


Mothers' Involvement in Emergency Remote Education: A Case Study in the COVID-19 Pandemic Era

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to provide an insight into the parental involvement process in emergency remote education by focusing on a group of mothers during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Northern Cyprus. In this case study, the data was collected through a semi-structured interview form, a life context questionnaire, and a socio-demographic information form. The rigorous thematic analysis of the rich data revealed that the participants were intensively involved in their children's remote education while taking on various overwhelming responsibilities including teaching. They thought that they were obliged to become involved intensively as they considered that the content and methods of teaching were not appropriate for learning remotely. They also believed that their involvement was needed and demanded by the children and their teachers. However, despite the participants' advantageous life contexts and access to material and cultural resources, they struggled in this exhaustive involvement process. They self-questioned their teaching responsibilities, roles, and competencies during the emergency remote education period.

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INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, soon after the first positive COVID-19 case was detected in Northern Cyprus, all the schools and education-related supporting services were closed. This was followed by putting the whole country into quarantine, which lasted for approximately two months. After an initial period of confusion, schools and universities gradually switched to remote education – some immediately, others much later and in a distorted manner. During this period, the transition from face-to-face education to mandatory fully remote education occurred without sufficient time to adapt the curricula or instruction. Bozkurt and Sharma (2020, p. ii) described this situation as “emergency remote teaching”, differentiating it from “online distance education”; while the latter is always an option, the former is an obligatory attempt to create temporary solutions to the immediate problems caused by a global health crisis.

In these unprecedented times, all the stakeholders in education – including parents with school-age children – were rushed into emergency remote education, not knowing how this unfamiliar experience would unfold.

PARENTS AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION IN THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC

Parents generally reacted negatively to the emergency remote education that occurred as a result of the school closures. A large-scale study on Chinese parents with young children revealed that there was a tendency to resist, even to reject, remote learning in this period; parents believed that it was inadequate. They also thought that neither they nor their children were ready for remote education (Dong, Cao, & Li, 2020). Another study, from Ireland, stated that parents with young children missed the early childhood education and care programs, which supported the children’s socio-emotional development, structure, and routine (Egan, Pope, Moloney, Hoyne, & Beatty, 2021).

In this period, parents were left alone to deal with their children’s learning, which was a challenging task. Spinelli, Lionetti, Pastore, and Fasolo (2020) reported that parents were stressed; they found it difficult, without support, to deal with their children’s education during the quarantine period. Similarly, a study by Garbe, Oulu, Logan, and Cook (2020) reported that parents struggled, during this period, with balancing their multiple responsibilities; maintaining their children’s motivation; accessing learning and reaching outcomes. There is literature stating that during the pandemic crisis, the school curricula, mostly due to their pre-determined and rigid natures, often failed to respond to emerging needs and conditions in education (Gul & Khilji, 2021; Hughes, 2020; Li, Zhang, Dai, & Hu, 2021; Roll, Chiu, & Huang, 2020).

Research indicates that there is a link between pandemic-related stressors, anxiety and depressive symptoms, and greater perceived parental stress (Brown, Doom, Lechuga-Peña, Watamura, & Koppels, 2020). Brown et al. also stated that parents’ negative financial situation was a factor in their increased anxiety. A study in Singapore confirmed that parental stress increased during the COVID-19 lockdown period and that this hurt the parent-child relationship. Furthermore, this elevated parental stress was found to have increased the incidence of harsh parenting (Chung, Lanier, & Wong, 2020). According to Griffith (2020), excessive parental stress occurs when there is a mismatch between the demands of parenting and the resources available, and it is defined as being related to parental burnout. Also, parental burnout is linked to perfectionism which could be self-oriented or socially prescribed (Sorkkila & Aunola, 2020). The former connotes the perfectionism parents expect of their parenting, while the latter refers to parents’ perceptions of others’ expectations of their parenting.

It seems that parental factors influenced communication between mothers and children in the pandemic period. For example, a study revealed that mothers’ older age and a higher level of education positively affected their relationship in this period (Uzun, Karaca, & Metin, 2021). This is in line with Reay’s (2002) argument that mothers who had positive educational experiences and who

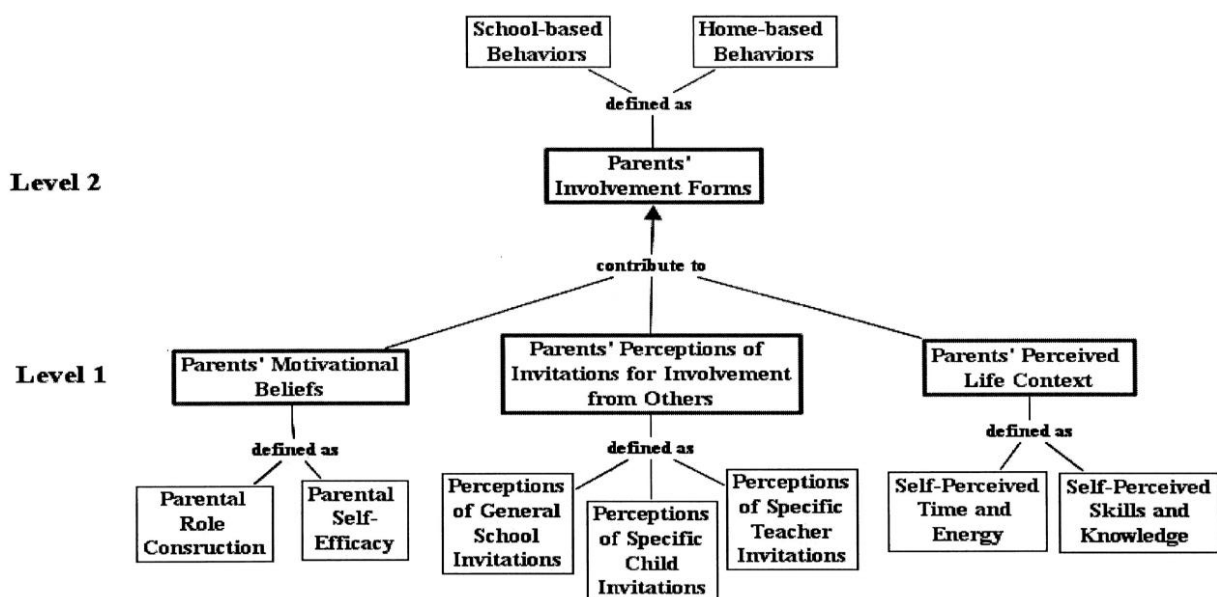
were from middle-class families were more involved in their children’s education. Similarly, a study revealed that there was a significant relationship between mothers’ education levels and students’ self-efficacy and academic achievement in learning the English language (Ocak & Tiraki, 2020).

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement is regarded as a desirable behavior (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). According to Hoover-Dempsey et al., parents are motivated to involve by their role construction and sense of self-efficacy. Also, the invitations for involvement from school, teachers, and children form to be another set of motivators for parental involvement. It is also stated that elements of parents’ life context, which involve parents’ knowledge, skills, time, and energy, play an important role in motivating parents to involve in their children’s education.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s multi-level theoretical model, from their original work in 1995 and 1997 (Reed, Jones, Walker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000; Walker et al., 2005), is significant in research on parental involvement. This model provides a conceptual framework of factors that affect the process of parental involvement. This model was revised by Walker et al. (2005) into three overarching constructs parents’ motivational beliefs; parents’ perceptions of invitations for involvement from others; and parents’ perceived life context (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Levels 1 and 2 of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s theoretical model of the parental involvement process



PARENTS’ MOTIVATIONAL BELIEFS

Parents’ role construction, which is part of their belief systems, seems to have a significant influence on their decisions for involvement. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) explain that parental role construction is a social construct, that is influenced by social groups, personal beliefs, and by parents’ own schooling experiences. Accordingly, it is responsive to changes, and it varies in line with the social conditions. The types of parental role construction are presented as follows: “parent-focused role construction” refers to parents feeling the ultimate responsibility for the child’s education; “school-focused role construction” pertains to the school having the ultimate responsibility for the child’s education; and “partnership-focused role construction” concerns the shared responsibility of both parents and school for the child’s education (Walker et al., 2005, p. 90). Empirical research revealed that parents’ perceptions of invitation for involvement from their children, the school’s expectations

of parental involvement, and the school's climate, have a substantial impact on the parents' role formation (Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013).

Parents' sense of self-efficacy, which refers to parents' beliefs about their capability, is another construct that supports and guides parental involvement (Walker et al., 2005). Accordingly, those parents who believe that their involvement will create a positive impact on the child's learning tend to involve themselves more, in varied forms.

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INVITATIONS FOR INVOLVEMENT

Another factor that appears to affect parents' involvement is their perception of invitations and demands from the children or their teachers to help with homework. Research suggests that children's age, performance level, and the parent-child relationship are influential in invitations (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Also, teacher invitations were found to have a significant impact on parents' decision to involve in children's schoolwork.

PARENTS' PERCEIVED LIFE CONTEXT

Parental life context includes parental skills, knowledge, time, and energy, and it is regarded as an important motivator for parents in their decisions to involve (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). These contextual elements are related to the resources available to them, and these resources create and determine involvement opportunities. They state that socio-economic status is often associated with access to these resources. For example, parents of lower socioeconomic status may possess lower levels of school-related knowledge or skill, as a result of less schooling for themselves, or lower levels of access to support systems (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003).

FORMS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement occurs in the form of behaviors and activities. For example, home-based behaviors include helping children with homework; and school-based activities involve attending school events. Having acknowledged these, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) cautioned that parents' over-involvement could have a negative influence on a child's education, as it could, for example, reduce the child's chances to take on responsibility for their learning.

Grounded on the conceptual background on parental involvement and the recent research findings on parental involvement in the first wave of the pandemic, this study aims to shed more light on parental involvement in parental response to emergency remote education by focusing in-depth on the experiences of a group of mothers with school-age children in Northern Cyprus. The available literature calls for more empirical research to better understand parental engagement in children's education during the pandemic (Brown et al., 2020; Griffith, 2020). In this crisis period, parents around the globe struggled with schoolwork (Chung et al., 2020; Dong et al., 2020; Egan et al., 2021; Garbe et al., 2020; Spinelli et al., 2020). This research could contribute to the literature by providing insight into the parental involvement process as to why and how they became involved and how their life context perceptions affected their decision to involve. Henceforth, the study aimed to illuminate the following research questions in the research context: Why did mothers involve in emergency remote education; how did they involve in emergency remote education, and in what ways did mothers' perceived life contexts affect their involvement?

Although the study is limited to a small group of 14 mothers, its findings could contribute to our understanding of parental involvement in emergency remote education from the perspectives and experiences of the participating mothers. Additionally, the study findings may contribute to the conceptual model on parental involvement and its interpretation during the COVID-19 era.

METHOD

This is a case study, within the qualitative research paradigm, that aimed to illuminate the parental involvement process during emergency remote education by focusing on a group of mothers

in the Northern Cyprus context. Qualitative research adopts an in-depth, individualized, and contextually sensitive approach to understanding how people construct meaning from their experiences (Patton, 2015). For this purpose, qualitative data provide in-depth information on authentic life experiences while focusing on events in their natural environments (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

A case study is a suitable research strategy when "... 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 2003, p. 1). This case study is context-specific, "... situated in time, place, culture, and situation" (Charmaz, 2006, p.131), which means that it is restricted to the social context from which the data were gathered. It focused on the involvement of a group of mothers, who were living in Northern Cyprus, and on their experiences during the engagement in their children's emergency remote education in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (Charmaz, 2006).

ETHICAL APPROVAL

For the current study, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the university to which the researcher is affiliated. The research was based on voluntary participation; the volunteers read and signed an "informed consent" form that openly explained the purpose of the research, and how data would be collected and used. During the data collection procedure, the researcher once again, orally and in writing, informed the research participants about the research aims and the research procedures, and how the data would be used. The participants were informed that they could leave the research if they wished to do so. During the data analysis and reporting, the participants' names were removed for anonymity and confidentiality purposes.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

In this study, purposeful sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling strategies were employed. A purposeful sampling strategy refers to selecting information-rich cases that could provide ample information to contribute to the purpose and the depth of the study (Patton, 1990). In this case, the information-rich participants were from a homogenous group of mothers. The convenience sampling strategy was used to obtain information from participants who were easily accessible to the researcher, in terms of proximity or for administrative reasons (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). In the current study, firstly, the voluntary participants who were nearby were contacted. The first participants were mothers whose children attended private primary schooling, in closer proximity to the researcher. Later, more participants were reached, through snowball sampling. This meant, in this instance, that those mothers who were contacted primarily, and agreed to volunteer in the study, recommended others with school-age children who might be interested in this research. This allowed rapid access to rich data sources in a convenient fashion (Patton, 1987). It also allowed for the expansion of breadth and depth of data, as it enabled more access to more lives and experiences, and thus, a better exploration and illumination of the subject matter.

As for the sample size in the current research – to judge the sample size of the study, it is advisable to pay attention to the study purpose and rationale, and whether the data allows meaningful comparisons, to develop and reach explanations (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The participants in the current study are fourteen mothers who lived in Northern Cyprus during the first lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sampling continued until the point at which no new information was obtained, in other words, until saturation (Roberts & Bowers, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1985) confirm this stating that in purposeful sampling, the size is determined based on informational consideration and if the information that is received from participants becomes redundant, sampling may cease. Table 1 provides demographic information about the participating mothers.

Table 1. Participating Mothers' Demographics

| <i>Specifications</i> | <i>Responses</i> | <i>N</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Age Range | 51-55 years old | 1 |
| | 46-50 | 4 |
| | 41-45 | 7 |
| | 36-40 | 1 |
| | 31-35 | 1 |
| Education | University graduate | 9 |
| | Post-graduate | 5 |
| Reported income level | Middle-to-high income | 9 |
| | Middle income | 5 |
| Housing | House with a garden | 12 |
| | Apartment with a balcony | 2 |
| Number of children | Single child | 8 |
| | Two children | 6 |

In this study, all the participants were biological mothers, within a nuclear family composition, who were residing in Northern Cyprus. According to the participants' responses to the socio-demographic information form, their professions were as follows: teacher, psychologist, clinical psychologist, engineer, academician, international relations specialist, physician, bank clerk, and insurance clerk. Nine mothers were reported as working mothers; of these, four were full-time and five part-time. Eight of the nine stated that their work routine was influenced due to the pandemic.

The age range of the participants' children was between 4 and 15, with a mean value of 8.6 years old. Accordingly, the children's year groups at school ranged from the reception year to year 10, with the highest number of children in year 2 (8 children), followed by year 5 (3 children). All these children were attending synchronous lessons, varying from 20 minutes to 6 hours, with an average of 85 minutes per day. Those parents who responded declared that the time spent on homework was between 30 minutes and 9 hours, with an average of 126 minutes a day. Except for one mother, the remaining mothers reported that they could speak English; nine of them considered their English level as 'good' and four as 'average'.

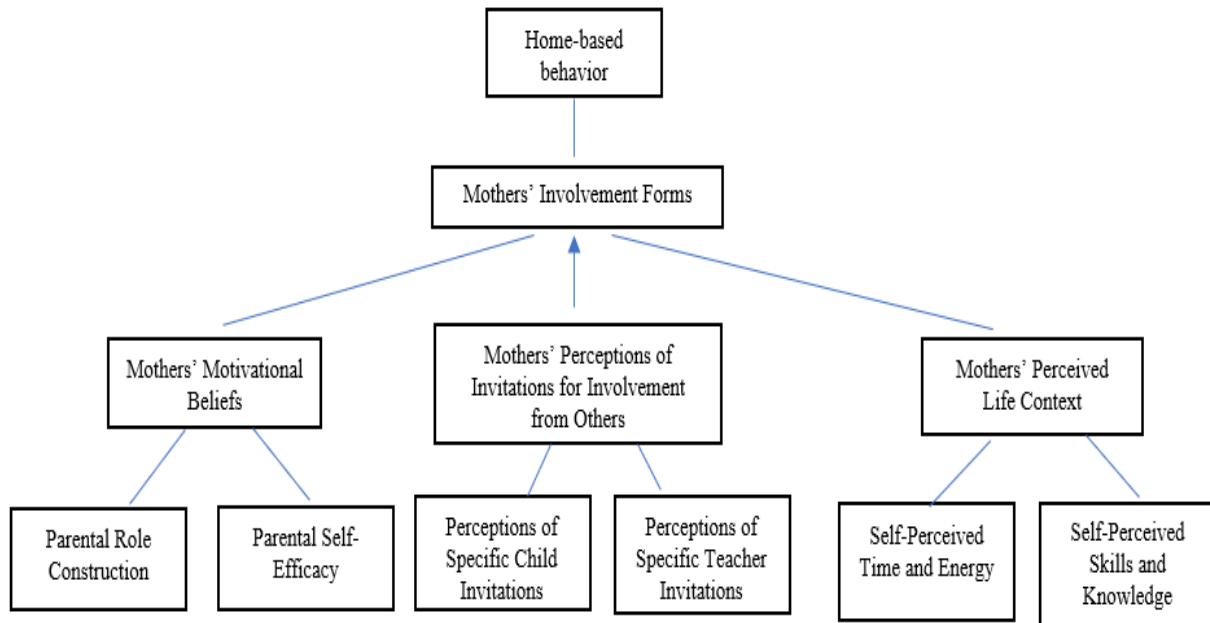
The children of these mothers were in private schooling, with a majority in the junior primary, that provided English-medium education. During this period, these children received their remote education via Zoom. The homework exchange, and communication with the teacher, were through ClassDojo or Edmodo, which are virtual school communication platforms for communication between the school and the students/parents.

DATA COLLECTION

Qualitative research data provide rich, holistic, and in-depth information, on a specific case that is focused and confined to the unique local context (Miles et al., 2014). In this study, rich data was obtained using multiple data collection methods until data saturation was reached. Charmaz (2006) states that the depth and scope of data are significant in explaining empirical events; therefore, data saturation is the key to qualitative data collection. Data saturation is described as "... the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data" (Guest et al., 2006, p. 59). Accordingly, Guest et al.'s empirical study indicated that saturation was reached within 12 interviews. They indicated that the basic elements for meta-themes were already present in the first six interviews. Additionally, Patton (2015) stated that whether saturation is achieved in a study also depends on the research purpose.

In this study, the data collection instruments were a semi-structured interview form, a perceived life context questionnaire, and a demographic information form. Both the interview form and the perceived life context questionnaire were based on the conceptual model of parental involvement, which was adapted from the revised theoretical model of Walker et al. (2005), which was originally developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler in 1995 and 1997. In the adapted model, the only constructs that were omitted from the revised model were the constructs on “Perceptions of General School Invitations” and “School-based Behaviors” (p.88) to match the study context, as education was remote. Figure 2 illustrates the adaptation of the conceptual model.

Figure 2. *The adapted version of Walker et al.’s (2005) revised model on parental involvement*



The semi-structured interview form was adapted from the parental involvement scale developed by Walker et al. (2005). The interview guide focused on the following constructs: Parental role construction, parental self-efficacy, perceptions of specific child invitations, and perceptions of specific teacher invitations, leaving out the school invitation construct. The original items in the scale, which was a 6-point Likert scale, were adapted to an open-ended question format with an emphasis on the COVID-19 period. The item content was kept as in the original. For example, in the original scale, under the section on parental role construction for involvement, item 3 “I believe it is my responsibility to help my child with homework” (p.100) was adapted as “Do you believe that it is your responsibility to help your child with homework in the COVID-19 period?”. Similarly, under the section on parental self-efficacy for helping the child succeed in school, item 4 “I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn” (p.101) was adapted as “Do you feel successful about your efforts to help your child learn in the COVID-19 period?”. The semi-structured interview form contained a total of 21 open-ended questions on the constructs, as opposed to 29 items in the original scale. The reason for the decrease in number was the omission of the reversed items found in the original scale such as “I don’t know if I am getting through to my child” (p.101), and the items concerning school, as education was remote. The interview questions were first prepared in English and translated into Turkish, the native language of the participants. An expert check was obtained for clarity and answerability while comparing each question to the items in the original scale corresponding to the constructs. Afterward, the interview form was pilot tested with two participants, and necessary changes, which were mainly on language clarity in Turkish, were incorporated.

The life context questionnaire focused on the participants’ perceived life context. In the questionnaire, as per the original scale, there were six items under the ‘time and energy’ construct,

and nine items in the 'knowledge and skills' construct. For example, "I have enough energy to help my child with homework" (Time and energy), and "I know how to explain things to my child about his or her homework" (Knowledge and skills) (Walker et al., 2005, p. 102). In the questionnaire, the 6-point scale format of the original scale was modified to a 2-point scale format - 'Agree/Disagree'. The original English version was translated into Turkish. The Turkish translation was checked by the expert before its use. Later, it was pilot tested with two participants for its clarity. However, a reliability check was not conducted on the questionnaire, and this should be noted as a limitation of this study.

The socio-demographic information form included 25 closed- and open-ended questions that sought information in four major areas: 1) socio-demographic information on the participants; 2) the impact of the lockdown on the participants' professional lives; 3) basic information on their children and their education, and 4) how mothers coped with their children's emergency remote education.

These instruments were originally prepared in English and translated into Turkish, the participants' native language. The expert check was obtained for each of the instruments during the peer-debriefing phase to validate that the concepts under study are included adequately (Yin, 2009). Before the actual use, the data collection instruments were pilot tested with two participants for language and clarity, and necessary alterations and modifications were made. The data was collected in three focus-group interviews and four individual interviews. These interviews were audio-recorded, as per informed consent, for analysis.

The data collection took place immediately after the end of the quarantine period when the measures had been eased. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in the open air. The life context questionnaire and the socio-demographic information forms were completed by the participants during the meeting for the interviews. When the data were collected, in June, the children had already been involved in emergency remote education for two months, i.e., since the beginning of April 2020.

DATA ANALYSIS

Before the analysis, the recorded interviews were fully transcribed, and the name of each participant was omitted. Each was assigned a code, for example, "M1", to conceal the participating mother's name while reporting. Hence, the letter 'M' referred to 'mother', and the number was given based on the chronological order of the interviews.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that in qualitative research data analysis "involves taking constructions gathered from the context and reconstructing them into meaningful wholes" (p. 333). In this study, thematic coding was conducted to analyze the data that was obtained through the interviews. This was done in two coding cycles: In the first cycle of coding, the data were read several times to construct the interpreted meaning of the data. In this process, the data was coded and sub-coded to allow extensive detailing of the rich data to indicate the emerged interrelationships. During the first cycle of the coding, process coding was utilized. This allowed connoting action, interaction, and consequences in the data (Miles et al., 2014). While coding, simultaneous coding was conducted as, in some cases, the data suggested multiple meanings that necessitated multiple codes. The coding process was repeated for each data set; and each time the codes and subcodes were compared, revised, and refined. After the first cycle of coding, a matrix was developed to arrange the data for easy viewing. In this matrix, the codes, subcodes, and quotations from the raw data were placed so that the connection with the raw data was maintained during the analysis process.

In the second cycle of coding, pattern coding was conducted which allowed the associated codes and subcodes from the first cycle to be gathered under umbrella-like categories that could capture the essence of the codes. In this phase, the matrix was revised multiple times as the second cycle continued; and the abbreviations were added to the codes. This phase was followed by the verification of the coding by cross-checking the thematic categories and codes with the raw data. Throughout the analysis, reading, rereading, and coding continued to the point of saturation (Egan et al., 2021). In this

comprehensive analysis, each thematic category needed to be well-represented by many cases in the data (Urquhart, Lehmann, & Myers, 2010).

Three main thematic categories emerged as a result of the above-mentioned systematic thematic coding analysis: Obligation for involvement; intensive involvement; and reflection on the involvement process. The codes and sub-codes were displayed to associate interrelationships, and coding abbreviations were devised to facilitate the coding process. Accordingly, Obligation for involvement (O) was motivated by 'Distrusting emergency remote education' (O-DERE) about the following concerns as sub-codes 'Perceiving teaching content and methods ineffective' (O-DERE-I), 'Observing lack of active student participation (O-DERE-LAP) and finding homework overwhelming (O-DERE-HO). The second thematic category was found to be the participating mothers' 'Intensive involvement' (I) in the form of 'Teaching and helping homework' as a code (I-THH), with sub-codes as 'Active teaching' (I-THH-AT), 'Learning to teach' (I-THH-LT), and 'Helping homework' (I-THH-HH). 'Initiating communication' (I-IC) was the second code within this thematic category. This took place through 'Interacting with the child on schoolwork' (I-IC-C) and interacting with the teacher (I-IC-T). Reflection on the involvement process (R) emerged as the third thematic category. This was in the form of 'Self-questioning' (R-Q) the following issues as sub-codes - the teacher-role (R-Q-TR), their 'Teaching competencies' (R-Q-TC), and their over-involvement (T-Q-I). The second code under the Reflection thematic category was 'Experiencing tension' (R-T) about 'Fulfilling requirements' (R-T-FR) and 'Competing with the fellow mothers' (R-T-C).

The analysis was displayed in tables (Table 2; Table 3; and Table 4) in the following part with the attributions to the participating mothers to indicate their contribution. This analysis process was followed by a rigid audit trial process which is discussed in detail below. In addition to the concerns regarding reliability, ensuring research validity was given utmost care in this study. As Yin (2009) states, case studies need to consider construct validity for investigating and operationalizing the concepts, internal validity for relationships among concepts, and external validity for the generalizability of the findings. In this study, the conceptual framework on parental involvement was considered both in data collection, analysis, and discussion of the research findings which aimed to contribute to the construct and internal validity of the study. The rigorous description of the research method, results, conceptual background and literature of the phenomenon, and the discussion of the findings aimed to help increase the external validity of this study.

The data analysis was reported using narrative description while benefitting from direct quotations from the participants. The quotations that were placed in the text were translated from Turkish to English, using back-to-back translation.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Validity and reliability of data collection procedure and analysis are crucial for a study that could allow trustworthy findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this analysis, the researcher paid utmost attention to enriching the credibility of the findings.

DATA TRIANGULATION

Data triangulation incorporates multiple procedures to allow the consideration of multiple perspectives to make meaning of the phenomenon (Stake, 1994). In the current study, data triangulation was achieved by seeking data through multiple methods: semi-structured interviews, parents' perceived life context questionnaire, and a demographic information form.

PEER DEBRIEFING

Peer-debriefing contributes to the credibility of a study by allowing a competent professional outside the study context to analyze materials and listen to the researcher (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). In the peer-debriefing process, an experienced colleague, with ample research

experience in qualitative research from a different university, was invited. The debriefing sessions involved informal discussions in which the peer asked questions that helped the researcher to reflect on the research process including data collection, data analysis, and reporting of the results.

AUDIT TRAIL

An audit trail is a valuable technique that aims to increase the credibility of the study findings (Erlandson et al., 1993). In this study, the competent peer who was engaged in the peer-debriefing process audited the data analysis process. This was accepted as an advantage since the peer was already well-informed on the study with essential background knowledge. Following the guidance by Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Erlandson et al., 1993, pp. 148-149), the audit trail materials were provided to the auditor in six categories: 1) raw data (interview audio recordings, interview guide, completed life-context questionnaires, and socio-demographic information guide); 2) data reduction and analysis products (interview transcripts); 3) data reconstruction and synthesis products (data analysis sheets of every data source; coding, matrix; and tables); 4) process notes (draft semi-structured interview guides; life-context questionnaires; and draft socio-demographic information form); 5) materials relating to intentions and dispositions (the draft research paper), and 6) information relative to any instrument (the final versions of the piloted data collection instruments).

During the auditing phase, after the first check of the data, the auditor requested a Zoom meeting on coding. In this meeting, the researcher and the auditor randomly selected and coded a set of data which was followed by comparing and discussing coding until a consensus was reached. Based on this, the auditor made suggestions, which the researcher considered, and revised coding accordingly. This was followed by the second round of audit, which was followed by the second Zoom meeting to provide oral feedback. The researcher took the feedback into account and revised it accordingly. In this process, the auditor also checked and verified the translation of the quotations in the report. The audit continued in intervals during the analysis and reporting phases. As a result, the auditor made further suggestions on the illustration and reporting of the data.

FINDINGS

This study focused on a group of mothers and their involvement in their children's education during the emergency remote education that was provided in the first school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The data that was obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using coding, which is an analytic strategy within the qualitative research paradigm (Miles et al., 2014). This analysis revealed three interrelated thematic categories: Obligation for Involvement, Intensive Involvement, and Reflection on the Involvement Process. The thematic categories, codes, and sub-codes were identified and reported in detail below with direct quotations from the raw data.

THEME 1. OBLIGATION FOR INVOLVEMENT

As displayed in Table 2, the participating mothers perceived that they were obliged to involve in their children's education. They did not consider the emergency remote education effective or sufficient. They found that the teaching content and methodologies were not appropriate for remote online education. Also, there was a concern that the homework was excessive and difficult.

Table 2. Obligation for Involvement

| <i>Thematic Categories</i> | <i>Codes</i> | <i>Sub-Codes</i> | <i>Participating Mothers</i> |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Obligation for involvement | Distrusting emergency remote education | Perceiving teaching content and methods ineffective | M1; M2; M3; M6; M5; M7; M8; M9; M11; M12; M14 |
| | | Observing the lack of active student participation | M1; M3; M5; M11; M12 |
| | | Finding homework overwhelming | M1; M2; M7; M6; M11; M12; M14 |
| | Responding to invitations/demands | Responding to direct invitations/demands from the child | M1; M3; M4; M5; M6; M7; M8; M9; M10 |
| | | Responding to indirect invitations/demands from the teacher | M1; M2; M3; M4; M5; M6; M7; M8; M11; M12; M13; M14 |
| | | Responding to direct invitations/demands from the teacher | M4; M5; M6; M7; M8; M9 |

DISTRUSTING EMERGENCY REMOTE EDUCATION

An overwhelming number of mothers shared their concerns about the teaching content and methods that were employed in remote education in this case. There was criticism that the content of core subjects such as mathematics was overwhelmingly complicated for the children to understand without support. Particularly those mothers who were teachers by profession believed that the teaching materials and methods were not appropriate for remote online teaching and learning. For example, a mother (M12) criticized that the teacher was trying to explain a complex mathematical structure using the “direct method” as if they were in the classroom. Similarly, another mother complained that the teacher was trying to implement the usual course subject content using the pre-COVID methods. She criticized that the teachers insisted on implementing the curriculum as if nothing had happened (M14).

Another point of concern was the lack of sufficient student participation during synchronous lessons. This was observed by several mothers while sitting next to their children during these lessons or while overhearing the lessons. For example, one mother said, “The children do not listen. One is busy changing his name, the other one plays with his dog. Teaching time is not very productive” (M1).

Several participating mothers thought that the homework that the children received during this period was an excessive amount, and overwhelmingly difficult for the student’s level of competence. Therefore, the mothers felt that their involvement was necessary; otherwise, the children could not complete the schoolwork. For example, a mother was worried, and she said “Today the children’s homework today was very difficult. Equations. Did he understand this topic during the lesson? If we don’t help, this homework cannot be completed by the children themselves” (M7). Similarly, some mothers thought that the type of homework and the projects that were assigned, such as preparing book covers, required them to step in and help, as the children could not complete them without support.

RESPONDING TO INVITATIONS/DEMANDS

Despite that several mothers stated that they self-initiated involvement in children’s education as a usual routine during pre-COVID times, they emphasized that their involvement has overwhelmingly increased during emergency remote education. Also, accordingly, the children’s demand from their mothers to help them with schoolwork increased substantially during this period.

For example, one mother explained “He asks me to do the homework together. He used to do this before as well; but at that time, I did not need to teach the topic” (M6).

Almost all the participating mothers perceived that their involvement was indirectly demanded by the teacher. Many thought that their active involvement was demanded, judging from the amount and complexity of their children’s homework on daily basis. For example, a mother said “They must expect us to help. We receive 10 pages of homework every day. For the child to be able to do this, the teacher must be expecting help from us. Indirectly!” (M2).

In addition to the indirect invitations for help, some mothers reported that teachers also made explicit demands for help with schoolwork. For example, a mother (M5) said that the teacher contacted her and asked her to teach the parts her child did not understand during the lesson. Additionally, several mothers reported that the teachers contacted mothers directly to ask for help in keeping the children engaged in front of the screen during the synchronous lessons.

THEME 2. INTENSIVE INVOLVEMENT

As shown in Table 3, the data analysis revealed an overwhelming involvement from the participating mothers in their children’s education during this period. They were teaching, organizing schoolwork, helping, and sometimes completing their children’s homework. To teach effectively, some mothers worked on developing effective teaching strategies. Some mothers said that they were learning the topics before teaching them to their children so that their teaching became more effective. Additionally, all the mothers expressed that they were intensively involved in homework completion.

Table 3. Intensive Involvement

| <i>Thematic Categories</i> | <i>Codes</i> | <i>Sub-Codes</i> | <i>Participating Mothers</i> |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Intensive involvement | Teaching and helping with homework | Active teaching | M1; M2; M3; M4; M5; M6; M7; M8; M10; M11; M12; M13; M14 |
| | | Learning to teach | M2; M4; M5; M8; M12 |
| | | Helping homework | M1; M2; M3; M4; M5; M6; M7; M8; M9; M10; M11; M12; M13; M14 |
| | Initiating communication | Interacting with the child on schoolwork | M1; M2; M3; M4; M5; M6; M7; M8; M9; M10; M11; M12; M13; M14 |
| | | Interacting with the teacher | M1; M2; M3; M4; M5; M7; M8; M9; M11; M12; M13; M14 |

TEACHING AND HELPING WITH HOMEWORK

Almost all the participating mothers said that they were engaged in active teaching during emergency remote education. They felt that their children needed them to explain the topics as they thought the children were not able to understand during synchronous lessons. This led many mothers to spend substantial time teaching the schoolwork. Several mothers described themselves as “mother-teacher” and explained that they had become like “teachers at home” during this period. Accordingly, a mother explained her contribution as follows: “At the moment, we are doing all the teaching. We are doing the teaching and the teachers are providing the support. I mean we changed positions” (M11).

The issue of how to teach in the best way to attain the students’ level and competence by using effective teaching strategies was the concern of several mothers. Some others said that they studied the topics to be taught in advance, watched related videos on YouTube, or accompanied the child

during synchronous lessons to prepare beforehand. A mother said “I do not know how to teach. In the first months, I sat down together with the child in all the synchronous lessons to see how the teacher was teaching the subjects, and I followed the same teaching method with my son” (M4).

According to the data, all the participating mothers were involved in helping the children to complete their homework. They all thought that it was their responsibility to help their children with their homework; however, they added that their contribution has substantially increased during emergency remote education. They explained that they made sure the homework was completed correctly on time despite that they were aware that it was often excessive and above the child’s level of competence. Cases were admitting that homework was completed by the mothers themselves so that it could be sent on time. The mothers explained that they spent a long time engaged in homework. One mother explained her routine during this period as:

First, I watch videos to understand the teaching topic of the day. Then, we watch the videos together with my son. Then, I do the teaching, and then we decide on how we do the homework. Then, I get him to do his homework. We spend the entire day doing homework. (M8)

INITIATING COMMUNICATION

All the mothers self-perceived themselves as responsible for initiating and maintaining communication with the school, class teacher, other parents, and their children. All of them explained that they interacted with their children on schoolwork in this period. While some mothers explained that their communication with their children increased as there was more homework to do; some others expressed that their communication diminished during this period. The amount of homework, mothers’ perceived tension while teaching and their perceived lack of patience seemed to have affected their communication negatively.

Several mothers expressed that they maintained communication with the class teacher in this period. This communication was via ClassDojo or through WhatsApp, and mostly on homework completion. Also, it was reported that there were no parent-teacher meetings that could facilitate better communication, particularly on effective teaching strategies.

THEME 3. REFLECTIONS ON THE INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The data revealed that the participating mothers experienced confusion and stress while involved in their children’s education during the emergency remote education period. The results are displayed in Table 4).

Table 4. Reflection on the Involvement Process

| <i>Thematic Categories</i> | <i>Codes</i> | <i>Sub-Codes</i> | <i>Participating Mothers</i> |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Reflection on the involvement process | Self-questioning | Questioning their ‘teacher’ role | M2; M4; M10; M11; M12 |
| | | Questioning teaching competence | M1; M2; M4; M6; M7; M11; M12 |
| | | Questioning over-involvement | M1; M2; M4; M5; M6; M11; M12 |
| | Experiencing tension | Fulfilling requirements | M4; M7; M8; M9; M10; M11; M12; M13 |
| | | Competing with fellow mothers | M6; M7; M8; M9 |

SELF-QUESTIONING

Many participants were self-questioning their increased responsibilities in this process. Some of them openly questioned and protested their newly acquired teaching role and responsibilities, saying that they did not volunteer to take the teaching responsibility. For example, a mother said, “I am not a mother who wants to take a teaching role. I am doing it because I must” (M4). Another one, who was

a teacher by profession, was also struggling; she said “I cannot apply the things I know. With my child, I lose my teacher identity and I become a mother” (M12).

Concerning the above, several mothers thought that they did not have adequate teaching competencies. For example, one of their concerns was whether they knew how to teach this age group. Another concern was related to whether their teaching approach was in line with that of the teachers’. This concern was particularly voiced by the mothers who were teachers by profession. For example, they wanted to know how to treat spelling errors while teaching in English (M12); or how to teach complex topics (M1).

Using the appropriate level of expertise to match the children’s level of knowledge and understanding was another issue about teaching competence. A mother voiced her concern as follows: “We are all educated, and we have seen these subjects. However, going down the child’s level and explaining them accordingly is a different matter” (M6).

The data revealed that several mothers self-questioned their over-involvement in their children’s education in this period worrying that their over-involvement could cause more harm than good. One of the concerns in this regard was related to the impact of their excessive involvement on their children’s autonomy. Some said that ideally, they preferred their children to be autonomous learners. For example, one mother (M7) described herself as a disciplined and autonomous learner in all her life and explained that this was how she had built her career. She said that ideally, she wanted to raise her child in the same way.

Also, there was a worry that their excessive involvement in the schoolwork gave a misleading message to the teacher. There was a worry that the teacher might have thought that the children were able to follow the lessons or complete an excessive amount of schoolwork without problems. After all, the homework was on time and completed correctly.

EXPERIENCING TENSION

The data indicated that the schoolwork created pressure and tension at home, and with other mothers. At home, besides the increasing responsibilities in household duties, the substantial amount of schoolwork seemed to have created tension. Accordingly, there was stress between the mother and the child, and between the mother and other family members, particularly with the father. Some of the reasons that triggered this stress were said to be the mothers’ overwhelming involvement, the competitive approach of the mother toward homework completion, and the children’s refusal to accept the mother in the teaching role. For example, a mother explained her frustration while struggling to teach:

Right now, I feel like I am drowning. I never give up fighting, but I am struggling. I’m swallowing as I am swimming. I am aware of my mistakes because my child hears my voice as if it is coming out of another mother she had not known before. She must be saying ‘how come this voice is coming out of my mom!’ and I am saying ‘how come this voice is coming out of me!’ I get upset. I fear harming my child’s self-confidence...(M11)

Also, the data showed that there was competition among mothers based on their children’s success in the remote lessons and in homework completion; and this created stress and tension. For example, a mother said, “There is a war among us about who got how many Dojo points during the week. There are so many people who ask me how many Dojos we collected this week” (M8). This competition was so much so that the children’s success was perceived as the mothers’ success.

In addition to the interview data, the participant’s responses to the life context questionnaire concerning their perceived life contexts on their time, energy, knowledge, and skills were analyzed. This analysis is displayed in Table 5 and Table 6, as below.

Table 5. Self-Perceived Time and Energy

| <i>Resource availability</i> | <i>%</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| I have enough time and energy to.... | |
| 1 communicate effectively with my child about the school day. | 85.7 |
| 2 help out at my child’s school. | 50.0 |
| 3 communicate effectively with my child’s teacher. | 92.8 |
| 4 attend special events at school. | 92.8 |
| 5 help my child with homework. | 92.8 |
| 6 supervise my child’s homework. | 92.8 |

As shown in Table 6, a large majority (85.7%) of the participating mothers perceived that during this period, they had time and energy to communicate effectively with their children about school. Similarly, almost all the participants (92,8%) perceived that they had time and energy to: communicate effectively with their child’s teacher, attend special events at school (in the pre-Covid period), and help their child with homework, and supervise their child’s homework. However, only half of the participants (50%) perceived that they had time and energy to help out at their children’s schools (in the pre-Covid period).

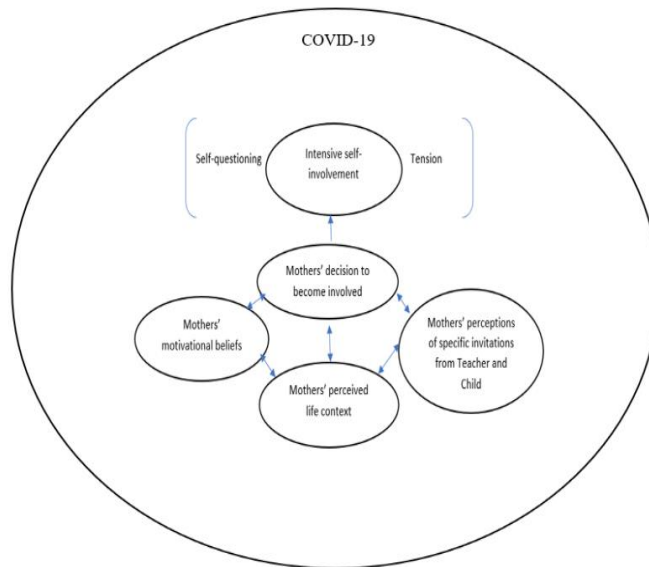
Table 6. Self-Perceived Knowledge and Skills

| <i>Resource availability</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1 I know about volunteering opportunities at my child’s school. | 71.4 |
| 2 I know about special events at my child’s school. | 92.8 |
| 3 I know effective ways to contact my child’s teacher. | 100 |
| 4 I know how to communicate effectively with my child about the school day. | 100 |
| 5 I know how to explain things to my child about his or her homework. | 85.7 |
| 6 I know enough about the subjects of my child’s homework to help him or her. | 92.8 |
| 7 I know how to communicate effectively with my child’s teacher. | 100 |
| 8 I know how to supervise my child’s homework. | 100 |
| 9 I have the skills to help out at my child’s school. | 92.8 |

As far as the perceived knowledge and skills were concerned, as displayed in Table 4, the data revealed that all the participants thought that they had the knowledge and skills to find ways to contact and communicate with their child’s teacher. Likewise, all of them regarded that they had the knowledge and skills to communicate effectively with their child about school and to supervise his/her homework. Furthermore, almost all the participants (92.8%) felt confident about helping out their children with schoolwork as they perceived that they had the necessary knowledge and skills. When it comes to how to explain things to children, there is a slightly lower perception (85.7%) of the skills and knowledge of this competence. Although a large proportion of the participants (92.8%) viewed that they knew about the special events at schools, there seemed to be a lower level (71.4%) of awareness of volunteering opportunities at the children’s schools.

The data that was obtained through semi-structured interviews, life context questionnaires, and socio-demographic information form revealed that the results were interrelated and interdependent. This implies internal homogeneity within the findings. Figure 2 displays the study findings and the interrelationship of the contributors considering the adapted conceptual model on the parental involvement process (Walker et al., 2005).

Figure 3. *Participating Mothers' Involvement in Emergency Remote Education*



DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was conducted immediately after the first COVID-19 lockdown measures were eased, and it covered the period of complete school closures and the sudden shift to emergency remote education in the Spring of 2020. The aim was to illuminate parental involvement in emergency remote education by focusing in-depth on understanding the experiences of a small number of mothers with school-age children in Northern Cyprus. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews, life context questionnaires, and a socio-demographic form were utilized as data collection instruments to seek data on their involvement. The rigorous data analysis revealed that the participating mothers felt that they had to involve intensively in their children’s learning, due to the problems they experienced in emergency remote education, and to answer the invitations from the children and their teachers on their involvement. Their engagement in education was highly demanding, and this overwhelming process led mothers to self-doubt and experience tension.

The study findings revealed that the participating mothers took overwhelming responsibilities in their involvement in the children’s learning, and most of them described themselves as “mother-teacher” since they adopted a teaching role at home. Some of them were concerned with their teaching strategies; therefore, they undertook further responsibility to study the teaching topic in advance (M8) or watched synchronous lessons to understand the teacher’s teaching style to facilitate the child’s learning (M4).

In this case, the participants’ involvement seemed so extreme that some mothers found themselves competing for ClassDojo points, while two of them claimed to be “the champions of the week” (M7; M8). Some mothers admitted that their competitive attitude created tension, among their respective family members, and with other mothers. This type of over-involvement could have negative impacts on the child’s education, as it could lead to negative developmental, social, and educational consequences (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). This was confirmed by some of the participating mothers as they were concerned that their excessive involvement could impact their children’s learner autonomy (M2; M3).

It is also important to consider the power of invitation for parental involvement. Accordingly, teachers’ invitation for involvement was found to be a profound motivator on parents’ decision to involve while exceeding the influence of socio-economic factors (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). In this

study, almost all the mothers perceived that their children and class teachers expected and demanded their intensive involvement. These invitations had a strong impact on the participants who had access to resources, i.e., knowledge, skills, time, and energy. This situation confirms the literature (Walker et al., 2005).

Also, the mothers had the impression that their involvement would make a positive impact as they considered themselves equipped to make a substantial contribution to their children's learning. By judging their socio-economic situation, educational background, and professional experience, they had access to material and cultural resources. Their life context questionnaire results confirmed this as all of them perceived having knowledge, skills, time, and energy for parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). This confirms Reay's (2002) statement that mothers' personal educational histories and their past educational experiences have an impact on their approach to their children's education and on how effective they are in dealing with their children's teachers. According to Reay, those mothers from middle-class families tend to refer to their own positive educational experiences and become more involved in their children's education. Likewise, in this study, the resourceful participants reported that they initiated and maintained communication with their children's teachers in this period.

The relationship between mothers' profiles and their engagement with their children is confirmed in another study in the pandemic context. Uzun et al. (2021) established a positive link between the mothers' ages, levels of education and their relationships with their children. Similarly, another study confirmed that there was a positive relationship between mothers' education levels and their children's levels of self-efficacy and achievement in English language learning (Ocak & Tiraki, 2020). This could confirm that social factors and perceived access to resources might affect mothers' motivational beliefs for parental involvement. In this study, the participating mothers were of high-education background whose majority of ages ranged from 40-50 with perceived knowledge, skills, time, and energy. The results also revealed that they believed to be responsible and capable of helping their children succeed at learning.

In the study, almost all the participants exhibited a parent-focused role construction (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Walker et al., 2005). They undertook a variety of responsibilities, ranging from teaching, assisting, and even doing their children's homework. Undoubtedly, the unusual time in which they lived influenced their forms of involvement. These findings confirm that parental role construction is a social construct, and it responds to changes and conditions in society (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

However, the data indicated that the demanding involvement led the participating mothers to experience tension and self-doubt at the same time. Several of them questioned their teaching role at home. For example, this situation created an overwhelming feeling of protest for one mother, as she explained that she was struggling between two roles as a mother and as a teacher (M12). Some mothers explained that heavy involvement in the children's education was not their choice but an obligation (M4; M12). The excessive involvement, in addition to the elevated domestic responsibilities, created a sense of inadequacy among many participating mothers. Despite their advantageous educational backgrounds and access to resources, they reported that they were struggling in this exhaustive involvement process. These findings are in line with the research concerning the first wave of the pandemic. Spinelli et al.'s (2020) study revealed that parents found it difficult to deal with children's education during the quarantine period of the first wave of the pandemic. Similarly, another study found that parents experienced problems while maintaining the children's access to learning, creating motivation for learning, and reaching learning outcomes (Garbe et al., 2020).

The participating mothers' worries, dilemmas, and tensions could be interpreted as signs of parental burnout (Brown et al., 2020; Chung et al., 2020; Griffith, 2020), which may be due to the self-oriented or socially prescribed perfectionism (Sorkkila & Aunola, 2020). This confirms Hoover-

Dempsey et al. (2005) as they also stated that parental role construction is a social construct that is influenced by society and by past experiences of parents' education. This was evident in this study, as several mothers, explained they had to complete all the homework on the same day, often causing more burden and stress on themselves, and their relationships with their children. Many of them made sure that homework was completed on time daily, without faults, knowing that it was above the child's capacity. For example, one mother (M11) admitted that insisting on completing all the homework caused frustration and tension between the mother and the child; nonetheless, she reported that she continued to teach and deliver homework in the same manner. So it could be that the participating mothers' high expectations of themselves and their children due to self-oriented or socially prescribed perfectionism could have contributed to more stress and tension during this period.

On the other hand, it should not be neglected that the findings revealed that the participating mothers considered themselves obliged to involve intensively due to the shortcomings in emergency remote education in this context. They regarded that the teaching content and methods were not suitable or effective for their children's remote learning. As far as the instruction and curriculum were concerned, the study showed that the participants distrusted the emergency remote education in this period. Accordingly, some mothers made informed comments and criticisms on many aspects of the instruction in this period such as the use of teaching materials and methods (M1; M12). Also, there was an excessive amount of homework with a high level of difficulty. Similarly, Dong et al.'s study (2020) voiced parents' disbelief in the emergency remote education for their young children. They considered it inadequate and ineffective. Likewise, Garbe et al. (2020) reported that parents were concerned about the quality and quantity of curriculum material, and their children achieving an adequate academic level during this period. Indeed, in many cases, the school curricula failed to respond, to meet the immediate needs and conditions that occurred as a result of the school closures, which led to the abrupt shift to emergency remote education (Gul & Khilji, 2021; Li et al., 2021; Roll, et al., 2020). Whereas, according to Hughes (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic could be an opportunity to bring necessary changes to curriculum design and implementation by incorporating alternative formative assessment procedures and reducing the ever-enlarging curriculum content. Hughes underlined the principle of "less is more" (p. 71) in instructional design and urged a more "... mindful, authentic, and humanly paced approach" (p. 69). He also emphasized reducing the curricular content, eliminating homework, or adjusting students' levels of cognitive complexity, so that parental help is minimized.

To conclude, the study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of parental involvement in emergency remote education by focusing on the experiences of a small number of mothers in Northern Cyprus. Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues (2001; 2005; 2013) stated in numerous studies that parental involvement and their active participation in children's education is highly beneficial. However, as this study showed, the pandemic crisis, particularly its first wave, placed immense responsibilities and pressure on parents, in this case, study on the participating mothers.

Direct invitations and demands from children and teachers in addition to the mothers' concerns on the shortcomings of emergency remote education were found to be important elements in their decisions to involve overwhelmingly. In this case, the participants' access to resources seemed to have functioned to their advantage as it contributed positively to their motivational beliefs; however, on the other hand, their high expectations might have added more stress to their involvement process during the emergency remote education in this context.

For future research, it is important to investigate if any lessons have been taken regarding curriculum and instructional planning and implementation for remote learning in the study context with or without a global crisis. Also, it is recommended to conduct a further study on parental involvement and include the school factor, as in this study it was omitted due to remote education. Furthermore, a similar study could be conducted in the same context with a similar group of

participants to investigate the parental involvement patterns further and possibly compare with the pandemic period.

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