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Socio-economic background and the academic performance of grade one learners as mediated by parental involvement

by

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MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

(Educational Psychology)

in the

Department of Educational Psychology

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University of Pretoria
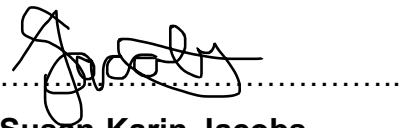
Supervisor

Prof Irma Eloff

Pretoria

August 2023

I dedicate this mini-dissertation to those who are passionate about making a change in the lives of the most vulnerable, and ensuring success for every South African child.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Susan-Karin Jacobs (16037911), declare that the dissertation titled "**Socio-economic background and the academic performance of grade one learners as mediated by parental involvement**" which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

…………………………………..

Susan-Karin Jacobs

August 2023

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Ethics Committee

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**CLEARANCE NUMBER:** EDU073/22
DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd
	Socio-economic background and the academic
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	mediated by parental involvement
INVESTIGATOR	Ms Susan-Karin Jacobs
DEPARTMENT	Educational Psychology
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CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE: Prof Funke Omidire

Mr Simon Jiane
Prof Irman Eloff

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

Fakuiteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this mini-dissertation, has obtained the applicable research ethics approval for the research described in this work. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's *Code of Ethics for Researchers* and the *Policy Guidelines for Responsible Research*.

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the interactions between the socio-economic backgrounds and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners[1] from two different public primary schools, as mediated by parental involvement. It was assumed that the interaction of these two elements at the entrance point of formal schooling could contribute to initiatives that minimise academic failure in the South African schooling system. One school was in the east, and the other in the west of Pretoria. These two geographical areas were purposefully chosen as they demonstrate, in general terms, two very different socioeconomic backgrounds in the Pretoria Metropole.

The research question underpinning this study was, 'How is socio-economic background mediated through parental involvement in the academic performance of Grade 1 learners?' The epistemology of interpretivism and a descriptive case study (n=4) research methodology were utilised. The data were generated by means of observations, interviews and visual data collection. The interview data were transcribed and analysed using the Constant Comparative Method in order to generate themes. Similarly, a theme analysis was done with the visual and observation data. The findings from the study indicate that the academic performance of the participants in this study was mediated via i) The quality and the quantity of parental time spent with children and ii) Access to additional learning experiences. In addition, the study acknowledges iii) The complexity of factors that affect the academic performances of Grade 1 children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

I recommend that future research focus on the effects of socio-economic background on the overall development of children in the South African context. Additionally, there is a requirement for a study to measure the effects of the community's role in learners' academic performance in the South African context.

Key words: Socio-economic background, Grade 1 learners, academic performance, parental involvement

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[1] The original title for this study was registered as "Socio-economic background and the academic performance of grade one learners". However, after language editing, it was decided that the text of this mini-dissertation would utilise the following spelling, "Socio-economic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners".

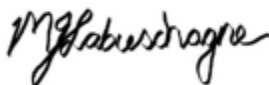# LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Exclamation Translations

To whom it may concern

The mini-dissertation entitled, "Socioeconomic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners as mediated by parental involvement" has been edited and proofread as of 15 August 2023.

As a language practitioner, I have a basic degree in languages, an honours degree in French, and a master's degree in assessment and quality assurance. I have been editing, proofreading, carrying out reference control, and technically formatting documents for the past 13 years.

Please take note that Exclamation Translations takes no responsibility for any content changes made by the student to the document after the issuing of this certificate. Furthermore, Exclamation Translations takes no responsibility for the reversal or rejection of the changes made to this document.

Kind regards

Melissa Labuschagne

Melissa Labuschagne trading as Exclamation Translations
info@exclamationtranslations.co.za

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMM   **Constant Comparative Method**

EF   **Executive Functioning**

NGO   **Non-Government Organisation**

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Academic performance is a multi-dimensional construct encompassing the foundation of school learning (Commodari, 2016). It explains the extent to which a student, teacher and/or institution has obtained a short or long-term educational goals (Tadese et al., 2022). This mini-dissertation focuses on the academic performance of Grade 1 learners from two public primary schools, one in the east and the other in the west of Pretoria. These two geographical areas were specifically chosen for this study as it demonstrates, in general terms, the two opposite poles in socio-economic development in the Pretoria Metropole. Academic performance focuses on diverse skills and abilities that enable children to transition to a higher level of formal education (Justice et al., 2019). Furthermore, academic performance can be understood as the nucleus, around which a whole education system is built, and which emphasises knowledge gained by students (Kumar et al., 2021).

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between the socio-economic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners, as mediated by parental involvement. Thus, this study focused on two different geographical areas that represent two areas with opposing socioeconomic conditions. While geographic location cannot consistently be used as a proxy for socioeconomic circumstances, it was used in this study to facilitate the initial sampling process.

I was especially interested in conducting a study concerning the effects of socio-economic factors on academic performance. Nortje (2017, p. 47) reports that a mere 20% of South African schools are classified as "functional". According to the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996), a school can be described as an institution that ensures that all children have access to quality education, qualified teachers, textbooks, and a safe school environment (Spaull, 2011). However, the different primary schools of the participants can be described as functional, as both schools have resources and quality teachers. This study sought a deeper understanding of the relationship between socio-economic background and parental involvement in academic performance at the entrance point of formal schooling. This understanding could contribute to initiatives that seek to minimise academic failure in the South African schooling system, which is often found in dysfunctional schools in impoverished communities (UNICEF, 2017).

Socio-economic background is a dynamic construct used to refer to an individual's access to social and economic resources, as well as the ultimate benefits associated with these resources (Brito & Noble, 2014; Peverill et al., 2021). Furthermore, socio-economic background is a multidimensional construct encompassing a social stratification system derived from access to various resources (Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2020). Socio-economic background refers to a measure in which an individual's sociological and economic status is determined within the economic and social hierarchy (Yaple & Yu., 2020). The factors supporting or detracting from early learning in South Africa are complex in nature. It is, therefore, necessary for parents and professional practitioners to be aware of these diverse barriers regarding the education system. Poverty in South Africa is a critical factor in the lack of quality education as it directly or indirectly causes numerous barriers to learning (Chikoko & Mthembu, 2021., p. 69; Donald et al., 2014., Van der Berg et al., 2011). Shuhratova (2023) further explains how poverty is one of the most significant barriers that prevent children from accessing quality education, affects the development of learners and may perpetuate the cycle of poverty. Individuals living in impoverished areas face unique challenges, such as a lack of parental guidance and interest, government funding, and qualified educators (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

Lower socio-economic status in households has been proven to have detrimental effects on the wellbeing and development of learners (Company-Córdoba et al., 2020; Letourneau et al., 2013; Loft & Waldfogel, 2021; Rahal et al., 2023). Alternatively, higher socio-economic status may have a positive impact on the educational development of learners for the mere fact that they have easy access to different resources necessary for their development (Kwarteng et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022; Tahir et al., 2021). Research has indicated low socio-economic backgrounds as being a great concern in relation to academic performance, as learners with this background face several barriers that limit their potential (Kwarteng et al., 2022; Nortje, 2017). In contrast, learners from higher-socio-economic backgrounds, therefore, have the advantage of being supported personally, financially, and socially through their parents' involvement in their development (Altschul, 2012; Liu et al., 2022). McCall (1981, as cited in Bradley & Corwyn, 2002) states that socio-economic background impacts a learner's cognitive development from infancy. Research further shows that socio-economic background may affect their decision-making and problem-solving skills (Hackman et al., 2015). Therefore, I decided to research the interaction between socio-economic background and parental involvement in the academic performance of Grade 1 learners.

1.2   INITIAL LITERATURE REVIEW

The initial literature review focused on learners' academic achievement within the parameters of their socio-economic background and the influence of parental support for optimum development. Throughout the literature review, I explored the factors contributing to academic achievement, and the factors related to socio-economic background that may contribute to the academic performance of Grade 1 children.

1.2.1   The effects of socio-economic background on the quality of education

It has been reported that 59% of South African children live in poverty (Hall & Sambu, 2019), and a further 2.3 million households with children go hungry daily (Van der Berg et al., 2021). This is known to affect their school attendance. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds may struggle with academic performance in formal schooling (McKinney, 2014). This could be due to a lack of initial cognitive development necessary to succeed in their academic careers (Arends et al., 2021, p.60; Ferguson et al., 2007; Ramesh, 2022). Furthermore, 80% of South African schools cannot provide learners with the necessary skills to further their academic careers (Nortje, 2017) as the South African education system is characterised by a shortage of teachers and inadequate school infrastructure (Meier & West, 2020). The shortage of teachers and inadequate infrastructure further lead to overcrowded classrooms, lack of attention and acute stress (Meier & West, 2020). A body of research has shown that learners who are brought up and moulded in a relatively disadvantaged community are faced with a lack of support systems and experiences (Arends et al., 2021, p. 61; Jiang, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). This negatively affects their cognitive neurodevelopment, as well as their oral language development (Clark et al., 2021; Fernandez & Ramia, 2015; Perry & Szalavitz, 2006).

The lack of infrastructure and skilled educators in disadvantaged communities contribute to poor quality of education (Agbor, 2012; Donald et al., 2014; Meier & West, 2020) and may affect learners' academic development. Therefore, impoverished learners are more likely to be unprepared for the educational challenges of formal schooling (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Cuyvers et al. (2011) and Arends et al. (2021, p. 65) indicate that learners with access to working infrastructure, such as clean classrooms, restrooms, and quality educators, are more likely to succeed.

In contrast to the evidence above, a more supportive community and better socio-economic circumstances may lead to more successful academic development. In many cases,

learners brought up in more affluent communities and familial settings are more goal-driven (Davids et al., 2015). Furthermore, research has also shown that household income may directly affect young learners' cognitive and academic development (Jiang, 2021; September et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2020) as it may impact their access to additional resources, such as parental expectations and early academic exposure.

1.2.2 The effects of dedicated parental/guardian involvement on academic development

The role of the parent/caregiver is crucial in the upbringing of a learner, especially one who attends school. Homework, book reports, and science projects are integral to academic development, and learners often need guidance or assistance with these. Therefore, the role of the parent/caregiver must be addressed during the early school years. A parent or caregiver's involvement in education is seen as their participation in their children's academic careers in order to help them succeed in school (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Sujarwo et al., 2021; Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2020). A report published in 2012 stated that the average South African classroom is at a ratio of 1:35 (Modisaotsile, 2012) and 1:33 in 2014 (Meier & West, 2020), meaning that there is only one educator to address the needs of 33 to 35 diverse learners in the classroom. However, more recent reports show that in some provinces, such as KwaZulu-Natal, an average ratio of 1:39 are a reality in some schools (Meier & West, 2020). Therefore, parent/caregiver involvement in academic development is crucial as vital information and extra help are lost during class time and are therefore needed at home.

Learners' home environment plays a vital role in their wellbeing and development (Davids et al., 2017). Therefore, it can be assumed that more involvement from parents/caregivers can lead to a higher academic success rate. Davids et al. (2017) further state that the parent-child relationship and home environment allow nurturing and functional development. These relationships are necessary for a learner to gain opportunities to expand their knowledge. Therefore, parental involvement affect learners' academic success and relates to positive youth development (September et al., 2015; Sengönül, 2022; Wang & Khalil, 2014; Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2020). Parenting can further be seen as the lens through which learners learn appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, acquire skills, and understand the different roles in a community (Davids et al., 2015; Sengönül, 2022; Tahir et al., 2021).

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the interactions between socio-economic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners, as mediated by parental involvement. A case study approach was utilised, with four Grade 1 learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

This study explored and described these interactions through personal interviews, observations, and the collection of artefacts such as workbooks, assessments, and report cards. The study sought to contribute to knowledge on socio-economic background and parental involvement in the academic performance of Grade 1 learners by exploring each case individually.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 How is socio-economic background mediated through parental involvement in the academic performance of Grade 1 learners?

1. How are socio-economic backgrounds related to the academic performance of Grade 1 learners? This question will be addressed through face-to-face interviews with parents to gain insights into how parental involvement influences a child's academic performance. Additionally, observations at home and the analysis of academic artefacts will be used to examine the practical manifestations of parental involvement in the context of Grade 1 learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

2. How does parental involvement present for Grade 1 learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds? This question will be addressed through face-to-face interviews with the parents to gain in-depth insight into how parental involvement may influence a child's academic performance. Academic artefacts, such as workbooks and report cards, will also be used to better understand the impact of parental involvement on a Grade 1 child's academic performance.

3. How does academic performance present for Grade 1 learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds? This question will be addressed through face-to-face interviews, observations and analysing academic artefacts to better understand how academic performance presents for Grade 1 learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

1.5 WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

Learners with more constructive, active parental involvement may perform better academically in Grade 1. The well-documented association between socio-economic background and academic performance in the early years is acknowledged in the current study (Altschul, 2012; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Demetriou et al., 2020; Letourneau et al., 2013; Nortje, 2017; Saifi, 2011; Tahir et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2020;). However, the study advocates for more in-depth investigation at the individual level of the interactions between socio-economic background and parental involvement in the academic performance of Grade 1 learners. This could provide insight into optimal support for learners during transitions to formal schooling. A case study design was utilised in this research to obtain data on this phenomenon.

1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.6.1 Socio-economic background

Socio-economic background is a dynamic construct used to understand an individual's access to social and economic resources, and the ultimate benefits associated with these resources (Brito & Noble, 2014). Low socio-economic background is defined as living in a household where the breadwinner's income is below the poverty line (Spencer et al., 2012). In South Africa, this term refers to R890 per month (Statistics South Africa, 2021).

1.6.2 Academic performance

Commodari (2016) refers to academic performance as the competencies and skills necessary for each child to succeed in their academic career. Academic performance is the attainment of long-term educational goals and is related to one's performance capacity to do well when judged by some level of standard (Rodríguez-Hernández et al., 2020). Cooper and Burger (1980) define academic performance as the quality of performance in classroom assessments and tests. Furthermore, studies have also shown that a child's academic performance is highly dependent on their cognitive and social skills (Claessens et al., 2009; Demetriou et al., 2020). The Grade 1 learners in the current study will be observed based on their reading, writing and mathematical skills, which will be collected through their report cards and social skills in order to observe their academic progress

1.6.3 Social development

In this study, social development refers to the relationship between learners and their peers, with emphasis placed on the relationship with their parents (Louw & Louw, 2014). It focuses on the behaviour of children where they are expected to adapt to the rules when complying with the community (Mayra et al., 2022). Social development also refers to skills that encourage positive interaction with peers, and the environment (Lynch & Simpson, 2010; Mayra et al., 2022) and support prosocial behaviour (Afshordi & Liberman, 2021). Furthermore, social development is related to a learner's positive or negative behaviour at home and in the classroom (El Nokali et al., 2011).

1.6.4 Parental involvement

Parental involvement can be seen as parents actively interacting with their children and participating in their children's education in order for them to achieve academic success (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021; Sengönül, 2022; Wang & Khalil, 2014). Learners who receive help from their parents with homework and projects, and whose parents are involved in their academic and social lives, may achieve better academic success. Furthermore, parental involvement refers to parents actively engaging at school and at home, and having a positive attitude towards their children's teachers, school, and education (Sengönül, 2022; Topor et al., 2010).

1.6.5 Grade 1 learner

The South African Schools Act no. 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) stipulates that the grade number plus six will equal the age of the children in that grade. Therefore, Grade 1 learners are defined as children who are six, going on seven years old in the year of admission.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework should mainly be used when the research focuses on one specific theory (Green, 2014) and is a reflection of the work the research engages in to use a specific theory (Varpio et al., 2020). In the case of this study, this was Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. This theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) explores how human development, specifically child development, takes place in their environment and how it affects their psychological and social growth (Crawford, 2020). This theory further investigates how different systems in a person's life influence their development, directly or indirectly

(Crawford, 2020), in ever-evolving interconnected systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory views child development as a complex system of relationships that is affected by multiple levels of their surrounding environments (Evans, 2020). Thus, to gain an in-depth insight into child development, their immediate environment and their interaction with their larger environment needs consideration (Evans, 2020). Additionally, this theory allows us to gain a better understanding on how the environments of individuals, along with their ecological realities, influence their development and behaviour (Rus et al., 2020). Furthermore, Hess and Schultz (2008, p. 57) describe this theory as "an analytical tool to understand individual development within complex social systems." This theory and emerging theories on structural poverty assisted me in investigating how the environment, partly determined by socio-economic background and parental involvement, interacts with a child's academic development in Grade 1. Furthermore, structural poverty explores how poverty is not only an individual trait, but is also caused due to macro-structural rules that determine distribution (Brady, 2019; Calnitsky, 2018).

Bronfenbrenner's theory comprises five systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Crawford, 2020; Donald et al., 2014; Rus et al., 2020; Tudge et al., 2016). Each system refers to the people in a child's immediate environment or in the broader social context, that affect their development (Louw & Louw, 2014; Rus et al, 2020; Tudge et al., 2016). This may include family members (Donald et al., 2014; Tudge et al., 2016), social structures, and the interaction between different social layers (Louw & Louw, 2014). Structural poverty in South Africa, which can be found at the core of our society, results in low-income families who may struggle to escape poverty regardless of their income status being above the poverty line for a period of time (Du Toit, 2005). This could affect the upbringing of learners living in impoverished areas. The economic status of a family into which a family is born seems to have a substantive impact on their outcomes later in life (Royce, 2022, p. 7.)Du Toit (2005) further investigates how stress, vulnerability, and economic deprivation play a key role in structural poverty. The author highlights that a brief spell of income may not necessarily change the family's poverty status. Thus, learners are not only influenced by their family's income but rather the structural setting of their immediate environment. A salary increase would not necessarily change their access to efficient resources, such as well-organised public schools, which could enhance their academic development (Calnitsky, 2018). Royce (2022, p. 7) further states that poverty should be understood based on the inexplicable relationship between

economic and political structures that cause the power imbalance. This imbalance affects the allocation of resources and opportunities.

Additionally, structural poverty refers to the macro- and meso-level demographic and economic contexts that represents the available opportunities and constraints for those individuals (Brady, 2019). Therefore, the systems in which learners live can impact their academic development, which is closely related to structural poverty. Thus, structural poverty outlines the effect of different economic and demographic structures on the development of children.

1.8 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

1.8.1 Epistemology of the study

The interpretivist approach was utilised in this study. According to Chowdhury (2014), interpretivism emphasises the meaning of people's character, and their participation in their respective cultural and social lives. It considers differences such as cultures, circumstances and times of development of different social realities (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Interpretivism further emphasises studying people in their natural and social environments to understand their world perception (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Williams, 2020). Interpretivists value the idea of subjective, first-person experiences (Schwandt, 1998) as these have the potential to enhance social policies because the researcher has a direct account of the participant's life (Denzin, 2001). Interpretivism aims to include richness in the insights gathered rather that attempting to provide definitive laws that can be generalised (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This study explores and describes the interactions between socio-economic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners, as mediated by parental involvement. The interpretivist approach was deemed the most applicable philosophical lens through which to view the data in order to reach this aim. This approach focuses on having a deeper understanding of the selected phenomenon instead of making generalisations that apply to the whole population (Creswell, 2007). This is deemed as the most applicable approach as this research is focused on the specific participants' lives and their experiences, rather than making generalisations about the general public (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm allows researchers to view the world through the eyes of the participant in question, resulting in findings that are natural in their social setting (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). It enables the researcher to treat the context of the research and

its situation as unique as well as the given circumstances of the participants (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This paradigm further allowed for the use of a case study research design to substantiate the findings and construct in-depth knowledge of the participants' surroundings and experiences (Günbayi & Sorm, 2018). The interpretivist approach focuses on a holistic view in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' interpretation of their world (Williams, 2020). This approach emphasises the importance of understanding the participants and their interpretation of the world around them (Aurini et al., 2021, p. 55; Ugwu et al., 2021). Thus, the use of the interpretivist approach will allow the researcher to gain subjective and personal information in order to gain a better understanding of the participants' lives.

1.8.2 The methodological approach of this study

Qualitative research can be described as "naturalistic" as data collection occurs in a natural setting where socialisation occurs (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 53). A qualitative approach also aims to explain and describe a phenomenon, and interpret and explore the outcomes of the findings while being context-bound and focusing on a small sample group (Leedy et al., 2019). Furthermore, the qualitative approach focuses more on direct experiences than on collecting and interpreting numerical data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). The qualitative research approach assists researchers in understanding the specific phenomenon in-depth as the data, obtained in the participant's natural environment, are interpreted through written or spoken words (Maree, 2016; Queiros et al., 2017). Denzin (2001) emphasises that qualitative researchers are never on the sidelines, but rather knee-deep in the research itself. It aims to provide a specific understanding to a phenomenon based on the individuals that are experiencing it, without making generalisations (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

This study focused on four individual cases. The use of a qualitative approach enabled each participant's values and ideas to become known. Qualitative research seeks to investigate variables to consider specific nuances and make further distinctions (Aurini et al., 2021, p. 7). Furthermore, this approach assisted in exploring the learners' and their parents' personal experiences through interviews and observations (Hennink et al., 2020). I was able to thus focus on collecting personal experiences and information from the participants to better understand the influence of parental involvement and socio-economic circumstances on the academic development of Grade 1 learners. Qualitative research aims to identify a participant's meaning of the world and how they interpret different life events (Hignett & McDermott, 2015). Therefore, this approach was beneficial to this study as I was interested

in the participants' individual academic performance and how the different systems influenced their lives.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research design

A case study research design was utilised in this study. Yin (2012) describes this method as necessary when researching a phenomenon that entails gaining in-depth knowledge of a specific case. The case study design also focuses on understanding real-life complexities as the research occurs in a natural setting (Crowe et al., 2011). Stake (1995, p. xi) further describes a case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case" for us as researchers to understand the participants' real-world behaviours and actions. Furthermore, a case study is also seen as the systematic investigation of a community or individuals where the researcher inspects in-depth data related to several variables (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Case studies focuses on the context, rather than the individuals alone and has the ability to capture multiple perspectives in order to gain an in-depth understanding of a certain phenomenon (Aurini et al., 2021, p. 61). Utilising a case study for this research allows the researcher to focus on the participants at hand and gather subjective data from their perspective.

This study followed a descriptive and exploratory case study design as I was interested in exploring the phenomenon and describing the cases in a real-life setting (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Yin, 2012). As such, the researcher observed the participants in their natural environment to gain a potentially albeit subjective view of their lives where events are observed over a short period of time. Notwithstanding the potential pitfalls of this study under review, the study aims to gather in-depth data from the participants and will allow the researcher to increase understanding of the relationship between the variables as highlighted elsewhere in the study.

1.9.2 Selection of participants

A non-probability sampling method was used in this study as it follows a non-systematic process that does not allow each person to receive an equal opportunity for selection (Elfil & Negida, 2017). Non-probability sampling is theory- or purpose-driven (Lavrakas, 2008), and exploratory (Berndt, 2020) and utilises sampling methods based on the researcher's choice, and the availability of the participants (Setia, 2016). Purposive sampling was used

in this study as the participants were chosen based on specific criteria (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). For example, the participants had to be in Grade 1, reside in either the west or east of Pretoria, and attend a public primary school. Purposive sampling was valuable in determining that the selected participants possessed the necessary qualities and characteristics for this research (Etikan & Bala, 2017). On that basis, four learners, two boys and two girls (aged seven years), and their respective caregivers/parents were recruited in this study as representatives of polar socio-economic backgrounds and parental involvement. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to focus only on the participants and theory in question while simultaneously providing me with a heterogeneous population sample (Berndt, 2020; Lavrakas, 2008; Kim, 2022).

An additional criteria applied in the selection of research subjects in this research project. The participants had to be living with both of their biological parents, and their mother tongue had to be Afrikaans. The researcher chose this criteria to minimise variables of the participants. Furthermore, I approached the parents of one boy and one girl from a public school in the east, and the parents of one boy and one girl from a public school in the west of Pretoria. Firstly, I worked with a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in Pretoria that assisted me with contacting parents whose children fit this criteria. Connection made with the research subjects were therefore done by an independent third party and therefore ensured securing the integrity of the intended engagement. Secondly, and prior to conducting the research, the researcher engaged with a previous colleague whose daughter was in Grade 1. Bias was a concern in this regard and methods of limiting bias are discussed in Chapter 3. Therefore, convenience sampling was also present to test the integrity of the interview method and content.

1.9.3   Data generation and documentation

Three qualitative data generation methods were employed during the study to facilitate understanding of the research topic, while gaining the necessary evidence to support this understanding. Two field visits, six months apart, were conducted to substantiate the findings and prevent subjectivity.

The first method of data collection was done through employing structured observations of researcg subjects. Observation is valuable in social research as it allows the researcher to systematically understand the participants' social setting, defined by their language, communication lines, reaction on external and internal stimuli, and power (Nieuwenhuis,

2016). Alternatively, interviewing is a data generation method that allows the researcher to ask questions that will help better understand the participants' lives (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Finally, visual data, such as personal documents, give a naturalistic view of the participant's life (Nieuwenhuis, 2016), and construct a picture of the child's academic development. These three qualitative data generation methods were used to understand the phenomenon, while gaining the necessary evidence to support this understanding. Two field visits, six months apart, were conducted to substantiate the findings and prevent subjectivity.

Firstly, I utilised structured observations while working with the respective learners as it was vital to observe them in their natural habitat without constraints or controls as I was looking to gain in-depth knowledge of each case (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Furthermore, it gave me the opportunity to be as close to the action as possible while it was occurring (Blanche et al., 2006; Nassaji, 2020). It also allowed me to compare the different lifestyles of the participants in answering the research questions. Secondly, interviews were mainly used with the caregivers/parents as they were able to describe the central themes of their lives (Moser & Korstjens, 2018), and provide a holistic snapshot of their parental involvement in their children's lives (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Two of the interviews were conducted during the day and two during the night as the parents had to work. Lastly, I analysed personal documents and artefacts such as workbooks, report cards, and school assessments as secondary sources to gain in-depth knowledge of the children's academic development. These artefacts were primarily used to give the reader a realistic insight into the academic performance and living conditions of the participants. It constructs a picture of emotional development and setting, which may frame academic development. In order to minimise the impact on the participants as possible, I primarily photographed these artefacts before returning them to the participants.

Table 1.1

Data generation and documentation

	TIME DURATION AND LOCATION	PARTICIPANTS	REASON
OBSERVATIONS	Carried out during the second stage of the research. The observations took place at their homes.	The participating learners were observed in their home environment.	I had access to their homes, relationships, and habits while observing parental involvement and socio-economic background.

	TIME DURATION AND LOCATION	PARTICIPANTS	REASON
INTERVIEWS	Conducted during the first stage of the research. It took place in their homes so that the parents/caregivers would feel at ease.	The parents/caregivers were part of this stage. Semi-structured questions were posed.	To gain a deeper understanding of the parents' involvement in their children's academic/school careers.
VISUAL DATA	Conducted during the third stage of the research. Photographs were taken of the children's report cards, workbooks, and assessments as evidence.	The learners' workbooks, school assessments, and report cards were photographed as data.	Workbooks, school assessments, and report cards (exploring their academic development).

1.9.4 Data analysis and interpretation

Analysis of obtained data correctly is vital as it allows the researcher to triangulate data and strengthen the findings, and, as a result, reach valid conclusions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Furthermore, Basit (2003, p. 143) defines qualitative data analysis as a "dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorising." It refers to the complex and ambivalent ways in which we make sense of our social worlds (Lyons & Coyle, 2021, p. 9). In this research, the data derived from the interviews, observations, and visual data were analysed to answer the research question. Within the intuitive and inductive reasoning, however lies also the pitfalls of qualitative data analysis.

To address the pitfalls of qualitative data gathering and data analysis, the researcher utilised the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) when analysing the data from the interviews and observations, as it allowed me to gain the trust of the participants, better understand the phenomenon, and constantly compare the cases (Glaser, 1965; Knotten et al., 2017; Mezinska et al., 2016) while increasing the traceability of the data (Boeije, 2002; Knotten et al., 2017). Glaser (1965) divides this method into four stages: (1) Comparing the incidents that are relevant to each theory, (2) Integrating categories and their properties, (3) Establishing the theory, and lastly, (4) Constructing the themes/theory. This study used the CCM to generate themes rather than theory. After analysing the interviews and observations, the researcher analysed the visual data separately. As previously discussed,

the researcher took photos as evidence of the learners' place of living, workbooks, assessments, and report cards to reach conclusions about their academic development. In this regard, Pink (2014) urges researchers to utilise visual and sensory data as an innovative way of understanding and developing interventions for change.

Visual data increases credibility as there is physical proof of the collected data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016), which is vital in qualitative research. However, the disadvantages thereof can include misplacing the photos or losing the device's battery. Therefore, I stored the photos on a hard drive and on my laptop, which is password protected. Secondly, I made sure to keep a battery pack with me to ensure battery life. In addition, the limitations of uncontrolled variables that can influence data gathering, data analysis and therefore conclusions were limited as much as possible to the exact variables being studied, i.e. socio-economic background, parental involvement an academic performance.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical research principles are vital to consider when conducting interviews, observations, and collecting visual data. These principles include transparency, respect for participants, informed consent, voluntary participation, consent to record audio and video, the right to leave the study at any point, and avoiding the use of deception (Reid et al., 2018; Vanclay et al., 2013). Thus, as the researcher, I made sure to obtain informed, voluntary consent from the parents, assent from the child participants, and approval from the relevant Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria. It is also important to protect the confidentiality of the data by preventing people from accessing the processed information. However, the researcher avoided this challenge by protecting their identities using pseudonyms. Furthermore, parents and learners needing to be more truthful during the interviews and observations might present a challenge as parents may be worried about how the data will be used. Therefore, the researcher reassured the participants about the confidentiality and anonymity of their information at the start of each interview and responded to any questions the participants had. However, the researcher was also conscious of the fact that it was my professional responsibility to report any abuse or neglect I may have witnessed during the interviews and observations, which was stipulated in the consent forms. Although no such occurrences were observed or assumed, it was still necessary to be conscious of the fact in order to protect participants if it were present, as it was still my duty as a researcher in the field to protect those most vulnerable. I thus availed myself of a social worker's contact information in case there was a need to report such things.

1.11 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

The following section outlines the layout of the chapters in this mini-dissertation.

Chapter 1: Overview of the study

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to, as well as the rationale for this study. An overview of the initial literature review and the research questions guiding this study were given. Lastly, the conceptual framework, paradigmatic choices, research methodology, and design were briefly discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature that is relevant to this study. The effects of socio-economic background on the quality of education and social development will be discussed. In addition, the effects of dedicated parental/guardian involvement on academic performance will be explored. An in-depth overview of the theoretical framework that guided this study, based on existing literature, will be given.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

Chapter 3 will provide an in-depth explanation of the research methodology utilised in this study, along with the research process and research design. The data collection, documentation, analysis, and the role of the researcher will also be discussed. Lastly, an overview of the ethical considerations will be provided.

Chapter 4: Research process and findings

Chapter 4 consists of an in-depth description of the context in which the study took place, along with the findings discovered during the data collection process. An overview of the themes will be given, along with an integration of the findings and existing literature.

Chapter 5: Recommendations, addressing the research questions and concluding remarks

Lastly, Chapter 5 will focus on summarising and integrating the research findings with the research questions that guided this study. Recommendations for future studies will also be given, as well as potential contributions and perceived limitations of this study.

1.12 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 provided an overview of this study. The background, purpose, concept clarification, as well as the working assumptions of this study, were explained. A brief overview of the research methodology and design, data collection and documentation, and data analysis and interpretation was provided.

Chapter 2 comprises an in-depth review of the relevant literature on this topic. This literature review will specifically focus on the effects of socio-economic background on the quality of education and social development, as well as the effects of parental involvement. Lastly, the theoretical framework guiding this study will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided an outline of this study's purpose. This chapter is focused on delving deeper into the potentially significant role of socio-economic background and parental involvement in the academic performance of Grade 1 learners.

Grade 1 learners are at a vulnerable stage in their lives, and are arguably at a stage where external variables can have a lasting impact on their academic performance (Nkosi & Adebayo, 2020; Sengönül, 2022; Seni & Onyango, 2020). Therefore, it is critical that maximum understanding is gained through the available relevant research. There is a substantial body of research regarding parents' socio-economic background and involvement (Jiang, 2021; Kalil & Ryan, 2020; Liu et al., 2022; Perrigo et al., 2022; Tahir et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020) and how this variable affects the potential outcomes of their children's academic performance. A deeper understanding of this phenomenon may contribute to the knowledge framework to support researchers to better address the current challenge regarding academic performance at the entrance point of formal schooling. Chapter 2 will explore the relevant literature on socio-economic background and its possible effects on the impact of education in the foundation phase, as presented in the different socio-economic areas of South Africa. In addition, said chapter will explore the impact of increased parental involvement on a Grade 1 learner's academic performance and development. Lastly, the chapter presents literature on socio-economic background and how it can contribute to social development.

2.1.1 The effects of socio-economic background on the quality of education

It has been reported that 60% of South African children lived in poverty in 2014 (Louw & Louw, 2014) and a further 62, 1% in 2020, which works out to 13 million children being impoverished (Visser, 2019). Some estimates indicate that 2.3 million households go hungry daily (Van der Berg et al., 2021). Poverty is known to affect children's school attendance as they are hungry, tired, and by deduction, lack the necessary home support and motivation necessary for learning. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds may thus struggle with academic performance in formal schooling (McKinney, 2014). In such cases, a lack of performance cannot only be ascribed to individual ability but also to a wide array of

environmental variables. As a result, they may be unprepared and lack the necessary skills to succeed in their academic careers. Furthermore, it has been revealed that 80% of South Africa's schools cannot provide learners with the necessary skills to further their academic careers (Nortje, 2017) and support their academic development due to a lack of teachers, overcrowded classrooms and insufficient infrastructure (Arends et al, 2021; Meier & West, 2020; Nkosi & Adebayo, 2020). Learners come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds with different compositions in literary skills, which could therefore result in learners struggling with their academic development in Grade 1. Poverty is not only a challenge in South Africa but also in the global context. According to the Agenda 2023 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2022), eradicating poverty is globally paramount to ensuring equal access to resources, services, technology, and opportunities. Poverty can impact children's scholastic abilities, as research shows that children brought up in impoverished areas are less likely to be ready for formal schooling, and lack the necessary skills to maintain long-term academic success (Duncan et al., 2017; Lesner, 2017). However, (mainly) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current economic climate in Russia and Ukraine (Mbah & Wasum, 2022), the relevant lack of political and economic stability in the USA, as well as increasing economic tension between the USA and China, which impacts global trade (Li et al., 2020), the number of severely impoverished individuals has risen from 75 million to 95 million globally (United Nations, 2022). Thus, increasing poverty is clearly seen as not only a South African challenge but also a global phenomenon.

Research has shown that learners who are brought up and moulded in a relatively disadvantaged community, and who lack familial support systems and experiences, are likely to be negatively affected in their cognitive neurodevelopment, as well as their oral language development (Clark et al., 2021; Fernandez & Ramia, 2015; Perry & Szalavitz, 2006). In addition, and in support of this, recent research also strongly supports the conclusion that socio-economic background has a strong, but also a more nuanced effect on language development (Duncan et al., 2017; Hoff et al., 2019). However, due to the causal relationship between socio-economic circumstances and language ability, it may be difficult to prove through research (Hoff et al., 2019). In South Africa, overall school performance remains comparatively low mainly as a result of multilingual and political factors, which pose significant scholastic challenges (Prinsloo et al., 2018). A seminal study in Pakistan summarised socioeconomic factors, such as school attendance, parents' educational levels, and income as contributing factors to learners' academic success or

failure (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012). This indicates that school performance and academic achievement are influenced not only by socio-economic circumstances, but also by a wide variety of factors outside of ability. This study postulates that the ability to perform in an education system is also determined by the factors surrounding the individual.

Many learners succeed in school, irrespective of their socio-economic background, if they have the appropriate social support structures to help them overcome the effects of economic challenges (Bouiri et al., 2022; Fang et al., 2020; Vadivel et al., 2023). Access to aftercare programmes, extracurricular activities, parental involvement, and teacher support may impact learners' overall development (Ayimbila et al., 2022; Kwarteng et al., 2022; Reddy & Fadiji, 2020). Schools who have Student Body Governances (SGB's) with access to monetary support are also more likely to invest in school activities and staff, which may promote the academic development of learners as there is more access to help for each child (Buys et al., 2020). In conclusion, socio-economic background may provide additional challenges in providing a quality educational experience for each child, which may ultimately affect their overall development (Tahir et al., 2021).

2.1.2 The impact of infrastructure and communities on the quality of education

The lack of infrastructure and adequately skilled educators in many disadvantaged communities may contribute to the lack of quality education provided (Agbor, 2012., Donald et al., 2014; Meier & West, 2020; Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2020). This could therefore affect the academic development of Grade 1 learners. According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), as discussed by Donald et al. (2014), Evans (2020) and Tudge et al. (2016), children are moulded and influenced by their surroundings. This supports the findings of Cuyvers et al. (2011) and Arends et al. (2021, p. 65), who explain that learners who have access to working infrastructure, such as clean classrooms, restrooms and quality educators, have a higher probability of succeeding in the classroom. Learners in lower socio-economic communities may be further disadvantaged due to a lack of access to high-quality private services (such as childcare and parks), their parents' lack of access to jobs, and inadequate informal social support systems (McLloyd, 1998; Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2020). These learners may also face the harsh reality of lower teacher expectancies and poorer academic readiness skills. Teachers who lack interpersonal teaching skills and who are negative role models may further contribute to children's lack of motivation to achieve academically (McLloyd, 1998; Meier & West, 2020). However, access to world-class educational infrastructure is not the only determinant of quality education.

A supportive community may provide a variety of contact and human resources that are available to the family to promote the health and wellbeing of learners (Kurtovic et al., 2021; Weissbourd, 2000). This promotes learners becoming productive members of society when they grow up. Thus, the benefits of a supportive community are valuable to the overall development of learners from various backgrounds.

The challenges posed by the lack of infrastructure remain prevalent in South Africa. A report published in 2012 states that the average South African classroom is at a ratio of 1:35 (Modisaotsile, 2012) and 1:33 in 2014 (Meier & West, 2020). This means that there is only one educator to address the needs of 33 to 35 learners with diverse abilities in the classroom. However, this cannot be generalised as public schools all over South Africa face the same challenges regarding overcrowded classrooms, irrespective of the socio-economic background of the school. Prinsloo et al. (2018) further emphasise that system failure and a lack of resource development are significantly at fault for schools struggling to showcase positive academic results. However, the lack of academic achievement cannot only be attributed to crumbling infrastructure (Prinsloo et al., 2018). The lack of achievement in the South African schooling system is a combination of various factors that have a lasting negative impact on the youth of this country.

Despite the crumbling infrastructure (Meier & West, 2020; Prinsloo et al., 2018), a healthy community that creates a supportive environment where academic performance is possible scan lead to a more successful academic career. A supportive environment where the school, community, and parents work together is vital to creating a thriving school environment for each child (Durišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Learners brought up in supportive communities and familial settings may be more goal-driven (Bouiri et al., 2022; Davids et al., 2015; Fang et al., 2020; Reddy & Fadihi, 2020), and focused on academic achievement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Zhang et al., 2020). Research shows a positive correlation between higher socioeconomic background and higher college admission test scores (Correa, 2019; Gobena, 2018). This is because learners' family background ultimately affects their access to quality educational systems. However, in the South African context, it should be noted that the tertiary education attendance rates for youth in South Africa has increased over the past 23 years. There was a 38.2% increase from 2000 to 2008, and a further 22% increase between 2008 and 2016 (Statistics South Africa, 2017). This reiterates the fact that socio-economic background may not be the only determinant of tertiary education admissions and attendance. It further shows that a lack of infrastructure may not

be completely at fault for the lack of school achievement. The concept of socio-economic background in education has also grown in popularity over the years, as low academic performance at schools was explicitly observed in children whose parents had low-income jobs, low education levels, and a lack of access to resources (Cowan et al., 2012, as cited by Rodríguez-Hernández et al., 2020). However, this research also acknowledges that this cannot be generalised to the South African population as there are many factors that influence academic achievement.

Cognitive and non-cognitive differences in skills are already evident before a learner enters the formal schooling system (Visser, 2019). Research shows that these differences are highly related to socio-economic background, which may ultimately affect the academic performance of Grade 1 learners (Dennis et al., 2022; Rosen et al., 2020; Siegler, 2019). However, each learner possesses their own unique capabilities, which are not related to socio-economic backgrounds. Zimmerman (2000) and Al Demerdash (2020) note that learners with a higher sense of self-efficacy showcase higher persistence, and those who judge their own work are more likely to achieve academic success. This emphasises the differences in each learner's capabilities, which may impact their ability to succeed academically. Shonkoff (2017) further notes that the developmental process is interactive. Each learner's ability to make decisions, control behaviour, and retain information is influenced by the environment they develop, not only individual-born traits. This, therefore, reiterates the importance of a supportive community.

As the teacher forms part of the community and its infrastructure, it should be noted that the importance of the teacher's relationship with the learner is valuable. Teacher participation in play and class may develop a learner's intellectual and social skills (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021; Tarman & Tarman, 2011). Active and constructive teacher participation in the classroom is critical for learning to take place. Teachers can function both as the guide to the learners' learning, as well as a good support system to nurture their interests and motivate the development of important skills needed to cope with daily stressors (Affuso et al., 2022; Reeve, 2006). Socio-economic background may impact a learner's academic performance at the entry level of their educational careers. Still, as discussed above, a supportive and stimulating environment can enhance a learner's developmental abilities. Parent, teacher, and community participation; and assistance from NGOs and the school are especially important in promoting the optimal development of learners. Ensuring quality education is critical as the academic development of learners will impact their availability,

exposure, and capability to enter the labour market, and therefore contribute to the future of South Africa.

2.1.3 The importance of early childhood education in the South African context

Early childhood education is vital as the skills that children learn at a young age may raise their ability to learn and retain new skills and abilities later in life (Visser, 2019). Language attainment is critical in early childhood development as language ability is one of the greatest predictors of school readiness and school success later in life (Burchinal et al., 2016). Early childhood education is highly dependent on the community, quality, or the presence of pre-school education, as well as the involvement of the parents in the early acquisition of knowledge. Early childhood education is critical for all children. This research aimed to investigate the impact of early childhood education in different socio-economic communities to better understand the cases at hand, and establish how it may contribute to Grade 1 learners' academic achievement.

Poverty, which is reflected in the Gini coefficient (Luptáčik & Nežinsky, 2020; Operation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011), is a reality for South Africans, leading to economic and social disadvantages. Research shows that countries such as South Africa, Sierra Leone, and Brazil share the reality of unequal wealth distribution (Assouad et al., 2018; Thorbecke & Charumilind, 2002). This affects monetary compensation and access to quality education. Schools in disadvantaged communities may rely more on governmental support and continuous support from non-profit organisations to uplift the communities and provide necessities for families. Learners who live in such communities often face inequality and injustice as they are forced to take responsibility for their academic development from a very young age. Educational changes are needed throughout South Africa in particular to mitigate the impact of overcrowded classrooms and the lack of access to resources for schools in disadvantaged areas (Meier & West, 2020). However, due to governmental policies worldwide regarding educational reform, governments are frequently held responsible for the gap in educational success in schools (Buys et al., 2020; Hopkins & Levin, 2000).

Schools are dependent on community and governmental support (Mkhize & David, 2023). Schools in more advantaged communities have a higher probability of being financially supported by parents, and are not only dependent on governmental involvement (Buys et al., 2020; Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021). However, there needs to be more research concerning

the effects of community support versus governmental support in South Africa. Quality education is the gateway to success for learners; thus, effective governing and community efforts are vital to ensuring quality academic performance.

Alternatively, it is not only schools that have an impact on early childhood development and education, but also parents. Early childhood development is filled with rich, supportive, and interactive experiences (Shonkoff, 2017), which can also be found at home and not only at school. The human brain is developed to respond to different experiences, which supports the acquisition of social-emotional skills, and cognitive and language competencies (Britto et al., 2017). Parents greatly impact their children's early education and development. Therefore, quality parent-child relationships and parenting efforts may contribute to children's future success and academic achievement. Thus, the success of early childhood education can also be attributed to the role of the parents, and not only to the public schooling system. Effective early childhood education programmes can improve the lives of learners and their families, and provide sufficient benefits to society (Essa & Burnham, 2019). Early childhood education provided by the school, community, or parents remains critical to early skill attainment.

2.1.4 The effects of socio-economic background on social development

The importance of child socialisation should always be considered in developing social wellbeing. Studies show that pre-school social behaviour directly correlates to learners' school readiness (Mulvey & Jenkins, 2021; Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). Learners are dependent on relationships with their peers and family to develop healthy social behaviour in order for them to function in a formal school environment. Therefore, learners exposed to inappropriate behaviour may lack the skills and knowledge to communicate in a healthy community. Serpell and Mashburn (2012) further state that the social development of learners is highly contingent on the various ecological systems in which the learner develops (Ergin et al., 2023). Positive parent-child relationships, regardless of socio-economic background, may increase a learner's social development (Ergin et al., 2023). Thus, this may also contribute to learners' social adjustment in their different contexts. Shonkoff (2017) promotes this idea by stating that healthy brain development depends not only on healthy and rich environments, but also on protection from excessive stress in life. Therefore, supportive and involved parents can contribute to the healthy overall development of their children by providing them with protective factors.

Social development is a critical skill that learners need in order to survive and be contributing members of society, as they practice communication skills and learn to adapt to social norms (Ergin et al., 2023; Sainain et al., 2020). It is, therefore, important that learners are moulded in uplifting environments, which can act as examples for future behaviour when interacting with different people in different circumstances. Social support within the family can significantly decrease the effects of stressors, such as poverty, when in a caring environment (Louw et al., 1998; Thompson, 2015; Turnbull et al., 2022). A learner's personal development and academic attainment can be improved by decreasing risk factors within their environment (Hango, 2007; Sattler, 2022; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2023;). Parents are able to decrease stressors by providing a supportive environment, assisting children with their homework, and providing emotional support (Ahmed et al., 2021; Lambert et al., 2022). As previously discussed, learners are dependent on interaction with their parents as early development is critical to their social and academic abilities (Visser, 2019). Learners learn from experiences, and therefore, growing up in an environment where support and care are emphasised may be beneficial to their social development.

Research further shows that parents from a higher socio-economic background may expose their children to opportunities to socialise effectively in different positive areas of their lives (Correa, 2019). Family ties and expectations further influence learners' social connections, allowing them to form meaningful relationships that will help them in the labour market later on in life (Correa, 2019). Thus, parents who are more involved in their children's social development may ultimately impact their social networking for future endeavours (Hango, 2007; Jiang, 2021; Lareau, 1989; Tan et al., 2020). Success in the labour market is necessary when faced with adversities as critical social skill attainment at one stage in a learner's life may impact skill attainment later on in life (Visser, 2019).

Persistent poverty during a learner's developmental years has also been known to have a detrimental effect on their social and cognitive development (Mulvey & Jenkins, 2021; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and Early Child Care Research Network, 2005). Chronic poverty in these early developmental years may evoke circumstances where chronic stress is prevalent, which may alter the brain permanently (Shonkoff et al., 2012; Smith & Pollak, 2020). The social development of learners is significant as studies show that it directly correlates with academic success and work-related skills (Ergin et al., 2023; Lynch & Simpson, 2011; Sainain et al., 2020). Thus, learners who are moulded in a supportive environment may potentially witness and learn from healthy

relationships (Clark et al., 2021), as opposed to learners growing up in an environment defined by chronic stress. Learners are highly impressionable, and their home environment is essential to their development. Social behaviour in learners is represented by their capacity to comprehend social relationships and psychosocial functioning, as well as their behaviour and attitudes, which in turn influence their ability to form relationships (Blaževic, 2016). These skills are fundamental and highly influenced by a learner's immediate exposure (Blaževic, 2016). However, there is a lack of sufficient research on how socio-economic background impacts social development in the South African context. Thus, assumptions about the presence and absence of these factors cannot be made at present.

Social development is a critical component in learners' developmental years, as their social competence will increase, they will learn to control themselves and overcome stress (Rauf & Bakar, 2019). Learners who have the opportunity to be moulded in a conducive environment where excellence and curiosity are motivated by their access to well-rounded conversations may have the advantage of developing critical social skills (Sainain et al., 2020); Salavera et al., 2022). Learners who do not have the same opportunities may be prohibited from having the same experiences as their lack of social skills and positive peer relationships, may influence their adjustment to school (Jõgi et al., 2022; Kiuru et al., 2015). Families' degree of engagement, including everyday practices, influences a learner's behavioural and cognitive developmental pathways (Belsky et al., 2007; Melhuish, 2010; Salavera et al., 2022). Socio-economic background is not the only determinant for learners reaching their full social ability. Ferguson et al. (2007) and Ergin et al. (2023) state that learners from disadvantaged communities often do not receive the stimulation at home that would prepare them to interact socially. However, as previously discussed, stimulating environments do not automatically ensure academic achievement and social development; rather, protection from different stressors can enhance said achievement (Shonkoff, 2017). A supportive environment, with protective parents or caregivers, is valuable in a child's social development.

In addition, Duncan et al. (2017) and Hackman et al. (2015) elaborate on the possible effects of socio-economic background on the development of Executive Functioning (EF), which is related to achievement and decision-making skills, planning, and cognitive development. Additionally, EF is related to inhibition control and cognitive flexibility- skills that are related to the social behaviour of learners (Rosen et al., 2020). It also plays a crucial role in a learner's school readiness and achievement abilities. Therefore, learners in lower socio-

economic circumstances may be prevented from developing vital social behaviour related to inhibition control, flexibility, and emotional control (Hackman et al., 2015), which are integral to well-developed social skills. However, research also shows that socio-economic circumstances are not the only predictor of favourable social behaviour, the development of EF, and academic achievement. Englund et al. (2004) and Tahir et al. (2021) find that learners with higher parental expectations from a young age perform better academically, socially, and physically. In support of this, Shonkoff (2017) emphasises the importance of environmental factors in increasing a learner's ability to develop these skills, not only socio-economic and individual factors. Thus, reiterating the importance of quality parental involvement and expectations in a child's life to increase social behaviour. Social skills and adequate social communication have become synonymous with successful human beings in the 21st century. Therefore, learners must develop these skills from a very young age to effectively contribute to society and continuously develop their skills, traits, and strengths. Each learner has the ability to achieve well in life, and by providing them with the opportunity and systems to do so, they will be able to flourish.

2.1.5 The effects of exposure to adequate and inadequate social behaviour

Dodge (1994) and Salavera et al. (2022) showed a significant correlation between learners developing conduct problems and parents utilising harsh and authoritative parenting styles to prevent their children from engaging in antisocial behaviour. Authoritarian parenting styles may impact a learner's self-confidence and ability to employ coping mechanisms. It can further restrict them from exploring their capabilities (Sarwar, 2016). Parenting practices are intended to promote academic achievement, positive reinforcement, discipline, and problem solving (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018). Thus, it can be said that learners are vulnerable to the behaviour of their parents, which may impact their own social behaviour. Learners' exposure to violent and disruptive behaviour may relate to their antisocial behaviour, which further prevents them from developing socially acceptable behaviour that allows them to contribute to society. Moreover, continuous exposure to stressful environments due to economic pressure further relates to learners witnessing disagreements between parents, aggressive attitudes, and harmful behaviour toward one another. This further contributes to their lack of adequate social development. In addition, learners who are moulded in communities where violence, law-breaking behaviour, drug use, and negative role models are prevalent (McLloyd, 1998) may display socially inappropriate behaviour.

Learners often mirror and learn social behaviour through exposure. Thus, children exposed to inadequate and inappropriate social behaviour are more likely to display this behaviour themselves. In addition, the home environment plays a critical role in learners' early development, and it significantly impacts what they can do, what they think, and what they believe (Visser, 2019). Furthermore, stimulating activities such as reading, singing, playing with the child, and observing acceptable social behaviour are all associated with positive developmental outcomes and individual growth (Visser, 2019). However, as discussed above, a stimulating environment is not the only predictor of success but rather a factor that minimises excessive stressors in life. Parents play an integral role in a child's development, and research has shown that supportive and cooperative parents act as models of appropriate relationships within the social system (Bayat & Madyibi, 2022; Devlieghere & Vandenbroeck, 2022; Hess, 2022; Ólaffsdóttir et al., 2020). In contrast, unsupportive parents are related to internalising and externalising behaviours of children (Marchand-Reilly & Yaure, 2019). Learners depend on positive reinforcement and influence to develop optimal social skills and contribute to society.

2.1.6 The effects of dedicated parental/guardian involvement on academic performance

Parental involvement is essential to maximising learners' potential and is critical to their academic performance (Benner et al., 2016; Gobena, 2018). The role of the parent/caregiver is crucial in the upbringing of a learner, especially one who attends school. Early childhood intervention is critical as it directly relates to the creation of successful adults (Ayimbila et al., 2022; Sengönül et al., 2022; Stacks, 2005). Homework, book reports, and science projects are synonymous with an academic career, and the help of a parent/caregiver may be advantageous to their academic performance. Parent/caregiver involvement in education is seen as their involvement in their children's academic careers to help them succeed in school (Ahmed et al., 2021; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021). Therefore, the involvement of parents/caregivers in academic performance is necessary as information and extra help may get lost during class time and are therefore needed at home. Research has also shown that household income may affect young children's cognitive and academic development (Gonzáles et al., 2020; Na'amnih et al., 2023; Ramesh, 2022; September et al., 2015). This may be due to the lack of access to various resources, such as tutors, extra-curricular activities, and health facilities, that could contribute to their overall development. However, this cannot be generalised to every context as the contributing factors to academic

achievement are vast and it is difficult to justify using one specific factor. This research, therefore, further investigated the impact of parental involvement, socio-economic background, and academic performance on the lives of Grade 1 learners.

Research supports the notion that positive and constructive parental involvement and interest in academic achievement is one of the greatest determinants in the relative success of a learner's academic career. It conveys a message to the learner through verbal and non-verbal feedback that education, and therefore school attendance, is important (Ahmed et al., 2021; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). This increases the learner's desire for intellectual growth and ultimate autonomy in their academic careers (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Salavera et al., 2022). Thus, a family and wider community with a value system that underpins the importance of academic performance is an undeniable determinant of scholastic performance.

Learners' home environment is vital to their wellbeing and development (Davids et al., 2017). Learners who spend quality time with their parents and have a home environment that is supportive and stimulating have a higher probability of academic achievement, specifically in mathematics and reading (Jõgi et al., 2022; Roksa & Potter, 2011). Quality time spent with children through play and reading assists with their wellbeing, and promotes their ability to form healthy relationships with people and objects within their immediate environment (Niklas et al., 2016). Therefore, it can be assumed that more academic involvement can lead to a higher academic success rate. During the early years of development, the parts of a learner's brain that control functions such as language progression and logical thinking are especially susceptible to stimuli from the external environment (Eloff & De Wet, 2009; Sainain et al., 2020). The effects of early experience on perceptual and cognitive skills mature over time and depend significantly on the analytic, synthetic, and recognition capabilities of neural circuits (Shaw et al., 2006). Thus, social factors play a vital role in regulating these learning processes as speech production and perception are learned better through human example and interaction with others (Attig & Weinert, 2020; Kuhl, 2004). Shonkoff and Richmond (2009) further describe early brain development as a 'serve and return' relationship between children and their parents. Children reach out to their parents and connect with them through facial expressions and babbling; a response in return is expected. However, if there is no such return, it may hinder the natural architecture and development of the child's brain, which may lead to behavioural and learning disparities. Thus, quality parental involvement is necessary for these parts of the brain to develop at a

healthy rate (Alarcón & de Ordinola, 2021; Byrnes & Wasik., 2019, p. 26). A learner's early years can be described as moments in which parents and children explore their worlds together, and expand their knowledge of the world and their immediate environments. A learner depends on the help and support of their guardians, and it is therefore vital that parents/caregiver invest their time and energy in their children's development, which may impact their academic performance (Fatonah, 2020; Liu et al., 2020).

Language proficiency and vocabulary knowledge allow learners to master all other conceptual proficiencies, which may lead to academic success (Prinsloo et al., 2018). Research has found that learners use language to share their thoughts and knowledge of different domains (Hoff, 2013; Lindfors, 2019). Learners first acquire language and vocabulary when interacting with their parents, and are exposed to parental language usage in the environment in which they grow up (Landsberg et al., 2016). Thus, parents who utilise various words, and more complex syntax and engage in greater intellectual conversations (Hoff & Laursen, 2019) contribute to a learner's language and cognitive development. Language is a critical part of academic performance. Research indicates that parents from lower socio-economic circumstances are less likely to actively engage with their children (Hoff & Laursen, 2019), preventing them from developing critical linguistic aspects associated with academic development. However, a lack of economic resources may result in parents utilising other tools to enhance their children's academic performance and to emphasise the importance of academic achievement (Hango, 2007). Niklas et al. (2016) note that parents who frequently read to their children, and parents' attitudes towards and relationship with reading mainly influence a child's vocabulary and reading abilities. Hango (2007) and Ayimbila et al. (2022) further states that parental involvement remains crucial to children's overall development as it conveys the message that their parents are interested in their future, development, and wellbeing. Therefore, dedicated parental involvement in children's academic careers may influence children to achieve more frequent academic success due to their strong support systems created by their parents.

2.1.7 The importance of a healthy parent-child relationship

Davids et al. (2017) further state that the parent-child relationship and home environment allow for nurturing and functional development. These relationships are necessary for a child to gain opportunities to expand their knowledge. Parenting styles that can be described as warm and loving directly impact the development and maintenance of healthy behaviour (Davids et al., 2017). Parental involvement affects children's academic success and relates

to positive youth development (Kalil & Ryan., 2020; September et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2014). The parent-child relationship is one of the most critical concerning cognitive development, even more so as peers and parents facilitate learning at home (Barger et al., 2019). Parenting can be seen as the filter through which children learn appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, acquire skills, and understand the different roles in a community (Davids et al., 2015). Children depend on their parents/caregivers for various reasons relating to healthy physical, cognitive, and social development, which may further impact their academic performance.

In addition, research has also shown that parenting styles, focus, and interactions can continuously change based on the popular parenting theory of the time (Hoff & Laursen, 2019). Thus, parents with access to new, publicly available knowledge or popular theories about parenting and discipline are more likely to change their parenting styles. This flexibility in approach enables them to focus more on the child's attributes than their shortcomings. It also motivates them to compete where they can flourish, while also allotting a reasonable amount of time to fostering child-parent relationships. Parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to utilise physical punishment as a parenting style. In contrast, parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to utilise psychological punishment, such as reasoning and manipulation (Hoff & Laursen, 2019).

It is evident that even during punishment, parents who utilise a more intellect-based parenting style allow their children to develop reasoning skills, creative thinking and locus of control (Zhao & Yang., 2021). In contrast, physical punishments focus on fear and control over the child. In this regard, Lee & Zhang (2022) and McLloyd (1998, as cited by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and Early Child Care Research Network, 2005) emphasises that poverty can greatly influence a child's cognitive and socio-emotional development. This may be attributed to parents' exposure to stressors, adverse life events, and inadequate income, which can impact the home environment. These factors could potentially render parents unable to showcase sensitivity towards their children, increasing the chances of coercive parenting styles and unstable home environments. However, as previously mentioned, protection from these stressors through the involvement of parents may hinder these challenges. This study cautions against broad generalisations of this phenomenon, yet acknowledges the empirical evidence that suggests differential parenting styles across the socio-economic spectrum.

Sigelman (1999) further states that parents who display abusive behaviour towards their children pay little attention to them, or give them no recognition, which negatively affects their social and cognitive development (Riggs, 2010). Cognitive and behavioural deficits can be attributed to reduced emotional support from parents, and less stimulating cognitive activities (Riggs, 2010; Melhuish et al., 2008). Thus, creating and maintaining a healthy parent-child relationship is necessary to ensure optimal development for each child.

2.1.8 The benefits of a structured home environment

A structured, supportive home environment is integral to a learner's positive upbringing and moulding (Visser, 2019). Learners' emotional development is a function of the routine within the family; therefore, a well-structured home environment may be beneficial to a child's overall development. Parents play a critical part in their children's overall physical, emotional, and cognitive development, and take responsibility for their learning until they gain independence (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Therefore, parents/caregivers who fail to provide their children with these activities may play a role in restricting their optimum cognitive, social, and behavioural development. Moreover, learners exposed to persistent poverty may have greater cognitive and behavioural deficits than children from a higher socio-economic background (Duncan et al., 1994, as cited by Visser, 2019; Justice et al., 2019). Emotional support and cognitive development are highly dependent on a structured home environment. However, socio-economic background does not automatically contribute to a structured or unstructured home environment.

The home learning environment in which learners develop affects their learning outcomes and has the potential to provide them with a rich context. This improves a learner's development, wellbeing, and learning (Benner et al., 2016; Darko-Asumadu & Sika-Bright., 2021; Niklas, 2015, as cited by Niklas et al., 2016). A constructive and supportive home environment is critical to ensure the optimal development of each learner. Learners rely heavily on upliftment, encouragement, and continuous engagement with their parents. A lack of parental involvement is also related to behaviour described as cold, disengaged, and emotionally harsh (Dodge, 1994; Riggs., 2010). These behaviours are associated with a learner's emotional wellbeing and perceived feeling of emotional security, therefore possibly affecting their academic development and performance. Learners who feel comfortable and secure in their relationship with their parents are also more likely to ask for assistance when struggling with difficult tasks. In addition, parents' views on parental involvement and their own role in their children's educational development also affect the amount of time they

spend with their children. For example, parents who view their role as vital to educational development are more likely to invest in their children's academic development. The aforementioned suggests that learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds, but with parents who are highly involved in their academic development, are also more likely to achieve well. This is partly due to their parents giving them the appropriate amount of attention, and continuously motivating them to rise above their situation (Darko-Asumadu & Sika-Bright, 2021; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Positive parental involvement is critical in a learner's overall development (Ayimbila et al., 2022; Kwarteng et al., 2022; Lambert et al., 2022). Thus, this study aimed to investigate the importance thereof. Research shows that the parent-child relationship is the most beneficial influence in a learner's life. It has also been found that parental involvement at home and school significantly impacts early child development (Ferguson et al., 2007; Hango, 2007; Simweleba & Serpell., 2020; Tan et al., 2020). Parents create quality time spent with children to ensure 'family time'. This provides learners with the opportunity to develop relationships and receive undivided attention from their parents, which is beneficial to their overall view of a supportive and protective family (Christensen, 2002; Seni & Onyango, 2021). Therefore, parents creating a structured and harmonious home environment could be beneficial to learners' overall socio-emotional adjustment and cognitive abilities. A family's daily routine is integral to a learner's development. The benefits of having a routine include self-reliance, social competence, academic achievement, better peer relations, and increased physical health (Ferretti & Bub, 2014; Ren et al., 2022). Moreover, healthy family routines create structure and allow for flexibility within the household (Fiese & Wamboldt, 2000; Ren et al., 2022), which benefits a learner's development.

A learner's individual development and differences become apparent during pre-school years, usually between the ages of three and six (September et al., 2015). A healthy parent-child relationship is one of the primary reasons for successful social and academic development (Ahmed et al., 2021; Ferguson et al., 2007; Hango, 2007). Positive parenting, involvement, and a supportive home environment in a learner's early developmental years are crucial for successfully acquiring skills and knowledge in their academic careers. Many South African parents face the task of raising a child in poverty-stricken communities, as 62.1% of children are identified as multidimensionally poor (Statistics South Africa, 2020). However, as discussed above, the effects of emotionally supportive parents are just as vital in every child's life. In this regard, ensuring positive social, emotional, and academic

performance is vital for each learner's positive academic, social, and emotional development.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework should mainly be used when the research focuses on one specific theory (Green, 2014) and is a reflection of the work the research engages in to use a specific theory (Varpio et al., 2020). In the case of this study, this was Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

2.2.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) explores how human development, specifically child development, takes place in their environment and how that affects their psychological and social growth (Crawford, 2020). This theory further investigates how different systems in a person's life influence their development, directly or indirectly (Crawford, 2020), in ever-evolving interconnected systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Furthermore, Hess and Schultz (2008, p. 57) describe this theory as "an analytical tool to understand individual development within complex social systems." This theory and emerging theories on structural poverty helped me to investigate how the environment, partly determined by socio-economic background and parental involvement, interacts with a child's academic development in Grade 1. Furthermore, the concept of structural poverty explores how poverty is not only an individual trait, but is also caused due to macro-structural rules, which determine distribution (Calnitsky, 2018).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory views child development as a complex system of relationships that is affected by multiple levels of their surrounding environments (Evans, 2020). Thus, to gain an in-depth insight into child development, one must look at their immediate environment and their interaction with their larger environment (Evans, 2020). Additionally, this theory allows us to gain an understanding on how the environments of individuals, along with their ecological realities, influence their development and behaviour (Rus et al., 2020). Bronfenbrenner indicated that systems of influence within an individual's immediate life may affect them differently (Crawford, 2020). Shelton (2019) explains that children exist in interconnected relationships, roles, settings and activities. Thus, utilising this theory to gain an in-depth understanding of each participant allows the researcher to consider their context.

Bronfenbrenner's theory comprises five systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Crawford, 2020; Donald et al., 2014). Each system refers to the people in a child's immediate environment, or the broader social context, that affects their development (Louw & Louw, 2014). This may include family members (Donald et al., 2014; Rus et al., 2020; Tudge et al., 2016), social structures, and the interaction between different social layers (Louw & Louw, 2014; El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). Therefore, the systems in which learners live can impact their academic development, which is closely related to structural poverty. In South Africa, structural poverty is rooted at the core of our society, which results in low-income families who may struggle to escape poverty regardless of their income status being above the poverty lines for a period (Du Toit, 2005). The economic status of a family into which a family is born seems to have a great impact on their outcomes later in life (Royce, 2022, p. 7). This evidently can affect the upbringing of learners living in impoverished areas. Du Toit (2005) further explains how stress, vulnerability, and economic deprivation play a key role in structural poverty, noting that a brief spell of income would not necessarily change the family's poverty status.

Thus, learners are not only influenced by their family's income, but rather the structural setting of their immediate environment. A salary increase would not necessarily change their access to efficient resources, such as well-organised public schools that could enhance their academic development (Calnitsky, 2018). Beeghley (1988) attributes structural poverty to macroeconomic policies, the economy's structure, and the poverty circle. Thus, reiterating Du Toit's (2005) statement, a rapid increase in an individual's salary would not necessarily ensure that their poverty ends as society is structured in such a way that there are too few jobs amongst too many people (Calnitsky, 2018). As a result of structural poverty, unemployment leads to even more poverty and economic deprivation (Beeghley, 1988), which may impact the familial structure as it often results in family disruptions. In addition, structural poverty does not only focus on the monetary income of each family (Du Toit, 2005). Instead, poverty is described as a multidimensional construct between asset poverty, cash dependency, labour market marginality, and the lack of social capital.

Royce (2022, p. 7) further states that poverty should be understood based on the inexplicable relationship between economic and political structures that cause the power imbalance. This imbalance affects the allocation of resources and opportunities.

Additionally, structural poverty refers to the macro- and meso-level demographic and economic contexts that represent those individuals' available opportunities and constraints (Brady, 2019). Therefore, the systems in which learners live can impact their academic development, closely related to structural poverty. Thus, structural poverty outlines the effect of different economic and demographic structures on the development of children. Structural poverty has developed as a theory based on the evolution of the phenomenon's origins. Firstly, behavioural theories concentrate on the individual's behaviour that causes poverty (Brady, 2019), and structural poverty focuses on the interaction between the demographic and labour market, which causes specific behaviour and poverty (Brady, 2019). Lastly, Brady (2019), states that the political theory influences power and policy, which causes poverty. Thus, structural poverty enables us to incorporate the contextual effects of economic structures.

Poverty cannot solely be explained by individual- or household-level resources as these processes are perpetuated through the social systems in which they are ingrained (Du Toit, 2005). The idea of structural poverty focuses on where people are placed in society, which may prohibit them from escaping their circumstances as there is a lack of resources, as well as social capital at their disposal. Thus, taking this into consideration, along with the ecological model, it is critical that we view learners not only as individuals, but as products of their environment as it ultimately affects their access to different resources, as explained above. Du Toit (2009) further argues that we cannot only view poverty as the lack of income - structural poverty includes a wide variety of social capital, such as the relationships, kinships, and networks that contribute to a person being stuck in a poverty circle. This research agrees that structural poverty is not only based on monetary income, but is associated with access to sufficient resources that may contribute to a child's optimal development.

The Ecological Systems Theory enables us to consider all aspects when researching possible reasons for a child's academic performance. This theory focuses on the child's biological composition as the primary source of development. However, it argues that the quality of the context in which the child develops highly impacts the child's cognitive and social development (Härkönen, 2007; Rus et al., 2020) Thus, socio-economic background is assumed to significantly impact a child's development as they face more adversities, challenges, and fewer opportunities. Therefore, the context of a child's development and where their primary moulding takes place may impact their academic performance.

However, as previously mentioned, socio-economic background is not the only factor that contributes to academic achievement. The Ecological Systems Theory allows researchers to investigate children's composition and abilities, and gain an in-depth view of the effect of systemic factors on a child's achievement (Leonard, 2011). This creates a deeper understanding of the effects of the child's socio-economic background, parental involvement, and the quality of the school's education system. Different systems have an impact on a child's development and achievement, with supportive individuals and structures being critical.

As previously discussed, Bronfenbrenner's model (1979) suggests that a child's development is not linear, but is somewhat surrounded by five different layers that play a necessary part in their effective development (Leonard, 2011; Tudge et al., 2016). The *microsystem* refers to people in the child's immediate environment, such as family members and those in the school setting (Louw & Louw, 2014.; Donald et al., 2014.; Crawford, 2020). The *mesosystem* refers to the interaction of the different layers, for example, the interaction between the parents and the school (Louw & Louw, 2014; Panopoulos, & Drossinou-Korea., 2020; Tudge et al., 2016). A child's academic progress not only takes place in the classroom, but also at home. The *exosystem* investigates how a child is influenced by the social contexts in which they move and develop (Louw & Louw, 2014; Panopoulos, & Drossinou-Korea., 2020; Tudge et al., 2016) but where they are not actively involved in. The *macrosystem* includes social and economic structures, values, and beliefs that impact a child's microsystem (Donald et al., 2014; Panopoulos, & Drossinou-Korea., 2020; Tudge et al., 2016). Lastly, the *chronosystem* refers to continuous changes, physiologically and socially, that occur over time and never end (Donald et al., 2014). Each system allowed me as a researcher to consider various relationships in order to understand a child's life and academic performance better (see Figure 2.1). No man is an island; learners depend on the influences and impacts of the various role players in the different systems to succeed in their academic careers. Integrating the ecological model and the concept of structural poverty allowed for a thorough understanding of the context in which learners develop. This was done by considering different circumstances and factors as I attempted to understand Grade 1 learners' academic achievement, parental involvement, and socio- economic background.

It is, however clear that further research is needed to understand the practical implications of structural poverty and the effects on a child's development in the South African context. This study considers the interaction between structural poverty and the impact it has on a

child, specifically in relation to their academic performance in Grade 1. As this study focuses on the interaction of the child within their environment, a further description of the effects of structural poverty is relevant.

Figure 2.1

Visual representation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model
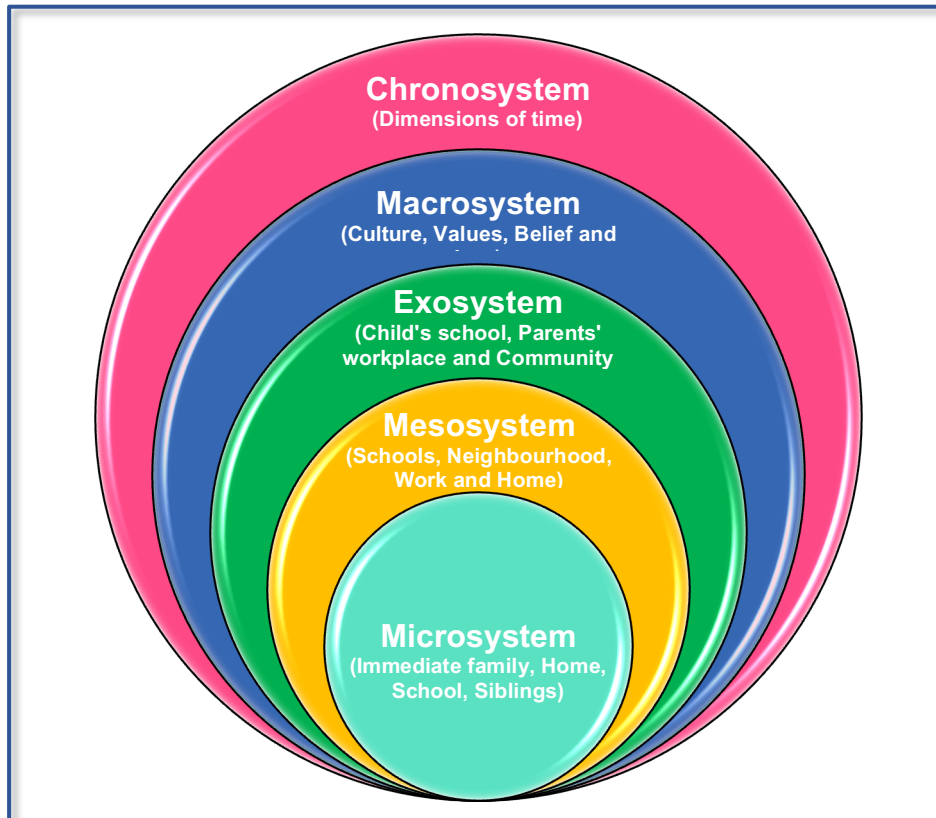
2.2.2 The interaction between structural poverty and the ecological model

Moreover, as mentioned above, the concept of 'structural poverty' and the ecological model allows for further understanding of a child's academic achievement as the immediate environment in which a child develops impacts their access to quality education, extra help, and positive reinforcements. Structural poverty may affect parents' abilities and access to nutritional support for their children, and could significantly affect having an upbeat parenting style (Salavera et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2015). This could result in generational poverty as the child may be incapable of growing out of the impoverished and hostile environment in which they were moulded. Structural poverty emphasises that the macro-level labour market and demographic conditions increase the risk factor of people falling into poverty (Brady, 2006). Thus, the greater the number of people in vulnerable labour markets or demographic circumstances, the greater the poverty (Brady, 2006; 2019). South Africa faces a structural

poverty problem: unemployment and a lack of skilled occupations force us into an impoverished state. Grade 1 learners may be vulnerable to the effects of structural poverty as they are continuously faced with numerous challenges, such as unemployment, poverty, malnutrition, and a lack of access to valuable social capital that could enhance the learning process. Therefore, the effects of structural poverty may prevent them from accessing the support they need to succeed in their academic careers.

Structural poverty is seen as the combination of 'persistent poverty', where people are trapped by structural or other factors that make it difficult for them to escape their circumstances, and the place these household have in society (Bolwig et al., 2010; Brady, 2019). The interaction between structural poverty and the ecological model is critical to understand as each learner is a product of their respective environment, and structural poverty may impact many learners in South Africa. South Africa's long history with poverty allows for a deeper understanding of its long-lasting effects on learners' academic achievement, as structural poverty encompasses each sector of a child's life. As such, we may better understand the effects of structural poverty on different generations as individuals and families attempt to progress out of disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances. As discussed above, an increase in monetary wealth does not necessarily result in power and escaping poverty. Political, economic, and social structures drive structural poverty in society. This could therefore impact access to vital additional help for parents, schools, and children who reside in disadvantaged socio-economic communities. Poverty is a complex construct, and scholars have been struggling for years to fully comprehend the depths, the effects, and the reasons for the persistence of this phenomenon (Greene, 2018). Questions regarding structural poverty in South Africa and its effects on Grade 1 learners' academic development still need further exploration for us to understand this phenomenon.

The ecological conception of academic achievement emphasises the convolution of processes as parental involvement, and the quality of teaching and community resources interact to contribute to a child's success in life (Evans, 2020; Hilferty et al., 2010; Tudge & Rosa., 2019). Thus, integrating the concept of structural poverty within this model helped to gain a deeper understanding of such complexities. Communities, parents, and teachers influence learners, and it is therefore vital that the impact of these influences is understood to ensure positive academic development. The current study subscribes to the notion that the literature on structural poverty and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theoretical Model

allows us to gain in-depth knowledge of these influences. Learners develop in different contexts and are products of their circumstances. Therefore, integrating these two theories provides us with a clear lens to analyse their academic achievement by allowing aspects of structural poverty within the ecological system to provide a clear explanation of this phenomenon.

2.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the available literature regarding socio-economic circumstances, parental involvement and academic performance allows us to have a deeper understanding of each aspect of this study. Each aspect is, in one form or another, connected and influences each other to an extent. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory suggests that one system will automatically influence the other system in a Grade 1 learner's life. The theory of structural poverty allows for a deeper understanding of the different resources and complexities of child development. There have been various discussions on the impact of socio-economic background and the possible effects on academic performance. The literature discussed above clearly draws a relationship between the two phenomena. However, the research also highlighted how other factors, such as community support and schooling, can contribute to academic achievement. Furthermore, the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance is highlighted throughout the research. Parents' impact is valuable as they play a critical role in their children's ultimate academic performance and social development. The literature allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and, therefore, acted as a guiding post for the data collection of this study. The systems interact with one another, and it can therefore be established that socio-economic background and parental involvement may impact the academic performance of Grade 1 learners in Pretoria.

In the next chapter, the research process of the data collection will be discussed by elaborating on the paradigmatic perspective and the applicable research methodology that were used in this study. Furthermore, a rich explanation of the research design choice and the selected participants' criteria is provided to ensure valuable and valid information.

CHAPTER 3: PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I discussed the relevant theory and existing literature on the topics related to the current study. The literature elucidated the role of socio-economic background and the effects of parental involvement in a Grade 1 child's academic performance. In addition, the conceptual framework that guided the study is presented and indicates how the Ecological Systems Theory and the notion of structural poverty interact through the different systems of a child's life. However, this chapter will elaborate on the study's methodology related to the collection and analysis of the data. It will also provide an in-depth overview of the data collection methods, the analysis of the data, and how the findings were interpreted using specific procedures.

3.2 EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The interpretivist approach was utilised in this study. According to Chowdhury (2014), interpretivism emphasises the meaning of people's character and participation in their respective cultural and social lives. It considers differences such as cultures, circumstances and times of development of different social realities (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020) Interpretivism further emphasises studying people's natural and social environments to understand their world perception (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, Williams, 2020). Interpretivists value the idea of subjective, first-person experiences (Schwandt, 1998; Williams, 2020) to possibly enhance social policies as the researcher has a direct account of the participant's life (Denzin, 2001). Interpretivism aims to include richness in the insights gathered rather that attempting to provide definitive laws that can be generalised (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020)This study aimed to explore and describe the interactions between socio-economic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners as mediated by parental involvement. The interpretivist approach was the most applicable philosophical lens to reach this aim since it focuses on having a deeper understanding of the selected phenomenon instead of making generalisations for the whole population (Creswell, 2007; Williams, 2020). Each person is different and therefore has different factors influencing their academic performance. Thus, the interpretivist approach allowed me to consider each participant's subjective experience when gathering the necessary data.

Interpretivism was initially developed in response to the criticism of positivism as it focuses more on the subjective experience of each participant (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). In contrast, positivism advocates the notion that reality exists independently from humans and is dictated by inflexible laws (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Interpretivism focuses on understanding the social phenomenon through the eyes of the participants (Cohen et al., 2007, as cited by Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Thanh & Thanh, 2015) rather than finding a universal truth that can be generalised to different groups. Thus, these findings are naturalistic to their subjective context and experience. The interpretivist approach allows the researcher to understand individuals' interpretations of the social phenomenon with which they interact daily (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Thus, the role of the researcher is to understand and interpret each participant's subjective views and stances (Guba, 1990, as cited by Kelly et al., 2018).

The interpretivist approach focuses on a holistic view in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' interpretation of their world (Williams, 2020). This approach emphasises the importance of understanding the participants and their interpretation of the world around them (Aurini et al., 2021, p. 55; Ugwu et al., 2021). Thus, the use of the interpretivist approach allowed the researcher to gain subjective and personal information in order to gain a better understanding of the participants' lives.

The advantages of this paradigm include in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon (Günbayi & Sorm, 2018), understanding the behaviours and beliefs of the participants (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Choy, 2014; Williams, 2020), attempting to understand social dilemmas (Denzin, 2001; Ugwu et al., 2021), and lastly, research being done in a natural setting (Tuli, 2010; Williams, 2020). Therefore, the data obtained are a reflection of the participants' authentic experiences. Some challenges of this paradigm, however, include possible subjectivity of the researcher (Kelly et al., 2018), findings that cannot be generalised (Aurini et al., 2021, p. 55; Cohen et al., 2011; Ugwu et al., 2021), findings that are not representative of the population and, lastly, researchers can never fully separate their findings from their values and beliefs (Ryan, 2018). However, I used multiple data sets to support the findings in this study. Furthermore, the findings do not need to be generalised as I am only interested in the individual cases of the four participants in question for this specific study.

The interpretivist paradigm denies the idea that reality is a socially constructed notion (Tubey et al., 2015) and, therefore, posits that reality differs for each person as we are influenced by cultures and circumstances. The ultimate goal of this philosophical lens is to understand

participants in their context (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Thus, conducting research in each participant's home was necessary for me, as the researcher, to gain in-depth knowledge of their subjective reality and factors that influenced their daily lives. This paradigm was also valuable in this study as it utilised a case study research design to substantiate the findings and construct in-depth knowledge of the participants' surroundings and experiences (Günbayi & Sorm, 2018). The interpretivist paradigm goes hand-in-hand with the case study approach. As such, it provided me, as a researcher, the opportunity to gather rich, holistic, and contextually relevant data from each participant (Mason, 2002, as cited by Ponelis, 2015; Williams, 2020). Therefore, I view the world as constructed and experienced by people and their interaction with their broader social systems (Tubey et al., 2015), which may influence their daily choices. Lastly, the interpretivist paradigm can be explained by our need to understand the world from a subjective worldview as we explore differences between individuals and, therefore, seek an explanation for their actions (Ponelis, 2015). The interpretivist paradigm sees each individual and their context as unique, thus allowing us as researchers to understand what may possibly contribute to the academic development of each Grade 1 learner.

3.3 THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH OF THIS STUDY

Qualitative research can be described as "naturalistic" as the data collection occurs in a natural setting where socialisation occurs (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 53). A qualitative approach also aims to explain and describe a phenomenon, and interpret and explore the outcome of the findings while being context-bound and focusing on a small sample group (Leedy et al., 2019). Furthermore, the qualitative approach focuses more on direct experiences rather than collecting and interpreting numerical data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). This research approach assists researchers in gaining an in-depth understanding of specific phenomena as these are interpreted through written or spoken words in the participants' natural environment (Maree, 2016; Queiros et al., 2017). Denzin (2001) and Mohajan (2018) emphasise that qualitative researchers are never on the side-line, but are rather knee-deep in the research itself. In addition, qualitative research aims to understand a specific phenomenon while focusing on the participants at hand, and not making generalisations about the whole population (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). It allowed for this study to be exploratory (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020) as I aimed to understand the interaction between socio-economic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners as mediated by parental involvement.

Moreover, qualitative research is an approach that allows researchers to further explore subjective human experiences within their personal context in order to gain a deeper understanding of different factors that might influence these experiences (Geling, 2015). Thus, qualitative research allows the participants to be observed in their own context and, in addition, provides the researcher with a direct experience of the different systems that may influence the participants' lives. In this case, qualitative research allowed me to gain in-depth knowledge of the relationship between the child and their parents within the subjective socio-economic circumstances of the family. Furthermore, Denzin (1998) and Mohajan (2018) describe qualitative researchers as being sensitive to the natural setting of the individual, and mindful of the experience's interpretive comprehension. In addition, Stake (2011) and Hameed (2020) further characterises qualitative research as experiential, holistic, personalised, and situational as it focuses on understanding the uniqueness of each human being within their context. Furthermore, utilising qualitative research should also allow for some moral change within the world (Bhangu et al., 2023; Flick, 2007), which starts with gaining insight into a phenomenon.

In addition, qualitative research and the interpretivist approach epitomise the characteristics of qualitative research. In this study, this meant that I was actively trying to understand how the participants made meaning of their situation (Bhangu et al., 2023; Merriam & Grenier, 2002; Mohajan, 2018). Qualitative research is also highly related to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, as our understanding of qualitative research lies within the idea that the meaning of our world is socially constructed through individuals who continuously interact with the different social systems in their lives (Bhangu et al., 2023; Hameed, 2020; Merriam & Grenier, 2002). As previously mentioned, researchers are not simply invisible creatures in the field, but are actively observing the participants, which may lead to them reflecting on their own life choices (Flick, 2007; Bhangu et al., 2023) Furthermore, qualitative research focuses on the events that come to light and on the conclusions of such events from the perspectives of the individuals involved (Teherani et al., 2015). A qualitative research approach allowed me to observe and explore the different systems within Grade 1 learners' life, and how these may contribute to their academic development. Thus, in my attempt to understand the phenomenon as a qualitative researcher, I built towards theory through observing and intuitively understanding each participant in their unique social context (Bhangu et al., 2023; Hameed, 2020; Merriam & Grenier, 2002).

There are, however, also challenges related to using a qualitative approach. This research approach tends to be subjective as the researcher focuses on personal observations during the study. It also tends to be very time-consuming, and lastly, a great deal of experience is needed to conduct a successful interview (Choy, 2014; Hennink et al., 2020, p.10) Utilising qualitative research has also received critique as the reliability of the findings is based on researchers'' subjective observation of the participants as they need to make certain judgements regarding the participants (Noble & Smith, 2015). However, the advantages of this approach include flexibility in the design structure, an in-depth understanding of the participants' views and feelings, and providing a holistic understanding of the human experience (Hennink et al., 2020, p. 10; Rahman, 2016). To minimise these challenges, I utilised artefacts such as workbooks, assessments, and report cards to support the findings. Furthermore, I only approached four learners and their caregivers. This was therefore less time-consuming as it was a small sample group.

In addition, Noble and Smith (2015) further elaborate on strategies that researchers can use to ensure credibility, including record keeping, acknowledging biases when conducting the research, and establishing comparisons/similarities between the different participants. This study focused on four individual cases, where a qualitative approach enabled each participant's values and ideas to become known. Furthermore, this approach assisted in exploring the learners and their parents' personal experiences through interviews and observations (Hennink et al., 2020). Therefore, the qualitative research approach benefitted this study as it focused on collecting personal experiences and information from the participants. This assisted me in gaining a better understanding of the influence of parental involvement and socio-economic circumstances on the academic performance of Grade 1 learners. The primary aim of qualitative research is to identify a participant's meaning of the world and how they interpret different life events (Hignett & McDermott, 2015). Therefore, this approach was beneficial to this study as I was interested in the participants' individual academic development, and how the different systems influenced their lives.

3.4   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study research design was utilised in this study. Yin (2012) and Priya (2021) describe this research method as necessary when researching a phenomenon that entails gaining in-depth knowledge of a specific case. The case study design also focuses on understanding real-life complexities as the research occurs in a natural setting (Crowe et al., 2011; Heale & Twycross, 2018; Priya, 2021). Stake (1995, xi) further describes a case study as "the study

of the particularity and complexity of a single case" for researchers to better understand the participants' real-world behaviours and actions. Furthermore, a case study systematically investigates a community or individuals where the researcher inspects in-depth data related to several variables (Heale & Twycross, 2018). In addition, research further shows the advantage of case studies when applying them to an educational perspective. This is because it allows researchers to capture complexity, but to do it in such a way that makes the data verifiable (Aurini et al., 2021, p. 61; Stenhouse, 1978; 1979, as cited by Hamilton & Corlett-Whittier, 2013).

A case study approach in qualitative research allows for flexibility as it is designed to meet the requirements of the different research questions and the case at hand (Priya, 2021; Hyett et al., 2014). The importance of the uniqueness of each case is emphasised as this may influence the complexities of specific relationships (Stake, 2011). Thus, it was critical to delve deeper into the different systems as the complexities thereof might give a better description and reasoning for the phenomenon. The essential characteristic of a case study is that it strives to uncover a holistic understanding of the cultural systems in which the phenomenon occurs (Aurini et al., 2021, p. 61;Feagin et al., 1991; Priya, 2021; Savin-Baden & Major, 2023). Therefore, conducting the research in a natural setting while observing the participants within their systems may provide a better insight into the child's inner workings. This specific case study was not intended to make generalisations about the whole population, but rather to gain a better understanding of the social complexities (Aurini et al., 2021, p. 61; Feagin et al., 1991; Stake, 2011; Priya, 2021; Savin-Baden & Major, 2023) that impact Grade 1 learners' academic development. This is an important research topic as people are products of the interaction between their different systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

This research method applied to this study as I was interested in understanding the interaction between socio-economic background and parental involvement. I further explored to what extent it may manifest within the academic development of Grade 1 learners *at the personal level*. These two systems are critical to understanding as the complexities within the relationship allow us to understand to what extent it impacts academic development at a critical age. This study followed a descriptive and exploratory case study design as I was interested in exploring the phenomenon and describing the case in a real-life setting (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Priya, 2018; Yin, 2012). An exploratory case study involves collecting data to discover possible patterns (Priya, 2018; Yin, 1983, as cited by

Hamilton & Corlett-Whittier, 2013). A descriptive case study considers possible theories to guide the study and research questions. I gained in-depth knowledge of the case while observing the participants in their natural environment, thus gaining a subjective view of their lives. I analysed two cases regarding socio-economic background and parental involvement. I was able to focus on the phenomenon and look at it from various angles (Thomas, 2021). Thus, gathering information from different angles allowed for an objective assessment of the relationship between the systems.

The advantages of the case study design include in-depth knowledge of the participants' lives (Savin-Baden & Major, 2023; Tight, 2017; Yin, 2012), gaining a deeper understanding of certain decisions and behaviours (Nieuwenhuis, 2016), and collecting data in a natural setting (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Data collected through a case study brings us closer to the natural person and how they experience life daily (Feagin et al., 1991; Muzari et al., 2022). This advantage was considered critical in this study as I aimed to understand the systems that may influence a child's life, and how, possibly, to enhance positive influences. The case study approach also allows the researcher to develop a critical perspective of the phenomenon due to the fact that vital "truths" (McLeod, 2010, p. 50; Savin-Baden & Major, 2023) about the participants come to light. Lastly, it allows the researcher to understand a specific phenomenon better in lieu of making generalisations for similar cases (Schoch, 2020, p. 245; Thomas, 2021). As previously mentioned, the holistic approach of a case study (Aurini et al., 2021, p. 61; Feagin et al., 1991) allows researchers to observe people in their context as they experience daily struggles and victories, as well as how different social complexities may impact them.

In contrast, limitations of the case study approach include the study being researcher-centred as it often involves observations (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Although it may provide unique insights, a case study is also not generalisable as it is case specific (Tellis, 1997; Tight, 2017). Lastly, there may be cause for concern in terms of reliability (Tight, 2017) as the collected data may differ from that of other researchers. Firstly, this study did not need to be generalised as my primary concerns were conducting an in-depth exploration and gaining detailed descriptions. Secondly, observations were not the only data collection method employed in this study. Visual data and interviews also formed part of the research, thereby minimising the challenge of the study being researcher-centred. In addition, I used multiple data sources to substantiate the findings, and did not only rely on my own subjective opinions (Schoch, 2020, p. 245; VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007). Lastly, I used structured

interviews and observations, with all four participants being asked the same questions in order to minimise subjectivity. This further allowed me to draw on possible similarities and differences between the participants.

However, the choice of methodology was still regarded as the most suitable for exploring the phenomenon, as it focused on providing a detailed analysis of a particular event, social phenomenon or social unit (Schoch, 2020, p. 245). Utilising a case study design also allowed the researcher to focus on the phenomenon within the space and confines of a specific case (Schoch, 2020, p. 245). Furthermore, it allowed the opportunity to collect different forms of data, such as observations, interviews and photographs in order to gain a clear insight into the world of the participants. A case study further allowed the researcher to explore a specific phenomenon (Muzari et al., 2022). This led to the researcher being able to confine the research to a small sample that was being investigated in-depth while having direct interaction with the participants (Muzari et al., 2022). Utilising this methodology allowed for the participants to give their subjective opinion of their lives and give an in-depth view of their reality within their context.

In conclusion, case studies are tailored to explore processes, relationships, and behaviours that are poorly understood or explored (Hartley, 1994, as cited by Meyer, 2001). As previously mentioned, this study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the relationship between the socio-economic background and the academic development of Grade 1 learners as mediated by parental involvement. Thus, the case study approach enabled me to gain a holistic overview of the different systems and how they interact.

3.5 PLACE OF RESEARCH

The research was conducted in the city of Pretoria in the Pretoria West and Pretoria East suburbs. Photograph 3.1 depicts the Google Maps images of the disadvantaged communities in Pretoria West, where two of the participants resided. The research was conducted in the participants' homes. One of the participants lived on a lot with many informal houses on this lot. This participant lived in a home where there were two rooms in the house. However, one room was used as a cupboard as they needed that facility in their home. Thus, three people shared one room, and the other child slept on a mattress next to the parents on the floor. They also had kitchen facilities, a television room, and two bedrooms. The other participant lived in a small house with the necessary facilities. The participant had her own room, but it was cluttered with toys and objects. The house had

three bedrooms for five people, and the mother was expecting another child at the time of this research being conducted. A further description of both field visits will be provided in Chapter 4.

Photograph 3.1

Google Maps images of the two residential areas of the participants in Pretoria West

Photograph 3.2

Google Maps images of the two residential areas of the participants in Pretoria East

In contrast, Photograph 3.2 depicts the advantaged areas in Pretoria East where the other two participants lived. Both homes had a garden, were in a secure location, and both learners had their own bedrooms, as well as an area to do their homework. One area was in Faerie Glen, and the other was in a security estate.

3.6 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

This research used a non-probability sampling method as it followed a non-systematic process, which does not allow each person to receive an equal opportunity for selection (Elfil & Negida, 2017). Non-probability sampling further refers to sampling methods based on the researcher's choice, and the availability of the participants (Setia, 2016). Lastly, it is also theory or purpose-driven (Lavrakas, 2008). Purposive sampling was considered valuable in this study as the selected participants possessed the necessary qualities and characteristics for this research (Etikan & Bala, 2017). A combination of purposive and convenience sampling was used. Purposive sampling is specifically used to select the participants most likely to yield valuable information that will contribute to the study (Campbell et al., 2020). Thus, employing this method assisted me in gathering critical information to reach the study's aim by investigating the relationship between socio-economic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners, as mediated by parental involvement. This allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the participants in this case study. Thus, purposive sampling was necessary to understand these systems better. This technique allows the researcher to choose applicable participants willing to provide the necessary information or experiences (Etikan et al., 2016). Moreover, purposive sampling enables the critical task of creating new information by comparing and contrasting the different findings from the participants (Denieffe, 2020).

The participants were selected based on the study's criteria, which are discussed below. The selection criteria were Grade 1 learners attending a public school in either Pretoria West or Pretoria East, as it was easily accessible in the researcher's network. The locations were also chosen, as the socio-economic circumstances for these two areas are different. The learners had to be residing with both of their biological parents, and their mother tongue had to be Afrikaans, as the researcher is Afrikaans and believed that it would contribute to understanding the underlying nuances within the language community. Furthermore, I approached the parents and social workers in the different areas to access one boy and one girl from a public school in Pretoria East, and one boy and one girl from a public school in Pretoria West. Firstly, I worked with two NGOs in Pretoria West that assisted me with contacting parents whose children fit these criteria. Secondly, in 2021, I worked with a colleague whose daughter was in Grade 1 in 2022. In order to find the last participant, I employed the help of a woman in the community who helped me to come into contact with one of her friends whose son was in Grade 1 at the time.

The four learners, two boys and two girls (aged seven years), and their respective caregivers/parents were recruited in this study as representatives of contrasting socio-economic backgrounds. Purposive sampling allowed me to focus only on the participants and theory at hand, while simultaneously providing me with a heterogeneous population sample (Campbell et al., 2020; Lavrakas, 2008). This sampling method further assisted me to ultimately increase and deepen the level of understanding about this phenomenon while considering the overall logic and rationale of the study (Campbell et al., 2020).

The advantages of purposive sampling include researchers producing the desired results as they can directly communicate with the participants' (Bhardwaj, 2019). Secondly, the researcher can only study the expected population of interest (Bhardwaj, 2019), thus making it less time-consuming and expensive (Andrade, 2021; Acharya et al., 2013). The disadvantages, however, include the validity of the research being questioned as the researcher controls the sample group (Andrade, 2021). Furthermore, there are concerns regarding the researcher's subjectivity as they seek the desired results (Acharya et al., 2013; Sharma, 2017). This could lead to the researcher ignoring answers that may prove the study wrong. Since subjectivity is a valid concern with case studies, I avoided as far as possible by regularly scheduling meetings with my supervisor, continuously consulting the literature, and utilising triangulation of the data sources. The sample group is also non-representative of the larger population (Denieffe, 2020; Rai & Thapa, 2015). However, the aim of this study was only to gain a deeper understanding of the four participants in order to contribute to knowledge regarding the interactions between socio-economic background, parental involvement and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners in South Africa. Lastly, the findings cannot be generalised (Acharya et al., 2013; Denieffe, 2020) as the sample group was too small. However, the most significant benefit of case studies, and the resulting sampling technique, is that the researcher has the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge, provide detailed descriptions, and have unique insights come to light.

The biographical details of the parents of the four participants are provided in Table 3.1 below. This is followed by the four participating learners' biographical details in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1

Biographical information of the parents of the participants gathered from in-person interviews and questionnaires

PARENTS	PARENTAL EDUCA-TION LEVEL	PARENTAL MARRIAGE STATUS	PARENTAL OCCUPATION	PARENTAL INCOME	CHILDREN	PARENTAL HOME LANGUAGE	GENDER OF MAIN BREADWINNER
Participant 1P **(Pretoria West)**	High School (Gr.12)	Married (Second marriage)	Father: Mechanic Mother: Unemployed.	R8000 per month	7 children	Afrikaans	Male (Mother does not earn an income)
Participant 2P **(Pretoria West)**	High School (Gr. 12)	Married	Father: Security manager. Mother: Helps at NGO when there's work.	R10 000-R15 000 per month	2 children	Afrikaans	Male (Mother does not earn a stable income)
Participant 3P **(Pretoria East)**	University degree	Married	Father: Civil Engineer. Mother: Marketing agent at a school.	R70 000+ per month	3 children	Afrikaans	Male and female (Both parents earn a stable income)
Participant 4P **(Pretoria East)**	University degree	Married	Father: Land Surveyor. Mother: Chartered accountant.	R70 000+ per month	2 children	Afrikaans	Male and female (Both parents earn a stable income)

Table 3.2

Biographical information of the Grade 1 participants

PARTICIPANTS	AGE	LANGUAGE	SIBLINGS	GRADE	YEAR AVERAGE	GENDER
Participant 1C (Pretoria West)	7 Years	Afrikaans	6 siblings	1	77, 7%	Female
Participant 2C (Pretoria West)	7 Years	Afrikaans	1 sibling	1	71,5%	Male
Participant 3C (Pretoria East)	7 Years	Afrikaans	2 siblings	1	84%	Female
Participant 4C (Pretoria East)	7 Years	Afrikaans	1 sibling	1	87%	Male

3.7 DATA GENERATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Observation is a required data generation method as it allows the researcher to systematically understand the social setting, which is defined by the participants' language, communication lines, and power (Busetto et al., 2020; Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Observations also enable the researcher to integrate into the field while minimising disruptions to gathering information about their unique context (Bratlinger et al., 2005; Busetto et al., 2020). I used structured observations while working with the respective learners as it was vital to observe them in their natural habitat without constraints or controls as I was looking to gain in-depth knowledge of each case (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Structured observations allow the researcher to gather overlapping and supporting measures (Busetto et al., 2020; Feagin et al., 1991), minimising the chances of possible subjectivity and judgement. This allowed me to be as close to the action as possible while it occurred (Blanche et al., 2006; Busetto et al., 2020). It also allowed me to compare the different lifestyles of the participants to answer the research questions.

Alternatively, interviewing is a data generation method that allows the researcher to ask questions in order to understand the participants' lives better (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Structured interviews enabled me, as the researcher, to ask appropriate questions to explore the different domains of interest (Barret & Twycross, 2018; Bratlinger et al., 2005). Secondly, interviews were mainly used for the caregivers/parents as they could describe the central themes of their lives (Moser & Korstjens, 2018), and provide a holistic snapshot of their parental involvement (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Barret & Twycross, 2018). During the first field

visit, two interviews coincided during the day, and two at night as the parents had to work and the learners had extra-mural activities in the afternoon.

Finally, the collection of visual data, such as personal documents, was necessary as they gave a naturalistic view of the participants' lives (Morgan, 2022; Nieuwenhuis, 2016), and constructed a picture of the children's academic development. I analysed personal documents and artefacts such as workbooks, report cards, and school assessments as secondary sources. The personal documents gave me an insight into the children's academic development during their forming years to find possible similarities and differences between the participants.

I primarily photographed these artefacts to impact the participants minimally. Two field visits were also conducted to ensure reliable data and to minimise subjectivity. The following tables and photographs depict the data generation and documentation, as well as the Google Maps views of the two areas where the participants resided.

Table 3.3

Data generation and documentation

	TIME DURATION AND LOCATION	PARTICIPANTS	REASON
OBSERVATIONS	The observations took place at their homes during the second stage of the research.	The learners were the participants. It was necessary to observe them in their home environment.	I could access their homes, relationships, and habits while observing parental involvement and socio-economic background.
INTERVIEWS	In order for the parents/caregivers to feel at ease, interviews took place in their homes during the first stage of the research.	The parents/caregivers were part of this stage. Semi-structured questions were asked.	To gain a deeper understanding of the parents' involvement in their children's academic/school careers.
VISUAL DATA	Photographs were taken of their report cards and workbooks during the third stage of the research.	The learners' workbooks, school assessments and report cards were photographed as data.	Workbooks, school assessments and report cards analysed to explore academic development.

Photograph 3.3

Google Maps image of Pretoria West (left) and Pretoria East (right)
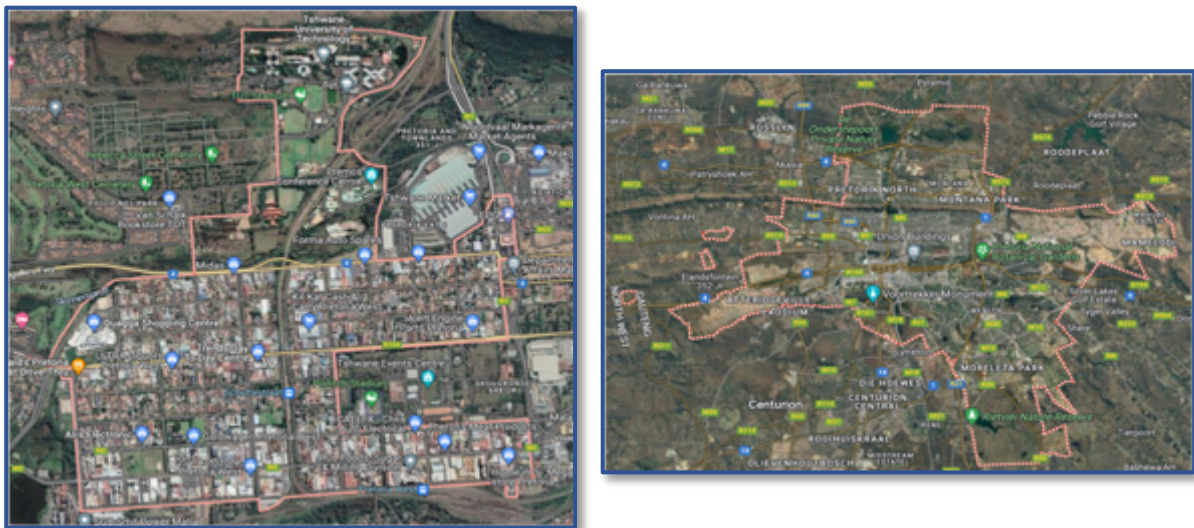
3.7.1 Data generation through interviews and observations

The following tables (Table 3.4 and Table 3.5) present information regarding the interview and observation processes and settings.

Table 3.4

Gaining information through observations and interviews

PARTICIPANTS	DATA GENERATION THROUGH INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS
PARTICIPANT 1	In order to collect data and find participants in Pretoria West, I had the opportunity to work with two Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) whose work was central to communities in this area. I worked with a social worker and gave her all of the requirements/criteria for the potential participants in order for her to allocate relevant participants who could participate in this study. I met the first participant on Sunday, 4 December 2022 at their home in Claremont, Pretoria West, with the social worker. She advised me that it would be safer if she were there during the interview and observation, as the participants may feel uncomfortable with my presence. I met the parents, their daughter and the social worker at 09:00 at the home. Both parents were present during the interview, which took place in their television room as they did not have a suitable private area for it to take place. It did however not compromise their answers as the social worker kept the child busy in her room while I interviewed the parents. There were no other siblings at the house during the 25-30 minutes that I was there. The time was used for the parental interview, child behaviour observations, a visit to the child's room, and taking a look at the child's homework. The second interview occurred on 11 June 2023, where the same procedure was followed.

PARTICIPANTS	DATA GENERATION THROUGH INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS
PARTICIPANT 2	In order to allocate the second participant, I had to work with another NGO that also specialises in working with communities in Pretoria West. I met with a woman who worked directly with the families who are part of their feeding scheme at the organisation. I gave her the requirements/criteria for the participants in order for her to allocate relevant participants who would be applicable to this study. I met the first participant on Sunday, 4 December 2022, at their home in Claremont, Pretoria West, with a woman from the non-governmental organisation. She also advised me that it would be safer if she were there during the interview and observation, as the parents might feel uncomfortable with my presence. I met the parents, their son and the woman at 11:00 at the home. Both parents were present during the interview, which took place in their television room as they did not have a suitable private area for it to take place. The participant and the woman from the NGO were outside playing with other individuals while the interview took place. I was at their home for 25-30 minutes, completing the parental interview, observing the child, visiting the child's room, and taking a closer look at the participants' homework and additional school books. The second interview took place on 10 June 2023 and the same procedure was followed, except for the fact that the father could not be present.
PARTICIPANT 3	Finding participants in Pretoria East was conducted via convenience sampling. I activated networks via a former colleague of mine from two years ago. In order to buffer the potential effect of knowing the participants, I employed various strategies. Firstly, I made extensive field notes and audio recordings to ensure that the collected data remained consistent across all four case studies. The use of the photographs also ensured equity in data collection. Secondly, I asked the same questions to all the participants, and made an effort to ensure that my behaviour remained the same towards all of them. Lastly, continuous sessions with my supervisor helped me to ensure equitable data collection as she made sure that I followed the same procedures and remained ethical at the different participants. Further quality criteria considerations will be discussed later in this chapter. I contacted this participant's parent as I worked with her at a primary school in 2021, and I knew her daughter would be in the first grade in 2022. I contacted her, and we arranged a time and day to meet. It was complex as both parents worked during the day, and the children had extramural activities and exams. Thus, I could only meet with them at night after they had completed their day's work. I met them on Tuesday, 6 December at 19:00 at their home in Faerie Glen in Pretoria East. Both of the parents were there, as well as the two siblings of the participants. I visited their home for 25-30 minutes, where I observed the child, completed the interview with both parents, had a closer look at the participant's schoolbooks, and had a look through their home. Participant 3 insisted on being in the photographs; however, the photo was taken in such a way as to protect her identity. I met the family on 19 June 2023 for the second interview at their home, where the same procedure was followed for the interview, observations, and photographs.

PARTICIPANTS	DATA GENERATION THROUGH INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS
PARTICIPANT 4	I came into contact with the last participant through a mutual connection. I spoke to a friend about this research and the requirements for participation. She then advised me to contact a family of her acquaintance. The interview and observation took place at their home in Silver Stream Estate in Pretoria East at 17:30 on Thursday, 8 December 2022. We had to arrange for the meeting to take place at night as both parents worked a full day, and the children had different extramural activities in the afternoon. Both of the children were there during the interview, but were in a separate room. The participating child did, however, come into the room at a certain point during the interview when the father's phone rang. I visited their house for 25-30 minutes, where I had the opportunity to complete the parental interview, observe the participant, look through their house, and see his schoolwork and reports. The second interview with the family took place on 20 June 2023, where a follow-up interview was conducted, further observations were made, and more photographs were taken.

Table 3.5

Summary of parental interviews

	WHERE	DATE	INTERVIEWEES
FIRST FIELD VISIT			
Participant 1	Home (television room)	4 December 2022	Mother and father
Participant 2	Home (television room)	4 December 2022	Mother and father
Participant 3	Home (kitchen)	6 December 2022	Mother and father
Participant 4	Home (dining room)	8 December 2022	Mother and father
SECOND FIELD VISIT			
	WHERE	DATE	INTERVIEWEES
Participant 1	Home (television room)	11 June 2023	Mother and father
Participant 2	Home (bedroom)	10 June 2023	Mother
Participant 3	Home (kitchen)	19 June 2023	Mother and father
Participant 4	Home (dining room)	20 June 2023	Mother and father

3.7.2 Documenting the interviews, observations and visual data

When collecting data, the role of the observer is critical as it has the potential to yield more realistic and authentic data (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 542). This is due to the fact that the researcher is gathering information first-hand within the situation (Wellington, 2015, as cited by Cohen et al., 2018). This allowed me to use the interviews, observations, and visual data to support this study's findings.

Table 3.6

Summary of data gathered through different methods

METHODS OF DOCUMENTING THE DATA	DETAILED SUMMARY OF DATA GATHERED
(a) AUDIO RECORDINGS AND TRANSCRIPTIONS	In order to encapsulate precisely what was said during the interviews, I used the audio recording application on my cell phone to record the parents' answers. Using an audio recording for an interview allows researchers to type up every answer verbatim (Leavy, 2023). This makes drawing upon the information easier as the answers are recorded verbally. I was, therefore, able to continuously listen to the voice recordings to ensure that I had gathered all the necessary information. I conducted the interviews in Afrikaans, and another individual transcribed them. However, I translated the text into English using Google Translate. This was done for both field visits.
(b) OBSERVATIONS	Observations are very popular when doing qualitative research. It relies on the researcher looking at the environment and the people in the environment and systematically observing necessary information, routines, and interactions (Cohen et al., 2018). In addition, observation was valuable in terms of face validity as it allowed me to gather first-hand verbal and non-verbal information about the participants involved in this case study. The field notes were a vital part of the study as they allowed me to gather critical information about that day, and record any relevant data that might influence this study. Field notes can be written both at the time of observation and after leaving the participants (Cohen et al., 2018), as it allows researchers to gather their thoughts about what they have observed. Observation notes were made for both field visits.
(c) VISUAL DATA	Recording visual data, i.e. photographs of the homes, their environment, schoolbooks and report cards, was vital in this study. Using visual data or photographs in qualitative research allows for the images to represent the truth, as well as tell a story about the reality of the actions (Cohen et al., 2018). I documented the visual data when I visited the homes in order to capture the truth and reality of each participant to ensure the validity of the research. Denzin and Lincoln (2003, as cited by Berends, 2011) emphasise the importance of visual data as it increases the quality of the representation, and bridges the subjective experience and reality of the researcher. In addition, research shows the advantages of combining interviews and visual data, as it enhances the accuracy and the completion of the participants' reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, as cited by Barends, 2011).
	As I only photographed the evidence from their report cards, homes, and workbooks, it leaves little room for subjective interpretation. However, photographs do not tell the whole story and should be viewed with other data sources to understand the phenomenon better. The photographs further supported this study, contributing to the different data collection methods, thus enriching and substantiating the findings (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2007; Glaw et al., 2017). One of the most significant challenges regarding photographs is confidentiality and anonymity (Crow & Wiles, 2008; Glaw et al., 2017). However, before I took the photos, I gained the parents' written consent to photograph their home and the children's books. I further ensured that no person could be seen in the photographs. As previously discussed,

METHODS OF DOCUMENTING THE DATA	DETAILED SUMMARY OF DATA GATHERED
	Participant 3 insisted on being photographed; however, the pictures were taken in such a way as to protect her identity.
	Pink (2014) urges researchers to utilise visual and sensory data to offer an innovative way of understanding and developing interventions for change. Visual data increases credibility as there is physical proof of the collected data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016), which is vital in qualitative research. However, the disadvantages can include misplacing the photos or losing the device's battery. Therefore, I stored the photos on a hard drive and on my laptop, which is password protected. Secondly, I took a battery pack to ensure battery life. Photographs were taken during both field visits.

3.8   DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data analysis aimed to find a deeper meaning and gain an understanding of the data by searching for information across multiple sources (Lester et al., 2020). Analysing the data correctly was vital as it allowed me to triangulate the data and strengthen the findings, and, as a result, come to a conclusion (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Basit (2003, p. 143) defines qualitative data analysis as a "dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorising." It refers to the complex and ambivalent ways in which we make sense of our social worlds (Lyons & Coyle, 2021, p. 9). I analysed the data derived from the interviews, observations, and visual data to answer the research questions. I utilised the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) to analyse the data from the interviews and observations. This allowed me to gain the trust of the participants, better understand the phenomenon, and constantly compare cases (Glaser, 1965) while increasing the traceability of the data (Boeije, 2002). I utilised this method as it allowed me to identify, analyse, and report the different themes derived from the interviews and observations.

Furthermore, I used the CCM to advance concepts derived from the collected data by simultaneously coding and analysing it (Taylor et al., 2015). This method is often related to the Grounded Theory (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018; Kolb, 2012; Taylor et al., 2015); however, in this study, the CCM was used to analyse the data generated in a case study. I focused on establishing themes rather than developing new theories using the collected raw data from the research (Leedy et al., 2019). The data collection methods most commonly used with the CCM are observations, interviews, and the collection of documents (Kolb, 2012). Thus, observations and interviews further allowed me to access the participants' inner workings and gain the perspective of these individuals (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Kolb, 2012).

The data analysis remained inductive as the study continued to promote the unique understanding of individuals' perceptions of their reality rather than focusing on a theory (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001; Olson et al., 2016). The continuous comparison allowed me, as the researcher, to develop themes by categorising and connecting the different relevant findings (Boeije, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Thus, by comparing the answers from the interviews, the observations, and the different artefacts, I was able to draw upon themes regarding the socio-economic circumstances and academic performance of grade one learners as mediated by parental involvement.

The advantages of the CCM analysis include having a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Glaser, 1965), working systematically (Boeije, 2002; Knotten et al., 2017; Mezinska et al., 2016)), and lastly, the researcher being able to start with raw data (Birks & Mills, 2022; Kolb, 2012) Working systematically increased my understanding of each aspect of the study while allowing me to grasp critical concepts. Working with raw data allowed me to analyse the necessary and applicable data relevant to this study. According to Boeije (2002) and Knotten et al. (2017), there are disadvantages to working with raw data. Firstly, the researcher's subjectivity is a disadvantage as the researcher alone analyses and chooses the data. Secondly, it is time-sensitive as the researcher must constantly analyse and interpret the data. I addressed these challenges by working closely with my supervisor to maintain momentum as much as possible. In addition, time management is vital when analysing data. Therefore, I created a timetable that divided the data into different categories so that I could work as effectively as possible. As I was only working with four participants, it was easier to manage my time as I had sufficient time to analyse their answers from the interviews.

The CCM enabled me to work systematically and gain in-depth knowledge of the participants' inner workings. While working with raw data, the CCM emphasises comparing everything to anything to increase traceability and credibility (Boeije, 2002; Knotten et al., 2017; Mezinska et al., 2016). After analysing the data according to a set plan, it was critical to interpret it according to the different categories of the data. This allowed me to establish themes that could ultimately contribute to existing research on the impact of socio-economic circumstances and parental involvement on academic performance.

Moreover, by comparing the incidents, I was able to draw upon similarities and differences from the parents, observations and visual data collected from the four different participants, who were from different socio-economic circumstances. The constant comparison also

enabled me, as the researcher, to identify relevant information. I divided this information into different categories, and integrated these different categories to identify overarching themes (Birks & Mills, 2022; Glaser, 1965). The themes constantly emerged as I compared the different categories, which assisted me in establishing themes that were relevant to this study. This research aimed to investigate the interactions between socio-economic background and the academic performance of grade one learners as mediated by parental involvement. As such, it was unnecessary to develop theories; instead, themes were discovered that could contribute to other programmes that promote academic achievement. These themes could, therefore, only be established through constantly comparing significant information. After analysing the interviews and observations, I analysed the visual data separately. In addition, I took photographs as evidence of the learners' workbooks, assessments, and report cards to conclude their academic development. The visual data collection further acted as physical proof of the children's academic performance, thereby minimising the chances of subjectivity.

Figure 3.1

Constant Comparative Method four-step process (Glaser, 1965)
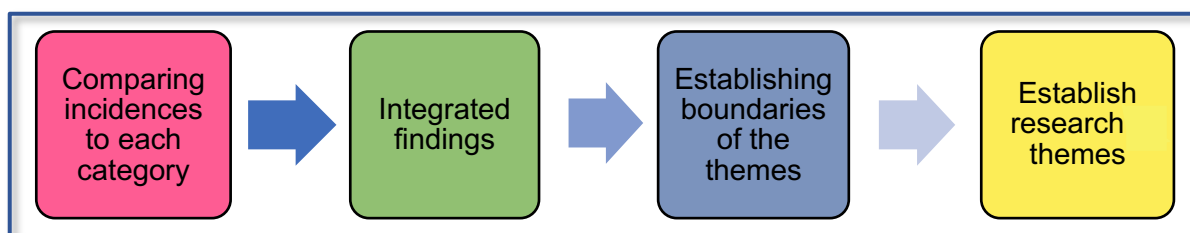
The steps of the CCM, as discussed by Glaser (1965), were followed as I first compared the incidences from the four interviews and observations. In order to familiarise myself with the data, I transcribed the interviews. Thus, I re-read all of the interviews multiple times to acquaint myself with the information provided by the participants as thoroughly as possible. Secondly, I integrated the findings into different categories (Glaser, 1965) to establish themes and better understand the findings. In order to do this, I used the coding system to identify themes that could be placed in different categories to draw upon the findings' differences and similarities. The third step focused on establishing the boundaries of the themes (Glaser, 1965), which could only be established after I coded the transcriptions of the interviews and the observation notes. Establishing the boundaries allowed me to determine the information that could be used, and eliminate unnecessary information. Lastly, the fourth step enabled me to establish the research's themes (Glaser, 1965) after tabulating

and analysing the findings. The themes then allowed for further identification of the similarities and differences between the participants, leading to conclusions being made. Chapter 4 will provide the identified themes and the categories derived from the findings.

Photograph 3.4

Raw work showing how the codes were found using the transcriptions
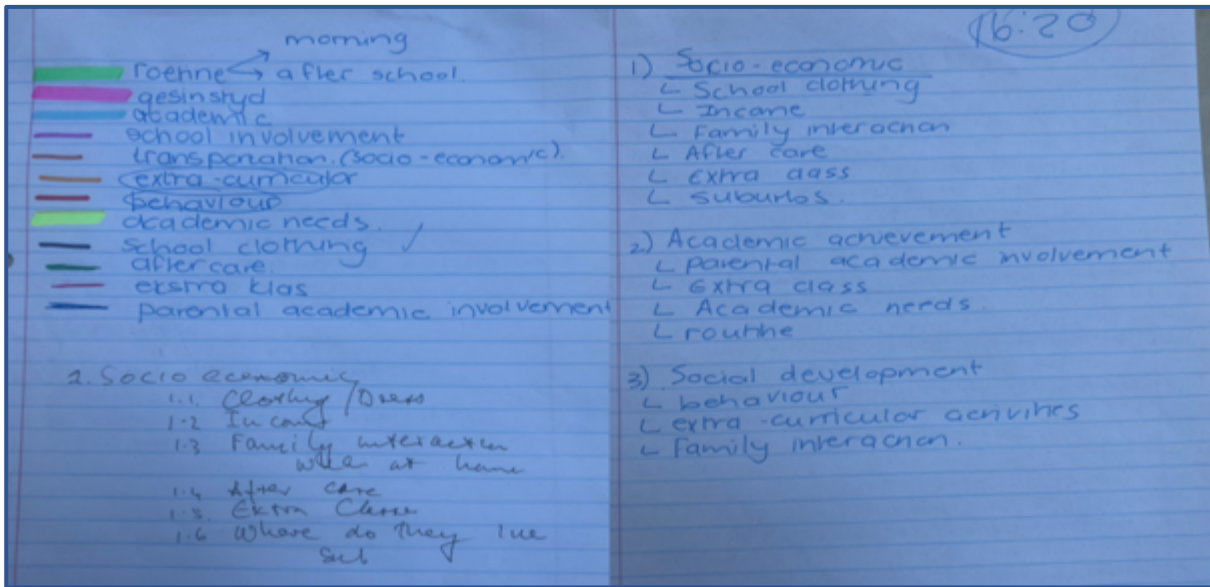
Photograph 3.5

Transcription of the interview with Participant 3 and how the codes were applied
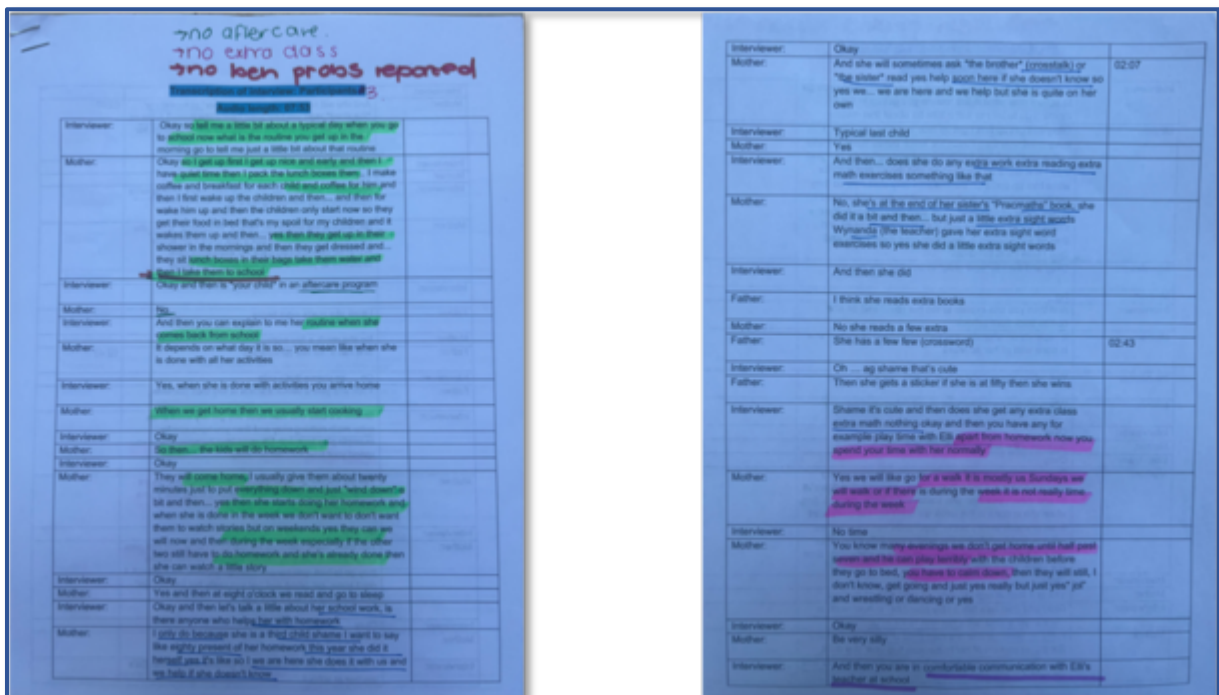
Photograph 3.6

Transcription of the interview with Participant 3 and how the codes were applied (cont. 1)

Photograph 3.7

Transcription of the interview with Participant 3 and how the codes were applied (cont. 2)

3.9 QUALITY CRITERIA FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Establishing credibility and trustworthiness within a qualitative study is vital to ensuring an ethical study. According to Guba (1981, as cited by Nieuwenhuis, 2016), the criteria for qualitative researchers are credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability.

Table 3.7

Quality Criteria for an ethical research study

| QUALITY CRITERIA FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	
CREDIBILITY	The advantages of qualitative research include the ability to explore a phenomenon, and the ability to gain a multi-layered description of the phenomenon. It further assists researchers to identify key issues that may act as an obstacle within the phenomenon (Leedy et al., 2019). In addition, it allows researchers to test the validity of the findings through verifications, as well as to evaluate specific policies and practices (Leedy et al., 2019). Moreover, credibility focuses on findings of reality that provide information that is as reliable as possible (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Credibility, therefore, refers to the truth and if that can be portrayed by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018). Thus, for me, as a researcher, to gain credibility in the field, I needed to provide descriptive data, become part of the research world, as well as the natural setting, which was the primary source of information (Cohen et al., 2018).
	In addition, prior to entering the research field, I took time to familiarise myself with the areas in which the research was to take place, as well as immerse myself in previous studies that took place in the same field. In addition, I had debriefing sessions with my supervisor after conducting the research (Niewenhuis, 2016), and provided descriptive images of what exactly took place that day. The interviews were also audio recorded, and photographs were taken of the different environments and workbooks of the participants. In addition, credibility can further be enhanced through well-defined purposive sampling and detailed data collection methods (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Guba and Lincoln (1981, as cited by Cutcliffe et al.,1999) maintain that credibility can be ensured once others recognise the same experiences after reading about it. Thus, providing rich and descriptive data with sufficient evidence is vital to ensuring a credible study.

QUALITY CRITERIA FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	
TRANSFERABILITY	Qualitative researchers do not focus on making generalisations as it rarely focuses on drawing upon random samples (Denzin, 1983, as cited by Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Transferability invites readers to make connections between their own experiences and the elements of the study (Niewhenhuis, 2016). Therefore, transferability in qualitative research can be increased by providing a detailed description, and a complete account of the context and participants for the readers to make their own conclusions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Firstly, I used purposeful sampling and selected participants who would represent the whole population regarding the phenomenon and the context being studied. In order to align myself with the criterion of transferability, I provided a detailed description of the findings, including photographs and excerpts from the interviews with the participants. Secondly, I purposefully chose participants from a particular socio-economic background with Grade 1 learners who attended a public school. Thus, the assumption was that this information could be compared to similar cases.
CONFIRMABILITY	Qualitative researchers play an integral role in the confirmability of the study. As a qualitative researcher, my role was to remain objective (Cohen et al., 2018) even though I was actively part of the research setting in order to ensure neutrality (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Confirmability refers to the researcher's efforts to confirm the data and either confirm or challenge the interpretation of the theory (Reid, 1994, as cited by Drisko, 1997). Thus, an "audit trail" is suggested to increase confirmability (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 126), as it allows any person to track the thought process and the decision-making process in relation to the researcher's findings. Confirmability in this research was ensured through the fieldnotes, the visual data of the photographs of the participants' books and report cards, and the transcripts of the interviews. Furthermore, continuous supervision sessions with my supervisor also assisted me in verifying the findings.
DEPENDABILITY	Qualitative researchers seek to illuminate, explore and understand similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997, as cited by Golafshani, 2003). Dependability in qualitative research is related to consistency (Cohen et al., 2018), and reliability (Nieuwenhuis, 2018). Dependability can be increased through the operational detail, the implementation of the research design, and the continuous reflection on the research process (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Thus, keeping notes from the fieldwork, taking photographs, and recording the interviews increased this study's dependability. In addition, taking notes on the data analysis process and how I interpreted the data also increased the study's dependability.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics approval for this study was granted by the Faculty of Education's Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria (EDU073/22). Throughout this study, I needed to adhere to specific research standards to remain ethical in the field while collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data. As the researcher, it was critical to remain objective when entering the field and observing any valuable information that may have arisen while gathering the data. There were ethical considerations that I needed to consider in completing this study.

Table 3.8

Ethical considerations for this study

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	
WRITTEN CONSENT	Written consent from the parents as participants, and assent from the Grade 1 learners were obtained before gathering data. Before the participants gave their consent, the researcher ensured that they understood the purpose, benefits, potential risks, and the research process (Jefford & Moore, 2008; Reid & Brown, 2018). I asked the participants to read through the documents I provided and, if they felt comfortable enough, to give me consent to conduct the study (Appendix A). I only started interviewing once the participants gave consent.
CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY	Confidentiality and anonymity are vital when conducting research. When reporting the findings, I reminded the participants that their identities would remain confidential and anonymous (Leavy, 2023). In addition, the participants were also unaware of each other's participation in the study as I did not disclose that information. Confidentiality is related to the principle of respect for the participants' autonomy. Moreover, the personal information gathered during the data collection phase will not be shared without their permission (Arifin, 2018; Wiles et al., 2008). Confidentiality also minimises the chances of the participants' being harmed (Arifin, 2018; Gibson et al., 2013) as their names remain anonymous and are only referred to as 'Participant', as seen in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2. As the interviews were conducted in the privacy of their own homes, the important aspect of confidentiality and anonymity remained intact.
VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION	Participation in this study was voluntary, meaning that the participants chose to contribute to the study, and could withdraw at any time without any consequences (Cohen et al., 2018). Voluntary participation, therefore, also refers to the willingness of the participants to contribute to the study after providing informed consent (Arifin, 2018; Nijhawan et al., 2013). The participants were reminded of their rights as voluntary participants throughout the study.

3.11 CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 provided an in-depth explanation of the research methods and the reasons for following an interpretivist paradigm in conducting this study. In addition, a further explanation was given of the reasons for choosing a case study approach. An in-depth view of the criteria for the participants, and the different methods used to collect qualitative data, i.e. interviews, observations, field notes, and visual data collection, were provided. Lastly, an explanation of the critical ethical considerations in this study was provided.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss the data-generation process and the identified themes in this study using the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) from the data analysis process.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 discussed the research process in terms of the different methodologies used to analyse and interpret the data. In addition, an in-depth overview of the collected data methods used (Section 3.6), the analysis of the data (Section 3.7), as well as the procedures for interpreting the findings (Section 3.8) were provided. Furthermore, the ethical considerations that guided this study were also discussed as they played a significant role in establishing trust between the researcher and participants, ensuring an ethical study.

Chapter 4 will provide a brief overview of the research process, and a description of the research findings. The transcriptions of the interviews, the observation notes, and the photographs will be used to describe these findings. In addition, further discussions regarding the data sets above will be presented by providing the identified themes established through the data analysis.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This section will discuss the research process and the study sites by means of detailed participant descriptions. The descriptive text will be supplemented with visual data in order to provide the contexts of the data collected for each participant. The descriptions are infused with some of the reflective notes made during the research process.

4.2.1 First field visit

As I visited the four participants' homes, the field visits occurred on three separate days and in two different areas and communities in Pretoria. I first met with the Pretoria West participants during the field visits on 4 December 2022. I was apprehensive as this was new territory for me, professionally and personally. I was unsure of what to expect from the research process. The field visit to the third participant occurred on 6 December 2022 at the first family in Pretoria East's home, and the fourth field visit occurred on 8 December 2022. I became more confident with each field visit, and the process became more enjoyable.

4.2.1.1 Participant 1: Pretoria West

I arrived at the first home at 10:00 in the morning while the family was home. I was greeted by the NGO's social worker outside the house, and I followed her into the house. For safety

reasons and in order to make the situation more comfortable for both parties, the social worker suggested that she come along as the family was familiar with her. The mother, the father and the participant, a seven-year-old girl, greeted me. The house was on a lot with no garden, and limited space for the whole family.

Photograph 4.1

Participant 1's house (left) and bedroom (right)

The parents and the participant waited by the gate as we entered. They seemed very comfortable and familiar with the social worker from the NGO. We entered the house, and I introduced myself and explained the reason for the interview. The parents were both inviting and friendly. However, the father was more vocal during the interview process. The participant (child) left the room with the social worker in order for me to have more privacy during the interview. I commenced the interview by first providing the parents with the necessary documentation per this research's ethical requirements. The interview started as soon as they filled in all of the paperwork. The parents were forthcoming with the required information and provided me with answers for this research. After the interview, I could walk through the rest of the house and observe the participant while she was playing with the social worker. The interview lasted about 25-30 minutes, and after arriving home, I wrote reflective research notes.

4.2.1.2 Participant 2: Pretoria West

The second interview occurred an hour after the first. This gave me a chance to reflect on the changes I needed to make regarding my general approach due to the fact that I felt too uncomfortable during the first visit. The second family lived nearby, and the learners attended the same primary school. I arrived at the house, and the worker from the NGO waited for me outside the house. The house was situated on a lot with numerous homes and flats across from the primary school. I walked through the lot to the family's apartment. They lived in a two-bedroom flat. However, one of the rooms was being used as storage space as the house needed cupboards. The participant's older sister slept on the floor in the storage room, and the participant slept with his parents in their room.

Photograph 4.2

Participant 2's house and room

I followed the same procedure as with the first family. We sat in their living room while I conducted the interview, and the participant played outside with some other children. The parents were informative and answered the necessary questions that I posed to them. After the interview, I walked through their flat, and they showed me numerous workbooks of the participant, as well as his room and his sister's 'room'. The interview lasted about 25-30 minutes, and I collected all the necessary data at that time. I could already draw upon similarities and differences from the first participants during the interview. These findings will be discussed later on in this chapter.

4.2.1.3 Participant 3: Pretoria East

The third interview occurred on 6 December 2022 in Faerie Glen in Pretoria East. In Chapter 3, I indicated how I remained ethical throughout this interview to protect this study from research bias that may have emanated from my familiarity with the context. As such, I recorded this interview, asked the same questions, and made notes during the interview in order to guide the findings. I was more at ease during this interview as I was already comfortable with the process and the participants. The house was in a safe community with a lot of security. I arrived there during the evening as both parents worked full-time and it was the only time we could schedule an interview. The participants lived in a three-bedroom house with a garden, a tv-room, a dining room and a kitchen. Each child had a room and sufficient space to do homework and study. The parents were making dinner when I arrived at their house. The participant was also very proud of her schoolwork and showed me numerous workbook examples.

Photograph 4.3

Participant 3's room and house

I followed the same procedure as with the previous families regarding informed consent and explaining the research. The parents provided me with in-depth answers regarding their involvement, as well as the participant's academic performance. This, however, will be discussed later in the chapter. As previously mentioned, I was able to draw upon similarities and differences from the different interviews. As this was my first interview in Pretoria East, the socio-economic differences became more concrete as parental involvement, academic

achievement, and socio-economic circumstances were observed. After the interview, the parents showed me through their house, and I took photographs of the necessary artefacts, such as the workbooks and the home. The interview process, along with the observation, lasted for about 25-30 minutes.

4.2.1.4 Participant 4: Pretoria East

The third interview occurred on 8 December 2022 at Silver Stream Estate in Pretoria East. I was more at ease during this interview as I was already comfortable with the process. The house was in a security estate in a safe community. I arrived there during the evening as both parents worked full time. The participants lived in a house with a garden, a tv-room, a dining room, and a kitchen. Each child had a room and sufficient space to do homework and study. The parents were making dinner when I arrived. This participant was also very proud of her schoolwork and showed me numerous workbook examples.

Photograph 4.4

Participant 4's room and house

I followed the same procedures as with the previous families regarding informed consent and thoroughly explaining the research study. The parents provided me with in-depth answers regarding their involvement as parents, as well as the participant's academic performance. As mentioned, this will be discussed later in the chapter. During the data collection process, I initiated a preliminary data analysis process in which I identified similarities and differences between the various interviews. After the interview, the parents showed me their house, and photographs were taken of the necessary artefacts, such as

the workbooks and the home. Again, the interview process, along with the observation, lasted for about 25-30 minutes. After conducting all of the interviews and collecting the necessary artefacts, I was able to analyse the data and identify themes across the different participants. I identified several themes that were visible in the interviews, as well as the observation notes and artefacts. The identified themes will be discussed in terms of the four case studies, which provided the foundation for this study.

4.2.2 Second field visit

The second field visit occurred approximately six months after the first field visit, and took place over a span of two weeks. There was sufficient time to analyse the data and contribute to the existing data collected from the first field visit. A follow-up interview was arranged with the parents, where the majority of the same questions from the first field visit were asked (Appendix C), extensive field notes were made, and observations were conducted. Three of the four participants still lived in the same homes as in the first interviews; however, Participant 2 needed to move due to financial constraints.

4.2.2.1 Participant 1

This interview occurred on 11 June 2023 at their home in Pretoria West. Both the parents were present during the interview, as well as the participant. However, she did not speak during the interview until I asked her a question. Since the first interview in December, there had been numerous changes. The family had welcomed a new baby, they had removed the participant from the school's aftercare programme as they felt that they could help her more with her homework, and she had started speech therapy at the local clinic. However, the mother stated that she struggled with the homework and helping her daughter was a challenge. The mother also noted that the participant had struggled immensely that year with spelling and reading in both Afrikaans and English. As per the previous interview, the father spoke the majority of the time; however, the mother made significant contributions regarding the current academic challenges. As the participants were more comfortable with my presence, the whole process lasted about 45 minutes, during which new photos of their home and their living conditions were taken, field notes were taken, and critical observations of the child were made.

Photograph 4.5

Participant 1's home - living area (left) and the kitchen (right)

4.2.2.2 Participant 2

I arrived at Participant 2's new home at 09:00 in the morning. The father could not attend the follow-up interview because he had to work. The mother and participant met me at their home, along with the employee from the NGO, just as with the first field visit. The family moved from their home into a one-bedroom Wendy house on the same lot as their previous home; they could not pay the R5000 monthly rent due to financial constraints. The changes that occurred for this family included: moving, the mother started a new job at the school, and the participant attended an aftercare programme after school. The mother indicated that his academic performance had improved since he joined the programme. This time, the mother showed me the whole lot, including the communal bathrooms that they shared with the rest of the residents, as well as their new home. The mother and father shared their bedroom with the participant and his sister; their bed was next to their parents. The home had a kitchen and one living area, which was used as the television room and the bedroom for all four family members. As the participants were more comfortable with my presence, the whole process lasted about 45 minutes, where critical observations, such as observing the participant in their environment and interacting with others. Field notes were made during the visit.

Photograph 4.6

Participant 2's new home - the kitchen (top left corner), the communal bathroom (bottom left corner), and the participant's parents' bedroom (right)

4.2.2.3 Participant 3

I arrived at Participant 3's house at 17:30 on 19 June 2023, as the children had extracurricular activities until then. The mother and father were busy preparing dinner together, Participant 3 was busy watching television, and her siblings were still at sports practice. The parents did not mention any significant changes to the participant's routine, except that the mother was not working at the school anymore and was currently working from home. The mother stated that since she was not working full time anymore, she had more time to spend with the children, and was therefore more available for their needs. The mother did not mention that she had significant academic challenges at the time of the second interview, except for English being more difficult than the previous year. Critical observations and field notes were made while I was there for approximately 45 minutes. The parents were also familiar with the process and were, therefore, more comfortable with my presence as well.

Photograph 4.7

Participant 3's home - her bedroom (top left corner), the dining room (top right corner), the kitchen (bottom left corner), and the television room (bottom right corner)

4.2.2.4 Participant 4

The second visit for Participant 4 took place on 20 June 2023 at 17:30. The children had extracurricular activities until then. The parents were much more comfortable with me as they were familiar with the process and therefore knew what to expect. The interview took place in their dining room again, with the mother and father present. They did not mention any significant changes in the participant's life, and they were very satisfied with his academic progress thus far. They specifically mentioned his reading abilities, as this was one of his strengths, and he was reading English at Grade 3 level at the time of this interview. After the interview, I once again walked around the house, wrote in-depth observation notes, and had an opportunity to witness the participant playing with one of his friends in the street. As previously mentioned, the participants were comfortable with the whole process, and I was there for about 35-45 minutes.

Photograph 4.8

Participant 4's home - the lounge (top left corner), the dining room and lounge (top right corner), the kitchen (bottom left corner) and the study (bottom right corner)

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The data was analysed by following the four steps of the Constant Comparative Method (CCM). This method aligns with the research methodology as discussed in Chapter 3 as it allows the research to have a deep understanding of the phenomenon (Glaser, 1965), work systematically (Boeije, 2002), and lastly, the researcher being able to start with raw data (Kolb, 2012). Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to gain knowledge on the specific phenomena as these are interpreted through written or spoken words in the participants' natural environment (Maree, 2016; Queiros et al., 2017).

Table 4.1

Analysing the data using the CCM

STEPS	CONSTANT COMPARATIVE METHOD PROCESS
STEP 1:	**Comparing incidences to each category (Glaser, 1965)**
	After the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed to assist in identifying the themes between the different case studies. The four interviews were printed, allowing me to work through each transcription together, and to continuously compare and contrast the findings. In Step 1, I identified the similarities that were present during each interview, and gave each one

STEPS	CONSTANT COMPARATIVE METHOD PROCESS
	a different colour in order to help with the coding process that would take place in Step 2. Furthermore, the photographs that were taken and the field notes were allocated to each participant to utilise for an in-depth description of the case. This process allowed me to objectively view each participant's answers while comparing the different interviews at the same time.
STEP 2:	**Integrate findings into different categories (Glaser, 1965)** This step allowed for the identification of themes through the use of the coding system, where I coded each theme with a colour (see Photographs 3.4-3.7 in Chapter 3). The findings were then integrated into different categories to draw upon the participants' differences and similarities. The data were compared and contrasted simultaneously in order to identify themes that were relevant for each participant. The photographs were not part of this step as the analysis of these only occurred after the interviews were analysed. The photographs did, however, prove to be a necessary source of information to support the themes that were identified in this step.
STEP 3:	**Establishing the boundaries of the themes (Glaser, 1965)** Establishing the boundaries of the themes could only be done after the transcriptions and photographs were analysed. This allowed me to determine the necessary and relevant data that could be used. After the themes were identified and coding took place, it was necessary to establish whether the information that was given in the interviews was relevant to this study. In order to establish the boundaries, further analysis of the transcriptions was necessary. Therefore, I needed to read the transcriptions again to determine whether the codes were relevant to this study. Thus, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were relevant in this step as they allowed for the relevant information to be used and the irrelevant information to be excluded.
STEP 4:	**Establishing the research's themes (Glaser, 1965)** The last step enabled me to identify themes in order to draw upon further similarities and differences in this study. After the previous three steps, the last step allowed me to exclude certain themes identified in the earlier stages of the process. After tabulating and analysing the findings, the identified relevant themes allowed for an in-depth understanding of certain similarities and differences in this case study. This provided me with an in-depth understanding of each case.

4.4 OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND OF THE CASE STUDIES

The following table provides an overview of the four participants' backgrounds.

Table 4.2

Overview of the case studies

PARTICIPANTS	OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND OF THE CASE STUDIES
PARTICIPANT 1	At the time of this study, Participant 1 lived in Pretoria West with both of her biological parents and three of her six siblings. She had three other siblings who do not live with them. The father was a mechanic, and the mother was unemployed. They had a shared income of R8000 per month. The participant attended an aftercare programme every day after school where she completed her homework. However, the mother indicated that she did assignments with her daughter at home. The mother walked with her to school every morning. The parents further indicated that the participant struggled to make friends, and that Grade 1 was a big adjustment for her as she did not trust easily. They further indicated that they were happy with her academic progress through the year as she was the first one of all of their children who passed Grade 1 on the first try. The parents indicated that she spent most Sundays with her father, and spent some time together as a family after she returned from the aftercare programme at school. She did not participate in any extra-curricular activities. The participant liked watching television after she returned from aftercare. Upon the second field visit, the parents noted that she did not attend an aftercare programme anymore as they felt that her homework was not complete when she arrived home. She also started playing netball after school, but stopped during the season as the participant felt that the school were not competitive.
PARTICIPANT 2	Participant 2 lived in Pretoria West with both of his biological parents and one of his siblings. They lived on an open lot in a flat across from the school. The father was a security manager, and the mother sometimes helped at one of the NGOs, although her position was not permanent. They had a shared income of R10 000-R15 000 per month. The participant did not attend an aftercare programme, and the mother indicated that she battled to do homework with him as he seemed uninterested. The mother indicated that she did homework with him, but did not do any additional work that might help him improve certain academic skills. She also indicated that he needed extra help doing homework and could not do it alone. The parents indicated that they had a very close relationship with the participant, and spent time together every day after school. They were also satisfied with his academic achievement for Grade 1 as they expected him not to pass as he did not do his homework. He did not participate in any extra-curricular activities as the school did not provide many options. The participant enjoyed watching television after school. Upon my second field visit, the family had moved to a one-room home, and the participant had started attending the aftercare programme at school.

PARTICIPANTS	OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND OF THE CASE STUDIES
PARTICIPANT 3	Participant 3 lived in Pretoria East with her biological parents and two siblings. They lived in a house with a garden, an allocated area for her to do her homework, as well as her own room. The father was a civil engineer, and the mother was a marketing agent at a primary school in Pretoria. They had a shared income of R70 000+ every month. The mother drove the participant and her two siblings to school every morning. She did not attend an aftercare programme after school, but participated in various extra-curricular activities and clubs at school. The mother indicated that the participant mostly did homework herself as she was capable of doing so, and asked for help from her (the mother) or her older siblings if she did not understand certain aspects of the work. The mother indicated that all three siblings did homework together every day when they returned from school and extra-curricular activities, and sat at the dining room table to do so. The parents indicated they had a very close relationship with all three of their children, and enjoyed family excursions over the weekends. In addition, they indicated that they were satisfied with her academic achievement in Grade 1, stating that she worked hard. The participant did some additional mathematics and reading work when there was time at home. Upon my second field visit, the parents reported that her routine had not changed, and that she was performing well at school.
PARTICIPANT 4	Participant 4 lived in a security estate in Pretoria East with his biological parents and one sibling. They lived in a house with a garden, an allocated area for the participant to do homework, and he had his own bedroom. The father was a land surveyor, and the mother was a chartered accountant. Both owned businesses and earned a shared income of R70 000+ every month. The father drove the children to school every morning as it was close to his work, whereas the mother fetched them in the afternoons and transported them to their various extra-curricular activities. The mother indicated that the participant mostly did his homework by himself, and she only provided assistance when necessary. According to the mother, the participant also received extra private reading classes, which increased his reading ability. The parents indicated that they spent at least an hour every night together as a family, but admitted that it was easier over the weekends as there was more time. They enjoyed family excursions and quality family time as each Friday night was deemed 'family night' in their household. The parents were satisfied with the participant's academic performance for Grade 1. The participant was active at school, and participated in numerous extra-curricular activities, such as rugby and cycling. Upon my second field visit, the parents noted that his routine had not changed since the previous year, and that he was performing well at school that year. He was still receiving extra reading lessons at the time of this interview, which boosted his abilities at school.

4.5 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

During this part of the chapter, I will discuss the identified themes I found through applying the CCM. The following figure outlines the themes and the subsequent evidence found during the data analysis.

Figure 4.1

Identified themes

THEME 1	• QUALITY AND QUANTITY TIME SPENT WITH CHILDREN
THEME 2	• ACCESS TO ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES
THEME 3	• ACKNOWLEDGING THE COMPLEXITY OF FACTORS AFFECTING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
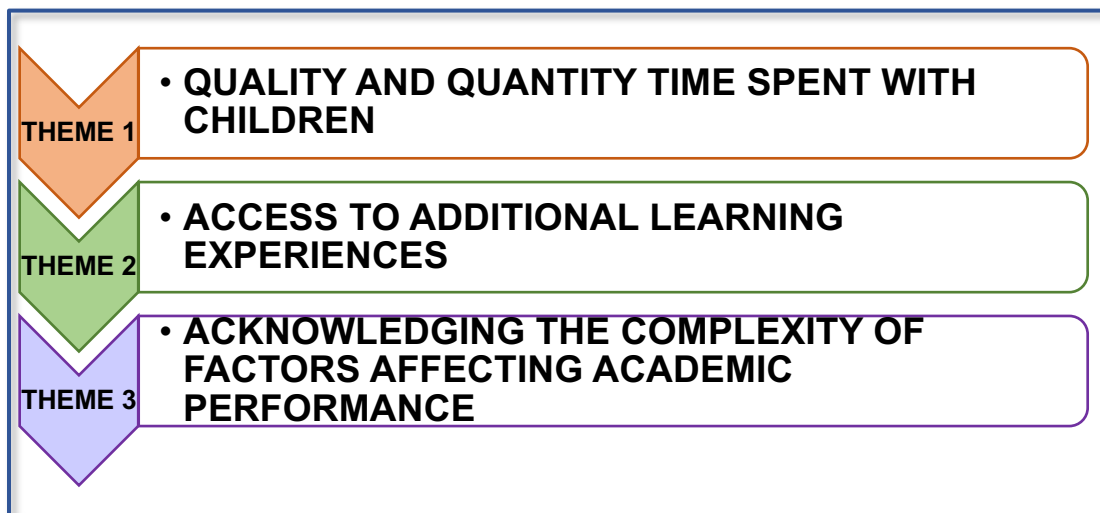
4.5.1 Theme 1: Quality and quantity of parental time spent with learners

As discussed in Chapter 2, parental involvement is critical for academic achievement at a young age, as learners often depend on extra assistance from their parents. One of the ways in which parental involvement manifests for Grade 1 learners is through the quality and quantity of the time that the parents spend with their children. The aim of the inclusion and exclusion criteria was to establish the manner of parental involvement in the participant's life that could contribute to their academic performance. The parental involvement and daily routine may contribute to the participant's academic performance, as discussed in Chapter 2. Thus, identifying the extent of their involvement, may contribute to the study's aim.

Table 4.3

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 1

THEME 1: QUALITY AND QUANTITY TIME SPENT WITH CHILDREN	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Parental academic involvement	Assistance regarding schoolwork (reading, maths, assignments).	Assistance is not being provided by parents (aftercare programme).
Family interaction	Any mention of quality time spent with the whole family, as well as the relationship with the parents (weekend activities, daily interactions).	Any mention of time spent with friends (specifically focusing on family interaction).
Daily routine	Any type of activity to describe the daily routine at home (waking up, extra-curricular activities, homework).	Any type of activity that does not fit into the daily routine (e.g. doctor's appointments).

The parents in this study indicated several aspects regarding their involvement with their children's schoolwork. Participants 3 and 4's parents indicated that they mainly did their homework independently, while Participant 1 an 2's parents reported that their children needed continuous assistance with their schoolwork. In addition, this involvement also refers to the parents' presence at school, and their access to their children's teachers. Participant 1's mother indicated that the homework was being done at the aftercare programme. Still, she further stated that she assisted her daughter with speeches and assignments, "I do assignments with her and help her with her things every day" (P1, lines 81-82, p. 3). In addition, she further stated that she had an open relationship with the participant's teacher, "The teacher WhatsApps me, and then she says that I have to come and see her" (P1, lines 47-48, p. 2). Participant 2's mother, alternatively, indicated that they, as parents, helped him with his homework. They also described their relationship with the participant's teacher as comfortable "… because he's on the governing body" (P2, line 82, p. 3).

It was noted that the parents from Pretoria East allowed their children to work more independently as they stated that the children needed little to no help with homework and schoolwork: "…I want to say like 80% of the homework this year she did by herself. If we are here, she does it with us, and we help if she doesn't know" (P3, lines 37-40, p. 1). Participant 3's mother worked at the school and therefore reported having an excellent relationship with the teacher. Lastly, Participant 4's mother reported that both she and the participant's father helped him with speeches, reading, and assignments: "… he will have to

read to us the stuff because they have stuff like that. They have to read fifty books in a month or whatever, so he will read to us" (P4, lines 116-118, p. 5). The last participant also stated that they had an open relationship with the teacher, but they preferred not to interfere in the classroom, "… we just have a stance, it feels like sucking up, and you know we are not…" (P4, lines 97-98, p. 4). However, they also stated that they communicated with the teacher that she should contact them if there was a problem, although there had not been any the year in which this interview took place.

In this case, family interaction refers to the time the parents spent with the participants daily, either assisting with homework or interacting with them socially. The parents in Pretoria West reported having time to play with their children in the afternoon as they do not participate in extra-curricular activities at school. "Yes, at the end of the day. On Sundays, I have the whole day with her that I have time with her" (P1, lines 41-42, p. 2). "He's stuck to his father's trousers hem. Everyone will tell you. Yes, and he goes to work with mama" (P2, lines 68-69, pp. 2-3) "He plays outside for three hours, and he's with us the rest of the time" (P2, lines 122-123, p. 4). In contrast to the information mentioned above, the parents in Pretoria East spent little time with their children during the school week as they worked full time, or the children had extra-curricular activities. "Yes, at least an hour and a half of just spending time together" (P4, line 53, p. 3). However, the parents reported spending most of the weekends with their children and engaging in quality time with them. "But otherwise, they go pretty much everywhere with us… their weekends are just bikes or *bulletjie* rugby or that type of stuff" (P4, lines 76-77, p. 4).

The participants in Pretoria East were actively involved with their children's school activities. Both sets of parents stated that it allowed them to spend quality time with their children during the week, apart from helping with schoolwork, as there was little time to do so. "You know, many evenings we don't get home until half past seven, and he (father) can play terribly with the children before they go to bed. You have to calm them down…" (P3, lines 68-70, p.2). In addition, children being enrolled for an aftercare programme may assist in understanding the participants' parental involvement and family interaction relating to the child's academic achievement. This is because a child's participation in an aftercare programme may indicate that parents do not do homework with the child. A guardian actively helps with homework after school, provides lunch, and cares for the child while the parents work. Only one of the four participants was in an aftercare programme connected to their primary school. "Who helps her with her schoolwork and her homework?" "The aftercare

programme" (P1, lines 23-25, p.1). Both primary schools had an aftercare programme connected to the school. However, only one participant from Pretoria West (1C) attended it daily as the two participants in Pretoria East had after-school activities.

Chapter 2 elaborated on the importance of family interaction, which is critical for developing appropriate social behaviour. All four sets of participants' parents stated that they spent time together. However, only Participants 3 and 4 elaborated on their different activities over the weekends and during the week during the interviews. "Yes, we actually never leave our children alone. Once a year we might go away for a weekend without them" (P4, lines 77-78, p. 4). In addition, the father stated the following about their family's interaction, "…Saturdays are sports from seven, eight in the morning until two o'clock in the afternoon, and then we'll chill and watch rugby and everything. On Sunday we go to church, and after church then it's a braai and they will play and swim" (P4, lines 82-86, p. 4). Thus, the parents of both Participants 3 and 4 emphasised that they spent quality time with their children besides helping with schoolwork and completing daily activities.

In addition, Participant 3's parents stated the following, "On weekends, we are together all the time. Should we say 90%…" (P3, lines 115-117, p. 4), thus they had the same experience as the other participants regarding family interaction. When I arrived, they had just finished their homework together and watched a programme on TV. Participant 2's parents stated that the participant spent time with them. Still, they did not mention any activities or experiences, and viewed the child being in their presence and doing homework as spending quality time together. Participant 1's parents stated that they spent an hour every day with her, and her father spent the whole Sunday with her. Therefore, it appears that the participants from Pretoria East spent more quality time together over the weekends, where they actively engaged in activities and experiences. They were more task driven during the week.

In terms of academic performance, establishing a healthy routine for children is vital to instilling a hardworking culture within the family, as discussed in Chapter 2. All four participants' parents stated that the mother did most of the work in the morning to get the children out of the house and off to school. "The mother wakes them up, then they're busy… getting dressed and stuff and then the mother will get the meals ready, and then she'll help them… the mother walks with them to school" (P1, lines 5-12, p. 1). However, Participant 1's parents reported that she watched TV and played when she returned from school as her homework has been completed at the aftercare programme. Participant 2's parents said that

he struggled to wake up in the morning, "…he sits with his eyes closed, then I carry him out of bed, then I put him in front of the sofa, then I put on a movie. He sits with his eyes closed with the porridge in his hands…" (P2, lines 9-11, p. 1). In addition, they reported that when the participant returned from school and made himself lunch (sandwiches), he helped with chores and did homework if he wanted to.

Participant 3's parents reported the following regarding the daily routine: "Okay, so I get up first, I get up nice and early, and then I have quiet time, then I pack the lunch boxes, then... I make coffee and breakfast for each child and coffee for him (the husband). I first wake up the children and then... and then wake him up. The children only start now, so they get their food in bed; that's my spoil for my children, and it wakes them up. And then... yes, then they get up in their shower in the mornings, and then they get dressed and... they put their lunch boxes in their bags, take their water, and then I take them to school." (P3, lines 4-13, p. 1). The mother further reported that the participant usually had activities after school. Still, after they returned from these activities, the parents would then start making dinner, and the children would do their homework. The participant was not usually allowed to watch TV during the week. However, she was allowed to do so over the weekends, and during the week if the older siblings were still busy with schoolwork. Lastly, Participant 4's morning routine was similar to those mentioned above. However, the mother reported that their live-in domestic worker helped a lot in the mornings to prepare the children for school. The father would then take the children to school as his office was near the primary school. During the evenings, when they returned from their activities, the parents would correct some homework mistakes and complete certain activities before the children went to bed at 20:00.

During the second field visit, Participants 1 and 2 changed their routines regarding homework completion. Participant 1's mother stated that she now did homework with her every day, while Participant 2's mother stated that he started attending the aftercare programme this year. Participant 1's mother explained their decision to remove their daughter from aftercare as follows: "No, we decided we're going to take her out the reason for that is... she's been put in after school, so her homework has to be done, and when she comes home, then homework just hasn't been done…" (P1, line 31-33, p. 1). Alternatively, Participant 2's parents justified putting him in aftercare as follows: "It's much better, like I said, we don't fight with him anymore to do homework; when he comes home, he can have his own time, he eats, and then he goes to play…" (P2, line 22-24, p.1). These changes had an impact on the participants' academic achievement. Participant 1's mother had begun

spending more time with her, but they struggled to get through the work, while Participant 2's progress had improved. The relationship between Participant 1 and her father were very loving and she wanted to be close to him. The interaction between the Participant 2 and his parents seemed loving. His parents assured that he looked neat before I arrived and wanted to show me his schoolwork. It was also evident that the parents were strict on watching television and playing outside. When I arrived he immediately obeyed them when they wanted privacy and went to play outside. His parents also knew exactly what work he struggled with at school and the type of subjects that were more challenging to him. Participant 3's parents had their own routine, as the mother and father cook together every night, while the children do homework or watch television in the other room. The interaction was also very loving and the participant was very obedient towards her parents. The siblings watched television together when I arrived at their home. Participant 4's mother is involved in his academic work at school, as she was able to tell me exactly what his struggles were and what type of work he enjoyed. Additionally, the family's interaction was loving and engaged, as the participant looked comfortable in his parents company. He also relaxed when the mother told him why I was there and seemed to accept my presence once the parents gave their stamp of approval.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Access to additional learning experiences

I found varying degrees of access to learning experiences outside of formal academic learning among the participants in this study. The socioeconomic factors influencing the overall academic achievement of Grade 1 learners were visible during the data collection process in terms of *formal* learning. These were indicated as access to school clothing, parental income, aftercare programmes, and the suburb in which the child is raised, which may have an impact on the academic achievement of the Grade 1 learner. It was especially prominent in terms of these participants' engagement in extra classes and extra-curricular activities. The criteria for Theme 2 were included to identify factors that may contribute to academic performance, such as extra classes, as well as identify the financial differences between the families.

Table 4.4

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 2

THEME 2: ACCESS TO ADDITIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
School clothing	Reference to access to school clothing.	Reference to access to other clothing.
Parental income	Reference to the financial income of the parents.	Reference to other financial incentives outside of their occupation.
Aftercare programme	Reference to the use of formal aftercare programmes.	Reference to the parents taking care of the participant.
Extra class	Reference to having access to extra classes, such as extra reading or mathematics classes, which need to be paid for.	Extra help from parents with homework.
Extra-curricular activities	Any mention of participation in organised extra-curricular activities.	Any mention of aftercare programmes or playing with friends.

The parental income between the four cases was prevalent as the two participants in Pretoria East were able to buy new school clothes, pay for extra classes to improve reading skills, and were able to live in a suburb that had numerous good schools in the area. Both sets of parents in Pretoria East had stable incomes, while the two sets of parents in Pretoria West did not have stable incomes. Neither of the two participants in Pretoria West had an allocated area to do homework, and one of the participants (P2), shared a bedroom with his parents, as they were living in a Wendy house due to financial constraints. Participant 2 did also not have a desk in their home, as it influences his ability to complete homework comfortably. The parents also stated that it is difficult with him sleeping in their bed. According to Yinusa and Basil (2008), the basis of any development within a country must commence with human capital development. Thus, factors such as income, family interaction, access to school clothing, aftercare programmes, and the suburb in which the child develops may influence their academic achievement. This theme and the varying levels of access to additional learning experiences were presented across the board, and were visible during all four interviews and observations. Home background, learning environment, and socioeconomic status are all determinants of academic achievement (Arends et al.

(2021, p. 65); Darko-Asumadu & Sika-Bright., 2021; Yinusa & Basil, 2008). However, it is an interchanging process as this study acknowledges that many factors affect a child's life.

Related to access to additional learning experiences, access to school clothing for the learners was one of the most significant factors reflecting the socio-economic circumstances of the participants. Three parents indicated that they bought the school clothes themselves, while only one of the participants indicated that they received the school clothes from the church. "At the school clothes shop and then the grey shirts, grey pants, and white shirts we just got from Woolies, Ackermans or PEP. Wherever we could get." (P4[2], line 145-147, p. 5). The mother thus emphasised how easily they accessed school clothes, which suggesting financial stability. In contrast, one of the participants in Pretoria West indicated that they received their school clothes from the church: "And where does she get her school clothes from?" "From the church." (P1, lines 103-105, p. 4).

As previously discussed, socio-economic background is a dynamic construct used to understand an individual's access to social and economic resources, and the ultimate benefits associated with these resources (Brito & Noble, 2014). Allowing for variance between contexts, low socioeconomic background is defined as living in a household where the breadwinner's income is below the poverty line (Spencer et al., 2012), which in South African terms refers to R890 per month (Statistics South Africa, 2021). In this case, parental income affects the child's access to specific resources, including extra classes, extra help from the parents, and access to resources in order to improve academic performance. The parental income of the four participants were completely different to one another. As discussed in Table 3.1, the parents from Pretoria West earned between R8 000 - R15 000 per month. Even though this is above the poverty line, it may still place constraints on the family's ability to access additional resources and learning experiences for the child. The parents in Pretoria East earned approximately R70 000 per month between them. All four parents in Pretoria East had attained tertiary education, while the parents in Pretoria West had not. Their jobs included being a mechanic and a car salesperson, respectively, while the jobs in Pretoria East included a chartered accountant and an engineer. Thus, substantive disparities in terms of parental income were present in the families from the two areas in Pretoria.

During the second field visit, Participant 2's parents indicated that he had started attending the aftercare programme at school as they found it easier to complete his homework with external help. "It's much better, like I said, we don't fight with him anymore to do homework; when he comes home, he can have his own time, he eats, and then he goes to play…" (P2, lines 22-24, p.1). Additionally, Participant 1's parents indicated during the second field visit that she did not attend the aftercare programme anymore as they felt that they could help her better. "No, we decided we're going to take her out the reason for that is... she's been put in after school, so her homework has to be done, and when she comes home, then homework just hasn't been done…" (P1, line 31-33, p. 1).

Attending extra classes further indicated access to extra academic assistance, and the need for extra academic assistance. "His reading is pretty much ahead because he's with Tina Cowley" (P4, lines 72-73, p. 3). This participant in Pretoria East had the opportunity to further his reading abilities as they had access to such facilities. Only one participant indicated that their child attended extra classes. However, one of the participants in Pretoria West indicated that their child needed extra help, "…he is someone who needs extra help…" (P2, line 53, p. 2), but the child did not attend any extra classes. The participants in Pretoria East resided in either a security estate or had personal security at their homes, with alarms and patrolling security companies. As previously discussed, the living conditions of the two areas were in complete contrast with one another. The communities in Pretoria East were in safe suburban areas of the city, with numerous schools, shops, doctors, and hospitals near their homes. In contrast, the suburb in Pretoria West did not have visible security forces, nor were they near any hospitals.

Social development in young children may also be attributed to their connection with their peers and their interaction with other children. Extra-curricular activities may be a way of increasing social awareness and appropriate peer relations. "Yes, chess, mountain cycling, wrestling, *bulletjie* rugby, mini-cricket. What else have you done? [addressing the child]. And Voortrekkers" (P4, lines 151-152, p. 6). Thus, Participants 3 and 4 were very active at school, and had the opportunity to develop their social skills. This contrasts with the data gathered on Participants 1 and 2 as the parents stated that their children did not participate in organised extra-curricular activities. Participant 3 was just as active as Participant 4, with the mother saying, "Yes, she does netball, and oh yes, mini-netball, mini-hockey, and she dances twice a week" (P3, lines 168-169, p. 5). Furthermore, Participant 2's father stated that the school did not provide an opportunity for the participant to play rugby, however, he

did participate in extra-curricular activities when there were any as the participant enjoyed being active. Participant 2 lived in a Wendy house during my second visit, as the mother reported that their previous home's rent was too expensive. Their living conditions had become significantly more difficult during the second visit, as they shared bathroom facilities with other families on the lot, did not have a kitchen and shared a room with both of their children. Participant 4's parents were preparing him to go on a school camping trip in the Western Cape, with numerous new equipment. Participant 3 had just arrived back from ballet and her siblings were busy participating in hockey at school. When analysing the visual data, it is clear that Participant 3 and Participant 4 live in more favourable conditions, which is attributed to their parents' income, allowing them to participate in different extra-curricular activities and attending extra classes.

4.5.3 Theme 3: Acknowledging the complexity of factors affecting academic performance

The findings of this study also amplified the complexity of factors that affect the academic performance of Grade 1 learners - beyond parental engagement. This study aimed to better understand the academic achievement of Grade 1 learners and the factors contributing to it. Thus, this theme focused on the various aspects that affected the participants' academic performance in this study. These aspects included the quality of assessments provided by the school, exposure to trauma, supplementary formal learning experiences, and emphasis on holistic learning. I was open to it possibly including aspects such as access to technology for learning, and basic eye tests. For the purpose of this study, the quality of assessments could be objectively established through the inclusion of the participants' report cards, as well as photographs of their schoolbooks. In addition, the interviews elicited responses regarding extra work at home, academic needs, academic achievement, and experiences with trauma. This study acknowledges that these (and other) factors may play a role in the ultimate academic achievement of a Grade 1 child in different socio-economic circumstances. The following table will describe the sub-themes and criteria for including and excluding certain information. The criteria for Theme 3 were included to state that the complexity of academic performance and that many factors contribute to academic success. For instance, academic achievement was part of the inclusion criteria, however, any mention of the participants struggling to make friends was excluded.

Table 4.5

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for Theme 3

THEME 3: ACKNOWLEDGING THE COMPLEXITY OF FACTORS AFFECTING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Academic needs	Any type of identified academic needs. Refers to academic struggles, e.g. reading, languages and so forth.	No academic needs.
Academic achievement	Marks on the report cards (English, mathematics, Afrikaans and Life Skills).	Reference to social behaviour.
Additional schoolwork	Any type of extra reading, maths, or academic activities at home.	Any type of homework or schoolwork was not regarded as extra work.
Unpredictability of stability	Unpredictable behaviour or actions that could impact the child's academic performance (removal from aftercare programme).	Reference to actions that are unrelated to academic performance.

Emotional, social, physical, and academic needs may play a part in a child's lack of academic achievement. Exposure to traumatic events during childhood increases the likelihood of scholastic and emotional challenges (Davis et al., 2018). Participant 2's parents reported that the participant's sibling died and, as a result, he found it difficult to cope. This may be an indication of emotional needs and challenges. Only two participants reported that their children had some academic needs. "…but only the technology like a laptop and stuff" (P1, line 93, p. 3). However, Participant 3's mother stated that the teacher was worried about a physical challenge regarding academic achievement, "The teacher just said at the end that we should take her for an eye test, so she's going to have a look" (P3, lines 87-88, p. 3).

Photograph 4.9

Photographs of Participant 3 (left) and Participant 1's (right) schoolbooks
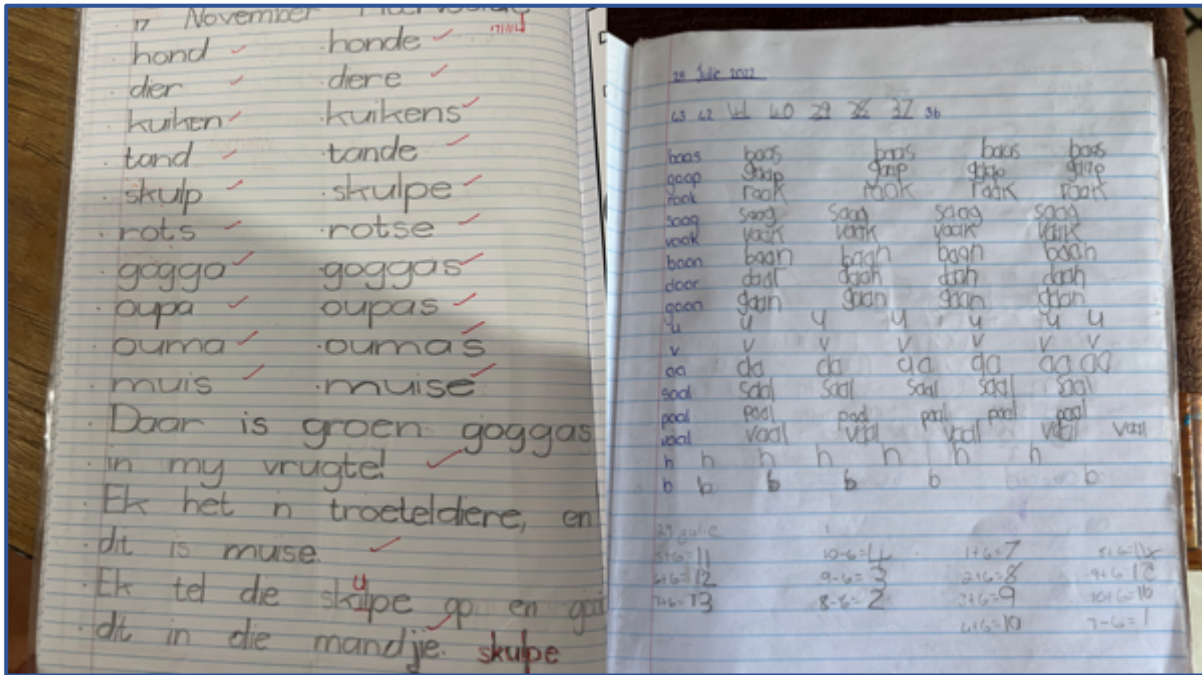
Additional schoolwork, such as reading or additional mathematics exercises, were included in this theme to establish whether additional work outside of school may contribute to academic achievement, as discussed in Chapter 2. Two sets of parents stated that their children completed some form of additional work in order to improve their skills in various subjects. "She's at the end of her sister's *Pracmaths* book; she did it a bit and then just a little bit of extra sight words that the teacher gave her to exercise" (P3, lines 50-53, p. 2). In addition, as previously stated, Participant 4 did extra reading outside of school responsibilities. Participant 1 said that they only did extra therapy work with her, and that the mother read the Bible to her at night. Participant 2's father stated that he did not enjoy extra work, and was struggling to do his schoolwork with him, "He is not one of the children…" (P2, line 42, p. 2). They were surprised that he passed Grade 1 as he did not complete much of his homework during the year.

In relation to unpredictable behaviour, which can cause disruptions in the child's stability, Participants 1 and 2's parents indicated in the second field visit that they made changes to their children's normal routine after school. Participant 1's parents indicated that they had removed her from the aftercare programme because her homework was not getting done. "No, we decided we're going to take her out the reason for that is... she's been put in after school, so her homework has to be done, and when she comes home then homework just

hasn't been done…" (P1, lines 31-33, p. 1). The removal from aftercare then led to the participant having academic challenges, as the mom stated that it was a lot of homework, and that she specifically struggled with reading and spelling. Participant 2's parents indicated that he was attending aftercare at the time of the second interview, and that his homework completion had improved. "It's much better like I said, we don't fight with him anymore to do homework; when he comes home, he can have his own time, he eats, and then he goes to play…" (P2, lines 22-24, p.1). Secondly, Participant 3's mother noted that she no longer worked at the school, and that it was an adjustment for her children. "I feel that... I feel that I can focus more on their little things on their little things yes definitely yes…" (P3, lines 13-14, p.1). This indicated that she had more time to spend with the participant. However, it was still a change in their normal routine.

Photograph 4.10

Example of Participant 2 (left) and Participant 3's books (right)
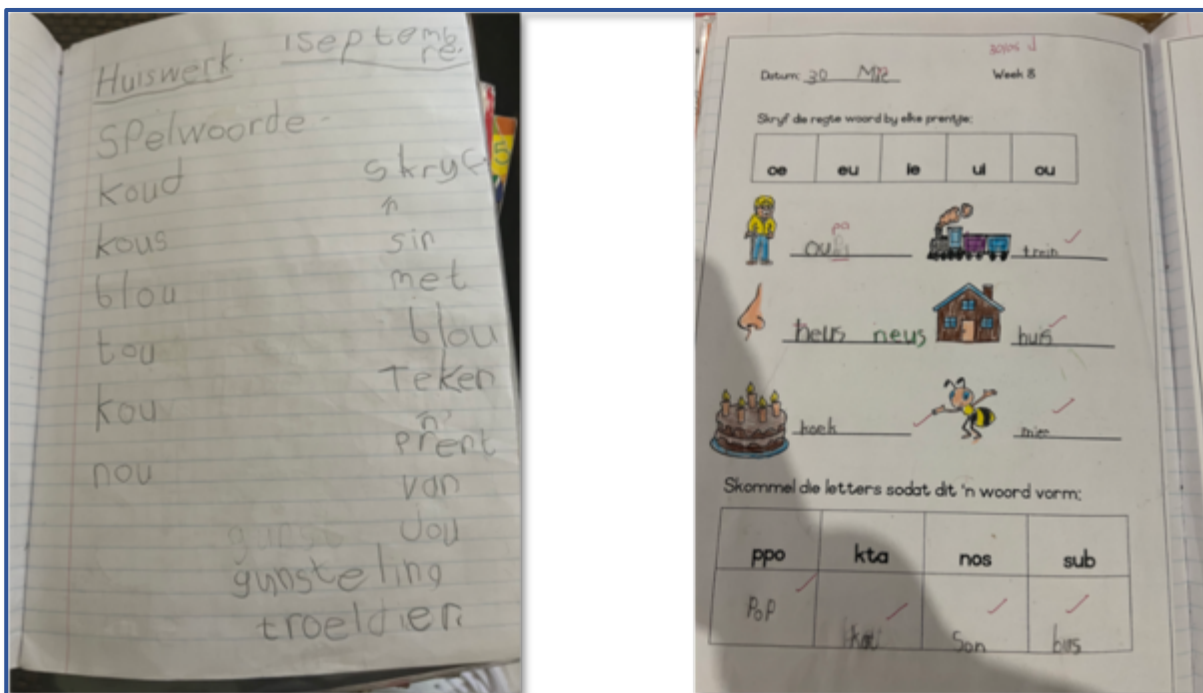
Photograph 4.11

Photograph of Participant 4 (left) and Participant 1's (right) report cards
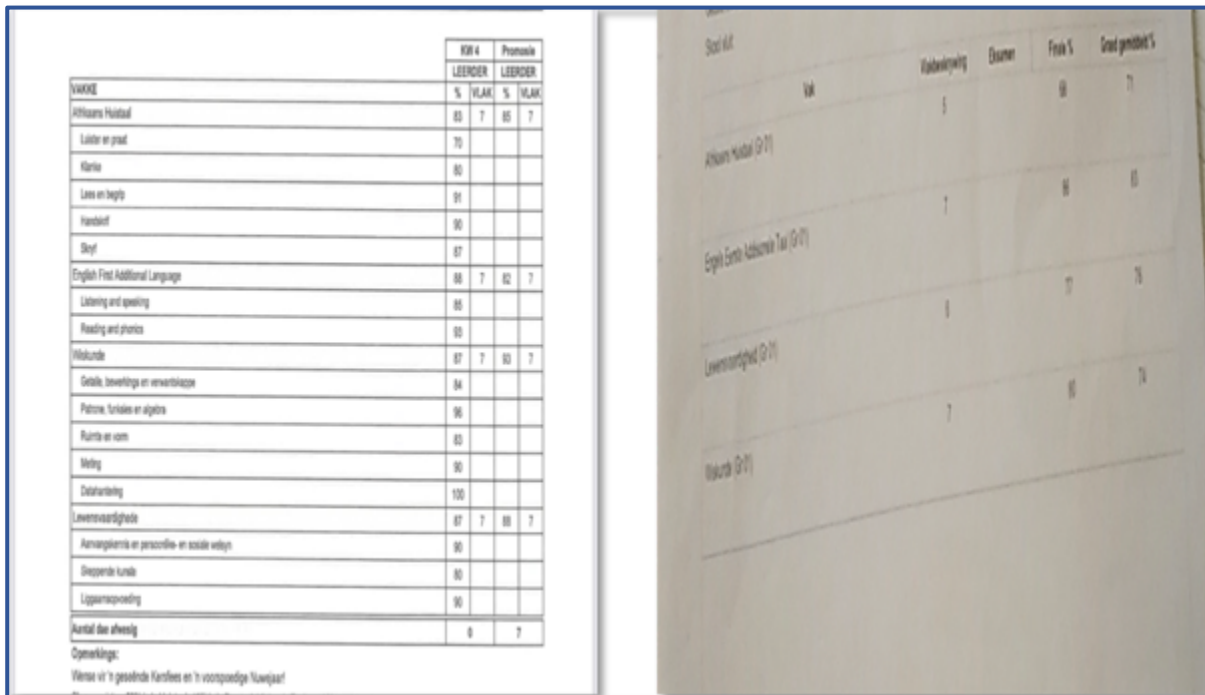
Photograph 4.12

Photograph of Participant 2 (left) and Participant 3's (right) report cards
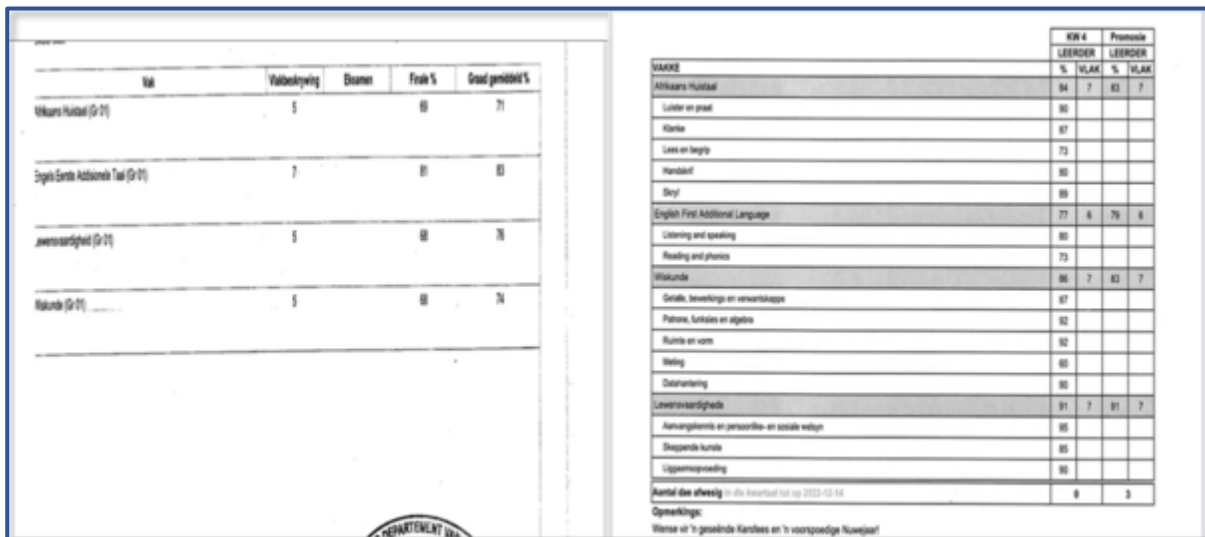
The photographs above provide an indication of the academic performance of the four participants. It is evident that the schoolbooks of the participants in Pretoria West were not marked by their teachers. In contrast, the schoolbooks from the participants in Pretoria East were neat, colourful, and marked by the teacher with encouraging notes. Furthermore, the

marks on the report cards were considered to be an objective indication of the participants' academic achievements. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, the acquisition of language is vital at such an age as it primarily takes place at home. Therefore, the Afrikaans' marks on their report cards show a visible difference between the participants. Afrikaans is the indicated home language for all four participants. Participant 4's Afrikaans mark for 2022 was 17% higher than that of Participant 1. At the same time, Participant 3's Afrikaans mark was 14% higher than Participant 2's mark. Participants' 1, 3 and 4 achieved success in mathematics, with all three achieving above 80% for the year. It is also important to note that Participants 3 and 4 achieved 10-23% more in Life Skills. Therefore, as discussed in Chapter 2, their social skill development and readiness for Grade 1 may have influenced their Life Skills mark as this subject focuses on the child's holistic development. Holistic development includes cognitive, emotional, physical, and social readiness (Western Cape Government, 2023).

Figure 4.2

Visual representation of the participants' end-of-year results
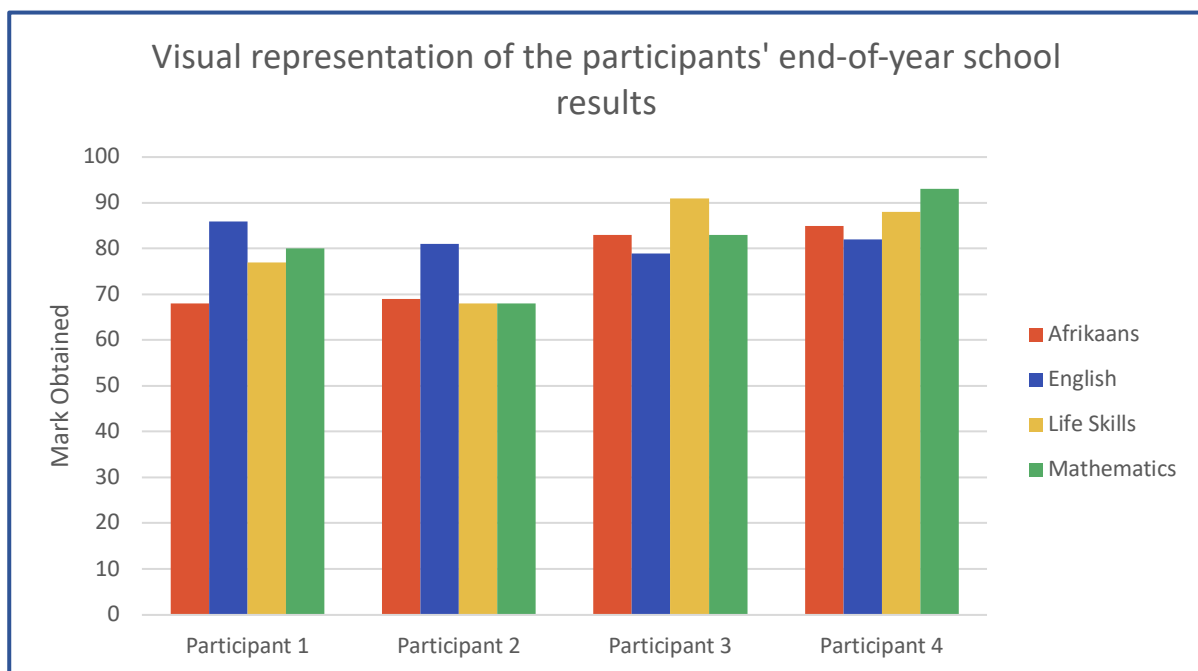
4.6   RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section will focus on integrating the above-mentioned identified themes with the existing literature on this topic in order to draw upon possible similarities, and outline differences if

applicable to this case study. In addition, this section will provide in-depth insights into the significant data that were gathered during this process within the different case studies.

Table 4.6

Research findings from the different case studies

CASE STUDIES	RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RELEVANT EVIDENCE
CASE STUDY 1	As previously mentioned, Participant 1 lived in Pretoria West with her biological parents and three siblings. She attended a primary school in the area. The following information was clear, considering the information from the interviews, observations, and visual data. It was noted that the parents did not spend a large amount of quality time with her during the week, and did not assist her with her daily homework tasks, apart from assignments. She attended an aftercare programme where they helped her to complete her homework. According to the parents, she had no academic needs besides access to technology, i.e. a laptop. When she returned home after school, she watched television. The parents also spent less time participating in activities with her over the weekend. In addition, it was also noted, with photographs of their house as evidence, that she did not have a sufficient area in which to do her homework, play outside, or have access to external assistance when it came to academic struggles. Her schoolbooks were also not marked, and the lack of access to extra-curricular activities at school and in the area was noted as this may affect her social development. Furthermore, the two subjects she performed the worst in were Afrikaans and Life skills (Photograph 4.7).
	The evidence suggests that this participant may have needed more assistance completing homework, as well as more engaged support from her parents. The parents spent limited quality time with her, and the socio-economic circumstances may have been detrimental to her academic achievement in terms of limited access to additional resources. She had no access to external academic support, extra-curricular activities, or consistent financial stability from her parents. Her lack of achievement in both Life Skills and Afrikaans may result from the home environment and lack of stimulation provided by the parents, as discussed in Chapter 2.
CASE STUDY 2	As previously mentioned, Participant 2 lived in Pretoria West with his biological parents and his sister in a flat on an open lot. He attended a primary school in the area. It was noted that his parents spent time with him every day, as the mother helped him with homework, and he returned home directly after school. However, it was also evident from the interviews that the participant did not want to do homework, which often led to him not doing it. The parents also did not spend quality time participating in activities together over the weekend. The participant did not have a sufficient area in which to do his homework, and the parents did not have the resources to pay for external assistance to help him with his academic struggles. They did not have a garden; however, there was a communal area for all of the children on the lot to play. They did admit during the interview that he needed help. The participant's schoolbooks were also not marked, and there were no comments from the teacher regarding his progress or areas on which he needed to focus. The lack of access to extra-curricular activities was also noted, as the school did not provide many options for him to be part of such a group. Lastly, the two subjects in which he performed the worst were Afrikaans and Life Skills (Photograph 4.8).

CASE STUDIES	RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RELEVANT EVIDENCE
	The evidence suggests that this participant needed additional support to complete his homework. The parents did not spend quality time with him, and the socio-economic circumstances may have been detrimental to his academic achievement. He had no access to external academic support, extra-curricular activities, or consistent financial stability from his parents. His lack of achievement in both Life Skills and Afrikaans may be a result of the home environment and lack of stimulation provided by the parents, as discussed in Chapter 2.
CASE STUDY 3	Participant 3 lived in Pretoria East with her biological parents and her two siblings. She attended a primary school in the area. It was noted that her parents did not spend time with her daily as she participated in numerous extra-curricular activities at school or with private organisations. However, the parents stated that they enjoyed spending time together over the weekends and taking the children on excursions, which they could enjoy as a family. The participant was able to do her homework independently, and the mother or older siblings assisted her if necessary. The participant completed extra reading and mathematics activities. She had her own room and a sufficient area in which to do her homework as she completed it in the dining room with her two siblings. They also had a big garden where she could play outside. The participant returned from school in the early evening with her mother and two siblings after they had completed their extra-curricular activities. Her schoolbooks were marked, with numerous comments from her teacher. The participant received good marks on her report card in all her subjects (Photograph 4.8).

The evidence suggests that the participant was more independent and could complete homework independently, which was mediated through a rich physical home environment. The parents were also more task-driven, focusing on academic tasks during the week and quality family interactions over the weekend. They had access to additional academic work. The parents also had access to good health resources as they were able to send her for an eye test per the teacher's request. She received good marks in all of her four subjects, indicating that she did not have academic challenges at this point. |
| **CASE STUDY 4** | Participant 4 lived in Pretoria East with his biological parents and sibling. He attended a primary school in the area. It was noted that the parents did not spend quality time with him on a daily basis as they focused on completing homework and participating in numerous extra-curricular activities. During the interview, the parents stated that they had one hour of quality family time when they had dinner together every night. However, the parents stated that they enjoyed spending time together as a family over the weekends and taking the children on excursions, which they could enjoy as a family. The participant was able to do his homework independently, and the mother or father would assist if necessary. The participant attended private extra reading classes at home, which the mother stated improved his reading abilities. He had his own room and a sufficient area in which to do his homework and play outside, and had access to resources to receive extra academic assistance. The mother fetched him from school and took him home after the extra-curricular activities. The participant received good marks on his report card (Photograph 4.7).

The evidence suggests that the participant was more independent and could complete homework independently, which was mediated through a rich physical home environment. The |

parents were also task-driven, focusing on academic tasks during the week and quality family interactions over the weekend. He had access to additional academic work, and the parents had access to good resources as they were able to send him for extra reading classes to improve his skills. He participated in numerous extra-curricular activities as he has access to these. He received good marks in all of his four subjects, indicating that he did not have academic challenges at this point.

4.6.1 Socio-economic background and its effects on academic achievement

The socio-economic background of families is frequently determined by the parents' education, occupation, income, and political power (Akhtar & Niazi, 2011). Moreover, socio-economic background and family income may directly impact a child's academic achievement. This was evident in this study as the participants from Pretoria East had access to external resources to improve their performance in certain academic domains. Furthermore, research indicates that lower socio-economic circumstances in the early developmental years may have lasting effects on learners as they tend to leave school earlier (Caro et al., 2009), and therefore lack the necessary skills mainly developed at home (Bourdieu, 1984, as cited by Hemmerechts et al., 2017). Participants 1 and 2's lower marks in Life Skills and Afrikaans may be indicative of a restriction of skills that are usually cemented and taught at home. These skills tests in Grade 1 often indicate the skills learnt at home. Family income, as well as socioeconomic background, have a direct correlation to the child's ability to succeed in school (Egalite, 2016). In addition, more affluent parents can ensure a range of resources, including extra-curricular activities and extra assistance (Egalite, 2016), if necessary. The findings of the current study reiterate the effect of socio-economic background on academic achievement as the participants from Pretoria West lacked the necessary resources, such as extra-curricular activities and extra classes, to receive a rich learning experience. Academic performance during the early stages of formal education significantly affects further educational opportunities (Li & Qui, 2018).

Furthermore, research shows that not only does the quality of the school affect the child's academic achievement, but also the abilities and participation of the parents (Egalite, 2016; Li & Qui, 2018; Thiele et al., 2016), which is influenced by their own academic background. Participants 3 and 4's parents were more involved in their children's overall academic experience, evidenced by the fact that they did homework with them every day and provided assistance when needed. Participants 3 and 4's parents had attended university and had

stable jobs, therefore impacting their own scholastic abilities. Socio-economic background has also been associated with lower-performing schools, and students from less affluent communities tend to perform worse than those from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds (Thiele et al., 2016). This was evident, as the schoolbooks of the participants from Pretoria West were not marked, and the teachers made no comments in their books. In addition, the parents also stated that the school did not provide many opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities, indicating a lack of resources. Socio-economic background may also significantly impact learners' reading literacy. Learners from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds are believed to have a better attitude towards reading, and a higher reading ability (Hemmerechts et al., 2017). Accordingly, the participants from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds performed better in languages, as per their report cards and in their workbooks, as the parents also reported reading to them extensively at home. This can be seen in their report cards as there was a significant difference between the language marks of the four participants, especially those for Afrikaans.

Kaeley (1990) and Chaudry and Wimer (2016) conclude that socio-economic background also impacts the mathematics literacy of learners and their ability to succeed in this subject. This, however, cannot be concluded in this study as only one participant did not achieve above 80% in mathematics. The most significant difference between the four participants seems to be their reading abilities and performance in both Life Skills and Afrikaans at school. As discussed in Chapter 2, the development of Executive Functioning (EF) is impacted by socio-economic background and may influence a child's achievement abilities (Blair, 2016; Hackman et al., 2015). In addition, families in more affluent socio-economic circumstances are also more likely to provide stimulating activities that can improve a child's basic life skills (Visser, 2019). This indicates that more stimulating activities occurred in the participants' home environments in Pretoria East. The participants in this case study performed better academically when they had access to different resources to improve academic performance.

4.6.2 Promoting parental involvement in academic achievement

Parental involvement is considered the active participation of parents in their children's emotional, social, and academic development (Castro et al., 2015). Parental involvement in a child's academic career has been shown to be instrumental in the ultimate success of the child's academic performance (Durišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Hemmerechts et al., 2017). Studies show that parents with a higher education background are more likely to take an

active role in their children's academic careers as they read to them, ensuring their language and speech development (Egalite, 2016; Williams & Sánchez, 2011). Accordingly, this could be seen in the interviews and the participants' marks on their report cards as the parents from Pretoria East, who had obtained degrees at higher education institutions, seemed to assist their children more with homework. Moreover, young learners are continuously developing while using their cognitive abilities, sensory equipment, and decision-making skills (Davis et al., 1984, as cited by Topping & Wolfendale, 2017). Thus, parents and teachers have a shared pedagogic responsibility to ensure optimum development for each child (Topping & Wolfendale, 2017).

Parents are often seen as the lever to promote academic achievement (Castro et al., 2015). Durišić and Bunijevac (2017) state that learning at home can be seen as parents' participation in numerous activities with their children, such as completing homework with the child, doing assignments with them, and taking them on excursions, as this is seen as actively engaging with the curriculum at school. Participants 3 and 4's parents indicated that the participants were able to complete their homework independently, but that they provided assistance if necessary. In addition, the parents of Participants 3 and 4 further indicated that they enjoyed going on excursions over the weekends, and that they spent quality time together as a family every weekend, if possible. Participant 3's mother also worked at her primary school, indicating that she was in contact with her teacher and engaged in her school activities. Participant 2's father was on the governing body, which may indicate that he was aware of the different academic challenges with which the school was faced. Learning does not only happen at school, but it is cemented at home. Learners who receive assistance at home in the form of extra reading, additional work, and access to tutor services tend to do better at school (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Izzo et al., 1999; Roksa & Potter, 2011). This was evident in the Afrikaans marks attained by both Participants 3 and 4, as they received additional reading classes.

In addition, research further shows that parental involvement in a lower socio-economic background is influenced by factors such as poverty, lack of access to additional learning resources, lack of financial resources (Williams & Sánchez, 2011), and low self-esteem (Davis, 1996, as cited by Durišić & Bunijevac 2017). Therefore, parental involvement tends to be lower in such circumstances. Parents in families from lower socio-economic backgrounds often have a higher probability of having negative experiences with school, resulting in a negative attitude. Moreover, such experiences and attitudes may make them

feel inadequate and unprepared to intervene in their child's academic performance (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008). Therefore, parents in improved socio-economic circumstances who possess higher education are more likely to actively engage in their child's curriculum and assist them with their schoolwork as they feel more confident in their abilities(Egalite, 2016). Accordingly, this can be seen in the data collected in this study as the parents from Pretoria East stated that they focused on reading at home, and one of the participants received extra reading assistance from a tutoring centre. These participants in Pretoria East also reported additional work for mathematics and extra sight words. Both of the parents in Pretoria West indicated that their children did homework at the aftercare centre and that they watched TV when they returned home. However, one of the mothers said that she helped the participant with speeches and school assignments. The parents of the other participant from Pretoria West stated that they struggled to complete the homework with their child and frequently left it unfinished. Furthermore, parental involvement can also be attributed to the communication between the parents and the teacher, as well as the frequency of contact between them (Izzo et al., 1999; Williams & Sánchez, 2011).

Learners whose parents are actively involved in activities, school functions, and parent-teacher meetings are more likely to succeed (Williams & Sánchez, 2011) because this allows parents to understand the school's academic climate. All four of the participants' parents stated that they were in communication with their child's teacher if there was a problem, and two of the four were actively involved as they formed part of the governing body or personnel of the school. A higher socio-economic background is often associated with parents fostering independence, while parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds focus on fostering obedience (Park & Lau, 2016). Parenting styles could, however, not be established through the interviews and were not the focus of the current study. However, independence regarding completing homework was discussed as the parents from Pretoria East noted that their children mainly completed their homework independently, and they provided help when needed.

In conclusion, the parents from Pretoria East seemed more involved with their children's academic progress as they did homework and assignments with them, actively spent quality time together over the weekends, and participated in school activities. The Pretoria West participants received lower marks in Afrikaans and Life Skills, which could indicate less stimulation at home, which is necessary for early development (Visser, 2019). The participants from Pretoria East also had access to resources to improve their abilities and

overcome academic, emotional, or social challenges. Participants 3 and 4 participated in numerous extra-curricular activities, and had the opportunity to develop many skills necessary to succeed in society, as discussed in Chapter 2. The learners' independence was also clear as the participants from Pretoria East could do their homework independently. Parents are vital in continuously developing academic skills, and should actively be involved in doing homework together with their child to ensure academic success (Gobena, 2018). The parents from Pretoria East were task driven, ensuring a stimulating learning environment for their children at home through providing their children access to their own desks, garden, and bedrooms.

4.6.3 Quality social interaction and its effects on social development

A conductive environment and early stimulation for learners is critical in order to ensure mature behaviour (Holden, 1997). Parents have a long-lasting effect on learners' social development as their first social interaction is within the familial context. In addition, research shows that parental effects have important implications for learners' social adjustment (Paley et al., 2000), and that positive maternal interaction is highly related to prosocial behaviour (Brody & Shaffer, 1982, as cited by Paley et al., 2000). Learners are vulnerable to their experiences with other individuals, and it is, therefore, necessary that these interactions remain positive in order to foster prosocial and positive behaviour at a young age. Furthermore, a sense of social morality and knowledge is also developed through interaction with parents, teachers, and siblings (Smetana, 1999). Thus, quality and positive interaction with parents and family may increase prosocial behaviour, affecting the learner's school interaction. Social interaction is critical to the overall development of a happy and healthy child. The findings of the current study reiterate the importance of positive peer and parent relationships. Participant 1's parents indicated that she often struggled to make friends because she did not trust people. Participant 2's parents indicated that he was extremely attached to them. Participants 3 and 4's parents indicated that they enjoyed participating in extra-curricular activities and spending quality time with their families.

In terms of social development in conventional theories, it is noted that parents and other adults constitute a particular link between the learner and society (Youniss, 1982). Thus, parents play a vital role in the social development of children as their parental efforts allow their children to socialise and develop adaptive social behaviour in the comfort of their own homes (Youniss, 1982). These behaviours allow learners to socialise with their peer group and exhibit acceptable behaviour. In the context of early childhood, learners develop internal

representations of working models, which guide their future social behaviour and appraisal in interpersonal transactions (Paley et al., 2000). In addition, emotional regulation may be highly impacted by familial context and parental influences, which may impact learners' social behaviour in society. Morris et al. (2007) state that family context affects the development of emotional regulation in three ways: *observation*, *specific parenting practices and behaviours,* and *the family's emotional climate*. These three factors are interconnected and affect learners differently. Firstly, learners learn through observation; therefore, observing their parents' emotional displays and interactions with one another may influence their perception of adaptive behaviour as children often view their parents as internal models. Thus, if such behaviour is maladaptive or against societal norms, learners may view those behaviours as normal and emulate them. Secondly, specific parenting practices are related to their attachment and parenting style.

Lastly, the family's emotional climate affects learners' social development skills due to the fact that the climate reflects the amount of negative and positive emotions displayed towards other family members. The findings of this study reiterate the importance of home environment stability. As mentioned above, Participant 1's parents indicated that she often struggled to make friends as she did not trust people. Participant 2's parents indicated that he was extremely attached to them. Due to the fact that Participant 2 experienced his sibling's death, this may indicate a reason for his strong attachment to his parents as he felt insecure. Both participants 1 and 2 developed in an environment with extreme poverty, which may also influence their social development as they were continuously surrounded by external stress that could impact them (Blair, 2016; Chaudry & Wimer, 2016).

Children often model their parents and family's behaviour; therefore, the behaviour must be socially acceptable, allowing the child to contribute to society. However, it is not only the observation of appropriate behaviour that is essential, but also the amount of time parents spend with their children. Learners need continuous care to promote their positive emotional health and wellbeing. As such, parents are vital sources of support to ensure that children can manage behaviour and emotions (Breiner et al., 2016). Quality time spent with children increases their ability to form an attachment to their parents, helps them to establish secure social relationships, and enables them to foster complex social and human capital (Roeters & van Houdt, 2019). In addition, Coleman (1988, as cited by Cooksey & Fondell, 1996) argues that the social capital within the family structure significantly affects cognitive development as their relationship allows them access to human capital. Thus, their

interaction with parents allows children to develop appropriate social behaviour, but it also impacts their wellbeing and ability to build future human connections. The findings of this study indicate that Participants 3 and 4 had a strong and secure attachment to their families as they frequently participated in quality family interaction and familial support. Participant 1 did not spend frequent time with her parents during the week, and did not engage in activities with them over the weekend, apart from going to work with her father on a Sunday. Participant 2 felt attached to his parents as they completed homework with him and spent every day after school with him.

Grade 1 learners are reliant on their parents as social guides to help them learn appropriate behaviour. This teaches them to display behaviour that would benefit themselves and the rest of society. Three of the participants' parents did not comment specifically on their social behaviour in the classroom or among their peers. However, Participant 1's parents mentioned that she struggled to make friends as she did not trust easily. Time spent with children, recreational or educational, may enable children to develop effective social relationships. Sociologists have emphasised the importance of the childhood experience as learners constantly construct their own lives (McAuley et al., 2012). However, their relationships with others influence it as they are seen as actively shaping their lives and valuing activities for the present and the future (McAuley et al., 2012). Parents spending quality time with their children not only helps them shape their reality, but also helps them to construct meaning for themselves and build healthy self-esteem. This enables them to connect with their peers, as well as community members. Parents have a vital role in ensuring appropriate learnt social behaviour to help their children take the next step in their lives, and possibly contribute to the workforce one day. The findings of this study indicate that Participants 3 and 4 had a strong and secure attachment to their families. They had the opportunity to engage in frequent familial activities and extra-curricular activities at school, where they could engage with their peers. Participants 3 and 4 did not have any academic challenges in any of their subjects, and they were able to complete homework independently, which may indicate appropriate levels of parental involvement. Participant 1's difficulties sustaining friendships may indicate a lack of social adjustment, a skill which can be developed through positive interaction within the familial context.

4.7 SYSTEMIC REVIEW AFTER 2020

An additional literature review was completed as a substantiative part of this study. The review entails 43 peer-reviewed articles that focus on socio-economic background, parental involvement and the academic performance of children. The findings can be found in Appendix F.

Framing the review

The following research questions guided the review:

1. Does socio-economic background have an effect on academic performance?
2. Does parental involvement in a child's life make a difference in their academic performance at school?

Search strategy

Peer-reviewed articles were identified from databases indexing leading educational journals- Education Research Complete (EBSCOhost), PsychINFO, ERIC, Family & Society Studies Worldwide, Humanities Source, MasterFILE Premier; and Google Scholar. The following search items were used to locate articles with empirical evidence of socio-economic background, academic performance and parental involvement:

(poverty or low-income or low socioeconomic or disadvantaged) AND (academic performance or academic achievement or academic success) AND (Parental involvement) AND (Africa)

The following were the inclusion and exclusion criteria:

1. Review period: From January 2020 to November 2023.
2. Language: Only articles published in English were included.
3. Type of article: In order to maintain rigour in the findings, only peer-reviewed articles were included.
4. The articles focus: Only articles with an adequate description of socio-economic background and the possible effects it has on academic performance. Furthermore, articles that focused on the impact of parental involvement on academic performance were also included.

4.8 INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS WITH THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As discussed in Chapter 2, this study used Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory when analysing the case studies. This was appropriate as it focuses on exploring human development, specifically child development, that takes place in their environment and how this affects their psychological and social growth (Crawford, 2020). This theory further investigates how different systems in a person's life influence their development, directly or indirectly (Crawford, 2020), in ever-evolving interconnected systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This study sought to understand the different systems that affect a child's academic achievement, specifically focusing on parental involvement against the backdrop of varying socio-economic circumstances. In addition to utilising Bronfenbrenner's Systems Theory, the concept of structural poverty (Calnitsky, 2018) was used to understand the effects of poverty in Pretoria West and how it may potentially influence Participants 1 and 2's academic performance.

Firstly, the Ecological Systems Theory comprises five systems: *microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem* and *chronosystem* (Crawford, 2020; Donald et al., 2014). Each system influences a child in different ways as the systems are interconnected and may ultimately affect a Grade 1's academic performance. Firstly, the *microsystem* refers to the participants' relationship and influence of their immediate family, school, home, and siblings, and how that may possibly affect academic performance. Parental involvement, a well-resourced home, spending time with the immediate family, and the support received from the school was evident in the findings of this study. Participants 1 and 2's parents were less involved in their academic performance as they completed homework at the aftercare programme or did not complete it at all if they did not want to. In contrast, Participants 3 and 4's parents indicated that they could complete homework independently, and were only provided assistance if necessary. Participants 1 and 2 did not have access to well-resourced homes because they did not have sufficient areas in which to do their homework, and Participant 2 shared a bedroom with his parents. In contrast, Participants 3 and 4 had their own bedrooms, access to technology, and a sufficient area in which to do their homework.

The *mesosystem* refers to the interaction of the different layers, for example, the interaction between the parents and the school (Louw & Louw, 2014). A learner's academic progress does not only take place in the classroom, but also at home. Participants 3 and 4's schoolwork indicated that the teacher was attentive to their strengths and weaknesses, and they attended a school that provided them with numerous opportunities to participate in

various extra-curricular activities. Participants 1 and 2 did not participate in any extra-curricular activities as their school did not allow them to do so. Participant 3 and 4 resided in a security estate and in a home with various security protective factors. In contrast, Participants 1 and 2 resided in a flat and small house, respectively, shared with numerous other residents, without any security. Therefore, the effects that these systems may have on each other is that the participants experience varying levels of support for their academic performance within the mesosystem of their respective lives.

The *exosystem* investigates how a learner is influenced by the social contexts in which they move and develop (Louw & Louw, 2014). Thus, the participants' schools, their parents' workplaces, and having access to community services may have had an impact on their academic performance. Participants 1 and 2's school did not provide opportunities to develop their skills in different areas since they had limited opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities. Participants 3 and 4's parents had stable jobs, which may have had an impact on the learners being more achievement focused and future-orientated. All four pairs of parents indicated that they had an open relationship with their children's teacher. Therefore, within the exosystem, it seems that the academic performance of the participants in this study was mediated by access to opportunities, e.g. extra-curricular activities.

The *macrosystem* includes social and economic structures, values, and beliefs that impact a child's microsystem (Donald et al., 2014). Therefore, parents' value placed on school or academic achievement may influence children's desire to do well in school. The lack of access to resources and external assistance for Participants 1 and 2 may have potentially affected their academic performance as the economic landscape within South Africa did not enable them to access these services.

Lastly, the *chronosystem* refers to continuous changes, physiologically and socially, that occur over time and never end (Donald et al., 2014). This refers to all four participants entering formal school for the first time, which is a substantive social adjustment. They may have reacted differently to the changes, therefore possibly impacting their ability for academic performance. The data were collected for the current study over a period of 6-8 months. Although this presents a fairly short period of time in terms of the chronosystem, the findings of this study suggest that engaged parental involvement and access to additional learning experiences and factors, such as extra-curricular activities, may play a critical role in learners' academic achievement. Participant 2's mother stated that he started

with rugby that year, which helped him with his socialisation skills and his ability to complete homework after school as he was focused on completing the task after rugby. Participant 2 also started attending the aftercare programme at school, which increased his academic performance. Alternatively, Participant 1 stopped attending aftercare, where after the mother indicated severe academic challenges as the mother struggled to help her daughter complete her homework. She specifically mentioned challenges in both Afrikaans and English in terms of reading and spelling.

During this study, each system allowed me to take various aspects into consideration when analysing the academic performance of a Grade 1 learner as mediated by parental involvement within various socio-economic backgrounds. As with other studies that utilise Bronfenbrenner's theory, from the findings presented above, it is evident that the different systems impacted each other. This may ultimately affect the academic performance of the different participants. Parental involvement, access to resources, and the quality of the school environment play an integral role in the academic performance of each child. Thus, the implications of the *microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem* and *chronosystem* on individual development are evident in the findings above. The participants who received more stimulation at home, whose parents were more involved, who developed in a supportive and safe environment, and whose parents were more involved in aspects related to their academic performance achieved higher marks at the end of Grade 1. However, this study also recognises that the academic performance of all four participants in the current study was above 70% (See Table 3.2). It should be noted that this study is exploratory and descriptive rather than comparative. It thus acknowledges that the variables that affect the yearly averages on the report cards of the four participants are significant. This may include the quality of teaching, assessments, feedback loops, in-class support, interpretation of marks, and other factors that impact final percentage scores.

This study also acknowledges that structural poverty affected Participants 1 and 2's abilities to access resources, such as well-resourced homes and extra materials to progress their academic success and access to quality education. Neither Participant 1 nor Participant 2's parents were able to provide their children with extra academic assistance, with their own bedroom, with a sufficient area to do their homework, or with opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities due to the school's lack of opportunities to do so. Participants 1 and 2 not only faced normal developmental challenges but also faced the added challenge of poverty, such as financial constraints which prohibited them from accessing certain

resources that are vital to their success. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and the notion of structural poverty within the South African context allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of the possible effects that these systems may have on the academic performance of the participants in this specific study.

4.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 presented the study's findings, and highlighted the golden thread of themes throughout the data set. These findings were supported through providing quotes from the participants' interviews, as well as including photographs of their homes and evidence of the participants' schoolwork. In addition, the findings were discussed by integrating them with existing literature, as well as integrating it with the theoretical framework.

In the last chapter, an overview of the study will be presented while also addressing possible limitations and the potential value of this study. Moreover, the primary and secondary research questions that guided this study will be discussed. Lastly, suggestions regarding future research into this phenomenon will be provided.

CHAPTER 5: ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, I presented the results of the study using the Constant Comparative Method (CCM). I discussed the findings, as well as integrating these with the existing literature on this phenomenon. Lastly, I gave an in-depth description of the findings concerning the theoretical framework.

Chapter 5 will first present an overview of the previous chapters, and discuss the research questions that guided this study. Lastly, a reflection on this study's possible contributions and limitations will be given, along with recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

5.2   OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

In **Chapter 1**, an overview of the study and rationale was given. The research questions were presented, along with the working assumptions that guided this study. A description of underlying concepts was also given: socio-economic background, academic performance, social development, parental involvement, and Grade 1 learners. I briefly discussed the literature review, along with the theoretical framework that was relevant to this study. Lastly, brief descriptions of the paradigmatic perspective, research methodology, and data collection strategies were given.

Chapter 2 explored the existing literature on the importance of parental involvement and the effects of socio-economic background on the academic performance of Grade 1 learners. The literature gave various critical viewpoints on the factors that impact a child's academic performance and overall development. Moreover, I gave an in-depth explanation of the theoretical framework of this study. For this study, I integrated Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Model (1979) and the concept of structural poverty (Brady, 2019; Du Toit, 2005; Royce, 2022, p. 7) to thoroughly understand the different factors related to a child's academic performance.

Chapter 3 gave an in-depth description of the research methodology used in this study. After discussing the relevance of the interpretivist paradigm, I further elaborated on utilising a

case study approach. The data collection and documentation strategies were also discussed, namely, interviews, observations, and photographs. The process of the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) (Glaser, 1965) was discussed, along with the methods utilised to interpret the findings. Lastly, a thorough discussion of the quality criteria was given to ensure the study's credibility. The ethical guidelines that I adhered to were also discussed.

The research results that emerged from the data analysis were discussed in **Chapter 4.** The themes contributing to a learner's academic performance were explored. The first theme explored the quality and quantity of time parents spend with their children and how it affects a learner's academic performance. The second theme focused on access to additional learning experiences, which could impact academic performance. Lastly, the third theme acknowledged the complexity of factors affecting academic performance. The study's findings concerning the existing literature, research, and the theoretical framework were discussed.

5.3   ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The following section will address the research questions that guided this study. The secondary research questions will be addressed first, whereafter a thorough discussion on the primary research question will conclude this section.

5.3.1 Secondary research question 1: How are socio-economic backgrounds related to the academic performance of Grade 1 learners?

The participants in this study were impacted by their socio-economic backgrounds on various fronts. As discussed in Chapter 4, the participants' socio-economic backgrounds mainly influenced their access to other learning experiences. The parental income disparity evident in this study impacted access to additional resources, such as school clothing, extra classes, parental involvement, and overall academic performance within their four subjects at school. These factors contributed to the overall academic performance of these Grade 1 learners, as accessibility to resources seemed to be associated with the participants' socio-economic background.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the parental income disparity was evident as the parents from Pretoria East earned significantly more than those from Pretoria West, impacting their ability to access different resources. These resources, such as the extra reading classes prevalent among the participants from Pretoria East, were directly related to academic performance.

The overall reading and language ability of the Pretoria East participants was higher than those from Pretoria West. Additionally, the variance in the ways in which parental involvement manifested in the participants' academic performance was evident throughout the study. For instance, the parents in Pretoria West were able to spend quality time with their children during the week, especially the mothers, as they did not have full-time jobs. Yet, activities such as homework supervision were limited in these cases. Parental engagement in the Pretoria East case studies entailed substantive homework supervision during the week. They also provided their children with the opportunity to participate in numerous extracurricular activities. Quality time tended to present more over weekends for these participants.

However, it should be noted that numerous factors influence academic performance. As discussed in Chapter 4, relating academic performance only to socio-economic backgrounds is challenging. The participants in the current study received almost identical marks, with few significant differences between the four. However, the most remarkable differences were found in their Life Skills and Afrikaans marks. This may be influenced by the socio-economic background of the participants, as discussed in Chapter 4. Socio-economic background encompasses the ability to provide extra classes, parental supervision, and the extracurricular activities necessary for a child's optimal development.

5.3.2 Secondary research question 2: How does parental involvement present for Grade 1 learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds?

The findings of this study suggest that parental involvement was deemed critical for the overall development of Grade 1 learners. The difference between quality and quantity of time was vital in this study as the amount of time spent with the participants varied. As mentioned, the findings suggest that the parents from Pretoria West spent more time with their children during the week, thus resulting in a great quantity of time. The participants' mothers fetched them from school and were present at home. These patterns were synonymous with the parent-child interaction for Participants 1 and 2. However, it was clear that the amount of time spent together did not necessarily relate to activities being done together, nor did it relate to increased academic performance. Participants 1 and 2's parents stated that their children often spent most of the weekdays and weekends with them, but they usually watched television or the children played at home.

The parents from Pretoria East suggested that they did not spend much time with their children during the week. Instead, they focused on their quality time together and being intentional with their activities. Participants 3 and 4 participated in numerous extracurricular activities, and the parents worked part-time to full-time, so they could not spend much time with them after school. The parents also noted that the children were able to do their homework by themselves and therefore did not need continuous parental supervision when completing their homework. The parents from Pretoria East focused on quality family time. They participated in activities together over the weekend, limited the use of technology, and engaged in meaningful time spent together. However, upon the second field visit, Participant 3's mother noted that she wanted to spend more time with the children during the week and, therefore, only worked part-time to do so. Parental involvement looked different for the participants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Quantity versus quality of time was established through this study, but all four participants seemed attached to their parents. Thus, we can assume that the children were comfortable with their parents' positions.

5.3.3 Secondary research question 3: How does academic performance present for Grade 1 learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds?

The academic performance for Grade 1 learners presented the same across the four subjects. The four participants had different strengths and weaknesses regarding their academic performance. However, it was noted that Participants 3 and 4's marks were practically the same. The marks between the four participants did not indicate significant differences, with all four receiving good marks. They were all, therefore, able to progress to Grade 2. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, there were significant differences in their Life Skills and Afrikaans marks. It was also noted that the Pretoria East participants had fewer reading challenges. Participant 4's mother also indicated that he attended extra reading classes, which improved his reading as compared to other children. In contrast, the parents from Pretoria West indicated that their lives took place in an area where their children faced great difficulties.

Additionally, it was also noted that the participants from Pretoria East were able to complete homework independently, and the parents only assisted when they reviewed their homework at the end of the day. The participants from Pretoria West did, however, need additional assistance to complete their homework. During the first field visit, Participant 1 was in an aftercare programme where she received continuous assistance with her academic needs. However, upon the second field visit, the mother noted that the participant had left the

aftercare programme, with the mother helping her with her homework instead. Participant 2's mother indicated that he did not like homework and would seldom do homework by himself, unless forced. However, upon the second field visit, the mother noted that he was attending an aftercare programme and that his academic performance had improved.

5.3.4 The primary research question guiding the study

The current study was guided by the primary research question: *How is socio-economic background mediated through parental involvement in the academic performance of Grade 1 learners?* Socio-economic background and parental involvement have different impacts on the academic performance of Grade 1 learners, with both playing an integral role in overall academic success. The literature and the current study's findings suggest that parental involvement and socio-economic background influence the academic performance of Grade 1 children. Socio-economic background influences access to additional resources, such as extra classes, school clothing, and extra-curricular activities. These factors may play a role in the overall development of a Grade 1 learner's academic performance. Thus, socio-economic background influences the family's access to various resources that can be utilised to maximise overall development.

Moreover, current literature, and the study's findings, indicate that parental involvement, specifically quality time spent with children, plays a role in their academic performance. Playing an active role in a learner's development at the start of their formal education is integral to their academic success. As discussed in Chapter 4, the community in which a learner develops, which is influenced by their socio-economic background, also impacts their overall development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In conclusion, critical insights were gained on the impact of diverse socio-economic backgrounds and how these are mediated through parental involvement. A Grade 1 learner's academic performance is influenced by various factors that are ultimately related to socio-economic background and parental involvement.

5.4   POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Considering that the study was conducted with a small number of participants, the study's findings cannot be generalised. However, since this study followed the interpretivist approach, this was not the aim of the study. Rather, the aim was to gain in-depth knowledge of the participants at hand in order to generate insights at the personal level. It focused on the four participants' families and their experiences, which contributed to the academic

performance of the participants. The provision of detailed descriptions of the participants' individual experiences may allow for the transferability of findings that are similar to this setting.

Additionally, it should be noted that the information gained through interviews may not reflect their circumstances as it is their subjective experience. Information regarding time spent with the participants was specifically of concern as additional data, such as photographs or report cards, cannot support it.

Furthermore, some practical challenges were present in the implementation of the study. The sampling processes in the two contexts differed. I had to work with two NGOs to find participants from Pretoria West. Contacting the participants for interviews was a challenge as I had to contact the social workers and employees of the NGOs to arrange meetings. I did not have the contact numbers of the participants, and therefore, arranging meetings that suited all parties took a lot of work. For the participants in Pretoria East, I could leverage personal relationships, which eased the scheduling of appointments and access to contact details.

The study did not collect psychometric data on the cognitive abilities, emotional skills, and behaviour of the participants. Psychometric data could potentially have informed the findings of the study in terms of parent-child relationships, intellectual abilities, and academic performance.

A further limitation is the caution with which the interactions between the various phenomena under study were explained. Parental engagement, academic performance, and socio-economic backgrounds are complex phenomena, and the variables that impact on the dynamics at play are multiple. As a researcher, I took care to interpret the findings with tentativeness due to the small sample, the contextual specificity, and the fact that the data collection was limited to interviews, observations, and visual data. However, this caution may mean that some of the insights gained may have been less emphasised.

The language in which the data were collected can also be seen as a limitation as all of the participants were Afrikaans and attended an Afrikaans school. Therefore, the findings can only be transferred to findings where the participants are also Afrikaans. However, as previously mentioned, this study's aim was not to generalise the findings, but rather to gain in-depth knowledge of the current results of the participants at hand.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study will be used to guide recommendations that can be implemented in future practice, training, and research.

5.5.1 Recommendations for future practice and training

The current study highlights the need for further research in South Africa regarding the impact of parental involvement and stimulation at home to contribute to a learner's academic development. In the field of educational psychology, it could be beneficial for educational psychologists to take a facilitative role to assist parents and community members in understanding their importance in the development of learners. An educational psychologist could therefore act as a soundboard for parents, teachers, and community members to help them prioritise the areas where a learner needs additional support so as to maximise their potential.

Parental education on optimising quality and quantity time with their children during these specific school years may be beneficial. The intricacies of effective homework supervision in all socio-economic contexts may also be included in such parental education programmes. Parental education may take the form of interactive workshops, print material, online resources, and interventions by educational psychologists.

Extending opportunities for access to extracurricular activities for learners in all socio-economic contexts could also be explored. Mobilising resources and community expertise in contexts of lower socioeconomic circumstances has the potential to be beneficial in supporting the academic performance of young learners.

Furthermore, based on the study's findings, learners could benefit from working with NGOs to establish collaborative relationships with their parents and teachers. Furthermore, there could be the establishing of support structures that could guide parents in identifying the areas in which learners need help, and providing them with additional resources, such as extra classes. As stated, equipping parents with the knowledge of exercises they can do at home to improve the overall development of the children may contribute to their academic performance.

5.5.2 Recommendations for future research

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations for future research are made:

- ❖ A future study to establish the effects of socio-economic background on the overall development of learners in the South African context.

- ❖ A study of the parents' perception of their role in a child's academic development.

- ❖ A study of the possible role of extra-curricular activities in the academic performance of Grade 1 learners.

- ❖ A study to measure the effects of the community's role in learners' academic performance in the South African context.

5.6   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this study was to investigate the interactions between socio-economic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners as mediated by parental involvement. In this study, I investigated participants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, as well as the role of parents in the academic performance of Grade 1 learners. Additionally, the significance of this study within the broader academic and practical context may allow for further research. It is evident, as discussed above, that it is necessary to implement support programmes in various communities that could contribute to the academic performance of children. Within the broader academic context, it is clear that further research is needed on the role of communities and parental involvement in the development of children in the South African context.

The study's findings indicated that various factors related to socio-economic background contribute to academic performance. Factors such as additional support and access to resources may contribute to a child's academic performance. In conclusion, this study posits that both socio-economic background and parental involvement may play a role in the overall academic performance of Grade 1 children.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORMS

<u>Consent for participating in a Research Project of the University of Pretoria</u>

<u>Project title:</u> The interaction between socioeconomic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 children as mediated by parental involvement

We would like to invite you _____to participate in a research study. In order to decide whether or not you want to participate in this study, it is important to know what the study is about. Once you understand the content of the study and if you decide thereafter that you agree to partake in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form.

Description of the research project

This study aims to explore and describe the interactions between socioeconomic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 children as mediated by parental involvement. This study is exploratory and descriptive and will attempt to describe the interactions between socioeconomic factors and academic performance in Grade 1 children as mediated by parental involvement by using the case study approach with four different Grade 1 children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. In order to be part of this study, your child would need to be observed for one day at your home, where after we will require one interview from you as well. This child would need to be observed in his/her natural context where they will be observed for an hour while they play and communicate with you as parent/caregiver and function in your home. We would like to observe them in their social environment and how they spend their time outside of school. We would also require taking photos of your child's workbooks, assessments and report cards as evidence of academic

performance. This study is concerning your child's academic performance and therefore, there are no right or wrong answers.

Possible risks and inconveniences associated with the research project

The interviews or observation may evoke emotional reactions from you as caregiver/parent and if so, time will be given to calm down in order for the interview to proceed or the interview can be stopped. However, any time you feel uncomfortable during the interview, you are permitted to leave the study immediately. Your identity would stay be kept anonymous and any relevant information would also be kept safe at the University of Pretoria.

Confidentiality

Any and all of the information collected during this study will be strictly confidential and the only people that will have access to the information would be the research team. However, the only exception would occur once the safety of the child is in question in which we are obligated to share the information with the appropriate agencies and departments. Please note that none of the questions are designed in such a way that aims to collect your personal information from anybody else. All of the information provided will be kept safely at the University of Pretoria.

Time and location

The interview will be arranged at a time and place of your convenience and will take approximately 30-60 minutes of your time. The interview will be audiotaped.

Benefits

There will be no financial incentives for your participation.

What are the rights of the participant of the study?

This participation of this study is purely voluntary and you as parent may feel free to leave the study whenever you feel uncomfortable, without any questions asked.

Has the study received ethical approval?

This study has been approved by the _____ committee of the University of Pretoria.

Possible questions regarding the project

We will be available via e-mail of our cell phone if there are any questions or concerns regarding the research project. Please feel free to contact me on 072 611 1293 or send an e-mail to suzannej36@gmail.com

Informed consent

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, conduct and risks associated with the research project. Furthermore, I have read the above information and confirm that that I understand the above mentioned information. I am further aware that the results will be processed anonymously. I have had enough time to as questions and raise any grievances that I may have. Lastly, I am aware that I may, without any consequences, withdraw from participating in this study. In conclusion, I give my consent in participating in this research project.

Name: _____   Date: _____

Signature: _____

I, _____ herewith confirm that the above person has been informed fully about the nature, conduct and risks of the study.

Investigator's name: _____

Investigator's signature: _____

Date: _____

Standard clause:

"We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies."

Parent/guardian consent for participation of a minor in a Research Study

Project title: The interaction between socioeconomic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 children as mediated by parental involvement

Parent/Guardian form

We would like to invite **your child** _____to participate in a research study. In order to decide whether or not you want your child to participate in this study, it is important to know what the study is about. Once you understand the content of the study and if you decide thereafter that you agree to let your child partake in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form.

Description of the research project

This study aims to explore and describe the interactions between socioeconomic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 children as mediated by parental involvement. This study is exploratory and descriptive and will attempt to describe the interactions between socioeconomic factors and academic performance in Grade 1 children as mediated by parental involvement by using the case study approach with four different Grade 1 children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. In order to be part of this study, your child would need to be observed for one day at your home. This child would need to be observed in his/her natural context for an hour where the play and communicate with you as parent/caregiver and function in your home. We would like to observe them in their social environment and how they spend their time outside of school. We would also require taking photos of your child's workbooks, assessments and report cards as evidence of academic performance. This study is concerning your child's academic performance and therefore, there are no right or wrong answers.

Possible Risks and Inconveniences associated with the study

Possible risks include, your child getting hurt while he/she is playing, your child feeling uncomfortable with my presence or it may evoke certain emotional reactions whereby the observation can be stopped if requested. However, any time the child feels uncomfortable during the observation, they are permitted to leave the study immediately. The identity of your child would stay be kept anonymous and any relevant information would also be kept safe.

Confidentiality

Any and all of the information collected during this study will be strictly confidential and the only people that will have access to the information would be the research team. However, the only exception would occur once the safety of the child is in question in which we are obligated to share the information with the appropriate agencies and departments. Please note that none of the questions are designed in such a way that aims to collect your personal information from anybody else. All of the information provided will be kept safely at the University of Pretoria.

Benefits regarding the research project

There will be no financial incentives

What are the rights of the participant of the study?

This participation of this study is purely voluntary and the child and parent may feel free to leave the study whenever they feel uncomfortable, without any questions asked. If your child decides to stop participating during the observation, this will in no way affect your child.

Time and location

The interview will be arranged at a time and place of your convenience and will take approximately 30-60 minutes of your time. The interview will be audiotaped.

Has the study received ethical approval?

This study has been approved by the _____ committee of the University of Pretoria.

Possible questions regarding the research project

We will be available via e-mail of our cell phone if there are any questions or concerns regarding the research project. Please feel free to contact me on 072 611 1293 or send an e-mail to suzannej36@gmail.com

Informed consent

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature, conduct and risks associated with the research project. Furthermore, I have read the above information and confirm that that I understand the above mentioned information. I am further aware that the results will be processed anonymously. I have had enough time to as questions and raise any grievances that I may have. Lastly, I am aware that I may, without any consequences, withdraw my consent for my child from participating in this study. In conclusion, I declare that my child may participate in this study.

Name: _____   Date: _____

Signature: _____

I, _____ herewith confirm that the above person has been informed fully about the nature, conduct and risks of the study.

Investigator's name: _____

Investigator's signature: _____

Date: _____

Standard clause:

"We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies."

Client Assent for participating in a Research study

Project title: The interactions between socioeconomic background and the academic performance of Grade 1 children as mediated by parental involvement

To be read to children under the age of 18 years

What is my role in the research project?

As we grow older, it is important that we keep on learning and asking questions on subjects we do not understand. We call this a research project. We are asking you if you would like to be part of this fun experience, where the only thing you are going to have to do is play and be yourself.

This study will provide us the opportunity to see your strengths in school and how you play at home. We are asking you to be part of this study because your parents already gave us consent that you can be part of this project.

What am I going to do?

If you want to be part of this study, we are going to spend some time together at your home where you are going to play, talk with mommy/daddy and do homework. It is very easy and you must only be yourself! We would like to take some photographs of your workbook and report cards if you agree to be part of this study.

Will the project hurt?

No, the project will not hurt. We are going to play and spend time together at your home and your parents will be there the whole time.

Who must I call if I have questions?

Whenever you have questions or doubts about the study, you are more than welcome to phone me on 072 611 1293 or you can ask me when I come visit you.

Did my parents say yes?

Yes, they said you may take part in this study and they know what this study.

Can I say no?

The moment you feel uncomfortable, you are more than welcome to tell me and you will not be in trouble. If you do not want to be part of this project, you just have to let us know.

(a) Writing your name on this page means that you **agree to be part** of this study and that you **know what will happen to you.** If you decide that you do not want to partake anymore, you just have to let us know.

Signature of the learner: _____

Date: _____

(b) Writing your name on this page means that you agree that we can **take photographs of your homework, assessments and report cards** and share it in the mini-dissertation. We will not be sharing this information with anybody and if you do not want us to take photographs, you just have to tell me.

Signature of the learner: _____

Date: _____

Standard clause:

"We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and

using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies."

<u>Research Environment Informed Consent</u>

I, _____, hereby give my full consent that the research project of Ms. Susan-Karin Jacobs from the University of Pretoria will take place at my home address _____. I understand that my identity along with my address will be anonymous.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Standard clause:

"We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies."

APPENDIX B: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Biographical information: Parents

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Number of children: _____

Birth order of children: _____

Married/separated/single parent: _____

Are you employed? Fulltime/ part time? _____

Job title: _____

Monthly income: _____

5000-10 000	10 000-15 000	15 000-20 000	20 000- 25 000	250 000-30 000
30 000- 40 000	40 000-50 000	50 000- 60 000	60 000- 70 000	70 000- +

Home language: _____

Highest qualification: _____

Address: _____

Standard clause:

"We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies."

Biographical information: Children

Age: _____

Date of birth: _____

Gender: _____

Number of siblings: _____

Birth order of child: _____

Home language: _____

Grade: _____

Address: _____

Standard clause:

"We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies."

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Interview questions for the parents:

1. Tell me about a typical school day in the life of your child? Getting up, going to school, coming back home … tell me how it works?

2. Is your child in an after school programme?

3. Can you please describe your routine with your child after he/she returns from school?

4. Tell me more about school work:

   4.1. Does anyone help your child with homework? Or does he/she do it alone?

   4.2. Do you do extra work with your child, such as extra reading?

   4.3. Does your child receive any extra classes?

   4.4. Do you have time to play with your child (other than schoolwork)?

5. Are you in communication with your child's teacher? How does it work?

6. How would you describe your child's academic progress?

   6.1. Do you think your child is progressing well at school?

   6.2. Have your child experienced any academic challenges?

   6.3. Have your child experienced any academic success?

7. How involved are you in your child's schoolwork? Tell me more.

8. If you were to guess, how much time would you spend with your child daily?

9. In your view, does your child have everything he/she needs to do well at school?

   9.1. Explain why, please.

   9.2. Where and how do you get school clothes for your child?

   9.3. Tell me about your child's meals/snacks during the school day?

   9.4. Does your child have all the necessary stationary (pens, books etc) for school?

9.5. Does your child participate in any extra-curricular activities (sport, culture, hobbies)?

10. Is there anything else that you want to share with me?

Standard clause:

"We would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously for further research purposes as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria and, where relevant, project funders. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies."

APPENDIX D1: FIRST FIELD VISIT'S FIELD NOTES

Sunday: 4 December

Participant 1:

- 'House' is very small, with only 2 bedrooms.
- Daughter (participant's) bed is situated under a geyser.
- The house is on a lot with other houses.
- The house is very dirty and there's dog feces lying around on the driveway.
- The mother is smoking while she is pregnant.
- The parents speak nicely to the child, however the dad seems more engaged with her.
- The child has a lot of toys in her bedroom.
- The child seems very comfortable with the social worker and very familiar with her presence.
- The daughter also engaged with me and was not shy when I arrived.
- There is no desk in her room. I also did not see any table (not kitchen/dining room) to do homework.
- No electricity while I was there.
- Walking distance from primary school.

- Her books were not marked by the teacher.
- They do not have security at their house.

↳ The house is placed on a lot with many other houses. (small commun)
↳ They live in a 2 bedroom flat, one room is used for cupboards as the house doesn't have any.
↳ The older sister sleeps on a mattress on the floor in the cupboard room.
↳ The participant sleeps with his parents.
↳ Both parents seem very friendly and the participant is very comfortable with his parents.
↳ he does not have a lot of toys and parents say he mostly plays outside with the other kids.
↳ The house was clean.
↳ They live across the primary school.
↳ Parents spoke a lot about their deceased child before the interview started and showed me pictures of the child.
↳ They have a cupboard with all of the child's belongings.
↳ We sat in the TV room.
↳ No electricity.
↳ They recently moved as they were evicted from previous house.

↳ Participant seemed very comfort. with the worker from the NGO.
↳ He was very shy and did not want to talk to me.
↳ When I left, he sat with the other residents under the tree in the dirt.
↳ His books were not marked by the teacher.

Tuesday : 6 December
Participant 3
↳ They live in a safe neighbourhood in Pretoria East.
↳ I was there at night, and the whole family was there.
↳ Parents were cooking, while the children watched TV.
↳ We sat in the kitchen while we conducted the interview.
↳ The children do their homework in the dining room.
↳ All 3 children came to greet me.
↳ The mom and dad are both involved in participant's life - academic, social, emotional.
↳ Parents are very loving towards the children.
↳ House was very neat.
↳ Participant has her own room, with toys. However, mom stated that she plays with siblings a lot.
↳ TV-time is limited during the week.
↳ Her school books were very neat and marked by teacher.
↳ Her room was very clean.
↳ The family is close - spends time together.
↳ Brother + sister helps participant with homework if she needs it.
↳ ~~Another~~ ~~was~~
↳ Mother takes most control of kids.

8 December: Thursday
Participant 4.

↳ Lives in a security Estate in Pta East.
↳ Whole family was at home as I was there during the evening.
↳ Double story house — very neat.
↳ They have a garden.
↳ Parents were very inviting. Sat in dining room for the interview.
↳ The participant was very excited and joined the interview half way through.
↳ Parents work full time, own business.
↳ Both parents seem very involved in participant's life. (drop off, pick up etc.)
↳ Participant has his own room + toys.
↳ Participant's very active at school
↳ Child seems very comfortable with parents.
↳ Very energetic and happy child.
↳ Mother + father is strict with disciplining the children.
↳ They have a live-in-domestic worker.

APPENDIX D2: SECOND FIELD VISIT'S FIELD NOTES

Second field visit:
Participant 1:

11 Junie
11:15

∟ Participants more comfortable with my presence.

∟ Father more forthcoming with answering questions.

∟ House looked the same than last year

∟ Could not visit participant's room again — baby is born and sleeps in her room now. (always?)

∟ Participant is very quiet, last year more vocal.

∟ Mother stated that they struggle with homework (participant not in aftercare anymore).

∟ Does not participate in extra-curricular — wants to start with swimming.

∟ House (not much changed)

∟ Neat when I arrived.

Second field visit

Participant 2:

- Moved out of the previous home, still live on same lot as last year, but in one "bedroom" Wendy house.
- Father at work when I arrived at the site.
- Mother was very friendly + participant.
  - More comfortable with my presence — showed around the lot after answering questions.
- "House" is very cold, no privacy, no direct access to bathroom...
- Kitchen in house.
- Seems as if participant and sister share a bed.
- Moved to aftercare programme to complete homework — improvement in marks.
- Sat in bedroom when doing interview.
- Participant showed me his pets (new dog). Children playing on the lot.

==Participant 3==
==Second field visit.==

└ Both parents home when I
arrived.
└ Siblings at extra. curricular,
while participant at home.
└ Not much changed since last
year.
└ Mother only working part-time at
the moment - wants to spend
more quality + quantity time with
children.
└ No additional academic
challenges — extra reading
(english) biggest concern.
└ House warm — a lot of technology
access.
└ Participant very comfortable with
presence. (dogs) pets in house —
TV on.
└ Dad making food, while we
spoke in kitchen.

==Participant 4:==
==Second field visit==

∟ Mother and father at home —
father just arrived from work.
∟ Busy packing older brother for
school camp.
∟ Participant playing with friends
outside when I arrived at
home.
∟ Very comfortable with my
presence — participant playing
with friend during interview.
∟ Father just arrived home
from work.
∟ Almost no changes from last
year — house looks the same.
∟ Participant doing very well
in school + extra curricular
activities.

Interviewer:	Okay so tell me a little about a typical school day so you get up in the mornings you make meals what does a normal school day look like	
Mother:	Okay we get up in the morning and then… we wake them up and then…	
Father:	But quite early (cross talk) like half past ▋ bout yes	00:14
Mother:	And… I have… a live-in maid from since ▋ ey were babies and she became part of the household then she is basically inherited I don't think I will ever get rid of her so we are spoiled with J▨ n the house… the kids have said her last name is also ▨ so … yes … so I just help them all to finish the last time daddy with his arm that can't dress and stuff then I just help everyone and then they eat and then yes they drive early five past … twenty past six (crossword)	00:39
Father:	Twenty past six (crossword)	00:40
Mother:	Daddy drives both children to school and then I quickly finish what I haven't finished and then I drive about seven hours away	
Father:	So I finish (indistinct) half past seven	00:49
Interviewer:	Okay	
Father:	Sorry half past seven in the morning yes	
Mother:	Yes, they are now at school all day, he usually goes to class or waits for an activity	
Interviewer:	Okay	

Mother:	At that time he has either chess or... what do you sometimes do cricket or something at that time until brother comes out and then I usually find them at school and then they come home
Interviewer:	Okay awesome and then your kids are in an aftercare program at school
Father:	No
Interviewer:	Okay and then what is your typical routine when you come back from the... activities or after school you come home
Mother:	It's quite confusing because we both have our jobs full time and we both have our own businesses so for me it's between our offices at Lombardy's which is just around the corner so we're just between the office and the house and they both ride bikes and they have quite a few activities so I drop off and pick up things and then in between we just do homework and especially from the last part of the year he pretty much does his homework himself so we check in the evening just where there are some spelling mistakes and what needs to be done soon and she reads well yes so the first half of the year we still have to help a lot but yes... I have to say from the middle of the year he basically does it himself (cross talk)	01:53
Father:	yes (crosstalk)	01:54
Mother:	From when they can start reading
Father:	It's quite "hectic" here in the evening because you know cycling is different times then it's still bull rugby
Interviewer:	Oh yes no... I can think
Father:	You know so she goes to get one I go to the other one like that... but we try to at seven o'clock in the evening everyone has to eat and homework is done and then we have to... sort of

Handwritten note in left margin: meer dinamik met die huiswerk. (independance)

Interviewer:	be calm	
Father:	Yes, at least an hour and a half just spending time together	
Mother:	And then yes they go to sleep at eight	
Interviewer:	Okay and then okay so you said you help where you can with homework if needed	
Mother:	Yes no definitely the grade ones still have	
Interviewer:	A bit of help required	
Mother:	Need help yes and yes but see that they let them read their books and us yes	
Interviewer:	Okay and then there is any extra work you do with Jorniel like extra reading extra	
Mother:	He does Tina Cowley	
Interviewer:	Okay	
Mother:	And I recommend it a hundred present to everyone	
Interviewer:	Okay	
Mother:	Everyone has asked me if I have a share in the business (indistinct) not at all but I'm... quite happy with it	02:41
Interviewer:	Okay, very good, and then... does he get any extra classes with the extra reading class?	
Mother:	No... his reading is pretty much ahead because he's with Tina Cowley	
Interviewer:	Okay and then... do you have any time to play with him say on a weekend or during the week apart from homework time or just spend time together	

Mother:	Yes (crosstalk) we actually never leave our children alone, once a year we might go away for a weekend without them	03:08
Father:	Yes, it's just	
Mother:	But otherwise they go pretty much everywhere with us... their weekends are just bikes or bull rugby or that type of stuff	
Father:	Yes it is every weekend (crossword) Saturdays are sports from seven eight in the morning until two o'clock in the afternoon then we will "chill" and watch rugby and everything and then Sundays are go to church and after church then it's barbecue and they will play and swimming (crossword)	03:21 03:35
Mother:	And we also try not to go anywhere on Friday nights and not to get people to hang out with	
Interviewer:	Okay	
Mother:	Friday nights are us	
Interviewer:	Family time	
Father:	Yes it's family time yes	
Interviewer:	Okay and then... are you in communication with... his teacher is it easy	
Father:	No	
Mother:	No I'm not...I'm not a class mother	
Father:	No I don't know we just have this stance it feels like sucking up and you know we are not...	
Mother:	So no I've just let know and sent a message if there's any problem let me know and if there's a discipline problem or something let me know I'm a block from the school so I can do it quickly to come sort it out but yes there was never such a message	

APPENDIX F: SYSTEMIC REVIEW AFTER 2020

	AUTHORS	TITLE	COUNTRY	METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
1.	Ahmed et al. (2021)	*"Parental Involvement or Interference? Rural Teachers' Perceptions."*	Pakistan	Qualitative research	The study's findings suggests that teachers were frustrated with the lack of parental involvement and that socio-economic circumstances hindered them from participating in their children's academic lives.
2.	Alfred et al. (2023)	*"The Contribution of Parents Involvement towards Students' Academic Performance at Ugandan Certificate of Education in Public Secondary Schools."*	Uganda	Quantitative research	Positive correlation between parental engagement and academic success.
3.	Ayimbila et al. (2022)	*"Parental Involvement in Monitoring Students' Academic Performance."*	Ghana	Quantitative research	The results of the study proved that poverty, low levels of education, single parenting, work load of parents, negative attitudes of teachers and parents toward each other and large family sizes, impact the level of parental involvement and therefore, the academic performance of the child.
4.	Bayat & Madyibi. (2022)	*"The home environment and parental involvement of preschoolers in Philippi, a low-income area: Do they hinder or support early learning?"*	South Africa	Qualitative research	Given low-income, low educational status and general lack, parents need a clearer framework on how to become involved and how to provide a conducive household learning environment for preschoolers. Parental involvement was limited by their unwillingness to regularly engage in stimulating activities at home.
5.	Bouiri et al. (2022)	*"Effects of Student, Family-related*	Morocco	Quantitative research	The results indicate that socio-familial characteristics had a partially significant relationship with school grades with a weak effect.

AUTHORS	TITLE	COUNTRY	METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
	Features on Academic Achievement."			
6. Chaidez & Rumayor (2019)	*"Parents who care: Narratives of sacrifice and effort among Mexican immigrants who want their children to succeed academically, emotionally, and socially.*	United States of America	Qualitative research	The findings suggest that parents from disadvantage socio-economic backgrounds want to be part of their children's academic careers but due to their living conditions, financial constraints and lack of language proficiency, they are unable to do so.
7. Choge & Edabu. (2023)	*"Parental Involvement and Learners' Academic Performance in Public Primary Schools in Kesses Sub County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya*	Kenya	Quantitative research	Findings from the study indicated that parental communication and involvement significantly affects the academic performance of learners.
8. Craft. (2019)	*"Academic performance of low SES students at an Australian university satellite campus."*	Australia	Quantitative research	The results indicate that there was no strong relationship between first year students' entry rank, nor was there a significant effect of socio-economic background on the results.
9. Cui et al. (2023)	*"Exploring factors relating to academic resilience among students with socioeconomic disadvantages: Factors from individual,*	China	Quantitative research	The results of the study proved that common factors relating to academic performance for students in disadvantages communities are: parental expectations, involvement, peer support, self-efficacy and schools with a high socio-economic status.

AUTHORS	TITLE	COUNTRY	METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
	school, and family domains."			
10. Darko-Asumadu & Sika-Bright. (2021)	*"Parental Involvement and Pupils' Academic Performance in the Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana."*	Ghana	Quantitative research	The study found that parents' education did not significantly impact their children's performance. However, there was a significant relationship between parental involvement, occupation and family size and the academic performance of these pupils.
11. Develieghere & Vandenbroeck. (2022)	*"Beyond the veil of parental involvement in early childhood education and care."*	N.A.	Quantitative research	The study concluded that most definitions related to parental involvement, is related to academic success and the promotion thereof.
12. Fairless et al. (2021)	*"Adolescent achievement: Relative contributions of social emotional learning, self-efficacy, and microsystem supports."*	United States of America	Quantitative research	A variety of factors contribute to academic performance, including self-efficacy, socio-economic status, parental involvement, peer and teacher support.
13. Fang et al. (2020)	*"Social Support and Academic Achievement of Chinese Low-Income Children: A Mediation Effect of Academic Resilience."*	China	Quantitative research	The results indicate that students from low-income households are dependent on peer, family and social support, which increases their academic resilience.
14. Greenfield & Moorman. (2019)	*"Childhood Socioeconomic Status and Later Life Cognition: Evidence From the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study."*	United States of America	Quantitative research	The results indicate to growing evidence that socio-economic differences in childhood contribute to potential cognitive disparities, later in life.

AUTHORS	TITLE	COUNTRY	METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
15. Hicks. (2021)	*"Parents' experiences with promoting academic success in low-socioeconomic middle schools."*	United States of America	Qualitative research	The findings suggests that middle school adolescents' academic performance is influenced by socio-economic background, parental roles, parent-teacher relationships and family routines.
16. Jiang. (2021)	*"How Socio-Economic Status Affects Academic Performance."*	China	Quantitative research	Families use their socio-economic resources to provide children with different educational resources, which impacts their academic achievement. Secondly, through parental educational aspirations and behavioural support, parents influence learning habits.
17. Kalil & Ryan. (2020)	*"Parenting Practices and Socioeconomic Gaps in Childhood Outcomes.:*	N.A.	Quantitative research	The evidence suggests that parents from more disadvantaged socio-economic background want to engage with their children in the same way that parents from more advantaged socio-economic backgrounds will do. However, they are unlikely to do those things, due to financial strains and family stress that impedes parents' emotional and cognitive functioning, which makes it harder for them to connect with their children in a stimulating and emotionally nurturing manner.
18. Kwarteng, et al. (2022)	*"Parental Involvement in the Academic Performance of Students in Ghana: Socio-Economic Status."*	Ghana	Quantitative research	The study concluded that parents' socio-economic background, specifically related to education, occupation and income levels, is an important factor that determines academic performance for students in the Upper West Akim District.

AUTHORS	TITLE	COUNTRY	METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
19. Lengua et al. (2021)	*"Preliminary evaluation of an innovative, brief parenting program designed to promote self-regulation in parents and children."*	United States of America	Qualitative research	The findings suggest that children growing up in low-income households tend to be less academically, socially an emotionally ready for school. Effective parenting may promote self-regulation, which may increase academic achievement.
20. Loft & Waldfogel. (2021)	*"Socioeconomic status gradients in young children's well-being at school."*	Denmark	Quantitative research	The results indicate that children from a more educated and higher income families experienced greater satisfaction with peers and school.
21. Mishra (2020)	*"Social networks, social capital, social support and academic success in higher education: A systematic review with a special focus on 'underrepresented' students."*	N.A.	Quantitative research	The results indicate that social networks, social capital and social support are critical contributing factors to academic achievement.
22. Mkhize et al. (2023)	*"School-Based Factors Affecting Grade 12 Accounting Learners' Performance in the General Certificate Secondary Examination (GCSE) in Eswatini."*	Eswatini	Qualitative research	The findings suggest that school related factors, such as not receiving their books in time and poor administration effected their marks. Furthermore, lack of parental involvement also contributed to their lack of academic achievement.
23. Mugumya et al. (2022)	*"Parents' involvement and students' academic*	Uganda	Quantitative research	The findings conclude that there is a positive relationship between parental involvement and learning at home.

AUTHORS	TITLE	COUNTRY	METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
	performance in Ryakasinga centre for higher Education- Sheema District, Uganda.”			
24. Nchinyi et al. (2022)	*“Factors influencing Students’ Academic Performance in Junior Secondary Schools in Maun, Botswana.”*	Botswana	Quantitative research	The results indicate that academic performance is influences by home background, the school environment and study habits.
25. Nkosi & Adebayo. (2021)	*“Teachers’ perceptions of Parental Involvement among Selected Secondary Schools in the Pinetown District, Durban.”*	South Africa	Qualitative research	The findings suggests that parents from schools in low socio-economic backgrounds tend to show less concern for learners’ educational endeavors, while some are concerned. However, social and educational backgrounds prohibit them from their level of involvement.
26. O’Connell, M. (2019)	*“Is the impact of SES on educational performance overestimated ? Evidence from the PISA survey.”*	United States of America	Quantitative research	The results indicate that the correlation between socio-economic and academic performance were modest. However, the correlation between academic performance and parental educational attainment were critical.
27. Perrigo et al. (2022)	*“Qualitative Methods Approach to Reimagine Education- Related Parental Involvement among Low- Socioeconomic Status Families.”*	United States of America	Qualitative research	The findings suggest that there are academic disparities between children from more advantaged and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. A key factor for that being parental involvement. However, factors that hinder their involvement are due to having poor proficiency in educational materials and having limited time for engaging in stimulating activities.
28. Poon. (2020)	*“The impact of*	China	Quantitative research	The results indicate a significant difference in parental expectations,

AUTHORS	TITLE	COUNTRY	METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
	socioeconomic status on parental factors in promoting academic achievement in Chinese children."			parental involvement, child engagement, as well as academic achievement between the low-SES and middle-SES groups.
29. Reddy & Fadiji. (2020)	*"Learners' educational aspirations in South Africa: The role of the home and the school."*	South Africa	Quantitative research	Students from low socio-economic status (SES) schools and homes, had lower educational aspirations. There was also a positive and negative relationship between school climate and learner aspirations. Parental involvement did not have any impact on shaping the learners aspirations.
30. Salwiesz. (2015)	*"The impact of parent involvement on the education of children: Unlocking the role of parent involvement in promoting academic achievement among racially diverse kindergarteners."*	United States of America	Qualitative research	The findings suggest that involved parents had a positive impact on language and mathematics performance at school.
31. Schmid & Garrels. (2021)	*"Parental Involvement and Educational Success among Vulnerable Students in Vocational Education and Training."*	Norway	Qualitative research	The findings indicate the students' acknowledgement of the importance of parental involvement regarding academic performance. Involvement, such as practical support, setting clear expectations, supervision of schoolwork and encouragement is needed.
32. Segoe & Bisschoff. (2019)	*"Parental Involvement as Part of Curriculum*	South Africa	Qualitative research	The findings indicate that parents' lack of involvement impact the functioning of the school, as well as

AUTHORS	TITLE	COUNTRY	METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
	Reform in South African Schools: Does it Contribute to Quality Education?"			their children's' academic performance.
33. Selvitopu & Kaya. (2023)	*"A Meta-Analytic Review of the Effect of Socioeconomic Status on Academic Performance. "*	N.A.	Quantitative research	The results indicated that there is a significant correlation between socio-economic background and academic performance.
34. Sengönül. (2022)	*"A Review of the Relationship between Parental Involvement and Children's Academic Achievement and the Role of Socioeconomic Status in this Relationship."*	N.A	Quantitative research	The results indicate that socio-economic background affected the relationship between parental involvement and school success of children, and played a mediating role in such relationship.
35. Seni & Onyango. (2020)	*"The Roles of Parents in Enhancing Academic Performance among Public Secondary Schools at Nyamagana District, Tanzania."*	Tanzania	Mixed-method research	The study concluded that parents are somewhat not doing well on issues related to parenting, school participation, helping with homework and communication with teachers.
36. Shuhratova. (2023)	*"The impact of poverty on education."*	N.A.	Quantitative research	The results indicate that poverty affects students' ability to access academic resources and gain opportunities. Poverty also affects children's well-being and cognitive development.
37. Simweleba,et al. (2020)	*"Parental involvement*	Zambia	Mixed-method	Interventions implemented in the school were vital in higher test

AUTHORS	TITLE	COUNTRY	METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
	and learners' performance in rural basic schools in Zambia."		research	scores. Additionally, increased parent-child interaction and the use of home instructions affected their test marks.
38. Tahir et al. (2021)	*"Effects of Socio-Economic Status of Parents on the Student's Academic Achievement."*	Pakistan	Quantitative research	Parents' financial status, financial and moral support, and socio-economic status affect children's motivation to work hard and their academic achievement.
39. Tan et al. (2020)	*"Academic Benefits from Parental Involvement are Stratified by Parental Socioeconomic Status: A Meta-Analysis"*	N.A.	Quantitative research	The results of the article provide evidence that some benefits of parental involvement, such as academic expectations, parent learning support at home etc., are stratified by familial socio-economic background.
40. Turnbull et al. (2022)	*"Family routines and practices that support the school readiness of young children living in poverty."*	United States of America	Quantitative research	The results indicate that stimulating activities, such as art, engaging in community activities and implementing literacy-focused activities, contribute to school readiness for children living in poverty.
41. Vadivel et al. (2023)	*"The Impact of low Socioeconomic Background on a Child's Educational Achievement."*	Germany, India and Nigeria	Qualitative research	The findings indicate that students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds did not achieve academically. Parents from low socio-economic backgrounds were also less interested in educating their kids.
42. Zhang et al. (2020)	*"Family Socio-economic Status and Children's Academic Achievement: The Different Roles of Parental*	China	Quantitative research	The results indicate that socio-economic background and parental involvement (subjective social mobility) were associated with academic achievement.

AUTHORS	TITLE	COUNTRY	METHOD	KEY FINDINGS
	Academic Involvement and Subjective Social Mobility."			
43. Zhang et al. (2021)	*"Family Socioeconomic Status, Parental Involvement, and Academic Achievement: The Moderating Role of Adolescents' Subjective Social Mobility."*	China	Quantitative research	The results indicate that parental involvement within a disadvantaged socio-economic background impedes adolescents' academic achievement.