

EVALUATION OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENTS ONLINE LEARNING AND HOMEWORK: CHALLENGES IN THE COVID-19 ERA

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluated parental involvement in online learning and homework of their children and the challenges during COVID-19 era. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consist of parents in all primary and secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to draw a sample of 200 parents from primary and secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled: "Parental Assistance in Online Learning and Homework" (PAOLH). The instrument was validated by two experts in educational measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.71 and 0.73 was obtained from section B and C respectively while the reliability coefficient for the entire instrument was 0.76. the instrument was administered via Google form. Percentages was used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that parents faced challenges in online learning during COVID-19, including understanding assignments, balancing responsibilities, financial challenges and managing digital tools. Younger children and secondary students required more support, while fathers provided resources and mothers handled learning tasks. Better school support is needed to ease these difficulties

Key words: Evaluation, parental involvement, online learning, homework, COVID-19 era, Port Harcourt

INTRODUCTION

Online learning is acknowledged by stakeholders as an important channel for educating learners. It has also been identified as a measure to surmount sudden crisis (Ayebi-Arthur, 2017). Online learning refers to the educational utilization of digital tools and devices by individuals. Most parents and individuals born in the late 90s' are considered digital natives. Reason being that they were born and raised in a digital era. Though they are expected to be digitally competent, a large number of them do not have the skills expected of digital natives (Bennett et al, 2008). Granted, some institutions ran virtual learning prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 virus but the transition for others during the pandemic was burdensome. The transition to online learning and assessment of students in the 2019/ 2020 academic year was very tasking for teachers, learners and parents. Parents involvement in their children's education is advantageous for learning and scholarly work (Durisic & Bunijeva, 2017).

However, for some parents and stakeholders, parental involvement in online learning and homework of their children during the pandemic was an uncharted path. Traditionally, parental involvement refers to participation in exercises at school and exchanging ideas with teachers; helping with homework; attending extracurricular activities and parents-teachers' meetings (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Epstein et al, 2009). For Borup et al (2013), parental involvement in online learning is different from engaging in traditional education. It demands elucidating the purview of obligation and assignment that parents should tackle. However, parents' involvement in their children's learning have been defined based on varied context and perceptions. Parental involvement refers to the actions parents execute in order to enhance their children's scholarly achievement, which demands alliance between parents and children; parents and teachers; and parents and parents

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(McNeal, 2014). For Nye et al (2006 :1) parental involvement refers to the effective engagement with their child outside of the day, in an activity which centres on enhancing academic performance. This definition reflects the expected position of parents in the academics and affairs of their children during the COVID-19 pandemic when face to face teaching and learning in schools became impossible.

One would expect parents to be in a better position to understand the personality of their children. Consequently, they are at an advantage on how to manage and assist their children in learning based on their temperaments. Researchers averred that some temperaments could significantly influence academic performance and motivation (Spinath, et al, 2018). Hence, every child is unique. It's only natural therefore to infer that parents know and understand the temperaments of their children better than anyone else. Researchers have posited that parents' involvement enhances better academic outcomes (Thornton, 2015); as well as a child's social, emotional and academic growth (Green et al, 2007). On the contrary others found that parental involvement, negatively influenced their children's academic achievement (Shumow & Miller, 2001; Cooper et al, 2000). Some indicators of parental involvement highlighted by Michigan Department of Education (2001) are: apprehension on how learners regulate their time, provision of favourable atmosphere at home, tracking their undertaking outside the learning environment, concentrating on self-discipline, expressing great expectations and supporting scholarly growth. Research show that certain demographic variables influence parental involvement in learning and homework of their children. Some of these variables are parents' socio- economic background, education level, marital status and employment. In this light, Domina (2005) found that parents with high socio-economic background are more disposed to efficiently engage in their children's learning than their counterparts in low socio- economic background. In a related study conducted by David-Kean (2005), education level, employment, marital status and income to a high extent influence parental involvement. Conversely, Hayes (2012) revealed that marital status, parents' level of education and income had no significant correlation with their children's academic outcome.

For Hakyemez-Paul et al (2018), two main hindrances to parental involvement are poor parental motivation and insufficient time to complete homework. Others opined that parents' presume that teachers would critic their efforts negatively and hold them responsible for their children's learning deficiencies (Hanni & Phippen, 2010; Haack, 2007). The relevance of homework in the assessment of the presence or absence of a trait or mastery of a particular topic, unit or subject content cannot be over emphasised. Studies have shown that homework enables students to learn the subject matter based on their pace, cognitive abilities, learning style, and sufficient time to review the materials for mastery. It also enriches independent study skills of learners to bolster personal determination and self-restraint (Kidwell, 2004; Painter, 2003). The term homework is seen as any exercise assigned by school teachers, expected to be executed during non-school hours' (Cooper, 1989). When parents are involved in homework, a child's insight of his/her capacity and logical skills would be enhanced (Hoover-Dempsey, 2002). However, Kidwell (2004) noted that in most instances parents are at a loss as to the extent they should assist their children with their homework. Another factor that deters parental involvement is the workload and scope of the homework (Cooper, 2008). This was compounded by other responsibilities that parents had to contend with due to the restriction of movements/ lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic. An earlier study long before the COVID-19 outbreak revealed that mothers are more disposed to guide their children's learning and activities (Crozier, 1999). This is corroborated by a study conducted by Boca (2020) in Italy which revealed that women bore most of the responsibility of supplementary care and household chores imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study of Lau and Ng (2019) also revealed that Chinese mothers, are generally more involved than fathers in children's education, hence may experience more challenges during their involvement in children's online learning. Traditionally, in most African countries and specifically in Nigeria, mothers are more involved in their children's learning especially in their formative years. In a recent study, Dong et al. (2020) found

that some critical setbacks of parents' involvement in online learning of their children are linked to: young children's inadequate self-control, time constraint, lack of knowledge and skills. They also found that parents were generally unprepared to support their children's online learning. In the same light, Spinelli et al. (2020) averred those perceived challenges of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with a higher level of perceived parenting stress. Early research findings reveal that as learners progress in class levels, parental involvement in their learning declined (Stephenson & Baker cited in Crosnoe, 2001); the decline is also seen as they grew in age (Sirvani, 2007; Richardson, 2009). This is in tandem with the study of Senler and Sungur (2009) which revealed a decline in parental involvement as learners grew older and established a significant difference between learners in primary and secondary school based on self-concept, task value and parental involvement.

Though most parents desire the academic growth and wellbeing of their children, their involvement in online learning and homework of their children during the COVID-19 pandemic was a responsibility they undoubtedly never bargained for. This study is predicated on this background.

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the unforeseen life-threatening situations that shock the whole world and the educational system in recent times. Due to the closure of schools and lockdown, parents were inadvertently forced into the role of teachers via online learning and assessment of their children. Most parents and families had to grapple with psychological, financial and personal involvement in their children's online learning and homework. For some parents, due to their occupation, career, and busy schedule before the pandemic, it was the first time they would be involved in their children's learning and homework. Others whose occupation required rendering essential services such as medical personal, security agents, fire fighters and power (electricity), during the pandemic. Had to work, go through the trauma of uncertainty due to quarantine, return to their families and were expected to assist their children with online learning.

While those who worked remotely, were saddled with the responsibility of working, taking care of dependants, domestic chores, dealing with personal issues as well as involvement in online learning and homework of their children. Even parents who are professional teachers and those who previously engaged home lesson teachers were not prepared for the dimension of workload and utilization of online learning platforms. It could also be inferred that large families with school age minors would also have faced a lot of challenges in assisting their children with online learning and homework. It is therefore expedient to determine the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. The researcher has also noted that literature on parental involvement in children's online learning and homework during the COVID-19 pandemic abound based on research conducted in Asia, Europe, America and the Middle East but relevant information on this in Africa and specifically in Nigeria is very scanty. This study will contribute to literature to fill this gap.

Aim and objectives

The study investigated the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework of their children in Port Harcourt Metropolis in the COVID-19 era. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Ascertain the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on their children's level of study in COVID-19 era.
2. Identify the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on the age of their children in COVID-19 era.
3. Find out the extent of involvement of fathers and mothers in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era
4. Determine the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era

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Research Questions

The following research questions were drawn from the objectives to guide the study:

1. Do the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework differ based on their children's level of study in COVID-19 era?
2. Do the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework differ based on the age of their children in COVID-19 era?
3. What is the extent of involvement of fathers and mothers in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era?
4. What are the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era?

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were drawn from the research questions to guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on their children's level of study in COVID-19 era.
2. There is no significant difference in the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on the age of their children in COVID-19 era.
3. There is no significant difference in the extent of involvement of fathers and mothers in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era.

METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consist of parents of children in all primary and secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to draw a sample of 200 parents from primary and secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis who responded to a survey via Google form, titled: "Parental Assistance in Online Learning and Homework" (PAOLH). The instrument was validated by two experts in educational measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha and a reliability coefficient of 0.71 and 0.73 was obtained from section B and C respectively while the reliability coefficient for the entire instrument was 0.76. Out of the 200 questionnaires administered to the respondents, 190 were returned, Percentages was used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One

Do the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework differ based on their children's level of study in COVID-19 era?

Table 1: Percentage scores on parental involvement in online learning and homework based on their children's level of study.

Items	N	Primary		Secondary		
		High Extent	Low Extent	N	High Extent	Low Extent
1 My child struggled to stay focused and engage during online lesson sessions	70	70.70%	29.30%	120	58.30%	41.70%
2 The demands of assisting with online learning and homework disrupted the balance between my work and family life	70	65.70%	34.30%	120	75.00%	25.00%
3 The curriculum and assignments were difficult for me to understand and explain to my child (children)	70	76.50%	23.50%	120	77.50%	22.50%

4	Managing multiple children online learning /homework schedules as well as my commitments was overwhelming	70	63.20%	36.80%	120	47.60%	52.40%
5	Prolonged involvement in online learning/assignment left me feeling physically and emotionally exhausted	70	52.60%	47.30%	120	58.40%	41.60%
6	Encouraging my child (children) to complete homework and attend online classes was a significant challenge	70	71.40%	28.60%	120	60.20%	39.80%
7	I faced challenges in trouble-shooting technical problems during my child (children) online learning/ submission of assignment	70	85.70%	14.30%	120	74.50%	25.50%
8	It was difficult to monitor/manage my child (children) screen time during online learning and leisure activities	70	42.40%	57.60%	120	47.60%	52.40%
9	The school expectations for parents' involvement in online learning was unclear	70	19.10%	90.90%	120	66.70%	33.30%
10	My child (children) needed additional academic support was difficult to access during the pandemic	70	57.10%	42.90%	120	75.00%	25.00%
11	Providing dedicated and distraction free environment for my child (children) at home was challenging	70	68.40%	33.60%	120	58.40%	58.30%
12	I personally felt unmotivated to stay consistently in my child (children) learning and homework process	70	50.20%	49.80%	120	60.20%	66.70%
13	I felt my relationship with my child (children) was strained due to added pressure of online learning	70	64.50%	35.50%	120	60.50%	55.70%
14	Balancing the role of being a parent and a teacher during online learning / homework was overwhelming	70	68.40%	31.60%	120	69.40%	30.60%
15	The volume of homework given to my child (children) was overwhelming for us to manage and meet deadlines	70	63.20%	36.80%	120	43.30%	56.70%
16	Prolonged screen time during online learning raised concerns about my child (children) physical and mental health	70	52.60%	47.30%	120	50.00%	50.00%
17	The home environment was not conducive to effective online learning	70	49.70%	50.30%	120	63.00%	37.00%
18	I struggled to understand and use the digital tools required for my child (children) online learning / homework	70	71.40%	28.60%	120	100.00%	0.00%
19	The cost of additional resources (internet, laptops, other soft wares) for online learning put a financial strain on my family	70	50.00%	50.00%	120	66.70%	33.30%

Table 1 revealed that parents with children in both primary and secondary schools to a high extent faced challenges in their involvement in online learning and homework of their children in COVID-19 era. Parents of primary school pupils reported higher challenges especially in: difficulty encouraging participation in online learning (70,70%); managing multiple children learning/ homework schedule as well as other commitments (63.20%); providing dedicated and distraction free environment (68.40%); and dealing with the volume of homework to meet deadline (63.20%). While parents of secondary students reported higher challenges in: disruption of balance between work and family due to demands of online learning (75.00%); schools unclear expectations of parents involvement (66.70%); difficulty in accessing additional academic support for their children due to the pandemic (75.00%); unmotivated to support their children in online learning and homework process (60.20%); unconducive home environment for effective online learning (63.00%); and financial strain due to additional learning resources such as laptops, internet, other soft wares etc (66.70%). These findings may be connected to significant economic challenges faced by parents, many lost their livelihoods due to the financial difficulties that affected businesses. The

COVID-19 pandemic led to company downsizing, forcing many businesses to shut down or operate remotely with a limited number of digitally proficient employees leaving others without financial resources.

The findings indicated that to a great extent, parents of children in both primary and secondary schools encountered similar challenges in engaging with their children's learning and homework during the COVID-19 period. Some of these challenges were: parents lack of understanding of the curriculum and assignment (Primary: 76.50%; Secondary: 77.50%); difficulty encouraging participation in online learning (Primary: 71.40%; Secondary: 60.20%); technical problems during online learning and submission of assignment (Primary: 85.70%; Secondary: 74.50%); strained relationship with their children due to pressure of online learning (Primary: 64.50%; Secondary: 60.50%); balancing the role of being a parent and a teacher (Primary: 68.40%; Secondary: 69.40%); and struggle to understanding and use digital tools for online learning/homework (Primary: 71.40%; Secondary: 100%). These findings may be linked to the unexpected outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, which no one had anticipated. As a result, parents had little to no preparation for managing their children's digital learning and homework.

Hypotheses One

There is no significant difference in the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on children's level of study in COVID-19 era.

Table 2: Independent t-test analysis on challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on children's level of study.

Level	N	Mean	SD	Std. Mean	Error Df	T	Sig
Primary	70	1.2262	0.24864	0.02972	188	6.535	0.218
Secondary	120	1.7986	0.70715	0.06455			

The analysis showed that with $t(188) = 6.535$, $p > 0.218$, since the significant value of 0.218 is greater than the 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted implying that there is no significant difference in the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on their children's level of study in COVID-19 era.

Research Question Two

Do the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework differ based on the age of their children in COVID-19 era?

Table 3: Percentage scores on the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on the age of their children.

Items	N	6 - 11years		N	12 -17 years	
		High Extent	Low Extent		High Extent	Low Extent
1 My child struggled to stay focused and engage during online lesson sessions	103	74.50%	25.50%	87	50.00%	50.00%
2 The demands of assisting with online learning and homework disrupted the balance between my work and family life	103	83.30%	16.70%	87	70.00%	30.00%
3 The curriculum and assignments were difficult for me to understand and explain to my child (children)	103	40.20%	59.80%	87	80.00%	20.00%
4 Managing multiple children online learning / homework schedules as well as my commitments was overwhelming	103	66.70%	33.30%	87	58.40%	41.60%

5	Prolonged involvement in online learning/assignment left me feeling physically and emotionally exhausted	103	83.30%	16.70%	87	60.20%	39.80%
6	Encouraging my child (children) to complete homework and attend online classes was a significant challenge	103	100.00%	0.00%	87	74.50%	25.50%
7	I faced challenges in trouble-shooting technical problems during my child (children) online learning/ submission of assignment	103	83.30%	16.70%	87	60.00%	40.00%
8	It was difficult to monitor/manage my child (children) screen time during online learning and leisure activities	103	50.00%	50.00%	87	47.00%	53.00%
9	The school expectations for parents' involvement in online learning was unclear	103	100.00%	0.00%	87	30.00%	70.00%
10	My child (children) needed additional academic support was difficult to access during the pandemic	103	50.20%	49.80%	87	20.00%	80.00%
11	Providing dedicated and distraction free environment for my child (children) at home was challenging	103	64.50%	35.50%	87	50.00%	50.00%
12	I personally felt unmotivated to stay consistently in my child (children) learning and homework process	103	83.30%	16.70%	87	80.00%	20.00%
13	I felt my relationship with my child (children) was strained due to added pressure of online learning	103	42.40%	57.60%	87	80.00%	20.00%
14	Balancing the role of being a parent and a teacher during online learning / homework was overwhelming	103	99.90%	19.10%	87	60.00%	40.00%
15	The volume of homework given to my child (children) was overwhelming for us to manage and meet deadlines	103	63.30%	36.70%	87	60.20%	39.80%
16	Prolonged screen time during online learning raised concerns about my child (children) physical and mental health	103	73.30%	26.70%	87	74.50%	25.50%
17	The home environment was not conducive to effective online learning	103	50.20%	34.80%	87	50.20%	49.80%
18	I struggled to understand and use the digital tools required for my child (children) online learning / homework	103	80.50%	19.50%	87	60.00%	40.00%
19	The cost of additional resources (internet, laptops, other soft wares) for online learning put a financial strain on my family	103	66.70%	33.40%	87	20.00%	80.00%

The result from table 3 revealed that parental challenges varied to a high extent based on children's age groups. Parents of younger children (6-11 years) reported higher challenges compared to their counterparts with older children (12-17 years) in: difficulty encouraging participation in online learning (75,50%); experienced physical and emotional exhaustion (83.30%); technical challenges with online learning/ submission of homework (83.30%); unclear expectations of parents involvement by the schools (100%); balancing the role of being a parent /teacher (90.90%); and struggle to understand and use digital tools for online learning/homework (80.50%). This could be attributed to lack of knowledge in the utilisation of digital tools in learning by most parents.

While parents of children within the age group (12-17 years), also high challenges in: lack of understanding of the curriculum and assignment (80.00%); and strained relationship with their children due to added pressure of online learning (80,00%). However, parents of children of the different age groups (6- 11 years) and (12 -17 years) respectively faced similar challenges in: disruption of balance between work and family life due to the demands of online learning (6-11 years: 83.30%); 12-17 years : 70.00%); difficulty encouraging participation in online classes (6-11years: 100%; 12-17 years:74.50%); unmotivated to support online learning and homework process (6-11years: 83,30%; 12-17 years: 80.00%); and concerns about their children's physical and mental health due to prolonged screen time (6-11 years:73.30%; 12-17 years: 74.50%). These findings are not surprising since before the pandemic most children spent more time at school under the supervision of teachers, especially for children in boarding schools. For some parents, the COVID-19 lockdown was the first time in a long while that they have spent significant time with their children and actively participated in their academic activities

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Hypotheses Two

There is no significant difference in the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on the age of their children in COVID-19 era.

Table 4: Independent t-test analysis on the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on the age of their children in COVID-19 era

Age	N	Mean	SD	Std. Mean	Error	DF	T	Sig
6 - 11years	103	1.6456	0.62434	0.06152		188	1.353	0.178
12 -17 years	87	1.5192	0.6625	0.07103				

The independent t-test analysis on table 4, revealed that there is no significant difference in the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on the age of their children in COVID-19 era. This is reflected in the result with $t(188) = 1.353$, $p > 0.178$. the null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Research Question three

What is the extent of involvement of fathers and mothers in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era?

Table 5: Percentage scores on involvement of fathers and mothers in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era

Items	N	Father		N	Mother	
		High Extent	Low Extent		High Extent	Low Extent
1 Providing access to online learning resources (Laptops / Internet)	40	79.50%	20.60%	150	50.00%	50.00%
2 Monitoring the child (children) online learning schedule (logging into classes time)	40	73.70%	26.30%	150	70.00%	30.00%
3 Assisting in the completion of homework	40	52.70%	47.40%	150	80.00%	20.00%
4 Encouraging the child (children) to stay focus during online classes	40	63.20%	36.80%	150	47.60%	52.40%
5 Communicating with teachers about the child (children) progress and challenges	40	36.90%	63.20%	150	58.40%	41.60%
6 Reviewing completed homework for accuracy and understanding	40	57.60%	42.40%	150	60.20%	39.80%
7 Motivating the child (children) to participate actively in online discussions or group work	40	90.90%	19.10%	150	74.50%	25.50%
8 Providing emotional support to reduce the stress of online learning and homework	40	72.90%	27.10%	150	60.00%	40.00%
9 Balancing work and family responsibilities to make time for the child(children) education	40	63.10%	36.80%	150	47.00%	53.00%

The study found differences in the involvement of fathers and mothers in online learning and homework of their children in COVID-19 era. Fathers showed slightly higher involvement in providing access to online resources, with (fathers: 79.50%; mothers: 50.00%); motivating children engagement in online learning (fathers: 63.20%; mothers: 47.60%); balancing work, family responsibilities and involvement in their children's education (father:63.10%; mother:47.00%) indicating high involvement, compared to mothers. Mothers were more involved in assisting in completion of homework (mothers:80.00%; fathers:52.70%); and reviewing homework (mothers: 60.20%; father: 57.60%) compared to fathers. This highlights the traditional distribution of

caregiving roles in many households. Both parents demonstrated similar levels of involvement in monitoring online learning schedule (mothers: 70.00%; fathers: 73.70%); motivating their children to actively engage in learning (mothers: 74.50%; fathers: 90.90%); and providing emotional support (mothers:60.00%; fathers:72.90%) indicating a high extent for both. This suggests shared responsibilities in addressing online learning and emotional challenges.

Hypotheses Three

There is no significant difference in the extent of involvement of fathers and mothers in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era.

Table 6: Independent t-test analysis on involvement of mothers and fathers in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era.

Parent	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean	Error	DF	T	Sig
Fathers	40	2.4444	0.33758	0.05338		188	1.118	0.265
Mothers	150	2.2741	0.94585	0.07723				

The independent t-test analysis indicated that with $t(188) = 1.118$, $p > 0.265$, the significant value of 0.265 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted. This imply that there is no significant difference in the extent of involvement of fathers and mothers in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Research Question Four

What are the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era?

Table 7: Percentage scores on the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era

Items	N	High Extent	Low Extent
1 My child struggled to stay focused and engage during online lesson sessions	190	50.70%	49.30%
2 The demands of assisting with online learning and homework disrupted the balance between my work and family life	190	78.90%	21.10%
3 The curriculum and assignments were difficult for me to understand and explain to my child (children)	190	89.50%	10.50%
4 Managing multiple children online learning / homework schedules as well as my commitments was overwhelming	190	57.90%	42.10%
5 Prolonged involvement in online learning/assignment left me feeling physically and emotionally exhausted	190	30.70%	69.40%
6 Encouraging my child (children) to complete homework and attend online classes was a significant challenge	190	73.70%	26.40%
7 I faced challenges in trouble-shooting technical problems during my child (children) online learning/ submission of assignment	190	73.70%	26.30%
8 It was difficult to monitor/manage my child (children) screen time during online learning and leisure activities	190	68.40%	31.60%
9 The school expectations for parents' involvement in online learning was unclear	190	50.20%	49.80%
10 My child (children) needed additional academic support was difficult to access during the pandemic	190	47.60%	52.40%
11 Providing dedicated and distraction free environment for my child (children) at home was challenging	190	58.40%	41.60%

12	I personally felt unmotivated to stay consistently in my child (children) learning and homework process	190	60.20%	39.80%
13	I felt my relationship with my child (children) was strained due to added pressure of online learning	190	74.50%	25.50%
14	Balancing the role of being a parent and a teacher during online learning / homework was overwhelming	190	68.40%	31.60%
15	The volume of homework given to my child (children) was overwhelming for us to manage and meet deadlines	190	56.40%	43.60%
16	Prolonged screen time during online learning raised concerns about my child (children) physical and mental health	190	43.30%	56.70%
17	The home environment was not conducive to effective online learning	190	57.90%	42.10%
18	I struggled to understand and use the digital tools required for my child (children) online learning / homework	190	66.90%	33.10%
19	The cost of additional resources (internet, laptops, other soft wares) for online learning put a financial strain on my family	190	40.40%	59.60%

The result on table 7 revealed that parents faced multifaceted challenges in supporting their children's online learning and homework during the pandemic: Work-Life Balance: 78.90% reported online learning disrupted their work and family responsibilities; Understanding Assignments: 89.50% of parents struggled with understanding the curriculum and assignments; 73,70% could not encourage completion of homework and attendance of online classes; Technical Issues: 73.70% found it difficult to troubleshoot technical problems; 68.40% experienced challenges of monitoring, managing screen time and learning activities; while 60.20% were unmotivated to constantly support learning and homework process; 74.50% averred to strained relationship with their children due to added pressure of online learning; 68.40% could not Balance the dual role of parenting and teaching; and 66.90% reported difficulty on use of digital tools for online learning/ assignment:. These findings could be traced to the pressure and stress that parents faced in due to the

Discussion of Findings

The results on research question and hypothesis (1 and 2) showed that parents of children in both primary and secondary schools to a high extent faced challenges in their involvement in online learning and homework of their children during COVID-19 pandemic. Parents of primary school pupils faced higher challenges in difficulty encouraging participation in online learning; managing multiple children learning/ homework schedule as well as other commitments; providing dedicated and distraction free environment; and dealing with the volume of homework to meet deadline. due to demands of online While parents of secondary students reported higher challenges in: disruption of balance between work and family due to the demands of online learning; schools unclear expectations of parents involvement; difficulty in accessing additional academic support for their children due to the pandemic; unmotivated to support their children in online learning and homework process; unconducive home environment for effective online learning; and financial strain due to additional learning resources such as laptops. These findings reflect the assertion of Kidwell (2004) that in most instances parents are at a loss as to the extent they should assist their children with their homework. In the same light, another challenge that deters parental involvement based on the findings of Cooper (2008) is the workload and scope of the homework.

The test of null hypothesis one indicated that there is no significant difference in the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on children's level of study in COVID-19 era. This is contrary to the findings of some researchers who found that as learners progress in class levels, parental involvement in their learning declined (Stephenson & Baker cited in Crosnoe, 2001).

The findings from research question two and the corresponding null hypothesis indicated that parental challenges varied to a high extent based on children's age groups. Parents of younger children (6-11 years) reported higher challenges compared to their counterparts with older children in: difficulty encouraging participation in online learning; experienced physical and emotional exhaustion; technical challenges with online learning/ submission of homework; unclear

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expectations of parents' involvement by the schools; balancing the role of being a parent /teacher; and struggle to understand and use digital tools for online learning/homework.

While parents of children within the age group (12-17 years), also encountered challenges in: understanding of the curriculum and assignment; and strained relationship with their children due to added pressure of online learning. This is in tandem with the study of Senler and Sungur (2009) which revealed a decline in parental involvement as learners grew older.

However, parents of children of the different age groups (6- 11 years) and (12 -17 years) respectively faced similar challenges in: disruption of balance between work and family life due to the demands of online learning; difficulty encouraging participation in online classes; unmotivated to support online learning and homework process; and concerns about their children's physical and mental health due to prolonged screen time. These results are in line with the findings of Dong et al. (2020) who found that some critical setbacks of parents' involvement in online learning of their children are linked to: young children's inadequate self-control, time constraint, lack of knowledge and skills. In testing the null hypothesis the result revealed no significant difference in the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework based on the age of their children in COVID-19 era. This is contrary to the findings of Dong et al. (2020) who found a significant difference between learners in primary and secondary school based on self-concept, task value and parental involvement.

Furthermore, the result from research question three and the corresponding null hypothesis revealed differences in the involvement of fathers and mothers in online learning and homework of their children in COVID-19 era. Fathers showed slightly higher involvement in providing access to online resources; motivating children engagement in online learning; balancing work, family responsibilities and involvement in their children's education; indicating high involvement, compared to mothers. This reflects the age long role of fathers as provides and financial pillars of their families. Mothers were more involved in assisting in completion of homework; and reviewing homework compared to fathers. These findings are in tandem with the study of Lau and Ng (2019) who also revealed that Chinese mothers, are generally more involved than fathers in children's education, hence may experience more challenges during their involvement in children's online learning. This is also agree with an earlier study by Crozier (1999), which revealed that mothers are more disposed to guide their children's learning. However, both parents demonstrated similar levels of involvement in monitoring online learning schedule; motivating their children to actively engage in learning; and providing emotional support. However, the statistical test of the null hypothesis indicated that there is no significant difference in the extent of involvement of fathers and mothers in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era.

The result on research question four on the challenges of parental involvement in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID -19 era, revealed that parents faced multifaceted challenges such as: Work-life balance; understanding assignments; could not encourage completion of homework and attendance of online classes; technical Issues: difficulty in handling technical problems; challenges of monitoring, managing screen time and learning activities; unmotivated to constantly support learning and homework process; strained relationship with their children due to added pressure of online learning; could not balance the dual role of parenting and teaching; and difficulty on use of digital tools for online learning/assignment. These results are in line with the views highlighted by the Michigan Department of Education (2001) on the challenges faced by parents in terms of their involvement in their children's learning. These include: apprehension on how learners regulate their time, provision of favourable atmosphere at home, tracking their undertaking outside the learning environment, concentrating on self- discipline, expressing great expectations and supporting scholarly growth. The findings of the study also aligns with the assertion of Bennett, et al (2008) that a large number of parents do not have the digital skills (Bennett, et al,2008).

CONCLUSION

The finding from the study revealed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents encountered a variety of complex challenges while supporting their children's online learning and homework. The findings indicated that to a great extent, parents of children in both primary and secondary schools encountered similar challenges in engaging with their children's learning and homework during the COVID-19 period. Though parents of primary school pupils faced higher challenges in difficulty encouraging participation in online learning, parents of secondary students encountered higher challenges in: disruption of balance between work and family due to the demands of online learning. In terms of challenges encountered by parents based on the age groups of their children, parents of younger children (6-11 years) reported higher challenges compared to their counterparts with older children in: difficulty encouraging participation in online learning; experienced physical and emotional exhaustion. While parents of children within the age group (12-17 years), also encountered challenges in: understanding of the curriculum and assignment; and strained relationship with their children due to added pressure of online learning.

On the difference in the involvement of by fathers and mothers it was deduced that fathers were more disposed in providing access to online resources; motivating children engagement in online learning, balancing work and family responsibilities, compared to mothers. While mothers were more involved in assisting in completion of homework; and reviewing homework. The findings also revealed that in terms of fathers/ mothers, level of study and age, there is no significant difference in parental involvement in online learning and homework of their children in the COVID-19 era.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

1. Schools and digital experts should offer basic digital literacy programmes to help parents navigate online learning platforms.
2. Schools should maintain communication channels with parents through regular updates and prompt feedbacks.
3. Parents should develop strategies at home to balance screen time with offline activities to enable them bond more with the children and also for relaxation.
4. Parents should pay closer attention to their children's challenges and concerns regarding online learning and actively involve them in decision-making. This approach will encourage and motivate children to participate more in the learning process.

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