less practiced in many developing countries, including Pakistan (e.g., Pobbi, 2020; Ashraf, 2019; Parveen et al., 2016; Hasnat, 2015). This research highlights the

critical dimensions of parental involvement from the perspectives of rural Pakistani children and their parents and teachers. Although this study focuses on Pakistan, its findings may also be of practical value for other developing nations facing similar challenges, such as lack of parental involvement or home-school cooperation. Understanding such challenges from the perspectives of children, parents, and teachers provides a foundation on which policies for improving parental involvement in children's education can be formulated and implemented.

1.2   Parental Involvement in the Context of Pakistan

In most developing countries, including Pakistan, involvement is often practiced abysmally by parents and unprofessionally by teachers (e.g., Ashraf, 2019; Hasnat, 2015; Pobbii, 2020). Previous research on parental participation shows that parents with the necessary skills and resources (e.g., social, academic, and financial) are likely to be actively and effectively involved in their children's education (Egalite, 2016; Weiss et al., 2009). However, in rural areas in developing countries, most parents are uneducated or low educated and thus not acquainted with the importance of involving themselves with their children's education (Hasnat, 2015; Mughal, 2020). Overall, the country is far from achieving its stated objective for school education, i.e., *the state shall provide free and quality education to all children* (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973). According to the National Education statistics (2017), more than 30% of children drop out during their primary education and very few resume their education later in life. Most of these young children work to help their parents meet the family's basic needs for survival (Mughal, 2020). The problems associated with the poor quality of school education and children's dropout are failure to implement official policy, inadequate educational budgets, lack of commitment by the government, inadequate facilities, ghost schools, and parents and teachers who lack the dedication to fulfil their responsibilities (Ali et al., 2021; Farooq, 2018). Teachers in Pakistan are not always trained or specialized, they are sometimes unable to get involved and cooperate with parents, or they do not consider parents to be their equals (Ashraf et al., 2015). Although teachers' lack of skills and indisposed attitude toward parents may be one reason for low parental involvement, overcrowded state schools and the burden of teaching multi-grade classes may also present a barrier to parent-teacher collaboration. While research has highlighted the rapid increase in the population of developing world, especially in the South Asian countries, the infrastructure remains the same (e.g., Aneel, Haroon & Niazi, 2019). Thus, crowded classes may make it problematic for teachers to communicate with parents, while teachers may interpret parental involvement in their school activities as interference (Mughal, 2020; Farooq, 2018).

Socially and economically, low-resourced parents may have only one option when deciding on their child's education, which is to send their child to a state school (Siddiqui, 2017). The cost of educating children in private schools,

which are often situated in towns or cities, is far out of the reach of rural parents both financially and geographically (Ali et al., 2021). The irony is that while fee-paying private schools generally impart quality education, they are not accessible to everyone, whereas state schools, which are equally accessible to everyone (i.e., free for all), do not deliver quality education, a situation which compounds parents' concerns and mistrust of state schools (Siddiqui, 2017). It is noteworthy that for children attending fee-paid private schools, parental involvement is active and productive: parents support their children's learning and regularly visit their schools. In contrast, children who study in state schools are less fortunately placed: their parents are not satisfied with the education system and hence generally pay little or no attention to their children's education (Kamal et al., 2022; Islam, 2017).

2 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Conceptualizations of Parents' Role in Their Children's Education

While it is generally agreed that parents have a role in their children's education, no universal consensus exists on what that role includes (Fox & Olsen, 2015; Fan & Chen, 2001). Thus, different concepts are used to characterize the part played by parents in their children's education and their interaction with teachers, such as parental involvement (Epstein, 2018; Wilder, 2014), parental engagement (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014), and home-school cooperation (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020; Perälä-Littunen & Böök, 2019). Home-school cooperation refers to a mutual working relationship based on readiness and intentional collaboration between parents and teachers in helping children and taking equal responsibility for their learning and development (e.g., Perälä-Littunen & Böök, 2019; Westergård, 2013). Similarly, the concept of parental engagement focuses on building an encouraging learning environment and describes parents' commitment to their children's education at home, school, and in the broader community (Manzon et al., 2015; Harris & Goodall, 2007). In turn, parental involvement refers to parents' contribution to their children's learning at home and school in several ways, for instance, helping children with homework, attending school events or frequently communicating with teachers (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001).

According to Epstein (2018), parental involvement, which emphasizes the importance of establishing a collaborative relationship between school and home, is associated with positive learning outcomes for children and increases the school's standing in the community. Epstein further extends the notion of parental involvement by explaining that involvement should go beyond home-school communication and invitations to visit schools: there should be a

partnership between home, school, and community (Epstein, 2018). Kim (2009) explains parental involvement as mainly about influencing children's overall behavior. It is the outcome of parents' ability and desire to act in children's education, which is generally shaped by cultural, social, and economic resources. In turn, Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) state that parental involvement starts at home by providing an encouraging environment, reading with children and spending time with them, and having a positive attitude about school. Similarly, Desforges and Abouchar (2003) describe parental involvement as based on diverse activities such as helping children with homework, communicating with teachers, and engaging children in discussions on different topics at home, which improves their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Studies also show that involvement can become more effective in facilitating children's education when it is viewed as mutual collaboration between home and school (Epstein, 2009; Emeagwali, 2009). Involvement is not merely a way of raising children's academic performance but also makes for positive coordination between teachers and parents, increases school enrollments, and improves behavioral and social adjustment, (Epstein, 2018; Sheldon, Epstein & Galindo, 2010; Fan & Chen, 2001).

Involvement is a multidimensional concept that describes the many different activities and behaviors parents engage in when helping and supporting their children's education (Roy & Giraldo-García, 2018). The notion of a partnership between school and family extends the idea of involvement by recognizing the significance of communication, respect for differences (e.g., parental illiteracy, poverty, and social class), the building of trust, and power sharing between school and family (O'Toole, Kiely & Mc Gillicuddy, 2019; Emeagwali, 2009). Parents' active participation and support can help children both with internalizing behaviors (e.g., reluctance, depression, and stigmatization) and with externalizing behaviors (e.g., environmental effects or interference in activities) (Marcone, Affuso & Borrone, 2020). Parental affection, support and care gradually decrease children's disruptive behavior and help enhance their confidence, social skills, and moral behavior (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Aleksiejuk, 2016). In this study, the concept 'parental involvement' rather than parental engagement or home-school cooperation was used, as the objective was to understand the views of different actors, i.e., children, parents and teachers, on the role of parents in their children's education in the context of a developing country, i.e., Pakistan. Moreover, the concept of parental involvement is widely used in the literature to explain the role and contribution of parents to their children's education (e.g., Lerner et al., 2022; Hakyemez-Paul, 2019; Epstein, 2018; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Fan & Chen, 2001).

2.2   Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement

As its theoretical framework, this research employed Epstein's (2001) typology of parental involvement, which identifies the different roles parents and teachers

can play in children's education, both at home and school, and is widely used in studies focusing on different levels of parental involvement. Joyce Epstein's framework for parental involvement in children's education can be deployed to inspire schools to develop a strong partnership between school, home, and community. Among the numerous motives for developing collaboration between family, school, and community, the foremost is to assist and influence children's holistic development and success (Epstein, 2018, 2009). Epstein focuses on children's holistic learning by emphasizing communication, collaboration, and partnerships and by positing that children learn and make better progress when parents, teachers, and other community partners work collectively. Epstein characterizes the concept of parental involvement as a series of overlapping spheres (Epstein et al., 2002). According to Epstein, the way in which schools and teachers foster children's learning replicates how they deal with children's families. For instance, when teachers or school personnel consider *children as students*, they often expect families to play their role outside of school. However, when teachers see *students as children,* they are more likely to acknowledge parents as partners and work together in forwarding children's educational processes (Epstein, 2018). The reason for creating such partnerships between home and school is to facilitate the success of all children not only at school but also later in their lives. When parents, teachers, students, and others view each other as partners in education, a community with an element of care and trust is generated in which children experience "family-like schools and school-like families" (Epstein et al., 2009). Furthermore, when teachers focus on schooling with a whole-child (holistic) approach, and parents join them in that endeavor as partners, they are better able to reflect on the different spheres of influence together and boost children's motivation in their learning activities. Hence, increased interaction between home and school both benefits the children and educates their parents in how to deal with school-related issues and help their children at home (e.g., Orell & Pihlaja, 2020; Paik et al., 2019).

2.2.1 Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement

Epstein's model is grounded on the premise that parents' involvement should go beyond merely visiting their children's schools. Instead, they should be invited to establish a partnership between the school, home, and community to implement the agenda of children's learning and development (Epstein, 2011). The model can guide policymakers, school leaders, and educators in how to cooperate with families in the design and development of school programs. Likewise, it can benefit educators in developing wide-ranging school and family partnership activities (Wright, 2009; Epstein & Sanders, 2000). The framework comprises six kinds of involvement: parenting; communicating; volunteering; learning at home; decision-making; and collaborating with the community. The six types of involvement act as a framework for analyzing the behaviors, responsibilities, and actions concerning children's social, emotional, and educational development taken by teachers, parents, and community members (Epstein, 2009; Epstein et al., 2002).

Type 1. Parenting – an encouraging home environment. This type of involvement concerns the role of parents at home and refers to helping and supporting families to acquire the skills related to their child's upbringing, mannerisms, and behavior in the early years. It focuses on how families can establish a favorable home environment that supports and encourages children's learning activities, such as helping children at home with school tasks or assisting them in other formal or informal learning activities. It also concerns parents' expertise in parent-child relations and the sharing of information between school and parents to better understand and facilitate children's activities. Examples of this kind of involvement are family support programs, parents' educational training, and home visits by schools, especially during children's transitions to primary, middle, or high school. Parenting also involves providing children with a balanced diet, a comfortable home, and a home environment conducive to learning. Through this kind of involvement, parents' awareness of their children's schooling can be raised.

Type 2. Communication – a strong bond between parents and teachers. Communication in parental involvement refers to the partnership and coordination between home and school. This cooperation is linked to mutual communication between teachers and parents about school programs and children's education. Schools need to initiate contact with families and create a space for parents' ownership over their child's education so that parents can freely and confidently participate in school activities. Moreover, arranging meetings from time to time with every parent to discuss their child's progress, and if required, providing parents who do not understand the school's language with an interpreter who can easily voice their concerns. To maintain the school's connection with parents, regular updates, not solely via phone calls but also via the use of advanced communication channels, could be beneficial if it encourages parents to learn how to use new digital communication tools. The ultimate purpose of 'communication' is to deliver information concerning a child's education to the child's home in such a way that parents understand and can respond to the school. In addition, the effectiveness of the partnership between home, school, and community can be assured when the flow of the communication and information is bi-directional: the school shares information with the child's home and the child's home shares information with the school (Sanders & Epstein, 2005).

Type 3. Volunteering – involvement with the school. Involvement takes place when school personnel invite parents to visit the school, organize different events for them and consider them as an audience for their children's activities. Parents can be given an opportunity to monitor their children's lessons and performance in sports, discussions, music, and other activities. Previous research has found a strong association between children's attainment and parents' attendance at different curricular and extracurricular activities (Epstein et al., 2002; Sanders & Epstein, 2005). Alongside children's formal learning, parents' involvement in school events can help children develop their confidence and interpersonal communication abilities and increase their knowledge-acquisition skills. Epstein (2009) reported that the challenge presented by this kind of

involvement is to schedule, organize, and, above all, get as many parents as possible, since making full-time volunteer visits to their child's school can be a problem for most parents. This type of parental involvement in which parents voluntarily visit their children's schools and support school programs and performances is important for maintaining children's positive attitudes to their education.

Type 4. Learning at home – home activities. This type refers to the involvement of families in their children's educational activities at home, including their homework and other mainly curriculum-linked learning activities. It also encourages teachers to design home assignments that enable children to ask questions and discuss school tasks with their parents. There may be an initial need to counsel parents on the skills required to monitor and deal with their children's homework and help their children with planning and decision-making. Likewise, for parents unfamiliar with their children's curriculum, the school must share information with families on the skills required to help children in all their school subjects. Schools can also encourage parents to attend science, reading, and math activities to learn and to help children at home. Epstein mentioned that this type of involvement (learning at home) is not easy to implement as every teacher needs to recognize the parents' connection with their child as a learner at home.

Type 5. Decision Making – shared decisions in the school. This type of involvement refers to the participation of families in decision-making in the school on strategies for the betterment of the school. When parents join or become a member of the school board, it enables them to witness the efforts made by the school for their children and direct their attention toward the children's learning. In other words, it means parents can make their presence felt in the school's governance through membership of school councils, parent committees, and parent-teacher associations. This kind of involvement gives parents a voice in different school programs that may enhance their interest in their children's education and build their trust in the school. Moreover, parental representation in decision-making can benefit parents in other ways, including meeting other families (networking) and creating a spirit of ownership within the school community.

Type 6. Collaborating with the community – a partnership. The role of school and family in children's education and development is also linked to the community. The coordination of schools with cultural, municipal, and social support organizations can empower the community to strengthen and elevate a school's standing, advance family access to support services, and improve children's overall development. This kind of involvement happens when community resources, services, and partners (e.g., schools, health centers, cultural institutes, art and music centers) are combined in the processes of developing school programs, children's learning, and family practices.

2.2.2 Implications and Limitations of Epstein's Framework

Research has largely focused on the role of parents in children's education, paying little or no attention to context (Kim, 2018; Bower & Griffin, 2011). However, a robust relationship and partnership among educators, parents, and the community could be auspicious for holistic learning (Paik et al., 2019; Epstein, 2018). This framework is not solely about supporting parents in matters concerning their children's education, but it extends the concept of parental involvement across the entire community, including teachers, parents, and other stakeholders concerned with the development of school and schooling (Epstein, 2018). Despite its limitations, Epstein's Model has remains one of the most widely used frameworks for studies related to home-school cooperation, parental involvement, or parental engagement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). The model is heavily based on the structure of the developed world, with the US context as its primary focus (e.g., Kim, 2018). It demonstrates the dynamic and vigilant involvement of parents in an advanced world where children are raised and educated very consciously, and parents are fully involved both in children's learning as well as in their academic grooming. While the framework can be fully used in advanced countries, some of its features are very helpful in understanding parental involvement in their children's learning in any societal context. For instance, *parenting* is primarily about the provision of food, housing, health care, and a supportive home environment, all of which support children's development and learning activities. *Communication*, in turn, includes school-to-home connections and home-to-school connections for staying updated on a child's educational progress (Epstein et al., 2009).

The socioeconomic context and approach to parental involvement in developing countries such as Pakistan diverge from those assumed by Epstein's model, which was designed to serve the developed world. In rural Pakistan, some children are rarely sent to school by their parents. Simply being sent to school and provided with food and a uniform is considered parental involvement. Likewise, freeing girls from the norm of early marriage and allowing them complete their school education is also considered involvement. Consequently, due to socio-cultural, racial, ethnic, and gender differences, Epstein's model is not fully applicable in the developing world (e.g., Ali et al., 2021; Hasnat, 2015; Afridi, Anderson & Mundy, 2014). Despite such aspects related to cultural diversity as ethnicity, social status, customs, and gender differences that are not explicitly addressed, the model nevertheless offers a general approach to parental involvement in children's education (Kimu & Steyn, 2013; Bower & Griffin, 2011). In Pakistan, parents' material deprivation, social status in the community, and adherence to local norms can influence their involvement in their children's education. Therefore, in less privileged societies (in this instance rural Pakistan), educators and administrators are obliged to recognize and respect parents' heterogeneity (e.g., cultural norms and socioeconomic status) when formulating parents' school and home involvement strategies (Afridi, Anderson & Mundy, 2014; Kimu & Steyn, 2013).

2.3   Children at the Center of Involvement

Parental involvement is a worthwhile activity for improving the quality of education (Epstein, 2018; Fan & Chen, 2001). Different kinds of involvement activities, such as storytelling, reading together, and playing with children, are encouraging exercises that expose children to cognitive stimulation, thereby significantly improving their social and academic skills (Natasha et al., 2020; Egalite, 2016). Other kinds of parental involvement include spending time with children, talking about school activities, being active in parent-teacher meetings, and helping children to develop learning strategies for the future, all of which can considerably increase children's sense of competence and self-sufficiency as well as their persistence in learning activities (Ho, 2009; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001). A study conducted in the context of Indonesia by Yulianti et al. (2019) found that despite their having limited educational and economic resources, parents' motivational support enhanced their children's academic success. Parents in developing countries are often uneducated and may also have faced financial challenges (e.g., Mughal, 2020; Pobbi, 2020). However, when the children of poor or uneducated parents perform well in school, parental praise and motivation can induce them to continue their efforts to be academically successful (Yulianti et al., 2019; Aleksiejuk, 2016). Moreover, parents often become involved through helping children with their homework, an activity which can be used to assess children's learning outcomes at home (Silinskas & Kikas, 2019; Deslandes & Barma, 2018). Involvement in homework can happen in different ways: parents may create timetables to help and observe their children's learning, or they may provide their children with a school-like learning environment (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). In addition, homework means the practice of academic skills during non-school hours and is thus a vital tool for parents to monitor what their child is learning, as well as serving as a method to unite parents, teachers, and children through communication and discussion (Cunha et al., 2015; Hoover-Dempsey, 2001). Goodall (2021), in turn, voices a slightly different opinion on homework, stating that parents' role in children's homework is a ubiquitous part of their education and not the only way in which parents can support their children's education. Other ways include showing children the importance of education and making them understand the importance of school tasks in their academic success (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014).

In developing countries, parental involvement can be valuable in initiating improvement in the quality of education (Ali et al., 2021; Hasnat, 2015). In the developed world, parental involvement has been considered crucial for children's education, beneficial for teachers and the community, valuable for promoting equality, and a way of increasing the quality of education (Epstein, 2018; Edwards & Alldred, 2000). For instance, in Singapore, parental involvement is supported and promoted by schools and the community; the key to consistent collaboration between parents and teachers is based on shared responsibility,

respect, and valuing diversity (Jones, 2019). Likewise, in Finland, active bilateral communication and respect and trust between home and school are standard features that encourage children's persistence in school (Levinthal et al., 2021; Purola et al., 2021). In Japan, parents' motivation and assistance also play a vital role in children's educational success (Holloway et al., 2008). In Pakistan, however, parents have been found to be less involved in their children's education. This has resulted in passive learning and a high dropout rate (e.g., Ali et al., 2021). Although there are many reasons for school dropout and poor quality of education, parental motivation and interaction with schools could support children's education and keep them in school (Mughal, 2020; Inman et al., 2019). Previous research has shown that irrespective of their views on the usefulness of parental involvement, policymakers, educators, and parents believe that, in order to advance the academic success of all children, there is a need to develop a home-school relationship with bilateral communication (Deslandes & Barma, 2018; Emeagwali, 2009). Cooperation encourages mutual respect, builds trust, and facilitates communication. This forms the foundation for an educational partnership in which the partners value each other's expertise and reciprocally contribute to children's education (Sapungan, 2014; Driessen et al., 2005).

2.4   Socioeconomic Challenges to Parental Involvement

The precarious socioeconomic situation of families and children's limited access to learning materials are the dominant barriers impeding parental involvement in developing countries (e.g., Kamal et al., 2022; Pobbi, 2020; Inman et al., 2019). In developing countries, parents often cannot support their children's education due to various challenges (e.g., poverty, social status, and ignorance) and instead keep their children out of school in order to increase family earnings or to do household tasks. Thus, many children remain unguided and deprived of their dreams of learning (Ali et al., 2021; Islam, 2017; Hasnat, 2015). According to Hornby and Lafaele (2011), parental involvement is a complex issue for disadvantaged families, who experience several obstacles related to family, children, and teachers as well as societal problems. Less educated and financially weak parents often consider themselves incapable of helping their children in their education. Parents' long working hours can also prevent them from being involved in their children's education (Inman et al., 2019). Similarly, parents working on low wages face financial challenges and often struggle to meet their children's basic needs, such food and shelter (Mughal, 2020; Yulianti et al., 2019). In Pakistan, especially in rural areas, families are often in a poor and unstable socioeconomic situation, which has deleterious effects on parents' interest in their children's education (Kamal et al., 2022). It weakens parent-teacher interaction and ultimately impairs children's academic performance as parents often cannot support their children's formal education (Fayyaz & Hashmi, 2022; Parveen, Hussain, & Reba, 2016). Consequently, lack of finance often compels parents to

send children out to work instead of school, a situation that leads to child abuse and dropout (Ali et al., 2021). The low-level involvement of economically and academically vulnerable parents has been explained in two ways (e.g., Islam, 2017; Hasnat, 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). First, rural parents are typically low-educated and do not have sufficient academic skills or adequate information to involve themselves in their children's learning, i.e., the school curriculum and homework (Kamal et al., 2022). Second, due to periodic financial crises, they often lack the resources needed to fulfil their children's educational needs (Ali et al., 2021). Although the family's precarious socioeconomic position is the dominant determinant of non- involvement, living in a community characterized by a high level of poverty and ignorance often means conforming to cultural norms and practices that have the potential to further contribute to the lack of parental involvement or parental interference (Ambreen & Mohyuddin, 2014).

2.4.1 Unskilled Teachers, a Challenge to Involvement

The geographic and social contexts of rural developing countries (predominantly Asian and African) generally require that schools and teachers serve the concerns of low-income and less-educated families beyond their role of just teaching in the classroom (Pobbi, 2020; Islam, 2017; Du Plessis, 2014). Moreover, schools are often geographically isolated, meaning that services such as transport, food, and school material for children and parents are often inaccessible or simply non-existent (Arnold et al., 2005). Rural schools are supposed to have trained and professional teachers as these are the most likely to have to deal with children of financially and academically vulnerable parents (e.g., Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). However, a large number of unskilled teachers with inadequate resources and poor school facilities negatively affecting home-school cooperation and children's learning and development are commonly the case in developing countries (Fomba et al., 2022; Hasnat, 2015). Teachers' lack of professionalism presents a particularly big challenge to parental involvement in many developing countries (e.g., Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Teachers often feel that dealing with parents is not their job or is an extra responsibility for which they do not have enough time; hence teachers often fail to live up to parents' expectations and to meet children's educational, behavioral, and social needs. This, in turn, ultimately discourages parents' involvement and demotivates children, impairing their interest in learning (e.g., Fomba et al., 2022; Ashraf et al., 2015; Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011). Westergård (2013) states that a welcoming attitude shown by teachers toward children's parents is closely linked to their training and professionalism, as when teachers hold parents in high regard and view them as the child's first educator, they are more likely to invite parents to participate in their children's education. However, in Pakistan, teachers are not professionally trained and thus do not treat parents as equal partners in their children's education (e.g., Farooq, 2018).

2.4.2 Cultural Hindrances to Parental Involvement

In developing countries, gender segregation in the educational domain is one of the major problems in girls' schooling and parental involvement (Singh & Mukherjee, 2018; Ambreen & Mohyuddin, 2014). In a patriarchal society, girls typically are not given a chance to express their views and feelings; instead, they are expected to quietly obey orders from parents or elders (Ambreen & Mohyuddin, 2014). In the context of formal education, this difference most clearly exemplifies the gap between males and females (Rabia et al., 2019). Most rural parents deliberately disregard girls' education, while prioritizing that of their male children. As a result, girls may become a victim of different psychological problems, such as developing an inferiority complex or suffering from loneliness. The indifferent attitude of the parents towards girls' education may, in part, be explained by the lack of segregated schools, an elevated risk to so-called family honor, issues related to commuting, fewer female job opportunities, and low parental aspirations (e.g., Rasheed et al., 2021). Research has shown that gender discrimination is strongly rooted in most rural areas in developing countries (Jayachandran, 2015), that people in remote areas customarily believe that women belong at home and that men are the breadwinners of their families (Noureen, 2011). One study found that 71 percent of the people sampled felt that discrimination exists between boys and girls in education in Pakistan, and that parents often attribute more importance to their sons than daughters (Rabia et al., 2019). The patriarchal conservative structure of rural society was found to compel parents to involve their children, especially girls, in domestic chores instead of sending them to school, thereby depriving them of their right to education (Ambreen & Mohyuddin, 2014). Likewise, the early marriage culture is also invasive, and parents who married off their daughters at an early age 'erroneously' believed that they had fulfilled their responsibility to them (Rabia et al., 2019; Male and Wodon, 2016).

3 AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation aimed to investigate the viewpoints of children, parents, and teachers on the topic of parental involvement in children's education in Pakistan, a rural developing country with a collectivistic culture. This aim was addressed in three sub-studies, the first on children's viewpoints (Study 1), the second on parents' viewpoints (Study II), and the third on teachers' viewpoints (Study III). In addition, I synthesized and compared the perspectives of children, parents, and teachers on parental involvement. Figure 1 depicts the overall plan of the research, including the three sub-studies and the research questions addressed in each. The main inspiration for conducting this study arose from a desire to broaden the understanding of parental involvement in the context of a rural developing country, where parental involvement is less known as a concept and less practiced. Formal education in many developing countries is not competitive and is declining due to diverse barriers, such as poor home-school coordination, precarious economic situations in families, and lack of qualified teachers (e.g., Ali et al., 2021; Hasnat, 2015). Moreover, compared to many other developing countries, the outcome indicators of school education in Pakistan are poor. An estimated 50 million school-age children live in Pakistan, of whom around 22 million are out of school (Kamal et al., 2022; UNICEF, 2018). Various explanations have been proposed for the low level of school education, including the fragility of the relationship between school and home, lack of parental support, poverty, teachers lacking the required skills and motivation, and cultural idiosyncrasies (Kamal et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2021; Ashraf, 2019).

Research indicates that school education can leave an indelible impression on a child's development and that parents can play a pivotal role in shaping children's interest in education (Aman et al., 2019; Wilder, 2014). Most of the developed nations of the world are seen focus intensively on primary education. Their schooling systems aim at generating mutual trust and respect between home and school, bilateral communication, the professionalism of teachers, and parental involvement as empowering and motivating factors in children's education (e.g., Levinthal et al., 2021; Santiago et al., 2016). However, no comparable policy on parental involvement in children's education exists in

Aim and Research Questions

Main Aim

To understand the viewpoints of children, parents, and teachers on parental involvement in children's education in rural Pakistan

Aim 1. To examine how children in a rural collectivist culture perceive their parents' role in their learning endeavors.

Aim 2. To comprehend financially and academically disadvantaged rural parents' narratives of their involvement in their children's education.

Aim 3. To explore the viewpoints of state school teachers on parental involvement in children's education.

RQ 1. What kind of parental involvement are recognized as supportive by children, and what barriers do they perceive as impeding their parents from helping them in

RQ 2. How do rural parents view their involvement in children's learning, and what challenges obstruct them from helping their children in their

RQ 3. How do teachers perceive the role of parents and the obstacles hindering parental involvement in children's education?

RQ 4. What are the similarities and differences among the viewpoints of the three stakeholders concerning parental involvement in children's education?
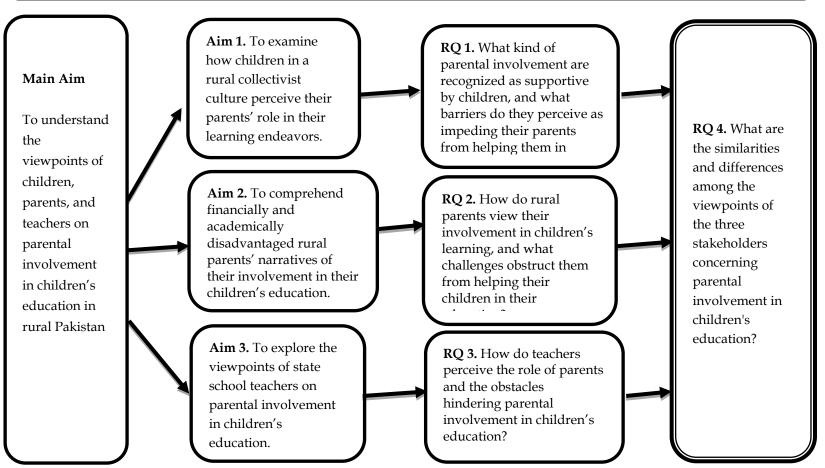
FIGURE 1 Aims and Research Questions

many developing countries, of which Pakistan is no exception (e.g., Ashraf, 2019; Pobbi, 2020). Hence, this study also calls for policymakers, administrators, and educators to plan suitable ways to facilitate and encourage parental participation in children's education.

The voices of children, parents, and teachers on the topic of parental involvement are rarely heard in developing countries such as Pakistan. This dearth of literature on home-school cooperation prompted me to frame the present research questions. The strength of the study is the use of a multi-informant holistic approach and data collected from three stakeholder groups: children, parents, and teachers. Three research questions stem from the main research task, are linked to a separate research article, and contribute to a theoretical and practical understanding of the phenomenon from different perspectives.

Research Question 1: What kinds of parental involvement are recognized as supportive by children and what barriers do they perceive as impeding their parents from helping them in learning? (Study I).

The research has shown that children's perceptions can assist exploration of the realities concerning their education and enable researchers and educators to understand the positive and negative impacts of social phenomena (e.g., Ferreira et al., 2018). What children think about their parents' role in their education is critical, as their views may offer essential insights for enhancing parents' involvement in this important phase of their lives. Hence, this sub-study investigated children's experiences of parental involvement in a context characterized by precarious economic and social resources and rich family networks.

Research Question 2: How do rural parents view their involvement in their children's learning, and what challenges obstruct them from helping their children in their education? (Study II).

To safeguard children's learning process and future, no matter how little parents can be involved in their children's education, any such involvement greatly affects children's academic success (Weiss et al., 2009). Similarly, parents' encouraging attitude toward children's education, including school visits, could play a role in bridging home and school and giving children a message that learning is essential (Emerson et al., 2012). To extend knowledge on parental involvement, this sub-study focused on rural Pakistani parents' narratives of their involvement in their children's education.

Research Question 3: How do teachers perceive the role of parents and the obstacles hindering parental involvement in children's education? (Study III).

The role of the teacher has always been of crucial importance in encouraging or discouraging parental participation in children's education (Yulianti et al., 2019; Ozmen et al., 2016). Indifferent and unresponsive attitudes shown by teachers toward parents and not considering parents as equal partners can result in parental dissatisfaction or unwillingness to visit their child's school

and participate in the child's education. This sub-study investigated rural teachers' viewpoint of parental involvement in children's education, a topic which has rarely been studied in a rural developing country.

Research Question 4: What similarities and differences are there in the views on parental involvement of the three stakeholders? For this additional research question, I synthesized and compared the viewpoints of children, parents, and teachers by cutting the three sub-studies.

4 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

I adopted a qualitative research approach to investigate parental involvement, with the aim of contributing new knowledge on of the topic in the context of a rural area in a developing country. Parental involvement is under-researched in many developing countries, including Pakistan (e.g., Sunbal & Jabeen, 2021; Hasnat, 2015; Afridi, Anderson & Mundy, 2014). Hence there was a need to explore this topic from different perspectives, i.e., from those of children themselves and from those of parents and teachers. The qualitative interview was considered the most suitable method for executing this research, as children (at ages 12-14) may not have the skills required to understand and fill out questionnaires (e.g., Markström, 2013; Edwards & Alldred, 2000). Similarly, most of the parents (informants) were illiterate, and thus interacting with them through interviews was the only viable option. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), methodology and epistemology are interrelated; however, methodology has more practical orientation whereas epistemology is about how knowledge can be attained and refers to the relationship between the researcher and the research subject (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

4.1 Epistemological Assumptions

This research drew on constructivism and social-constructivism as philosophical approaches, both of which epistemological stances are aligned with subjectivism. The socio-constructivist approach assumes that knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon that can be acquired through interaction between social actors (Jha & Devi, 2014; Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997). The constructivist approach posits that the methodology employed in a study must enable sense-making and meaning-making activities. It aims at unscrambling the relationship between human experience and knowledge creation (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In turn, social constructivism highlights the importance of social interactions and

the role of culture in creating knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Amineh & Asl, 2015).

The present study utilized multi-informant (children, parents, and teachers) and multi-method qualitative interviews on the topic of parental involvement in children's education as the data source. This study contributes new constructivist knowledge by applying the concept of 'parental involvement' in the context of a rural area in a developing country. Moreover, social constructivism highlights the significance of social interactions and the role of culture in creating knowledge. This study also explores the socio-cultural implications of parental involvement in the societal context of rural Pakistan. It sheds light on some of the cultural characteristics (male domination, early marriage, gender segregation and inequality) that have the potential to hinder parents' involvement in their children's education. The findings demonstrate that lack of parental involvement and children's academic failure is also associated with dominant social and cultural practices. Thus, the present study is also informed by social constructivism in this specific socio-economic context.

As a researcher, I actively constructed the knowledge generated from the informants' accounts. According to Blaikie (2007), the process of creating new knowledge occurs through shared interpretations and cultural and behavioral understanding. The study informants, i.e., children, parents, and teachers living in a rural socio-collectivistic culture, constructed their social realities by interpreting and conceptualizing their own experiences, which I, as a researcher, then analyzed. People's interpretations may differ owing to differences in their experiences, culture and social environment (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997). Therefore, the findings of a qualitative study cannot be considered as objectively attained knowledge; instead, it is meaning-making and sense-making knowledge which has evolved through interpreting the experiences and thoughts of the informants (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

4.2 Methodology

This research was carried out using qualitative interviews with children, parents, and teachers, thereby providing a multifaceted understanding of parental involvement in children's education. It aimed to capture the views of rural children, parents, and teachers in a developing country, hitherto an under-researched topic. The focus group interview, which encouraged a comfortable atmosphere for children to share their ideas and experiences, was considered the most appropriate technique for collecting data from children, (Gibson, 2012). Semi-structured interviews were considered more suitable for investigating teachers' views on issues related to parental involvement. Moreover, for the rural parents, most of whom were uneducated or less educated, the narrative interview was considered the most suitable method of data collection. Narrative interviews helped the participants to express themselves freely and the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of their views. The study participants

were selected from the Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa (KPK) province of Pakistan. Although poverty and illiteracy are spread across the whole country, the people living in rural KPK confront more challenges and hardships in feeding and educating their children (Gouleta, 2015).

4.3   Three Types of Interviews

Multi-informants (children, parents, and teachers) and three types of interview (i.e., focus group, semi-structured, and narrative interviews) were conducted on parental involvement in their children's education (See Table 1). To answer the first research question, school-aged children (*n* = 40) were interviewed using the focus group (FG) technique. To answer the second research question, narrative interviews were conducted with parents (*n* = 12) having school going children and living in rural areas. To answer the third research question, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with rural school teachers (*n* = 10). In total, 62 informants participated in the interviews. The researcher sought and obtained permission from the district education officers and school principals to recruit the study participants (teachers and children) from their schools. Written consents to participate were then collected and signed/stamped by teachers, parents, and children. The interviews with children, parents, and teachers were conducted in 2018 and 2019. Information on the study informants is presented in table 1.

Table 1 Interviews and informants in the three sub-studies

No.	Title of Study	Number of Interviews	Interviewees
I	Rural Children's Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Their Education in Pakistan	8 focus group interviews with a total of 40 school-aged children (boys and girls)	• Children aged 12-14 years attending grades six to eight in rural state schools. • 4-6 children in each focus group • 4 focus group interviews were conducted with boys and 4 with girls.
II	Parents' Involvement in Their Children's Education: Narratives from Rural Pakistan	12 narrative interviews with rural parents	• Academically and economically vulnerable rural parents. • All parents had children attending rural state schools. • Equal numbers of mothers and fathers from different families were interviewed
III	Parental Involvement or Interference? Rural Teachers' Perceptions	10 thematic interviews with teachers	• Rural state school teachers • 5 interviews conducted with male and 5 with female teachers • Teaching experience from 5-26 years • Teachers had a master's or bachelor's degree

4.3.1 Studying Children - Focus Group Discussions

Eight focus group interviews were conducted with children studying in grades six to eight in state schools. Each focus group session comprised four to six children. Children are good sources of information rather than passive receivers of inputs. Hence, interviewing school children is a good way to obtain information about the role of their parents in their learning. Interviewing children can be challenging due to the asymmetry in power between interviewer and child (Einarsdóttir, 2007). However, research suggests that focus group interviews with children are effective in familiar venues where children can freely and confidently express their views (McLachlan, 2005). Nevertheless, one individual may dominate the whole group by speaking constantly. To avoid this, the present interviewer sought to ensure that all the children participated in the discussion (Gibson, 2012). In Pakistan, the majority of state schools are gender-segregated, especially in rural areas (Malik & Mirza, 2014). Since the objective was to gather the views of both genders, an equal number of FG interviews (4 FG interviews with each group) were carried out with male and female children from different low or middle-income families and attending single-sex schools (Robinson, 2014). The reason for selecting this sample was that these school children were around 12-14 years old and were able to clearly talk about their experiences and different aspects of parental involvement in their learning endeavors.

As the study sample was comprised minors, they could not be interviewed without permission from their parents or guardians. Written consents to participate were collected and signed/stamped by the children's parents and by the children themselves (Spriggs, 2010). Moreover, all the children and their parents were provided with detailed information about the study to ensure that they understood the procedure and what it involved and thus could make an informed decision about their children's participation. This information included the participants' roles and rights, clarity regarding research objectives, and the use and security of the collected data. All the participants voluntarily participated in the study, and small gifts were distributed to the children who participated in the interviews.

I developed my interview guide based on Epstein's framework of parental involvement (Epstein, 2018), supplemented by topics found in previous research on different aspects of parental involvement (e.g., Yuliantiet al., 2019; Wilder, 2014; Bower & Griffin, 2011). As a result, my conversations with the participants proceeded smoothly. I conducted a pilot interview with participants with similar characteristics to those who participated in the study itself. This activity helped to identify weak points and allowed me to make the required revisions before the interviews proper (e.g., Turner, 2010). All the interviews were conducted in Urdu, the national language of Pakistan and audio-recorded with the participant's permission. Likewise, both parents and children were given assurances about anonymity and confidentiality, and pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities.

4.3.2 Studying Parents- Narrative Interviews

This study addressed socio-economically vulnerable rural parents' views on their involvement in their children's education. These parents often perform poorly in other welfare areas, such as employment and education. Narrative interviews were considered an appropriate method of ascertaining rural parents' views on their involvement in their children's education (e.g., Muylaert et al., 2014; Wyrick, 2010). Twelve parents were interviewed, and the data were used in the Study II. The participants were mothers and fathers from different families and ranged in age between 34 and 53 years.

The primary criteria for recruiting informants were being a parent living in a rural area and having a child attending a state school. The sampling method used in this study combined purposeful and snowball sampling techniques (Ghaljaie, Naderifar, & Goli, 2017). Initially, two parents were purposefully recruited for the interview. Social ties are very strong in rural Pakistan (collectivistic society), and the parents initially recruited helped in recruiting further informants. According to Patton (2002), getting help from already recruited participants in recruiting further participants from within their social networks may provide useful information in terms of the research task. As most of the participants were illiterate, the interviewer verbally explained the contents of the information sheet, which included the study objectives, their rights as participants, and a consent form, before the start of the interview. The interviews were conducted in Hindko, one of the regional languages, and one in which the interviewer was also fluent. The parents freely discussed different involvement issues, such as their views on home-school cooperation, participation in children's education at school and home, and the diverse challenges they faced in educating their children.

The interviewer was also acquainted with the local socio-cultural norms and traditions. The place, day, and time of the interview were decided according to the parents' convenience. Interviews with fathers were conducted in locations such as a shop, garden, farm, or the family's home in accordance with their working schedules. The interviews with mothers, however, were conducted in their respective homes. Given the fact that in rural areas, male and female interaction is a sensitive issue, interviews with mothers were conducted with the permission of their husbands or in-laws. My sister accompanied me during the interviews with the mothers, as this helped to maintain a safe and congenial atmosphere and encouraged the informants to talk confidently and freely about different topics, especially gender-sensitive matters. All the interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the interviewees, and they were assured that their anonymity would be protected.

4.3.3 Studying Teachers - Thematic Interviews

Thematic interviews were employed in the case of teachers. Ten state-school teachers were interviewed in the rural province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. In the public sector, separate schools for boys and girls are customary

in Pakistan, especially in rural areas (Malik & Mirza, 2014). The intention was to gather the views of both genders; hence the participants consisted of five male and five female teachers. As with the mothers, being a male researcher interviewing female teachers, especially in remote locations, is not easy. Hence, approval from the district education officers and school leaders was acquired to interview the female teachers. Moreover, to render the environment more encouraging, my niece (an adult) accompanied me during the interviews with the female teachers. This strategy enabled both the female teachers and the interviewer to complete the interview in a befitting manner. The interviews were conducted on the school premises at the convenience of the informants. All the teachers voluntarily participated in the interviews after being fully informed about the research, their rights as a participant, and signing a consent form.

The interview guide was developed based on previous research (e.g., Ashraf, 2019; Epstein, 2018; Wilder, 2014; Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013; Westergård, 2013) so that the discussions would progress logically and all the research topics would be covered. Different aspects of parental involvement were discussed, including the teachers' views on parental involvement in school activities, parental participation in parent-teacher meetings, parents helping children with their homework, and factors they felt obstructed their involvement. These interviews were conducted in Urdu, the national language, and audio-recorded with the teachers' permission. Demographic information was obtained, and field notes were made during the interviews.

4.4   Data Analyses

Various types of data analysis techniques can be used in qualitative research. Thematic and narrative analyses are common methods of analyzing interview data in qualitative studies (McAllum, Simpson & Unson, 2019; Cooper et al., 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2006). I used thematic analysis techniques in Studies I and III and narrative analysis in Study II. The thematic and narrative analysis was data-driven to capture the voices of the children, parents, and teachers.

Thematic analysis is an in-depth qualitative data analytical technique that describes the dataset in a detailed manner, for instance, by analyzing, identifying, organizing, and reporting themes (e.g., Wæraas, 2022; Dawadi, 2020). The six steps in thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used to analyze the present data. All the interview recordings were transcribed and the transcripts validated by reading them and listening to the recordings multiple times. Research has shown that to conduct a more profound analysis, it is necessary to transcribe recorded interviews as the transcription process facilitates more rapid familiarization with the dataset (McMullin, 2021; Bird, 2005). After becoming acquainted with the dataset, initial codes were identified and highlighted.

This doctoral study explored the role of parental involvement in children's education in rural Pakistan from the perspectives of children, parents, and

teachers, a topic which has rarely been investigated in a rural setting in a developing country. A bottom-up approach was considered appropriate, and data-driven coding was performed (Cooper et al., 2012). After coding the entire dataset, analysis at a broader level was conducted to categorize the codes and identify sub-themes and main themes. After this, the interview transcripts were carefully re-read to confirm the relevance of the themes and sub-themes yielded by the data and categorize them. Moreover, to ensure that the sub-themes and themes were adequately supported by the dataset, I revisited the transcribed data and the analysis to search for any information that might further support the existing sub-themes and themes. This process helped to ensure that all the sub-themes and themes accurately reflected the dataset. Finally, quotes used in the findings section were extracted from the dataset (interviews) to illustrate the themes reported in the studies.

The second sub-study (Study II) applied a narrative approach to investigate rural parents' views on parental involvement in their children's education. The narrative technique is considered one of the most appropriate choices for studying and understanding the stories of economically and academically vulnerable informants (e.g., Huber et al., 2013). Most of the present informants (rural parents) were poor and often uneducated, and they tended to narrate their views in detail, thereby supporting narrative analysis as the most suitable methodological choice. This analysis aimed to understand the parents' narratives and socio-cultural phenomena by focusing on "what" is said in the informants' narratives. The analysis started by transcribing the interviews word-for-word, after which an understanding of each interview was gained from close reading of the transcript. After familiarization, the transcripts were compared to discover similarities and differences in stories, and common thematic elements (codes) relevant to the aim of the research were highlighted (Riessman, 2008). Subsequently, the ideas and topics identified in the parents' narratives were categorized and grouped to facilitate the search for appropriate labels for the sub-narratives and narratives. Finally, the transcripts were re-read to search for any further information that might support the existing sub-narratives and narratives. The excerpts to be used in the results were then translated into English (Nikander, 2008).

5 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE ORIGINAL STUDIES

5.1 Study I Children's Perceptions of Parental Involvement

What children think about their parents' role in supporting or hindering their learning has rarely been studied (e.g., Madge & Willmot, 2007), especially in the context of a rural developing country (Nazir & Hameed, 2019). This study centered on children's perceptions of their parents' role as supporting or hindering their education in the context of a rural developing country with a collectivist culture. Eight focus group interviews were conducted with a total of 40 school children (21 boys and 19 girls) in grades six to eight and analyzed using data-driven thematic analysis.

The results showed that these Pakistani children living in rural areas perceived themselves to be aided by their families, with parents who incessantly motivated them to study and made them understand that their own lack of education was responsible for their hardships. The children seemed to understand their parents' efforts to support them and conceded that even though their parents were uneducated, they encouraged and appreciated their children's academic success. Above all, the children's talk highlighted the role of the extended family as an effective compensatory mechanism for their parents' inaccessibility or incapability to help them with their studies. In previous studies conducted in individualistic cultures in the developed world, the idea of the extended family playing a role has not been considered. The present findings revealed that the absence of parental support in rural Pakistan led to a dependency on the extended family's educated members (elder siblings, aunts, uncles, or cousins). Although the rural children saw themselves as unnoticed by their parents due to their low educational level or work-related demands, they reported being assisted in their learning endeavors by educated members of their extended families, an example of the mutual support given by families in a collectivistic socio-domestic culture.

The findings also revealed that although the children reported that their parents profoundly cared about their education, their lack of involvement in it was experienced as disappointing. The children indicated understood, however, that the lack of parental involvement was primarily due to their parent's poverty or lack of education. Such parental deprivation may cause children to be withdrawn from formal education and made to work. Parental ignorance, in turn, means that schools remain unvisited by most parents, a situation that results in a communication gap between home and school and to feelings of discontent in children. Together with socioeconomic destitution, the results exposed the ingrained local practices that negatively affect the education of girls in a patriarchal society. Although parents sent their daughters to school, their differential treatment was apparent in the girls' talk, in which they told how their education was often interrupted after primary education due to social insecurity or early marriage. The results also revealed that elders (parents or grandparents) in the family occupied a dominant position, and that girls might not be allowed to go to school if there is any risk that their so-called honor could be compromised. Thus, parents can also prevent their children from gaining an education.

5.2   Study II Parents' Narratives of Parental Involvement

Parents' active involvement in children's education and a positive attitude towards schools can potentially act as a bridge between children's formal schooling and their learning at home (e.g., Paik et al., 2019; Epstein, 2018). The second sub-study aimed to capture the rarely heard views of socio-economically vulnerable rural parents. Twelve rural parents were interviewed on their views concerning parental involvement, and the interview data was subjected to narrative analysis. The findings yielded two diverse narratives: *a narrative of hope and trust-building* and *a narrative of dissatisfaction and inequality*. Although most parents were illiterate and poor, they were aware of the importance of education and of striving for a better future for their children. The parents' narratives, like the children's talk, also indicated the potential role of their socio-domestic collectivistic culture and help with their children's education from educated members of their extended families (uncle, aunt, and siblings).

Besides parents' desire for and optimistic attitude toward their children's success, they also spoke of various challenges and interruptions to their children's education, including the uncaring attitude of teachers, their precarious socioeconomic situation, and the expectation that they submit to local hegemonic practices. Their narratives showed the grievances with teachers, including teachers' non-professional and discouraging attitude, resulting in miscommunication and poor coordination between home and school. The asymmetrical power relation between poor, often illiterate parents and teachers was also evident, the parents reporting that parents and their children are not treated impartially by teachers, a situation that can add to parents' disappointment and erode their trust in the school.

Another distinctive feature of the findings was the criticism levelled by the rural mothers at their children's fathers. In a patriarchal society, especially in rural areas, speaking against males (e.g., father, husband, or elder brother) is not customary. Most of the mothers were critical if their husband's behavior (misuse of power in their relationship) and were emotional (crying) when describing their lived circumstances. However, their dependence on their husbands limited their free involvement in their children's education. They openly blamed the children's fathers and held them responsible for their children's passive attitude to learning. Despite being less educated than their husbands, the mothers showed awareness and concern, especially on the obstacles to education for girls, and reported trying to resist the violation of fundamental rights such as gender segregation, child labor, and the abuse of male power. Overall, the findings broaden the current understanding of the concept of parental involvement by revealing its opportunities and challenges. The narratives were not solely subjective but also more broadly revealed the general infrastructure of Pakistan's rural hierarchical society.

5.3   Study III Teachers' Views on Parental Involvement

Cooperation between home and school can help teachers better focus on teaching children, as such collaboration and communication enables teachers to gain a better understanding of individual children's needs and their home activities, and thus is conducive to the creation of a more optimal learning atmosphere (Perälä-Littunen & Böök, 2019; Emeagwali, 2009). The third sub-study focused on how teachers view the role of parents and the obstacles hindering parental involvement. Ten rural state schoolteachers were interviewed, and the data were analyzed using data-driven thematic analysis.

The teachers reported experiencing annoyance and dissatisfaction with parents' involvement in their children's education. They reported trying to edify rural parents on the importance of prioritizing their children's education through various channels of communication, such as phone calls and letters, but had often found such contact to be wholly one-way, and reported that many parents could not even be bothered to visit the school. The teachers also wondered what kind of support or learning output parents expected from the school, given the irresponsible stance they took towards school and their children's education and the fact that many of them were neither serious nor practical regarding their children's education and unwilling to spare time to visit the school or properly follow their children's progress. The analysis foregrounded the disappointment teachers felt towards parents for not seeing their child's education as a shared responsibility. According to the teachers, most rural parents consider their responsibility ends with sending their children to school, leaving the responsibility for their education entirely to the teacher.

Although the teachers blamed the parents, the results also indicated that parental non-involvement in their children's educational activities was not

wholly intentional. The rural parents were often controlled and influenced by factors beyond their immediate control, such as their precarious economic situation, lack of education and awareness of education, and, above all, the repercussions of not conforming to local norms. Such factors rendered rural parents' involvement problematic. Because of their parents' precarious socioeconomic circumstances, many children, including girls with a dream of gaining an education, withdrew from school to engage in paid work, in the implausible belief that they would return to school later in life. The teachers highlighted the parental barriers that girls face within the home due to the norms of gender inequality and outside the home due to their lack of safety if unaccompanied. The findings also revealed lack of understanding concerning the hardships faced by rural parents. Their interview talk also indicated that the teachers were inactive and unresponsive on the issue of engaging children's parents, further widening the gap between home and school. Most teachers consciously or unconsciously acknowledged that their own children attended fee-paying private schools, thereby signaling teachers' own dissatisfaction with the education system they serve, and hence that they are victims of their own rhetoric.

5.4 Synthesis of Children's, Parents', and Teachers' Perspectives

This study focused on children's, parents', and teachers' perspectives on parental involvement in children's education in rural KPK Pakistan. Their perspectives showed some commonalities and differences. Among the commonalities, both children and parents acknowledged the important contribution made to children's education by the extended family system and collectivist domestic culture. All three stakeholders reported parents' vulnerable socio-economic conditions as a potential factor contributing to parents' lack of involvement in their children's education. They described poverty and illiteracy as often preventing parents from monitoring their children's education and leading them to withdrawing their children from education and, instead of sending them to school, making them work to supplement the family's finances. All three also described the frequent lack of cooperation between home and school as due to various reasons such as parents' precarious socioeconomic situation, teachers' disrespectful behavior and parent's lack of interest. Factors such as cultural idiosyncrasies and gender inequality were commonly mentioned by children, mothers, and teachers. They described girls as more deprived of their fundamental right to education than boys, a situation that may be due to the patriarchal structure of their community. In addition, mothers spoke about the prevalence in their community of an unjustified division of power between male and female in which women were often relegated to a subordinate position. Such power differences can have a negative effect on girls and women, especially in the domestic, social, and educational domains of life. Compared to fathers, the rural mothers seemed more

conscious and concerned about their daughters' education despite the fact that they were mostly illiterate.

Moreover, the study indicated different realities and differences of opinion, especially between rural parents and teachers, in their respective talk about home-school cooperation and responsibility for children's failures in their academic learning. Parents seemed to blame teachers for disrespectful behavior, while teachers blamed parents for lack of cooperation and irresponsible conduct regarding their children's education. Parents expressed disappointment over teachers' attitudes towards them and their children's learning in state schools. Parents also criticized teachers for not considering them as equals and for behaving non-professionally, thereby potentially widening the gap between home and school. Some teacher's admission that they were sending their children to private schools indicates their dissatisfaction with the quality of education in state schools. Teachers also claimed that parents were often passive and indifferent to their children's education.

6 DISCUSSION

This doctoral study contributes to research and understanding on "parental involvement" by providing new knowledge on the issue in the context of a rural area in a developing country. The results showed that irrespective of the diverse challenges they faced, including unfair treatment by teachers, vulnerable socioeconomic situation of their families, barriers to the education of girls, asymmetry and misuse of power, and cultural idiosyncrasies, parents sought to contribute to their children's education and wished to see them succeed in their lives. This study addressed parental involvement from three distinct perspectives, i.e., children's, parents', and teachers' views on parental involvement in the context of a rural area in Pakistan. Many of the findings, such as gender segregation, abuse of power, and the role of the extended family are, to some extent, socio-culturally specific. The meaning of a specific social phenomenon depends upon its context, since it is this which communicates the informants' lived realities. This dissertation research has broadened the meaning of parental involvement through its novel insights into a life context characterized by a precarious socio-economic situation but also by a rich network of family relationships.

The first sub-study investigated children's views about parental involvement in their education. The children spoke about both the drawbacks (e.g., poverty and illiteracy) faced by their parents and the positive motivation they received from their parents. They acknowledged the importance of parental participation in their education and reported feeling greater motivation and inspiration when their parents supported them. They reported that their parents warned them that if they didn't study hard, they might end up enduring the same miseries as their parents. Previous research has highlighted the importance for children's learning careers of adequate financial, academic, and motivational support from their parents (e.g., Gobena, 2018; Edwards & Alldred, 2000). The second sub-study investigated parents' narratives on parental involvement and the results showed that the parents experienced both hope and dissatisfaction. Hearing rural parents' voices in this way has contributed to a broader understanding of the concept of parental involvement in children's education.

Apart from their vulnerable socioeconomic situation, the parents criticized teachers for not treating them respectfully or communicating with them in a timely way about matters affecting their children's academic learning. They regarded most teachers as non-professionals who sent their own children to private schools, prompting the question, how then can they treat and teach others' children fairly? The mothers also spoke about patriarchal power relations and male domination as one of the main reasons for depriving girls of education. Their narratives confirm the continuing violation of fundamental human rights, such as compelling children to work and girls into early marriages. In many developing countries, girls' education is often restricted, and women's independent decisions and involvement in children's education are controlled. Hence, women often demonstrate submissive attitudes due to their dependency on men (e.g., Shah & Shah, 2012). The rural teachers, in turn, highlighted that the gap between home and school is due to parents' lack of coordination, demotivation, and other socioeconomic factors. The teachers were also found to have indifferent attitudes towards children's parents and seemed to blame parents for not putting aside sufficient time for monitoring and guiding their children's learning, such as taking an interest in their homework.

A hitherto unacknowledged factor that emerged from the children's and parents' stories concerned the important role of rural collectivistic values in strengthening parental participation in their children's education. This phenomenon has not been addressed in previous research in an individualistic culture in the developed world. The analyses revealed that parents with low education and long working hours often take advantage of their local socio-collectivistic culture, i.e., the extended family system, in which educated extended family members may guide children and thus compensate for the vacuum left by parents. While differences exist between individualistic and collectivistic cultures in such areas as family structures, schooling systems, the rural-urban divide, and parents' ways of thinking (e.g., Cortina et al., 2017), individualistic and collectivist cultures are equally concerned with how people achieve their goals (Lansford et al., 2021; Lodhi et al., 2021). The primary concern of people living in an individualistic culture is safeguarding the rights of each person and their immediate family, whereas in a collectivistic culture, people's foremost concern is to work for their immediate community; this means that in exchange for loyalty and obedience the people in this group are likely to look after each other and show solidarity in helping individual members achieve their targets (e.g., Cortina et al., 2017; Avan et al., 2007). In rural Pakistan, households are characterized by multigenerational households' and free exchange of support and knowledge. The role of the extended family is to provide additional support and assistance when needed for a nuclear family's well-being (Lodhi et al., 2021). Educated family members (elder siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins) are often involved in providing different kinds of support, e.g., childcare, helping children with homework or visiting a child's school in place of their parents. In turn, grandparents or other elderly members indirectly help children, e.g., emotional support, giving advice, and sharing stories and learning experiences (Ali, 2018;

Avan et al., 2007). In sum, the children, parents and teachers' stories were not only subjective but also, on a broader level, revealing about the overall infrastructure, socio-economic circumstances and hierarchical, patriarchal, nature of rural Pakistani society.

6.1 Important Features of Children's, Parents', and Teachers' Perspectives

There were both similarities and differences between the children's, parents, and teachers' perspectives on parental involvement in children's education. All three stakeholders spoke about parental poverty, illiteracy, and cultural idiosyncrasies, factors which can contribute to parent's lack of involvement. The parents spoke about teachers' lack of professionalism, and teachers about families' lack of motivation as the leading causes of lack of parental involvement and poor schooling. The children and parents both spoke of the importance of the extended family system in a rural collectivistic culture in compensating for parents' lack of involvement in their children's education. The parents' and teachers' interviews yielded the most contradictory data, as each group blamed the other. The teachers blamed the parents, and the parents pointed to the defects of the teachers. The teachers alleged that the children's parents did not cooperate with them and help their children learn at home, whereas the parents believed that the teachers did not consider them equals and were not committed to their profession. In learning of the experiences and viewpoints of both teachers and parents, it became clear that despite poverty, illiteracy, gender inequality, and the indifference shown by teachers, both stakeholders were somehow failing to understand and hence perform their responsibilities. This was not only because of indifference and ignorance but also because both parties did not fully understand their roles and responsibilities concerning cooperation in promoting their children's education. Hence, it is imperative that this 'blame game' stops and that both parties understand and perform their roles fairly and collaborate to help children succeed in their learning endeavors (e.g., Farooq, 2018; Lasater, 2016).

Overall, the experiences and perspectives on the notion of parental involvement of all three stakeholders (children, parents, and teachers) in rural Pakistan showed some important similarities and differences. Norm-based socio-cultural traditions and the benefits of a collectivistic family pattern were evident in the data. This dissertation research has revealed the educational infrastructure of a rural area in relation to the teachers in schools, the position of parents, the views of school children themselves, and other socio-cultural phenomena. It has opened the possibility for a new debate on the role of parents in supporting their children's education in their current socio-economic situation and in the light of their asymmetries of power, including in their relations with teachers, in future research.

6.2 Contributions – Parental Involvement in Context Updating

The present study, with its multi-informant approach (i.e., children's, parents and teachers' perspectives), contributes to the literature on parental involvement by broadening the concept of parental involvement to include such ideas as parental interference, freeing children from child labor and early marriage by the simple expedient of sending them to school, and the value of the extended family in compensating for parental involvement where a child's parents are unable to do this themselves. Parental involvement, which is one of the central pillars in children's learning and has been extensively discussed in the context of developed countries (Purola et al., 2021; Kim, 2020; Epstein, 2018; Hartas, 2015; Edwards & Alldred, 2000) has been addressed in the context of a rural area in a developing country in this doctoral research.

Comparison of the findings of the present research with earlier research on parental involvement and home-school cooperation (e.g., Epstein, 2018; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Sormunen et al., 2011), the understanding, usage, and the nature of parental involvement in the developed or western world and in developing countries are poles apart (Ahmed et al., 2022; Kim, 2020; Pobbi, 2020). For example, in the developed world, parental involvement refers to the thorough-going and constant participation of parents in all aspects of children's learning. It is not confined to children's activities at home but extends to their academic performance at school. Getting their children into the best school is at the top of the parental involvement agenda, while evaluating the curriculum children are taught also falls within the domain of parental involvement. Helping children in their studies, decision-making, and resolving academic queries are also part and parcel of parental involvement (Purola et al., 2021; Reparaz & Sotés-Elizalde, 2019).

In contrast, in developing countries like Pakistan, providing children with nourishing food, postponing their daughters' marriages so that they can complete their education, exempting children from child labor, and sending them to school are the kinds of actions that can be considered as parental involvement. Parental negligence and poverty, however, keep children deprived of the materials, guidance, and motivational support they would need as learners. Hence, the present study presents a new theoretical aspect to bear on the topic of parental involvement. Another important theoretical dimension found in this research is a specific benefit of a collectivistic culture, i.e., the extended family system, as in rural Pakistan, which can compensate for a lack of involvement by a child's parents. The role of the extended family has not been noted in previous studies in the developed world or within individualistic cultures. The views of the parents and children testify to the practice of educated family members (uncles, aunts, cousins) helping children with their homework, especially those whose parents are unable to provide such assistance. Thus, the role of the extended family in performing parental duties is a novel addition to the concept of parental involvement in children's education.

6.3 Practical Implications

The regrettable poverty, illiteracy, and lack of professionalism of many teachers in rural Pakistan have caused a gulf between home and school that eventually weakens children's academic opportunities (Ahmed et al., 2021). The results of the present study have various practical implications for parental involvement. Overall, they sound a wake-up call to administrators, school leaders, and policymakers to identify practices and plan suitable ways to promote and facilitate parental participation in children's education. The previously ignored or little use of "parental involvement", which is one of the main pillars of school education, has led children towards poor performance and created a gap between home and school (Paul, Rashmi & Srivastava, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2021; Hasnat, 2015). The current study has highlighted the importance and need for parental involvement in children's schooling in general and especially in rural areas of Pakistan. The suggestions for parental involvement offered here can help managers design academic policies that enrich learning, invite the contribution of parents and support cooperation and coordination between the school administration and the children's parents.

First, the present study suggests that schools need to be aware of the economic constraints on the involvement of rural families in their children's education. The findings show that rural parents want to be involved in their children's education and wish to see them succeed. However, their vulnerable economic situation often means that their attempts at involvement are interpreted as interference. Hence, given the economic situation, a whole-village approach of incentivizing families to send their children to school and to actively participate in their education should be initiated through school and community leaders. Such a strategy can help economically distressed parents who wish to educate their children as well as encourage less motivated and less well-informed parents.

Second, the study findings significantly indicate that increasing parental awareness and making parents understand the benefits of education are more important than merely or symbolically attending a parent-teacher meeting. When parents who are illiterate and enmeshed in conservative values become better informed about their roles, responsibilities, and activities, they may become more engaged in school-based parental involvement and be satisfied with their children's education. Media, school leaders, and community leaders should launch awareness campaigns on the benefits of child education, the harm to children of dropping out of school, and the negative impact of early marriages on girls. This would help to combat irrational, stereotypical thinking and conservative trends that lead to gender marginalization, bias, and abuse (Rabia et al., 2019; Male and Wodon, 2016).

Third, the study highlighted the asymmetrical balance of power in the academic sphere and how it is often misused. The findings showed that teachers often consider rural parents, due to their poverty and illiteracy, inferior to

themselves and blame them for their children's academic failures in various situations. The study also found that uncaring and disrespectful attitudes by teachers, leading to the breakdown of communication and each party blaming the other, discourage parents' involvement, to the ultimate detriment of their children's education (Ozmen et al., 2016; Ashraf et al., 2015). To remedy this situation, the state should ensure transparent and quality recruitment of teachers and provide quality induction programmes for in-service teachers on their ethical responsibilities and on cooperation with parents. The provision of flexible and accessible communication channels may also be an effective way of reaching out to parents, especially those doing laboring or unskilled work. This would encourage teachers to view parents as equal partners and to teaching, treating, and inspiring others' children as if they were their own. It would also encourage rural parents who are often uneducated or less educated to more confidently express their concerns to teachers (Ahmed et al., 2021).

The present findings and the recommendations based on them could strengthen teaching, broaden parents' understanding of their responsibilities to their children, and boost children's academic performance. Thus, the findings can help both in removing existing hindrances and in engineering new policies to bring about positive interaction between home and school, thereby substituting barriers with opportunities. The findings also have value for other neighboring developing countries such as India, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan which have almost the same socio-cultural structure and share similar impediments to universal education as Pakistan. In view of the gaps in the literature that have been revealed in this dissertation research process, the findings invite a new understanding of parental involvement in children's education in Pakistan, and perhaps also in other developing countries, as one of the main pillars enabling children's success and development.

6.4   Ethical Considerations

Conducting research in an ethically responsible manner, meaning it ensures that the anonymity, free will, interests and concerns of participants are protected, and enhances its value (Van Wijk & Harrison, 2013; Josselson, 2007). This research followed the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity and the code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Research Ethics of the University of Jyväskylä. The data were collected in rural Pakistan through interviews/discussions with children, parents and teachers. All the relevant protocols and guidelines were followed, including those concerning culturally sensitive issues, while interviewing the participants, especially females, i.e., schoolgirls, mothers, and female teachers. In rural Pakistan, most state schools are gender-segregated; thus, to gather the views of both genders, an equal number of interviews were conducted with boys and girls, male and female teachers, and mothers and fathers.

My being a male researcher interviewing females (teachers, mothers, and girls) was not easy, especially given the geographical remoteness of the informants. Rural parents, especially mothers, can be considered vulnerable because of their weak socioeconomic situation and less exposure to communication with males other than relatives (Bashir, 2020). Similarly, interviewing children can be demanding due to the power asymmetry between child and interviewer, especially in the case of female children (Einarsdóttir, 2007). In addition, gender segregation in education also made it challenging to interview female teachers. To counter these potential obstacles, I made appropriate arrangements well before the interviews. I obtained formal permission from district education officers and school principals to access schools and recruit participants. Written consent for participation was collected and signed/stamped by children, parents, and teachers (e.g., Klykken, 2022). Moreover, to avoid offending cultural sensitivities, I was accompanied by my sister, an adult niece, and a female school worker during the interviews with the children, female teachers, and mothers. This strategy helped create a safe and positive environment and encouraged openness on the part of the informants, enabling them to talk freely and confidently about different issues and topics.

Due to their weak socioeconomic position and low exposure to interaction with strangers, including researchers, rural mothers can be considered vulnerable (Farrimond, 2013; Bashir, 2020). Hence, I tried to create an encouraging atmosphere through understanding, empathy and respecting the participants' feelings. Almost all the mothers became emotional (crying, expressing sadness and resentment) when discussing the obstacles to their children's education, personal matters, and their everyday life circumstances. Some mother's talk about their sufferings, especially when they were emotional, went too far off-topic. However, I regarded it as necessary and allowed the mothers to talk and display their emotions before smoothly shifting the discussion back towards the research topic of parental involvement.

All the interviews with children and teachers were conducted on school premises with the permission and kind assistance of the school management. The interviews with mothers were conducted in their homes with their consent and at their convenience, and with fathers in different places such as a garden, farm, shop, or home. All the participants voluntarily participated in the study. Before the interview, participants were provided with detailed information about the study to help them understand its purpose and make an informed decision about their participation. All the interview discussions were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. All the interviews were conducted in Urdu (the national language) and Hindko (a regional language), in both of which I have native-level proficiency. All the interviews were collected, stored, and handled carefully; I alone had access to the data (Lin, 2009). All participants were informed about the storage and security of the data', and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

6.5 Critical Reflections on My Research

As a researcher, it is always good practice to candidly highlight limitations in the research process as these can guide avenues for potential future research. I reflected critically on the sampling, data collection, and analytical methods I applied in this doctoral research. This enabled me to suggest further research opportunities related to my research topic.

This doctoral dissertation summary reports on three studies conducted on the role of parental involvement in children's education. I employed qualitative research methods to examine parental involvement, and the results offered a new understanding of the topic in the context of a rural area in Pakistan. On the one hand, the data collection approach and the sample sizes were appropriate, given the qualitative nature of the research. The choice of a qualitative approach was also appropriate as no research existed on the topic in the context of a rural area in a developing country. The use of qualitative interviews was also appropriate, as rural children and poor, often illiterate parents unfamiliar with surveys as might have found a questionnaire difficult to answer (e.g., Ogan, Karakuş & Kurşun, 2013). On the other hand, while the samples in all three doctoral studies were relatively small, this can be justified on the grounds that sample size rarely matters in qualitative research (e.g., Marshall et al., 2013). I consider that I extracted sufficient valuable information from the three data sets to meet my doctoral research objectives, although slightly more detailed data could have further enhanced the findings. However, constraints on resources meant that it would not have been possible to collect qualitative data from larger numbers of participants. In the future, if I have the opportunity to conduct similar types of studies, I would hope to be able to conduct more detailed interviews with larger numbers of participants.

Another strength of the samples used in my doctoral study is their diversity, as the data were gathered from children, parents and teachers. This diversity helped to generate a lot of valuable information from different stakeholders' viewpoints. Finally, the samples used in this doctoral study were all from one geographical region of Pakistan. Pakistan is a land of many sub-cultures, and challenges to primary education and parental involvement differ significantly across different sub-cultures and social classes. Based on this limitation, the findings may not be generalizable to other social classes and sub-groups in Pakistan. Given the qualitative nature of the study, it was appropriate to draw a sample from one geographical location; however, in future, if I have a chance to continue this kind of research, I would gather data from different sub-cultures to understand potential variations in parental involvement in children's education. I might also undertake large-scale quantitative research to cover the views on parental involvement of a range of sub-cultures and ethnic groups.

The data collection process went smoothly, according to the plan I first discussed with my research supervisors. I believe that I obtained enough details and depth of information from the participants to meet my doctoral research

requirements. However, at the same time, I suspect that a few factors might have decreased the level of information that I might otherwise have acquired from the participants. First, in the case of the school children, there was a clear age gap between me and them. Although I used focus group interviews, which are effective in familiar situations (McLachlan, 2005), I observed that these rural school children from economically disadvantaged families were initially a little shy about talking to me. Nevertheless, I persevered and managed to create a rapport with them at the beginning of the interview which encouraged them to speak freely. The presence of a female chaperone during the discussions also helped me to create a conducive environment in which to conduct the interviews. However, I sensed from some of the participants' body language and facial expressions that they were a little hesitant to speak in front of strange adults. Nevertheless, for cultural reasons, the presence of a female chaperone, i.e., my niece and my sister, when interviewing the female children, female teachers, and mothers was unavoidable, given the challenge of collecting data from female participants as a male researcher. Finally, at the end of the interviews with the children, I presented them with some small gifts. I did not inform them in advance of this and the gifts were kept in my bag and not visible to them during the interview. Thus they were surprised and happy to receive these gifts.

The data from the participants were collected in the Urdu and Hindko languages as the participants were unable to speak English. As I only have a speaking and listening native-level proficiency in Hindko and cannot write in Hindko, the data were transcribed in Urdu. For the purpose of reporting data in the research papers, I translated some parts of the data into English. It is possible that I might have lost some nuances of meaning when transcribing or translating data produced in one language into a different language.

6.5.1   Trustworthiness

There is no consensus as to what constitutes trustworthiness in qualitative research. However, many seminal qualitative researchers have proposed various dimensions along which qualitative research can be evaluated (e.g., Yadav, 2022; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The criteria used for assessing the quality of the present research were credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Stenfors et al., 2020; Stahl & King, 2020; Anney, 2014).

Credibility refers to the degree to which the research findings are plausible and correct (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). My prolonged engagement with the entire data set during my doctoral research helped me to align with previous literature, the research questions, data collection, data analysis, and study findings. This helped me complete and produce credible research findings. Confirmability, in turn, refers to a strong connection between the data and the study findings (Stenfors et al., 2020). In this doctoral research, I have shown how the findings were produced, presented detailed descriptions of the data and quoted verbatim from the data whenever appropriate, actions which have helped meet the conformability criteria of trustworthiness. Finally, the transferability factor refers to the applicability of the study findings to other locations, settings or groups.

The basis for evaluating transferability is evident in the detailed description of the research context in which the research was carried out and how it shaped the research findings (Stenfors et al., 2020; Anney, 2014). I also provided sufficient information on the study context and the procedures used in my research to help the reader to assess my interpretations of the data and consider to what extent the study findings can be transferred to other settings or contexts (Stahl & King, 2020; Morrow, 2005). For example, the study findings might be transferred to different geographical locations and rural provinces in Pakistan, specifically where widespread poverty, and illiteracy, is prevalent. Moreover, despite cultural differences, the findings may be partially transferable to other low-income countries, especially in South Asia, as they also have large rural populations, widespread poverty, illiteracy and a lack of good schools, especially in rural areas.

6.5.2 Future Research Avenues

The above critical reflections on my overall doctoral research and evaluation of each of the three sub-studies point to potential future avenues for research into parental involvement in children's education and allied domains in Pakistan and elsewhere.

The children's data were collected through focus group interviews, and the children freely participated in the discussions. However, the rural children did not mention corporal punishment or expressions of anger by teachers or parents, despite their use as a disciplinary means in rural areas by both groups (e.g., Abbas, 2022). Further research could be done using methods more sensitive to the experiences of children who have received corporal punishment. Moreover, rural children may experience negative feelings and dismay when their parents cannot satisfy their needs or demands (Ahmed et al., 2022). Further research could investigate children's feelings, especially when their parents cannot support their education due to a lack of resources. Furthermore, whereas almost all the mothers raised gender segregation issues, the fathers did not. Hence, a possible avenue for future research could be the differences in parents' treatment of their male and female school-going children. Moreover, in Pakistan, especially in rural areas, schoolteachers are not professionally highly trained or cooperative (e.g., Farooq, 2018), as was apparent in their admission that their own children go to fee-paying private schools in order to receive a quality education. However, the teachers did not openly confess or allude to their own shortcomings; instead, they blamed poor, often illiterate parents and held them responsible for their children's passive learning. Future research could investigate teachers' professional skills and ways of cooperating with families. Moreover, this research was limited to exploring teachers' views on financially deprived parents in a rural area in KPK province. Investigating the views of urban schoolteachers involved in teaching the children of affluent families in cities may produce different and interesting findings.

SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Tässä väitöstutkimuksessa tutkittiin lasten, vanhempien ja opettajien käsityksiä vanhempien osallistumisen merkityksestä lasten koulutukselle sekä vanhempien ja koulun yhteistyötä Pakistanin maaseudulla. Vanhempien osallistumista lasten koulutukseen ja yhteistyötä koulun kanssa on tutkittu laajasti kehittyneissä maissa (Purola ym., 2021; Kim, 2020; Epstein, 2018; Hartas, 2015; Edwards & Alldred, 2000). Kehitysmaissa tämä aihepiiri on kuitenkin jäänyt vähemmälle huomiolle, vanhempien osallistuminen on jopa voitu jättää huomiotta tai se on sivuutettu (Pobbi, 2020; Hasnat, 2015). Joka tapauksessa vanhempien osallistuminen lasten koulutukseen on kehitysmaissa erilaista verrattuna kehittyneeseen maailmaan, eikä sillä välttämättä ajatella edes olevan merkitystä. Tämä kuilu, erot ja eriarvoisuus vanhempien osallistumisessa kehittyneiden ja kehittyvien maiden välillä johtuu valituista toimintatavoista, kulttuurista ja erilaisesta sosioekonomisesta tilanteesta (Kim, 2018; Afridi, Anderson & Mundy, 2014; Borgonovi & Montt, 2012). Lisäksi tutkimukset osoittavat, että monissa kehitysmaissa ei ole erityisiä toimintatapoja, jotka koskisivat vanhempien osallistumista lasten koulutukseen, eikä Pakistan ole tästä poikkeus (esim. Pobbi, 2020; Ashraf, 2019; Hasnat, 2015). Tämän väitöstutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tutkia vanhempien osallistumista lasten koulutukseen, ja valottaa tilannetta erityisesti Pakistanin maaseudun kulttuurisessa sekä yhteiskunnallisessa kontekstissa.

Tutkijat ovat käsitteellistäneet vanhempien roolia lasten koulutuksessa ja heidän vuorovaikutustaan opettajien kanssa eri tavoin. Tutkimuksissa on käytetty erilaisia käsitteitä kuten vanhempien osallistumista (parental involvement) (Epstein, 2018; Wilder, 2014), vanhempien sitoutumista (parental engagement) (Manzon et al., 2015) ja kodin ja koulun välistä yhteistyötä (home-school cooperation) (Orell & Pihlaja, 2020). Nämä monet tutkimuksissa käytetyt käsitteet tekevät operationalisoinnista epäselvää ja epäjohdonmukaista (Fan & Chen, 2001). Lisäksi eri käsitteiden käyttökelpoisuus voi vaihdella kulttuurista toiseen. Tämä vaihtelu johtunee ihmisten erilaisista sosioekonomisista olosuhteista (esim. Bower & Griffin, 2011). Tässä tutkimuksessa käytetään käsitettä *vanhempien osallistuminen* (parental involvement), koska tarkoituksena on ymmärtää erilaisia näkökulmia, ja koska tuo käsite sopii kehitysmaakontekstiin paremmin kuin vanhempien sitoutuminen tai kodin ja koulun yhteistyö. Vanhempien osallistumisen käsitettä käytetään myös laajalti kirjallisuudessa (esim. Lerner et al., 2022; Hakyemez-Paul, 2019; Epstein, 2018; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Fan & Chen, 2001). Tärkein innoittaja tämän tutkimuksen tekemiselle oli tavoite laajentaa ymmärrystä vanhempien osallistumisesta kehitysmaiden maaseudun näkökulmasta, jossa vanhempien osallistuminen on vähemmän tunnettua, ja käytännön toimintana lähes olematonta.

Tässä tutkimuksessa sovellettiin Epsteinin laajalti tutkimuksessa käytettyä vanhempien osallistumisen mallia. Mallissa käsitteellistetään erilaisia vanhempien osallistumisen tapoja. Näillä tavoilla vanhemmat ja opettajat yhdessä tukevat lapsia opetussuunnitelman mukaisessa ja sen ulkopuolisessa toiminnassa (esim. Epstein, 2018, 2009, ja 2001). Epstein (2018) laajensi ymmärrystä

vanhempien osallistumisesta selittämällä, että osallistumisen pitäisi mennä kodin ja koulun viestintää ja kutsuja pidemmälle. Kodin, koulun ja sitä ympäröivän yhteisön välillä pitäisi olla kumppanuus (Epstein, 2018). Epsteinin mukaan se, miten koulut ja opettajat huolehtivat lasten oppimisesta heijastaa heidän suhtautumistaan lasten perheisiin. Esimerkiksi jos opettajat tai koulun henkilökunta ajattelee lapsia oppilaina, he usein myös ajattelevat koulun ulkopuolisten, lasten oppimiseen liittyvien tehtävien kuuluvan perheille. Jos opettajat näkevät oppilaat lapsina, he kokevat vanhemmat kumppaneiksi ja työskentelevät yhdessä vanhempien kanssa (Epstein, 2018). Tavoite tällaisessa kodin ja koulun välisessä kumppanuudessa on tukea kaikkien lasten menestystä koulussa ja myöhemmin elämässä. Kun vanhemmat, opettajat, oppilaat ja muut näkevät toisensa kasvatuskumppaneina, muodostuu yhteisö, jossa ovat mukana huolenpidon ja luottamuksen elementit ja jossa lapset kokevat "koulun olevan perheen kaltainen ja perheen koulun kaltainen" (Epstein ym., 2009). Mallissa kuvataan kuusi osallistumisen muotoa: vanhempana toimiminen, kommunikointi, koulussa tehtävä vapaaehtoistyö, oppiminen kotona, päätöksenteko ja yhteistyö ympäröivän yhteisön kanssa. Nämä kuusi osallisuuden lajia toimivat kehyksenä, jonka avulla voidaan analysoida opettajien, vanhempien ja yhteisön jäsenten toimintaa, vastuita ja toimia (Epstein, 2009; Epstein et al., 2002).

Lasten vanhempien ja opettajien ääntä vanhempien osallistumisesta kuullaan harvoin kehittyvissä maissa, kuten Pakistanissa. Tämä puute ohjasi minua tutkimuskysymysten muotoilussa. Seuraavat kolme tutkimuskysymystä on johdettu tutkimuksen päätavoitteesta, ja niiden tarkoitus on edistää tutkittavan ilmiön teoreettista ja käytännöllistä ymmärtämistä eri näkökulmista. Tutkimuksen vahvuutena on kokonaisvaltainen lähestymistapa ja aineiston kerääminen sekä lapsilta ja vanhemmilta että opettajilta.

1: Minkälaisen vanhempien osallistumisen lapset tunnistavat heidän oppimistaan tukevaksi, ja minkälaisten esteiden lapset kokevat estävän vanhempia auttamasta heitä oppimisessa? (osatutkimus 1).

2: Millaisena maaseudun vanhemmat näkevät mahdollisuutensa osallistua lasten oppimisen tukemiseen, ja mitä esteitä he näkevät tässä toiminnassa? (osatutkimus 2).

3: Miten opettajat näkevät vanhempien roolin lasten koulutuksessa, ja mitä esteitä he havaitsevat vanhempien osallistumiselle? (osatutkimus 3).

4: Mitä yhtäläisyyksiä ja eroja on lasten, vanhempien ja opettajien vanhempien osallistumista koskevissa näkemyksissä? Vastatakseni tähän kysymykseen vertailin ja syntetisoin lasten, vanhempien ja opettajien näkemyksiä kaikissa kolmessa osatutkimuksessa.

Tutkimus toteutettiin lasten, vanhempien ja opettajien laadullisilla haastatteluilla. Haastatteluilla saatiin monipuolinen käsitys vanhempien osallistumisesta lasten koulutukseen. Pakistanissa tutkimukseen osallistujat valittiin Khyber Pakhtoon Khawan (KPK) provinssista. Fokusryhmähaastattelut olivat sopiva tekniikka tietojen keräämiseen lapsilta. Tällaisissa haastatteluissa on mahdollista

luoda mukava ilmapiiri, jossa lapset saattoivat jakaa ajatuksiaan ja kokemuksiaan (Gibson, 2012). Opettajien näkemyksiä vanhempien osallistumiseen liittyvistä kysymyksistä kerättiin puolistrukturoiduilla haastatteluilla. Koska suurin osa haastatelluista vanhemmista oli kouluttamattomia tai vähemmän koulutettuja, narratiiviset haastattelut olivat sopiva valinta, mikä auttoi osallistujia ilmaisemaan näkemyksensä vapaasti.

Tuloksista nähtiin, että maaseudulla asuvat lapset, vanhemmat ja opettajat näkivät vanhempien osallistumisen arvon, mutta samalla useita esteitä, jotka haittaavat vanhempien osallistumista lasten koulutukseen. Lasten, vanhempien ja opettajien näkemyksissä vanhempien osallistumisesta oli yhtäläisyyksiä, mutta myös joitakin vastakkaisia näkemyksiä tuli esiin. Lasten vanhempien ja opettajien kertomuksista kävi ilmi, että vanhempien köyhyys, luku- ja kirjoitustaidottomuus, kulttuuriset erityispiirteet, opettajien ammattitaidon puute ja perheen koulutuksen vastainen asenne olivat tärkeimmät syyt vanhempien osallistumattomuuteen. Lisäksi lasten ja vanhempien kertomuksista nousi esiin uusi käsitys maaseudun kollektiivisen kulttuurin (suurperhe) merkityksestä vanhempien osallistumisen vahvistamisessa. Tätä kollektiivisen kulttuurin roolia ei ole otettu huomioon aiemmissa, kehittyneissä maissa tai individualistisissa kulttuureissa tehdyissä tutkimuksissa. Lapset ja vanhemmat kertoivat yhdessä suurperheen merkityksestä, ja siitä miten kollektiivisessa kotikulttuurissa perheet tukevat toisiaan, ja koulutetut perheenjäsenet auttavat lapsia heidän oppimispyrkimyksissään sekä kompensoivat vanhempien puuttuvaa osallistumista lasten koulutukseen.

Tuloksista kävi myös ilmi, että yhdessä sosioekonomisten haasteiden kanssa paikalliset käytännöt voivat vaikuttaa tyttöjen koulutukseen patriarkaalisessa yhteiskunnassa. Vaikka vanhemmat lähettävät tyttärensä kouluun, heidän erilainen kohtelunsa näkyi tyttöjen äitien ja opettajien kertomuksissa. Näissä kertomuksissa kuvattiin, kuinka tyttöjen koulutus keskeytyy usein peruskoulun jälkeen. Haastatellut kertoivat, että tyttöjen ei ehkä anneta käydä koulua, jos koulunkäynnin koetaan vaarantavan heidän perheensä niin sanotun kunnian. Näin ollen vanhemmat voivat myös estää lapsiaan saamasta koulutusta. Lisäksi tulokset toivat näkyviin köyhien, usein luku- ja kirjoitustaidottomien vanhempien ja opettajien välisen epätasapainoisen valtasuhteen. Opettajat eivät kohtele vanhempia ja heidän lapsiaan puolueettomasti. Tämä voi mahdollisesti aiheuttaa vanhemmille pettymystä ja heikentää heidän luottamustaan kouluun. Ristiriitaisimmat havainnot tulivat esiin vanhempien ja opettajien haastatteluissa, joissa molemmat arvostelivat toisiaan. Opettajat syyttivät vanhempia, ja vanhemmat osoittelivat opettajien virheitä. Opettajat väittivät, että lasten vanhemmat eivät tee yhteistyötä heidän kanssaan, eivätkä auta lapsiaan oppimaan kotona. Vanhemmat uskoivat, että opettajat eivät pidä heitä tasavertaisina, eivätkä opettajat ole sitoutuneita ammattiinsa. Kun tunsi molempien osapuolten kokemukset ja näkökulmat oli selvää, että sekä vanhemmat että opettajat eivät jotenkin onnistuneet toimimaan niin kuin olisi ollut parasta. Tämä ei johdu ainoastaan siitä, että he olisivat välinpitämättömiä ja tietämättömiä vaan myös siitä, että he eivät täysin ymmärrä rooliaan ja velvollisuuksiaan. Olisi välttämätöntä, että tämä

"syyttelypeli" lopetetaan, ja sen sijaan molemmat osapuolet auttavat oikeudenmukaisesti ja vastavuoroisesti lapsia suoriutumaan hyvin oppimispyrkimyksissään (esim. Farooq, 2018; Lasater, 2016).

Tämä tutkimus on tuottanut uutta tietoa ja uutta ymmärrystä sekä laajentanut käsitystä vanhempien osallistumisesta ja sen esteistä. Tulokset osoittivat erilaisia lisäyksiä "vanhempien osallistumisen" käsitteeseen. Näitä lisäyksiä ovat vanhempien toiminta, joka estää koulunkäynnin, lasten vapauttaminen työstä ja varhaisista avioliitoista, pelkkä lasten kouluun lähettämisen, ja laajennetun perheen osuus lapsen koulunkäynnissä. Kollektiivisen kulttuurin eli Pakistanin maaseudulla vallitsevan suurperhejärjestelmän toimiminen kompensoivana tekijänä onkin yksi tämän tutkimuksen tuottamista uusista havainnoista. Suurperheen roolia ei ole huomioitu aiemmissa, kehittyneissä maissa ja individualistisissa kulttuureissa tehdyissä tutkimuksissa. Tutkimus tuottaa tietoa, joka tukee opetusta, laajentaa vanhempien ymmärrystä heidän vastuustaan sekä viime kädessä parantaa lasten akateemista suoritusta. Tutkimustuloksista on apua myös sekä esteiden poistamisessa että sellaisten uusien toimintatapojen suunnittelussa, jotka tuovat vuorovaikutusta kodin ja koulun välille korvaten esteet mahdollisuuksilla. Tutkimuksen tuloksia voidaan hyödyntää myös muissa kehittyvissä maissa, kuten Intiassa, Bangladeshissa ja Afganistanissa, koska näissä maissa on lähes sama sosiokulttuurinen rakenne ja samanlaiset esteet vanhempien osallistumiselle kuin Pakistanissa. Aikaisemman tutkimuksen puutteet huomioiden tämä tutkimus on askel, jolla edistetään vanhempien osallistumista ja sen tuottamia hyötyjä lasten koulutuksessa Pakistanissa ja ehkä muissakin kehittyvissä maissa. Vanhempien osallistuminen on yksi lasten menestyksen ja kehityksen olennaisista pilareista.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

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بچوں کے انٹرویو ۔ سوال نامہ

1. آپ اپنے خیالات سے آگاہ کریں کہ والدین بچوں کی تعلیم میں کیا کردار ادا کرتے ہیں؟

2. بتائے کہ کس طرح آپ کے والدین ہوم ورک میں آپ کی مدد کرتے ہیں؟

3. اگر آپ کے والدین آپ کے ہوم ورک میں مدد نہ کریں تو کون آپ کی مدد کرتا ہے ؟

4. جب آپ کے والدین سیکھنے میں آپ کی مدد کریں تو آپ کیسا محسوس کرتے ہیں۔ کیا اس سے آپ کو مدد ملتی ہے یا آپ تنگ ہوتے ہیں؟

5. کیا آپ کے والدین اساتذہ میٹنگ میں شرکت کرتے ہیں؟ آپ اس بارے میں کیا محسوس کرتے ہیں اور اس سے آپ کو کیا فائدہ پہنچتا ہے؟

6. جب آپ اپنا نتیجہ والدین کو دکھاتے ہیں تو ان کا پہلا ردعمل کیا ہوتا ہے ؟ اس رد عمل پر آپ کیا محسوس کرتے ہیں؟

7. اگر آپ کو گھر پر پڑھائی بارے کوئی مشکل ہوتو اسے کس طرح حل کرتے ہیں؟ آپ کے والدین حل کے لئے مدد کرتے ہیں یا کوئی اور کرتا ہے؟

8. جب کبھی آپ سٹڈی نہ کریں تو والدین آپ کو کس طرح پڑھائی کی طرف راغب کرتے ہیں؟ کیا آپ اس طریقہ کو پسند کرتے ہیں؟

9. سیکھنے کے لئے والدین کے کردار بارے آپ کون سے کاموں کو بہترین قرار دیتے ہیں. آپ کیا سمجھتے ہیں کہ والدین کو آپ کی تعلیم کے بارے کیا کرنا چاہئے ؟

</div>

1. Could you please share your views about parental Involvement in your education?

2. Please tell me, how do your parents help you in doing homework?

3. If your parents cannot help you, then who helps you do your homework? How often do your parents/guardians help you in doing homework?

4. How do you feel when your parents help/support you in learning? Do you think your learning improves when your parents help you? Or does this bother you?

5. Do your parents attend PTM (Parents Teachers Meeting)? What do you think about it? How does it benefit you?

6. When you show result card to your parents, how do your parents react? How do you feel then?

7. Do you face challenges in your learning at home? How did your parents help you to overcome those challenges?

8. How do your parents motivate you to study if you don't study sometimes? Do you like the way your parents encourage you to study?

9. What are the things that you value most about parental Involvement in terms of learning? What do you want your parents to do for your schooling?

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والدین کے انٹرویو۔ سوال نامہ

1. بچوں کی پڑھائی میں والدین کی شمولیت کے بارے میں آپ اپنے خیالات کا اظہار کریں۔

2. آپ کے نزدیک وہ کون سی سرگرمیاں ہیں جو بچوں کے سیکھنے کے عمل میں ذیادہ موثر ہیں؟

3. آپ گھر میں بچوں کی پڑھائی میں ان کی کیسے مدد کرتے ہیں؟ اور ان کو پڑھائی کی طرف کیسے راغب کرتے ہیں اگر وہ پڑھائی نہ کریں ؟

4. بتائیں بچوں کی پڑھائی میں آپ کو کن کن مسائل کا سامنا ہیں ؟ ان مسائل کا بچوں کی پڑھائی پر کیا اثر پڑتا ہے ؟

5. آپ اساتذہ کے ساتھ اپنے تعلقات کے بارے میں بتائیں۔ آپ کو اساتذہ سے کس قسم کا تعاون ملتا ہے اور آپ ان سے کیسے تعاون کرتے ہیں؟

6. آپ سکول کب جاتے ہیں اور اس سے آپ کو اور آپ کے بچے کی پڑھائی کو کیا فائدہ ہوتا ہے؟ کیا آپ کو سکول جانے کے دوران مسائل کا سامنا کرنا پڑتا ہے ؟

</div>

1. Could you please share your views about parents Involvement in children's learning?

2. Kindly explain what Involvement activities you think are the most effective in children's education?

3. How do you help your children learn at home and motivate them to study if they don't study sometimes?

4. Kindly explain the challenges you face while educating your children. How does it affect your children's education?

5. Explain your relationship with teachers. What kind of cooperation do you receive from teachers, and how do you cooperate with them?

6. How often do you visit school and how does it benefit you and your child's learning? Do you face problems while visiting school?

1. آپ بچوں کے سیکھنے کے عمل میں والدین کے شرکت بارے میں اپنے خیالات کا اظہار کریں ۔

2. بطور استاد وہ کون سی سرگرمیاں ہیں جو آپ کے نزدیک والدین کے ذریعے بچوں کو سکھانے میں زیادہ نتیجہ خیز ہیں۔

3. وہ کون سی چیز ہے جس سے آپ کو پتہ چلتا ہے کہ والدین بچوں کے سکھانے عمل میں شریک ہیں؟ مثلا ہوم ورک، مطالعہ میں مدد، امتحان ، جائزہ وغیرہ میں مدد، اپنے خیالات سے آگاہ کریں۔

4. وہ کون سی رکاوٹیں ہیں جو آپ محسوس کرتے ہیں کہ بچوں کے سیکھنے کے عمل میں والدین کو درپیش ہیں۔ مثلا عوامل زبان، سکول کے ذمہ داران تک رسائی ، والدین کے معاشی مسائل ہو سکتے ہیں۔ اپنے خیالات سے آگاہ کیجئے ۔

5. اگر والدین بچوں کے سیکھنے کے عمل میں شریک نہ ہو تو استاد کو کن مسائل کا سامنا کرنا پڑتا ہے؟

6. آپ کے خیال میں وہ کون سے اقدامات ہیں جس سے والدین کو سکھانے کے عمل میں شامل کیا جاسکتا ہے ؟ ان والدین کو کیسے شامل کیا جاسکتا ہے جو پہلے بچوں کی پڑھائی میں شریک نہیں رہے ، ؟

1. Could you please share your views about parental Involvement in children's learning?

2. What parental involvement activities have you found the most effective in children's learning?

3. What do parents do that tells you they are involved in their children's education?

PROBE: Such as children's homework, helping children in studies, helping children in exam/test preparation. Share your views.

4. What barriers/challenges do parents face as they try to get involved in their children's education?

PROBES: Factors may include language barriers, parents' access to school, and parents' educational and financial problems. Share your experiences.

5. What challenges do teachers face if parents are not involved in their children's education? How do you cooperate with children's parents?

6. What do you think are the most effective ways to make parents involved?

PROBE: How do we involve parents, who have not previously been involved in their children's education? Explain

ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

RURAL CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

by

Qazi Waqas Ahmed, Anna Rönkä and Satu Perälä-Littunen, 2022

Article

Rural Children's Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Their Education in Pakistan

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Abstract: Drawing from focus group discussions, this study reports 40 school-aged children's (12–14 years, boys and girls) perceptions of parental involvement in the context of a developing country with a collectivist culture. The results indicate that despite parental interference, adherence to local customs, poverty, and illiteracy, children felt encouraged by their parents through strategies that reinforced their motivation to continue their education. Extended families' educated members can also compensate for parents being unable to support their children in learning. The study highlights the role of the socio-cultural context in understanding parental involvement.

Keywords: children's perceptions; parental involvement; school education; developing country

1. Introduction

Pakistan is currently unable to provide education to all children between the ages of five and sixteen [1]. Although the country is trying to eliminate barriers that prevent children from having an education [2], it has not yet been successful in implementing its constitutional mandate: 'the state shall provide free and quality education to all children' (Constitution of Pakistan, art. 25A). In addition to the poor implementation of government policies, education is also influenced by poverty, lack of qualified teachers, and lack of parental involvement, rendering it less of a priority for the populace [3,4]. Consequently, 22.5 million children between the ages of five and sixteen are not in schools [5] According to the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey [6], the overall literacy rate has been invariant at around 60% since 2014–2015, with urban and rural literacy rates of 73 and 52 percent, respectively.

In developing countries, particularly those in South Asia (i.e., Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan), most of the population lives in rural areas where the condition of schools is unsatisfactory, and the vast majority of state schools lack necessary facilities [7]. Similarly, defects in the physical infrastructure of schools further increase parents' concerns—schools without a boundary wall, for example, are perceived as insecure, especially for girls [8,9]. Likewise, rural families face barriers with respect to involvement, such as being unable to impart appropriate social and academic skills to their children due to vulnerable socio-economic situations [1,10]. Nevertheless, it is widely known that both home and school play a crucial role in shaping children's interest in learning [11], and that parental involvement is an effective predictor of children's success [12,13].

Researchers have conceptualised the role of parents in children's education in different ways, and parental contributions have variously been termed *parental involvement* [13], *parental engagement* [14], and *home–school cooperation* [11], thus making operationalization unclear and inconsistent [15]. Such involvement can vary between developed and developing countries and even within a single country, based on people's socio-economic circumstances [16]. The term *parental involvement* is well-known from Epstein's (e.g., 2018) framework, which includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home,

decision-making, and collaborating with the community, with a focus on the US context. However, Kim explained that, despite its widespread use, Epstein's framework might not be entirely relevant to developing countries because of policy and socio-economic differences [17]. In the developed world, involvement means collaboration with schools and participation in children's learning [18,19]. However, in the context of limited material resources (e.g., Pakistan), parental involvement may encompass exceptional efforts to meet the children's basic educational needs and to spare them from household tasks in order to attend school at all [20,21]. Most studies on parental involvement have been carried out in the developed world, and so conceptual frameworks and operationalisations have likewise mainly focused on developed countries [17].

1.1. Children's Perceptions of Parental Involvement

Studies conducted in developed countries indicate that children expect and value parental involvement in their learning [19,22]. For instance, in New Zealand, children reported that their parents talk to them about learning and tell them how important education is for their future success [22]. Similarly, in a Canadian study by Deslandes and Cloutier [23], children stated that their parents visit their school and oversee their learning activities. In a Spanish study, children reported that their parents help them with their homework [24]. Likewise, British children conceded that parental participation in school positively influences their learning [18]; parental support promotes and enhances children's motivation and interest in learning endeavours [13].

In contrast, studies in developing countries have found patterns of parental involvement that have adverse effects on children's education [21,25]. Parental interference and lack of involvement seem to discourage children, with detrimental effects on their academic performance [26], and even positive involvement can become problematic for other financially and academically less privileged parents [27]. For example, when children from underprivileged families see other children enjoying facilities provided by their parents, they expect the same and become discouraged when their parents cannot support them in the same way [21,28]. Moreover, the children's curricula are often beyond the didactic level of the parents, and the children, perceiving that their parents may not be competent, are likely to believe that they cannot ask for help, such as with their homework [26].

1.2. Developing Country Context

In developing countries, demographic factors such as family income, education, and local customs may hinder parental involvement [29]. Research has highlighted how parents' attitudes and knowledge play a crucial role in supporting or impeding children's schooling [30,31]. Children from low-income families are also aware of the disparities between families, and this awareness can affect their behavioural expectations and cognitive skills [28]. In rural Pakistan, parents generally hold low-paid jobs, such as tailors, barbers, farmworkers, or self-employed [32]. Those who want their children to learn work hard to provide the resources needed [3], often having to work longer hours, leaving less time for involvement [10]. Although education in provincial state schools is free for all, finding the money to buy the necessary school supplies is an extra burden for low-income parents [21]. This, in turn, leads parents to favour males over females, as a male child receiving an education is seen as an investment in the family's future [33]. Girls' education in many developing countries is thus a significant challenge [34], and poverty, social ignorance, and a lack of separate schools for girls can make parents reluctant to send their daughters to school [4]. Moreover, a culture of early marriage is also pervasive, and many girls are married off between the ages of 15 and 18 [35]; girls are therefore often prepared for household responsibilities rather than being offered a formal education [9], even though research indicates that having two educated parents is a clear advantage and that an educated mother alone can do much to enhance children's learning [12].

Similarly, rural Pakistani parents often do not know the procedures for contacting the school or lack the skills needed to help their children [36]. In such circumstances,

collectivist and joint family cultures reinforce parental involvement [37]. According to Hofstede [38], developing countries generally have a collectivistic culture. Families in such a culture reciprocally cooperate and expect shared responsibility to meet material and emotional needs [39]. In rural Pakistan, people generally live in multigenerational families where two, three, and sometimes four generations live together, including grandparents, uncles, cousins, and siblings. Such a family system shares common property and residence because family ties and unity are often needed for people to survive socio-economically [39]. Likewise, the collectivistic socio-domestic culture is a potential resource that supports children in their education [40] because parental involvement in extended families does not reside only in the hands of the parents, but it can be contained and supported by the members of the extended family [25,37]. According to Motha [41], despite facing social and economic adversity, the extended family's cooperation, emotional support, and cohesion can serve children's educational needs and keep members together. For instance, parents who cannot help their children in learning attain compensation for parental involvement through an educated family member [39].

The current study examines children's perceptions of parental involvement in a developing country and collectivist culture. Children's voices on this issue have rarely been heard in the developed world and even more rarely in developing countries. Hence, this study contributes to the literature by providing new insights into a context characterised, on the one hand, by a lack of economic and social resources but, on the other, by a rich network of family relationships.

2. Methods

To gain an in-depth understanding of the children's viewpoints, we adopted a qualitative approach and conducted thematic focus group (FG) interviews with school-aged children. The interview guidelines and themes were based on Epstein's seminal framework [42], supplemented by themes found in previous studies of parental involvement [13,16,19,25]. Features of Epstein's model relevant to the context were used, and special attentions was paid to features such as how parents help and support their children in learning at home and facilitate them by providing resources needed for learning.

2.1. Participants

The participants were selected from rural state schools in Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa (KPK; a province of Pakistan). Although widespread illiteracy and poverty are problems across the country, the inhabitants of rural KPK face greater challenges and hardships in educating their children [43]. The schools were single-sex, and equal numbers of FGs were conducted with boys and girls. Children aged 12–14 years were selected because they had enough school experience to discuss the role of parental involvement. First, permission from the district education officers and school principals was obtained, and then written consent was collected from the participating children and their parents. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all children received a gift.

2.2. Data Collection

The data collection was carried out in eight focus group (FG) interviews with 40 school children (21 boys and 19 girls) in grades six to eight from eight different state schools. Interviewing children can be challenging due to the power differential between the interviewer (an adult) and the children [44], but research suggests that FG interviews with children can be effective in familiar situations [45]. FG interviews permit study participants to express their personal stories and opinions without observing a stringent order of questions. This technique is highly appropriate for gathering data from children and parents [45,46]. The FG moderator (i.e., the researcher) created a comfortable environment for the study participants for their unrestricted communications during the interviews and kept control of the session by involving everyone in the focus group discussions, and leading questions were avoided for more detailed and candid answers from the study participants. A limitation of

FG interviews is the possibility of one individual dominating the group; to avoid this, the interviewer sought to ensure that all the children's voices were heard [47]. We developed the interview guidelines to ensure that the topics and sub-topics would encompass different aspects of involvement, including parental support, parental help in learning, and parents' reactions to success and failure.

A pilot interview was conducted, and revisions were made to the protocol as a consequence. Each FG was composed of four to six children, and the duration of the interviews ranged from 35 min to just over an hour. The transcribed FG interviews resulted in 116 pages of A4 size. The first author conducted all the interviews in Urdu, transcribed them, and translated excerpts into English. All the FG participants expressed their views about parental involvement, but there was a degree of variability in children's responses; for example, some children provided more detailed answers than others. Similarly, children's discussions portrayed a variety of perceptions regarding parental involvement in their learning activities. Notably, a male researcher interviewing female children in rural areas presented a challenge due to cultural constraints, so interviews with girls were conducted in the presence of a female chaperone (school worker). To ensure that enough data were collected, the interviewer monitored the extent to which similar comments accumulated. Pseudonyms invented by the children themselves were used to maintain their anonymity.

2.3. Data Analysis

The first author transcribed the audio recordings of the eight FG interviews word by word, and a data-driven thematic analysis was performed on the collected data [48]. The interview transcripts were read several times to ensure their accuracy. After becoming familiar with the data, initial codes were identified and highlighted. The data were analysed by using a 'bottom-up approach [49]. After coding the entire FG dataset, further analysis was performed to identify sub-themes and themes within the dataset. After identifying the sub-themes and main themes (see Table 1), the transcriptions were carefully re-read to verify the relevance of themes to the data and the research questions, which helped in labelling themes better to answer the research question. The themes were then named in a manner so that their applicability to the research question is apparent. Finally, quotes were chosen from the dataset to exemplify each established theme reported in this study to answer the research question [50].

Table 1. Themes, sub-themes, and excerpts from the interviews.

Themes	Sub-Themes	Data Excerpts
Parental engagements in children's education	Parents convince children	*My parents look after my education, and they say to me, look, we never became literate and have faced many problems, so you study hard . . .*
	Joint family compensate Parenting	*My parents are illiterate and cannot help me with homework, but they ask me to get help from my cousin because she is educated and helps me . . .*
Barriers to parental involvement	Parental illiteracy	*My parents are not educated . . . Sometimes, I feel very sad and disturbed . . . if they don't come to my school, how they will know whether I'm studying at school or not?*
	Parental poverty	*I have a friend Aliya; she was the second-best in class . . . she left the school . . . her father can't cover her studies costs . . .*
Parental interference hindering children's education	Local customs	*My parents sometimes ask me to leave school after the eighth grade . . . you'll be getting married in a few years.*
	Gender-based involvement	*Our neighbors don't let their girls go to school; girls are really fond of learning . . .*

3. Findings

We were interested in how rural school children perceive parental involvement in their education. The children talked about their own experiences and those of friends, relatives, and neighbouring children. Interestingly, the children tended to talk about other children's experiences when discussing the challenges of parental involvement. The children seemed aware that the educational opportunities in rural Pakistan are far from ideal. The data analysis yielded three main themes and six sub-themes regarding children's perceptions of parental involvement.

3.1. Parental Engagement in Children's Learning

> *Some parents are not educated, but this is not their fault; it's their parents' fault. My parents look after my education, and they say to me, look, we never became literate and have faced many problems, so you study hard. It doesn't matter that they are uneducated; they take care and play an important role in my education. (Pinki, girl)*

> *My father is a fruit seller, but he encourages me and tells me to study as much as I can. Even on Sundays, if I say that I want to help him, he says, do your schoolwork. (Nomi, boy)*

The children explained that, despite being poor and illiterate, their parents worked hard to get them educated. According to the children, their parents often cited themselves as examples of the outcomes of poor education, saying that their lack of education is responsible for their relative poverty and long working hours on low pay. They highlighted how their parents sometimes worked harder to arrange private tuition when they could not help them with homework. Nevertheless, the children viewed their parents in sympathetic terms and seemed to understand their hardships, thus feeling morally obligated to study hard. The above excerpts revealed a picture of children whose parents are financially unstable and uneducated and do their best to educate them.

> *My father is a driver and comes home in the evening. He always works and cannot take much interest in my studies due to his work, but you know he sends me to the tuition centre to study and complete my homework. He doesn't know about my books, but he is happy when I pass exams. (Fiqa, boy)*

The children described their parents' responses to both their successes and failures. Even poor and uneducated parents enjoyed it when their children were successful at school. The children explained how their parents used gifts, prizes, and promises conditional on good academic achievement as positive reinforcement for performing well in class. They recognised their parents' selfless efforts and sincere attention to their education. The following excerpt is an experience of a child whose weak performance saddened her mother; she then worked harder and secured a class ranking that pleased her mother.

> *I couldn't get good marks in the previous exam, and my mother was sad. I understood her pain and the hard work she had done for me, and so I studied hard and was third-best in my class, and then I studied harder and, in the last exam, I was top in the class. You know my mother was very happy and bought me a computer. (Zari, girl)*

> *My parents are very nice; they support me in my learning and wish to see me educated. They don't understand but see my notebooks and appreciate me. I try my best to make them happy. (Sheeda, boy)*

Moreover, children credited the joint family system as an informal source of help for their learning. They described how their extended families are helpful and encouraging, especially when their parents cannot help them academically due to illiteracy or long working hours. They talked about the support they received from their extended families. Several children said that even though their parents are uneducated, they make efforts and hope to see their children educated. For this, parents often seek help from an educated family member. The children acknowledged the support from their elder siblings, uncles, and aunts. Babli, Gogu, and Veer spoke about their experiences:

When I go back home from school and start doing my homework, I sometimes don't understand my lesson. Whenever I don't understand my lesson and get worried, I go to my grandparents' place, and my uncle helps me do homework. (Babli, girl)

My father cannot help me in learning at home as he has many responsibilities. But whenever I have to prepare for any task or face a problem with doing homework, my aunt and sometimes my uncle helps me. (Gogu, boy)

It is a very serious issue that our parents are not educated. Thank God my elder brother helps me, and you know when he is not at home, I try to study by myself, but I cannot learn as well as I do with my brother. (Veer, boy)

The children talked about the multiple benefits of the joint family. According to them, a literate family member can be a blessing for children whose parents cannot help them with their homework. Where poor parents must work hard to support their families and thus do not have time to monitor their children's education, the joint family can compensate with an educated family member assuming the role of guardian and visiting the school to receive updates on the child's learning activities. Diya and Chintoo expressed their views as follows:

My mother is illiterate, so she doesn't come to the PTM [parent–teacher meeting], but my sister comes and discusses my progress with my teacher. (Diya, girl)

First, my father tries to come to school, but if for some reason he cannot come, my elder brother or sometimes my cousin come and meet my teacher. (Chintoo, boy)

Conversely, working parents, especially in rural areas, need someone reliable and responsible around their children, and in such cases, the joint family is also an advantage. The children explained that, while many parents work in cities and towns far from their homes, the joint family system means that they do not feel ignored. Their parents can ask other family members to monitor their children's learning activities. Although parental absence from a child's education is detrimental, support from the joint family plays a compensatory role.

My grandmother always comes to my school and asks my teacher how I am getting on. She is not educated, but she comes to my school and then informs my parents. (Nina, girl)

My father is out of the country and works in Saudi Arabia, but my uncle comes to my school to know about my learning progress from my teachers at my father's place. (Munna, Boy)

3.2. Barriers to Parental Involvement

According to children, parents' unstable financial conditions and lack of didactic skills are the most prevalent reasons for parents' non-involvement in their children's education. Due to their parent's susceptible socio-economic circumstances, many children cannot continue their education and thus, sacrifice their dreams of learning.

The children's views indicate that any lack of parental involvement in their school education is mainly due to their parents' unstable financial condition or low education level. The children voiced concerns that parental inability to help them in their formal learning negatively affected their interest in education. According to them, uneducated and less informed parents were reluctant to attend their children's schools, and, in some cases, parents seemed not to know about the annual parents' day at school and thus failed to show up, to their children's disappointment. One of the study participants expressed his views as follows:

My parents are not educated, and I know that is why they don't come to school. Sometimes, I feel very sad and disturbed because, if they don't come to my school, how they will know whether I'm studying at school or not? (Bablu, boy)

Mothers in rural society are often illiterate or less educated and thus cannot participate in children's learning. The children reported that a girl's mother might be unable to visit

her daughter's school because she is primarily occupied with domestic chores. Likewise, a father or other male family member would not be allowed to visit a school for girls because of gender segregation. Thus, the children's—and especially the girls'—schools were not visited by parents due to their ignorance and lack of interest, resulting in a communication gap between students, teachers, and parents.

> *My mother cannot help me with doing homework because she doesn't know about my books. She also doesn't come to my school to meet my teacher as she remains busy with household tasks and my father or uncle cannot meet my teacher because this is a girls' school. (Honey, girl)*

Likewise, the children revealed that while their parents might not visit their schools because they are overburdened with work, many children also go to school irregularly because they are helping their parents with chores much of the time. The children disclosed that their parents force them to help with domestic-related affairs to contribute to family earnings, badly affecting their learning. Taking time for activities other than learning can divert children's attention away from education, and parents' economic hardships and lack of interest can result in children being sent to workplaces instead of schools.

> *After school, in the evening, I often go into the fields with my father to cut fodder for our goats, and we come back home at sunset, and sometimes I cannot do my homework because of power cuts. (Khan, boy)*

> *My uncle is poor; he has a small shop in the village and works there all the time. His son doesn't complete homework and often doesn't come to school because his father needs his help in the shop. (Mintu, Boy)*

The children also explained that parents are often unable to meet their basic educational needs, with even the relatively low cost of necessary school supplies, such as books and notebooks, putting formal education out of the children's reach. Sometimes, even the children who work hard cannot continue their schooling and must sacrifice their educational dreams because of their parents' hardships. The following excerpts describe how a parent's poverty caused the withdrawal of a child from formal education and how a teacher's ignorant reaction to poverty can act as a barrier to education.

> *I have a friend, Aliya; she was my classmate and a good friend of mine. She was second-best in the class, but in the seventh grade, she left school. We were all very sad when she left school. Her father could not cover her school expenses. I wish she could study because she had big dreams. (Fairy, girl)*

> *We have to buy exercise books to write in, and sometimes my father doesn't have the money to buy my exercise book and then I don't go to school, because if I go to school without an exercise book, the teacher insults me. (Nomi, boy)*

3.3. Parental Interference Hindering Children's Education

The interviewed children were concerned over their parents' adherence and compliance with local traditions. They said that local tradition perhaps causes interference and gender segregation, affecting involvement in children's learning possibilities, especially for girls.

The children uncovered that rural parents occupy a dominant position and decide almost everything in the family. They revealed that uneducated and less informed parents tend to have conservative ideas about the education of children—especially girls, who might not be allowed to go to school in case their so-called honour becomes compromised. In many cases, a family's fear of girls entering a romantic relationship before marriage keeps them out of school, and school children, especially girls, can thus find it hard to convince parents regarding their dreams of becoming educated. In the excerpt below, a girl's parents asked her to leave school because they believe that girls are supposed to be married and therefore will not benefit from education.

My parents sometimes ask me to leave school after the eighth grade, and I have asked my father, why are you asking me this? [girl was angry] He (father) replied, what will you do if you get an education, you'll be getting married in a few years. (Honey, girl)

My cousin is very intelligent. Every year she got a good ranking in the class. Her mother says they will not educate her further, so she only studied until the fifth grade. After that, they arranged her engagement, and next year, she might get married. (Guria, girl)

The children—mainly girls—exposed how many families do not send their daughters to school. They described how rural parents are highly conservative and marginalise girls in the name of family honour. The fact that girls walk to school increases parental worries, especially in light of the possibility of sexual harassment or involvement in a romantic relationship, both of which can damage a family's reputation. One of the interviewees described a family who did not let their daughters go to school.

Our neighbours don't let their girls go to school. They are very strict parents. The girls are really fond of learning, but they don't allow them because they think it could put their family's honour at risk. (Pinki, girl)

The participants also argued that parents' differential treatment of girls and boys is a further barrier to girls receiving an education. They noted that, in poor and uneducated families where the parents must choose between sending male or female children to school, the decision generally favours the male children. Educating male children is seen as an investment in a potential breadwinner for the family and is thus seen more positively than girls' education.

I have a cousin (male); his father sent him to a private school, and his sister is studying in our school [state school]. I know his parents don't take much interest in their daughter's education, but they really care about their son. They say that our son will take care of us when we become old, and the daughter will get married soon. (Jiya, girl)

On the one hand, children revealed that parental inspiration and the compensation of extended family play a crucial role in their education. On the other hand, their views unveil that parents often fail to give proper time, support, and attention to their education due to either illiteracy or poor economic conditions. The children were concerned about parental adherence to local customs, which may negatively influence their education, especially in the case of girls.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This study's findings contribute to a new understanding of how rural children in a collectivist culture perceive their parents' role in their education. The results show that children perceive parental involvement as a critical factor in their education. The children explained that they felt inspired to study hard to avoid ending up poor and uneducated through various parental persuasion techniques that reinforced their motivation and ambition for a better future. They described how extended family compensates for parents' unavailability or inability to help children with their studies. In rural KPK, living in an extended family is part of the collectivist societal culture, and children from such a family system felt closer to their uncles, aunts, and cousins, learn from them and from each other. An individualistic society generally emphasizes self-reliance, whereas a collectivistic culture stresses individuals' reliance on the family-unit to which they belong [51]. Extended families are usually typified by shared residence, mutual support, and knowledge exchange. Younger and relatively learned family members (elder siblings, aunts, uncles, or cousins) often facilitate children in their learning activities, whereas elder members (e.g., grandparents) offer indirect assistance, i.e., emotional support, affection, and sharing of diverse learning experiences with children [44]. Besides poverty, children explained that their parents' low education also caused dependency on extended family members, with parents asking better-educated relatives to help their children learn because of their

illiteracy or lack of time caused by work demands. Thus, living in an extended family familiarises children with its members' struggles and offers the chance to learn from them.

In light of our findings, it appears that the concept of parental involvement used in earlier studies maybe too narrow or partially unsuitable for use in developing countries, especially rural communities. Whereas the concept of parental involvement in developed countries generally assumes that all children have the opportunity to attend school [18,19], in a developing country, involvement can turn to interference, and parents may stop their children from going to school if, for example, their labour is needed; the children gave several examples of this in the study. The findings demonstrate that parents' poverty can wipe out children's entire life. Children often work to support their families because, without their help, families would not be able to meet their basic needs. Consequently, often, some intellectual and ambitious children with big dreams cannot continue their education. Previous research also shows that children's learning and performance are directly associated with parents' socio-economic circumstances [20,21]. Alongside socio-economic hardships, the children also revealed deeply rooted practices that impede children's—especially girls'—education. For instance, educating girls is discouraged by older family members, who rule the family in a patriarchal society. Due to traditional customs and a conventional mindset, many girls are expected to stay home and work 'in the kitchen'. Other reservations may also exist linked to the notion of 'honour', with parents fearing that a daughter might become involved in a relationship that does not lead to marriage, damaging the family's reputation and making her ineligible for marriage later [33]. The children indicated that social ignorance could lead parents to decide to marry their children off at a young age or to use them as labour. Child marriage is both a cause and a consequence of girls not going to school, because those who marry young are less likely to continue their education, and children from poor families often have to work to help their families, while child labour is not regarded as a bad thing in rural society. Thus, poor parents often send their children to work in fields, hotels, and factories, and these children either drop out of school or their attendance becomes irregular. The children also revealed that rural parents often think that a daughter will leave home to live with her husband's family, whereas a male child will remain with them, and sending a male child to school is thus considered an investment in the family. Other issues, such as gender gaps, child labour, parental interference, and reluctance to educate daughters, can be seen in many developing countries (e.g., India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan), which affects the rights of girls badly, particularly in education [52,53]. Therefore, the results of this study could also be applicable in countries other than Pakistan.

Future Research Directions

This study data were gathered through focus group interviews and children provided candid responses to the researcher's questions. Yet, the children did not mention corporal punishment, despite rural parents and teachers commonly using it as a disciplinary tool. Future research could use methods more sensitive to children's negative experiences caused by corporal punishment. Likewise, children might have adverse consequences (i.e., negative feelings and demotivation) when their parents fail to support and participate in their school education. Thus, future studies could explore children's feelings that emerge when parents cannot positively contribute to their learning activities. Future research could compare the individualistic and collectivistic country contexts regarding the perceptions of parental involvement in children's learning endeavours.

Moreover, this study examined children's perceptions about parental involvement in their education, but it did not include rural parents' stance regarding the difficulties faced by them in positively contributing to their children's learning endeavours. Therefore, future research could investigate the challenges rural parents face in contributing to their children's education. Moreover, the present findings come from a small-scale qualitative study and are thus not generalisable, although they do describe different aspects of parental involvement from the viewpoint of children and are therefore worth studying further with

a more extensive research design that could yield generalisable results. Finally, this research was carried out in a rural setting, and replicating the study in urban areas of developed or developing countries may produce different outcomes.

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II

PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION: NARRATIVES FROM RURAL PAKISTAN

by

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III

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT OR INTERFERENCE? RURAL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

by

Qazi Waqas Ahmed, Anna Rönkä and Satu Perälä-Littunen, 2021

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Research Article

Parental Involvement or Interference? Rural Teachers' Perceptions

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This research explored rural state school teachers' perceptions concerning parental involvement in children's education in a developing country context. The data were collected through thematic interviews with teachers of public schools situated in the rural areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan. The study findings revealed teachers' frustration and disappointment regarding parental involvement. Teachers believed that susceptible socioeconomic circumstances and adherence to local customs hindered many parents from participating in their children's education. In line with this, teachers frequently held negative perceptions regarding children's parents, and these perceptions have the potential to adversely affect parent–teacher communion and children's learning. We offered several policy implications for enhancing parents' roles and teachers' competency in supporting parental involvement, which could also be practical in other developing countries sharing similar impediments, such as widespread illiteracy, poverty, and a lack of qualified teachers.

1. Introduction

Previous research has shown that children's educational interests are best served when parents and teachers cooperate [1–3]. Their joint efforts bring a variety of benefits to both home and school. For instance, well-functioning cooperation increases families' confidence, extends trust, builds a positive image of the school, and ultimately helps children's learning [4, 5]. However, in Pakistan, the idea of parental involvement is relatively unknown owing to parents' socioeconomic situations and the negligence of schools in motivating parents [6]. In many developing countries, there is no policy regarding parental involvement in child education [7, 8], and Pakistan is no exception. Likewise, lack of necessary school facilities and teacher's cynical attitude are putting parents off from being involved in children's education [9]. Studies acknowledge that unprofessional teachers are among the major reasons behind poor education [10, 11]. In Pakistan, teachers' professional development has not been given appropriate consideration [12]. Different

factors are responsible for the lack of quality teachers, including political considerations in the posting of teacher trainers, lack of a school monitoring system, less emphasis on teaching practices [13], and inappropriate mechanisms to assess teachers' aptitude [14]. The teaching profession is typified with low competence and poor performance due to a lack of training, lack of motivation, old teaching methods (e.g., focus on memorization rather than pragmatism), and overcrowded classes [15]. Consequently, teachers are considered weak and passive in solving children's learning problems and engaging parental involvement [6, 10]. Studies acknowledge that parental involvement and cooperation, as well as communication between home and school, could contribute to children's learning [4, 16]. The cooperation benefits the school, family, and children. For instance, it enhances children's learning, gives parents access to children's education, and encourages classroom teachers [17]. However, when parents and teachers do not cooperate, they are stuck in a dilemma of distrust and build a wall of their own by saying "your child" or "my child" instead of "our

child" [18]. Research suggests that teacher's views are essential in understanding different parental involvement practices [19, 20]. Therefore, this study's rationale is to explore teachers' perceptions of parental involvement from the context of a rural developing country and to add new knowledge to the existing research body, which is mainly from the developed world.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teachers' Views on Parental Involvement. Teachers in different cultures hold different perceptions regarding home–school cooperation [21, 22]. Their perceptions play a vital role in encouraging or discouraging parents from being involved in their children's education [23, 24]. For instance, when teachers have a high regard for parents, they most likely encourage them to participate [2, 25]. However, teachers' unpleasant and uncaring attitudes discourage parents [10], which results in communication breakdown, and both start blaming each other, especially when the child seems passive in learning [26, 27]. According to [28], teachers' views about parents' involvement are closely linked to their professionalism. Professionally competent teachers are likely to show welcoming gestures [29]. However, those who are not prepared to correspond with parents fail to establish good relationships, affecting home–school communion [27]. In Pakistan, school teachers are not professionally well trained [10]. They perceive that parents play a limited role in children's education; thus, they are not treated as equal partners in the educational process of their children [6, 7].

2.2. Obstacles to Parental Involvement. Studies on parental involvement reveal variations in the level of involvement, and variations mainly depend upon the parents' ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds [30, 31]. In Pakistan, less involvement, which reduces children's learning progress, is attributed to barriers such as poverty and parents' low educational level [13]. Similarly, in rural Indonesia, parents with inadequate knowledge and limited material resources consider themselves unconcerned and less willing to be involved in children's schooling [3]. Moreover, in rural Pakistan, the poor quality of education in state schools (e.g., poor teaching and learning) often deters parents from sending their children to them. Nevertheless, educating children in private schools is beyond the means of low-income families, who can hardly manage their lives [32]. In Pakistan, neither do state schools take considerable steps to encourage children nor are parents motivated to do so [7, 33]. According to [34], some parents do not have time for involvement owing to challenging working conditions, while others do not feel at ease if they are uneducated [35]. Research suggests that education has long-term benefits for children [36] and short-term expenses for underprivileged parents [9]. Financially and academically privileged families tend to provide feasible support to their children [37]. However, in rural Pakistan, the socioeconomic situation is one of the major reasons; families cannot spare sufficient time and resources for children [38]. Research shows that teachers' role is crucial in promoting or preventing parental involvement. It can fail due to teachers' lack of competence and off-putting attitudes [10, 39]. Hence, the present study investigates rural school teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in children's education.

3. Methods

Qualitative research is an appropriate technique for studying individuals' experiences or viewpoints [40]. This qualitative study employed a thematic interview procedure to investigate teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. Teachers' views helped us understand different involvement practices in rural Pakistan.

3.1. Data Collection. The data collection was carried out through thematic interviews with state school teachers. Ten teachers were interviewed from six state schools situated in rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan. We intended to gather both genders' perceptions; thus, the participants included five male and five female teachers. All interviews with teachers were conducted on the school premises during their free or less busy hours. Schools were randomly selected in low-income and rural neighborhoods of KPK. State schools with coeducation are less common in rural Pakistan, and being a male researcher interviewing female teachers was not easy, especially given remote sites. Therefore, district education officers' and school principals' permission was acquired to access girls' schools and to interview female teachers. Likewise, to consider cultural sensitivity and make the environment more conducive, the interviewer brought his adult niece with him during the interviews with female teachers.

The participants were provided with a consent form and detailed information about the study. They were also assured of their anonymity and confidentiality. We have fulfilled the technical requirements necessary to demonstrate the use of ethical procedures in researching human participants. The research has been carried out following the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity and the Responsible Conduct of Research and Research Ethics at the University of Jyväskylä. Based on previous research studies [4, 20, 26], we developed interview guidelines. It included teachers' views of parental involvement, parental participation in the parent–teacher meeting (PTM) helping children do homework, and factors obstructing parental involvement. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. The first author was fluent in the Urdu language and conducted all interviews. In addition, demographic information and field notes were taken during the interviews.

3.2. Data Analysis. Data-driven thematic analysis was used to analyze the data [41]. The recordings of all interviews were transcribed, and to check the transcripts' correctness, the interviews were listened to and read again. The first author transcribed the interviews, and personal transcription

Table 1: Themes, subthemes, and excerpts from participant's interviews.

Data excerpts	Subthemes	Themes
Children, who do not study at home, cannot participate well in classroom activities.	Children's absenteeism Incomplete homework Lack of contact with school	Teachers blaming parents
I had a very competent student.... Her father has not paid her vehicle fare...the driver does not pick her for school.	Poor nourishment Parental ignorance	Poverty and lack of parental education
Many parents feel that if someone follows their daughter, their family honour will be compromised.	Gender role Parental insecurity Social events	Parental interference caused by settled local practices
Parents do not value education and do not understand that education is children's right.	Teachers impolite attitude Parents' lack of trust	Teachers preconceived perceptions

helped to improve the reliability of the data. After becoming familiar with the data, initial codes were identified. All codes were organized and then categorized to identify subthemes and main themes. The excerpts used in the findings have been translated from Urdu into English. The data analysis enabled the construction of 4 main themes and 10 subthemes.

4. Findings

We explored how state school teachers perceived and experienced parental involvement in rural Pakistan. Interviewed teachers were aware that parental involvement could undoubtedly be of great help in children's education. For instance, Pola and Babli said "In my opinion, parents play a central role in children's education (Pola). Without parental involvement, children cannot proceed well in their learning process (Babli)." However, most teachers' account elucidate and uncovered that various factors, such as low parental education, unstable financial conditions, local customs, and teachers blaming parents, adversely affect parental involvement in children's education. In addition, female teachers were more aware of such parental interference and discriminatory roles in their daughters' education. Through the data analysis, four themes were established regarding teachers' perceptions of parental involvement: (a) teachers blaming parents, (b) poverty and lack of parental education, (c) parental interference caused by settled local practices, (d) teachers' preconceived perceptions (Table 1).

4.1. Teachers Blaming Parents. The interviewed teachers tended to criticize parents and held them responsible for children's absenteeism, incomplete homework, and lack of contact with the school. Teachers complained that parents were not fulfilling their responsibilities regarding children's education. They explained that parents' noninvolvement negatively influences children's education. For instance, most teachers pointed out that many children come to school from their homes, yet spend the whole day outside the school. In response, teachers sent notices to the children's

parents but barely received any response. Teachers believed that parents' disinclination and indifferent behaviours indicate that they do not value their children's learning but rather consider it an option. The following interview quote explains the teachers' concerns.

"For many years, we are trying to maintain school discipline, but many children do not come to school on time. Children's parents do not cooperate with us. I would say that it is parents who are developing such habits in children (Kaka, M)."

According to teachers, children's homework is one of the areas where parents' cooperation and involvement are essential, given that parental support at home encourages children to learn. Nevertheless, teachers voiced their concerns that many children suffered in their learning process because neither did the parents visit their children's school nor help the children to do homework, which results in poor learning outcomes or school dropouts. They believed that most parents think they have played their part once they send their children to school. Teachers expressed parents' lack of participation in the following manner:

"Some parents do not even know the given homework. When we call parents, first they do not come, and if any of them comes, he says that the child sits at home with books in his hands. If he does not learn the lesson, then it is your responsibility (Nori, F)."

In addition, teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with parents who merely send their children to school. According to teachers, a vast majority of rural parents believe that they have fulfilled their obligation of educating their children by simply enrolling them in schools and the rest is up to the teachers. Interviewees believed that educating children was a mutual responsibility of both teachers and parents. However, they revealed that parents' absence from parent–teacher meetings (PTM) is a significant hurdle, as it hinders the discussion about students' conduct and learning progress. They expressed their discontent that when parents are called to visit school, they mostly respond that they are busy with chores. However, when children fail, parents say that the fault lies at the teachers' court, as they do not teach them properly. The following interview excerpt explains this problem.

"Many parents spare no time for their kids at all. Parents neither visit their children's schools nor help them in their studies at home. I would say, are parents to earn their livelihood only? Children are their parents' futures, and their parents are not as concerned as they should be (Pola, M.)."

4.2. Poverty and Lack of Parental Education.

The second theme is concerned with parents' low education levels and economic hardships, which make rural parents' involvement difficult. According to teachers, providing food and clothing for children is also considered a parental responsibility, and it is such a salient feature in rural Pakistan. Teachers explained that most of the children are not provided with a balanced diet by their parents, and they are often sent to school without breakfast, which results in poor listening and weak concentration in class during the lesson. One of the interviewees explained how poverty influences children's health and learning.

"I often found many children physically present in class but mentally absent. I sometimes tried to investigate why they are not attentive in class activities and found that most children come to school without breakfast (Raja, M.)."

The teachers explained that education at public schools is free. However, the expenditures associated with children's school education, such as notebooks, writing equipment, school uniforms, and transport, are additional expenses putting more pressure on underprivileged parents in sending their children to school. Teachers also revealed that many parents induce their children to work when they are meant to be at school. This, in turn, has an adverse effect on children's interest in learning. Nori and Nomi explained the impact of parents' hardships.

"I had a very competent student, and suddenly, she stopped coming to school. After some days, I asked her fellows why she was not coming to school, but no one answered. I then asked her best friend, who was studying in the same school. She said Mam, she comes far from school, and her father has not paid her vehicle fare for the last six months, and now the driver does not pick her for school (Nori, F.)."

Moreover, according to the teachers, most rural parents are less educated. Parental ignorance usually leaves children uninstructed and unguided, which results in poor academic performance. Teachers believe that illiterate or less informed parents show a careless attitude, and thus, brilliant students often get exploited and lose their passion for learning. The following excerpt explains the parents' unawareness about their children's education.

"A father came to school and asked for a short leave for his son. I asked him in which grade his son was enrolled. His father was not able to tell the grade in which his son was enrolled. Imagine how we expect his father to help him learn at home (Kaka, M.)."

4.3. Parental Interference Caused by Settled Local Practices.

The third theme of the teachers' talks dealt with settled local practices, which may sometimes be harmful to children's learning. Rural parents tend to obey local traditions, which could interfere in children's learning possibilities. For example, teachers said that most uneducated parents in rural areas perceive no sense in educating their daughters. Such parents' attitude is due to the prevailing local traditions, where parents often prioritize boys over girls. Most parents send their girls to state schools and boys to private schools because parents believe that a male child with a prosperous future is the family's asset. In addition, the teachers explained that parents often compel girls to get married at an early age. Those immature and uneducated girls/mothers cannot bring up their children in a way the teachers consider desirable. Thus, due to the young mother's inability, a chain of ignorance extends to future generations. Noori and Babli shared their experiences.

"I had a student in 9th grade. She said her mother wanted her to get married after 9th grade. She wanted me to talk to her mother to wait until she completed her 10th grade. I contacted her mother and asked her, but her mother said we could not get a better proposal, and after all, she could not bear the burden anymore (Babli, F.)."

Teachers also talked about parents' worries regarding their children's safety. They explained that the school being far away from home was a reason many parents were not educating their daughters. Teachers explained that if a girl has to go to school on foot, she must be accompanied by a male family member who could also lose wages for that day. The participants believed that parents often educate their daughters up to the primary level. After that, they seldom send their daughters to school due to a lack of social trust and threats of harassment. Hence, many girls are deprived of the right to education in the name of "family reputation."

"Sometimes, family honour becomes a hurdle in the way of girls' education. Parents do not let their girls go to cities for further education. Many parents feel that if someone follows their daughter or she faces harassment, their family honour will be compromised (Sheelo, F.)."

In addition, teachers explained that children's absence from school during community social events has both instant and long-term adverse effects on their education. They explained that convincing rural parents to ensure their children's school attendance was complicated during social events. Children remain absent without permission, especially during funeral observations and marriages, which ultimately diverts their attention from studies. Interviewees explained that school personnel sometimes fined them or struck them off the register for being absent without permission. Consequently, many parents withdraw their children from school.

"Children's attendance is one of the major problems. Sometimes children remain absent for many days without any notice. When they are asked about their absence, they often say we went to attend a marriage with our parents (Raja, M.)."

4.4. Teachers' Preconceived Perceptions.

The fourth theme addressed teachers' preconceived perceptions, indicating a negative attitude towards parental involvement in children's education. Teachers' views seemed to signal that they

undermine parents and consider them problematic and less than others in society owing to their various characteristics, such as illiteracy, poverty, and low social status. Teachers believed that rural parents do not appreciate teachers' work and role in their children's education. The following lines explain this dilemma.

"This is a side area (remote site), and people here are not qualified. Parents do not value education and do not understand that education is children's right. They send their children to school but do not sense that he/she will learn (Munni, F)."

Moreover, teachers brought to light parents' discontent over rural state schools. They explained that parents generally perceive that teachers are not well qualified and that school facilities are inadequate, which will impede their children's learning endeavours. The fact that state school teachers send their children to private schools justifies rural parents' concerns. Eventhough they understand the situation, many rural parents, due to poverty, send their children to state schools. Thus, a lack of trust in teachers and state schools discourages parents from being involved in their children's education.

"I know many state school teachers (colleagues) who are educating their children in a private school. Many poor parents feel bad about this situation because they cannot educate their children in private schools (Pola, M)."

The teachers expressed a worry that they bear the sole responsibility for children's learning. Parents do not perform their duties, and without parents' cooperation, teachers cannot adequately handle the issues in children's education. In the end, uninvolved or less involved parents hold teachers responsible for children's shortcomings, further damaging the home–school relationship. Accordingly, the teachers added that very few parents perceive children's education as a joint responsibility of home and school.

"Parents here (in rural areas) are not informed about the value of education. They think that the only responsibility they have is to send a child to school. What a child has learned at school is no concern of theirs. I think parents do not know their commitment at all (Raja, M)."

In addition, teachers highlighted that in a society where the rate of unemployed educated adults is high, it is difficult to see the value of education. They argued that many parents think that education will not make a difference in their children's lives. According to the teachers, parents anticipate that their son will also become a laborer like them. Thus, parents often give up the hope of receiving a reward from their children when they complete their education. This approach prevents parents from being involved in children's education. The following lines explain this concern.

"I must say that in our society, many educated and intellectual adults are unemployed. This is also one of the reasons parents are demotivated and do not look after their children's educational activities (Kaka, M)."

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study manifested teachers' frustration and disappointment regarding parental involvement in rural Pakistan against the issues impeding parent–teacher cooperation in children's education. Teachers sensed parents as either demotivated or reluctant, hence lacking interest in their children's learning. Teachers also alleged that rural parents' susceptible socioeconomic circumstances are adversely affecting parental involvement. Besides, teachers' indifferent attitudes towards poor parents resulted in their reluctance to consider parents equal partners in their children's learning. Hence, teachers were also found to be inactive and unresponsive in engaging children's parents, which widened the gap between home and school. The findings uncovered that teachers lacked trust in parents and perceived parents as not playing their essential role, affecting home–school cooperation and reducing children's attainments.

In line with what Lawson [42] argues, we believe that parental involvement cannot be solely explained in relation to teachers' or parents' willingness to be involved. The term parental involvement is too subjective to be objectified. It depends on society's socioeconomic structure because factors such as poverty, illiteracy, and teachers' professionalism determine any community's level of priority. Considering these circumstances, the present study contributes to a new dimension of understanding parental involvement in children's education. Teachers demonstrated some features that do not fall into the "definitions" of the term "parental involvement," "parental participation," or "parental engagement" [4, 16, 42]. According to teachers, the provision of food and clothes, sparing children from domestic chores, and letting them go to school should also be considered parental responsibilities. Teachers explained that it often becomes imperative for parents to provide bread and butter for children as a top priority. This unsound economic structure in rural KPK is perhaps one of the major barriers to parental involvement. While, in the advanced world, parental involvement means cooperating with teachers and participating in children's education at both school and home [16, 29]. Moreover, the findings revealed that in the case of girls' education, the involvement often turns to interference that disrupts girls' schooling. Interviewees explained that gender disparity exists in rural Pakistan, adversely affecting girls' education. The concept of gender inequality is widespread in many developing countries. Teachers revealed that even if parents send their daughters to school, they are not guided appropriately, and their education is interrupted, as they are married off in their teens. Hence in this context, letting the girls go to school, especially beyond the primary level, is considered a great step for parents regarding girls' schooling [44].

In addition to this context, teachers also seem reluctant and pensive regarding their coordination with parents. They often do less than their duty and obligation by not putting extra effort into making their students learn. They usually blame parents for not educating their children. Most of the teachers expect parents to be equally responsible for children's learning, neglecting the fact that most parents are both illiterate and poor. These parents hardly manage the bread and butter for the family and hence have neither the capacity to provide recourses nor the spare time for their

children's learning activities. Their substantial economic burden and illiteracy make it more difficult for these parents to play a considerable role in their children's education. Thus, parental poverty and illiteracy are the foremost reasons keeping millions of children out of schools and eventually coerce parents to assign their children laboring for family income. As a result, ambitious children with big dreams often cannot continue their education due to their parent's vulnerable socioeconomic circumstances [45]. Parental involvement, in other words, is significantly linked to the teachers because if teachers coordinate with parents, then parents would be able to participate in their children's learning [19, 25]. Thus, teachers should consider barriers concerning parental involvement and work extra by considering the children as their own [13, 46]. Such a cooperative push by teachers can motivate parents and guarantee productive learning outcomes for children.

5.1. Policy Implications. This study indicates challenges in home–school cooperation regarding children's education in rural Pakistan. To improve the situation and improve schooling outcomes, more rigorous policies and investments are recommended towards the quality of teachers, parents' awareness of their liability, and material support for the schooling of low-income families' children. The findings show that rural area teachers considered poor parents inferior to others in society and blamed them in various situations. The solution would be for the state to provide quality entry and in-service training facilities that help teachers gain competence in cooperation and communication with children's parents. Moreover, teachers need to be taught their ethical and moral responsibility towards the parents as equal partners in the learning process of children, and they should be offered administrative support, so that parents can channel their concerns [27]. The state should also provide essential financial support to low-income families because a hungry child without books, notebooks, and writing equipment cannot learn. A state subsidy can solve this issue. In a nutshell, teachers and parents need to be aware of following children's learning and be held equally responsible for the outcome.

5.2. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research. The study has a few limitations that have to be taken into account. The results of this small-scale qualitative study cannot be generalized due to the small sample size and the possibility that the teachers in this study were selected. Nevertheless, findings from a sample of 10 teachers from rural state schools raised some questions that need further studies in the future. The present study focused on teachers' views regarding socioeconomically disadvantaged parents in a rural area setting. To capture the broader picture, there is a need to find the perception of urban school teachers working with children from middle- and high-class families. Likewise, some study findings indicate that teachers blame both parents and children for lack of parental involvement and interest in education. Thus, one research focus would be solely to explore teachers' perceptions about the engagement

of children of low socioeconomic classes in a classroom environment. In addition, this study pointed out that parental interference hinders children's education, especially in the case of girls, and creates problems for teachers in the classroom. Thus, to address this problem, research needs to be extended to broaden the understanding of rural families' perceptions of settled practices. Moreover, further research could investigate parents' perceptions of parental involvement in their children's education and how they view teachers' invitations to be involved. Last, due to the small sample size of this study, the research findings need to be tested through survey research.

Data Availability

The data of this study were conducted in Urdu language from school teachers in rural KPK, Pakistan, through semistructured interviews. The study participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Moreover, the data are transcribed in (Urdu) handwritten form, and the written text does not exist in the soft copy form. Therefore, the data are not publically available.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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