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# Parental involvement and expectations of children's academic achievement goals in Botswana: parent's perceptions

Keinyatse Kgosidialwa

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND EXPECTATIONS OF  
CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT GOALS  
IN BOTSWANA: PARENT'S PERCEPTIONS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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May, 2010

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Entitled: *Parental Involvement and Expectations of Children's Academic Achievement Goals in Botswana: Parent's Perceptions*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, School of Psychological Sciences, Program of Educational Psychology.

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## ABSTRACT

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This study examined the school related activities that parents in Botswana engage in with their children. The study also examined how parents in Botswana perceive their involvement and expectations of their children's academic achievement goals. Sixteen parents (15 females and 1 male) who had children in standards five, six, or seven participated in the study. Participants were parents from four different villages in the Central District Council in Botswana. Parents were more involved with their children at home by encouraging their children to put effort. Parents also went to school to communicate with the teachers at school. Some parents assisted with homework even though most parents were challenged by the content their child was learning. Parents had high expectations of their children's academic life regardless of their children's performance in class. Various beliefs mingled with parents' expectations and their children's achievement goal. Although parents varied in their involvement, there was not much difference in their expectations. Lack of time and challenging subject matter were challenges to parents' involvement.

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Finally I would like to thank Roberta, Linda, and Laura for their support and encouragement.

## **DEDICATION**

**I DEDICATE THIS WORK TO MY LATE HUSBAND,  
TEBO O. KGOSIDIALWA**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore school-related activities that parents in Botswana engaged in and how these parents perceived their involvement and expectations of their children's academic achievement goals. Understanding the role of parental involvement may lead to increased educational attainment, and improved education may lead to increased opportunities for the individual and economic progress for the nation.

*In A Framework for Action in Sub-Saharan Africa: Education for African Renaissance in the Twenty-first Century* (UNESCO, 1999), it was stated,

If the next century is going to be characterized as a truly African century, for social and economic progress of the African people, the century of durable peace and sustained development in Africa, then the success of this project is dependent on the success of our education systems. For nowhere in the world has sustained development been attained without a well-functioning system of education, without universal and sound primary education, without an effective higher education and research sector, without equality of educational opportunity. (para. 1)

Unlike many sub-Saharan states, Botswana has allocated substantial resources to education. Since universal primary education was adopted in 1980, education expenditure has increased from 6.8% to 10.9% and from 19.1% to 24.5% of total government expenditures (Lisenda, 2005). While education has improved substantially, progress is still desired. A report from the Botswana Institute of Development Policy Analysis

suggests that increased spending on primary education has led to higher enrollment and an increased number of teachers, but there is still room for improvement in the quality of educational outcomes (Lisenda). One basis for further improvement may be understanding parents' attitudes and behaviors and increasing positive parental involvement (Lisenda; Molefe, Pansiri, & Weeks, 2008).

Such suggestions are consistent with research. Increasing evidence suggests that educational advancement can be facilitated or hindered by parental behaviors (Crimm, 1992; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Rosenzweig, 2000, 2001). A recent meta-analysis of parenting and academic achievement (Rosenzweig, 2000) found that 25% of the variance in school grades may be explained by parenting variables.

A recent study (Park, 2008) found that parental behavior impacted education in a wide range of countries studied. Consequently, increased attention needs to be paid to parental involvement in educational developments in many countries including southern Africa.

### Botswana's Educational Background

When Botswana attained its independence from the British in 1966, a small number of the people of Botswana were literate; only a handful had progressed beyond primary school (Mogae, 2007). In 1975, the first National Commission on Education met to review Botswana's education policy and map the way forward. This review came as the government realized that the education system was lacking in many respects. In 1977, the First National Commission on Education produced a detailed report on National Policy on Education, popularly known as *Education for Kagisano* (National Commission on Education, 1977).

Based on the recommendations from *Education for Kagisano*, significant educational developments took place. One of the developments was the abolition of school fees for primary education in 1981. This was followed in 1984 by the abolition of secondary education school fees (Mogae, 2007). In 1994, the country acknowledged its achievement of universal access to a 10-year basic education, reduction of class sizes at the primary level, and increased access to senior secondary education and beyond (Republic of Botswana, 1997).

#### Botswana's Education Structure

Botswana's education structure is comprised of 12 years of formal schooling-- seven years of primary education (equivalent to elementary education in the United States), three years of junior secondary education (equivalent to middle school in the U.S. education system), and two years of senior secondary education. That is equivalent to grades 1-12 in the U.S. education system. Completion of each level of education is marked by a national exit examination. For example, the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) is a national examination students complete at the end of their primary education. PSLE is based on the following core subjects: mathematics, English, science, social studies, and Setswana (Botswana's national language). The end of three years in junior secondary education is marked by the Junior Certificate Examination (JCE). Unlike the PSLE, the JCE covers all subjects taught in the junior secondary curriculum. Students who do well on the JCE proceed to senior secondary school and complete after two years. Upon completion of their senior secondary education, students may then proceed to higher education.

Due to the emphasis and importance the Botswana government places on education, in his fiscal year 2008/2009 budget speech, Mr Baledzi Gaolathe, the Honorable Minister of Finance and Development Planning, stated that the Ministry of Education has allocated the largest share of the total national budget funds for the fiscal year (26.8%= P5.51 billion) to education; this was followed by the Ministry of Local Government which received 17.4% (P3.51 billion; Republic of Botswana, 2008).

In addition to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Local Government and Housing is also accountable for education; through the district councils, it is responsible for building primary schools, teachers' housing, books, and stationery (Republic of Botswana, 1997). In his State of the Nation Address, President Festus Mogae indicated that education has consistently received the largest share of our national budget, over 25% of total spending for the past 10 years (Mogae, 2007). Although the government has placed an emphasis on education, based on my experience as a teacher and as a parent, the current author has wondered about student motivation in learning as shown by unsatisfactory results on the final JCE examinations.

#### Statement of the Problem

One of the factors found closely related to children's learning is parental involvement. Research has found that children whose parents are engaged in their school-related activities perform much better academically than children whose parents are not involved (Barnard, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Ho & Willms, 1996; Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Michael, 1999). Therefore, parent communication with the school is effective in promoting parent involvement (Ames, Khoju, & Watkins, 1993; Ho & Willms; Pang & Watkins, 2000).

Although research relating parental involvement and academic performance has been conducted, most studies are based on Western cultures and children's responses on a questionnaire or test. Consequently, no research has been conducted in Botswana targeting parents' perceptions of their own involvement, expectations and beliefs toward their children's education, and how these factors influence academic performance.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore school-related activities in which parents were involved and how these parents thought their involvement affected their children's academic achievement goals. Secondly, the study explored parents' expectations and perceptions of the effect of their expectations on their children's academic achievement goals. Through responses to semi-structured questions, parents of standard six pupils in four villages in Botswana provided detailed information on how they thought their involvement in school-related activities affected their children's academic achievement goals.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- Q1 How do parents in Botswana perceive their involvement and expectations of their children's academic achievement?
- Q2 How do parents in Botswana perceive their past experiences with school with regard to their learning?
- Q3 What types of school-related activities do parents in Botswana engage in with their children in upper primary school?
- Q4 What expectations and academic achievement goals do parents in Botswana have about children who are in upper primary standards?
- Q5 What challenges do parents in Botswana experience while getting involved in their children's academic life?

### Significance of the Study

Social cognitive theory believes that motivation is a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). In their study, Linnenbrink and Pintrich noted that social cognitive theories emphasize how students are motivated in different ways; that motivation is situational, not stable, and is domain specific. Therefore, it is important for those who are involved in children's learning to understand how and why learners are motivated to achieve in school (Linnenbrink & Pintrich). In addition, Spera (2006) indicated that parents have the potential to influence their children's motivation towards learning.

Through the current study, parents should become aware of their personal experiences, beliefs and expectations, and relate each to their own behaviors regarding how these affect their children's achievement motivation in school. The hope is that by being made aware, parents will be able to realign their personal expectations and involvement along with the school's expectations if they notice any discrepancy between their personal expectations and behaviors, and the school's expectations. As a result, schools may be able to understand what beliefs and expectations influence the parents' level of involvement in their children's school-related activities. Teachers may also obtain a better understanding of what children are experiencing from their parents since parents use different parenting styles that may influence their children's achievement motivation.

Furthermore, teachers may understand the children better if they understand their parents' background with regard to school expectations and will be in a better position to work with parents in order to assist the children effectively. If home expectations contrast

with the school's expectations, then teachers will find ways of harmonizing the two separate perspectives so that the children benefit from the education system. Most teachers do not know parents' goals regarding their children's education and parents also do not know what teachers would like them to do for the learners in order to improve their education (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Therefore, teachers can serve students more effectively if they understand parents' expectations for their children.

#### Rationale for the Study

Many factors have been found to influence learners' academic success and motivation to learn. Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory suggests that children's personal beliefs, their behavior, and environmental factors such as teachers, parents, and peers' beliefs influence their learning. Bandura believes that all learners are motivated and that the difference rests in the direction of their motivation because they are motivated toward different activities. Even though most of the time the school is viewed as the place where the child's motivation and learning starts, research has shown that the origin of a child's literacy development occurs in the home.

Several studies have shown that parental involvement is the key to improving children's academic learning (Ames & Archer, 1988; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997; Hara & Burke, 1998). In addition, a variety of studies have shown the importance of parental involvement and how well both elementary and secondary school children could perform when they realize that their parents are involved in their learning (Gonzalez-De Hass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005; Pomerantz & Moormann, 2007). It has also been realized that parents' involvement during the elementary school years plays an important part in the child's future academic outcomes (Barnard, 2004).



In searching for the actual meaning of *parental involvement* and its impact on learning, Hoge, Smit and Crist (1997) concluded that parental involvement consists of four components: parental expectations, parental interest, parental involvement in school, and the family community. Hoge and colleagues concurred with Mau's (1997) conclusions that parental expectations and supervision of students' academic work are the most important aspects of parental involvement when compared with other components. However, Mau indicated that there are cultural differences in interpreting parental involvement. In her study, she found that cultures differed in what constitutes parental involvement.

In his speech during the prize giving ceremony at Molongwa Community Junior Secondary School (Botswana), the Director of Botswana Telecommunications Authority stated, "Parents have been known to leave the education of their children entirely in the hands of the teachers" (Mokone, 2007, p. 5). On the other hand, Mathangwane and Arua (2006), in their study which was conducted in two villages in Botswana to examine attitudes toward reading, found that parents in Botswana could read and had positive attitudes toward reading. However, the parents' reading behaviors as shown in the table of responses raised a concern. For example, from a total of 60 parents in one village (Letlhakeng) who participated in the study, 13 parents indicated that they did not like to read, while another group of 13 parents did not indicate whether they liked to read or not. Only 34 out of 60 parents stated that they liked to read. The concern also arose when 13 out of the 60 children whose parents participated in the study indicated that they did not like to read.

In Thamaga (about 40 km from the city of Gaborone), Mathangwane and Arua (2006) found that from a total of 47 parents, 11 parents indicated that they did not like to read. From a total of 47 children whose parents participated in the study, 7 children indicated that they did not like to read; another group of 5 children did not report whether they liked to read or not (Mathangwane & Arua). Only 35 out of 47 children indicated that they liked to read. These results may be related to the findings of the report of the First National Survey on Literacy in Botswana (Republic of Botswana, 1993) which suggests that there was no reading culture in Botswana.

The first National Survey showed that from a sample of 3,214 adults who showed that they never read, 29.5 % indicated lack of interest in reading, 23.4% indicated they had nothing to read, 11.3% did not have time to read, 33.9% could not read well, and only 1.9% indicated poor sight as the reason for not reading. One wonders what this implies for the children living with these parents (29.5 %) who do not like to read. It should not come as a surprise that out of the total number of students who sat for the JCE, 23.4% in 2004, 23.6% in 2005, and 23.4% in 2006 failed the examination (Ministry of Education, 2006). With all the educational provisions that the government has put forth, one would expect students in Botswana to perform well academically; however, this was not the case.

Studies have shown that important factors from the home such as parents' attitudes, and expectations toward the child influence learning at school. Parents' expectations toward their children's academic life have undoubtedly been accepted as the predictor of the child's academic performance (Chao, 1996; Furnham, Rakow, & Mak,

2002; Kaplan, Liu, & Kaplan, 2001; Marchant, Paulson, & Rothlisberg, 2001; Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982; Patrikakou, 1996).

Based on the reasons for not reading given by participants in the report of First National Survey on Literacy in Botswana (Republic of Botswana, 1993), comments made by Mokone (2007), and the analysis of children's and parents' responses in the study by Mathangwane and Arua (2006), there was a need to carry out a study that examined Botswana parents' involvement and expectations of their children's learning and how parents perceived these personal factors as being influential in their children's achievement in school. This study differed from other studies on parental involvement because even though parental involvement is a familiar construct in Botswana, no research has ever been conducted to investigate how parents in Botswana perceive their involvement and expectations towards their children's achievement goals in school learning.

#### Delimitation of the Study

Since this study followed a qualitative approach, it was not possible to generalize the findings to other populations who were not participants in the study because even if people lived in the same area, their views on the same phenomenon would not be exactly the same.

As this was an exploratory study of parents' perceptions on how their involvement, and expectations influenced their children's achievement goals in learning, (a) only parents were interviewed, (b) only data from parents' views were analyzed by this study and validated by teachers' perspectives, and (c) only parents whose children were in standard five, six or seven participated in the study. Even though the results of

the study could not be generalized, they helped shed light on parents' perceptions of their children's academic achievement goals.

#### Definition of Terms

*Botswana.* A country in Africa where the study was conducted.

*Batswana.* Citizens of Botswana.

*Child.* A standard five, six, or seven pupil whose parent participated or had the potential to participate in this study.

*Homework supervision.* The extent to which parents checked their children's homework before the child handed it to the teacher.

*Junior secondary school.* A school consisting of the grade level equivalent of eighth to tenth grade in U.S. education system.

*Primary school.* A school comprising standard 1 to standard 7.

*Parent.* Legal caretaker of the child.

*Parental expectations.* The degree to which the parent holds high hopes of the student achieving at high levels.

*Parental involvement.* The extent to which parents attended and participated in school-related activities.

*Setswana.* One of the official languages and national language of Botswana.

*Standard.* A term used in Botswana to denote grade level in primary school.

#### Glossary of Terms

Batswana--Citizens of Botswana

PTA--Parents and Teachers Association

VDC--Village Development Committee

JC--Junior Certificate

BGSCE--Botswana General Secondary Certificate Examination

MoE--Ministry of Education

PSLE- -Primary School Leaving Examination

CDC--Central District Council

Form 1-5 (equivalent to Grade 8-12 U.S. education system)

Standard 1-7 (equivalent to Grade 1-7 U.S. education system)

### Assumptions of the Study

The following were assumptions inherently related to the current study:

1. All participants honestly responded to the interview concerning their experiences, beliefs, and expectations and how they perceived themselves as being influential in their children's achievement motivation in school learning.
2. Participation in the study was voluntary.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore how parents in Botswana perceived their involvement and expectations of their children's academic achievement goals. This chapter served as the introduction to the study and laid the foundation for the study through discussions on the statement of the problem, purpose, significance of the study, research questions, delimitations of the study, definition of terms, glossary of terms, and the assumptions of the study. Chapter II discusses the literature reviewed on the topic and how it illuminates some perspectives of what constitutes parental involvement, why parents get involved, and what other aspects may have an effect on parents' involvement in their children's academic life.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

A number of meta-analyses conducted over the last 15 years have found that parental involvement is related to academic achievement (Crimm, 1992; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Rosenzweig, 2000, 2001). The magnitude of the relationship is consistently large enough to have a meaningful impact across ethnic group, socioeconomic level, and grade level. For example, Rosenzweig (2000) found that parenting variables accounted for almost 25% of the variance in academic achievement. The purpose of this paper was not to report the summary of the empirical literature; rather, it was to summarize the theoretical perspectives and to explain and describe the link between parental involvement and academic success. This study was framed on the literature of parental involvement in children's school learning and academic success (Epstein's typology of parental involvement; Epstein, 1995).

#### Parental Involvement

A variety of perspectives have been put forth in an attempt to understand the nature of parental involvement; some researchers suggested parenting styles, verbal interactions, book reading, homework, and attending school functions as some of the parents' behaviors that affect children's school success (Epstein & Dauber, 1991;

Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Other parents get involved with their children through supervising homework and school selection (Urdu, Solek, & Schoenfelder, 2007).

#### *Hess and Holloway's View*

Based upon a summary of research and theory prior to 1984, Hess and Holloway (as cited in Paulson, 1994) summarized the dimensions of parental involvement. In their view of how parents could be involved, they concluded that children's academic performance is manifested by the following:

1. Parents' verbal interaction with their children and verbal environment at home.
2. Parents' expectations of the children.
3. The effective relationship between parents and children.
4. The type of discipline and control strategies used by the parents.
5. Parents' values regarding their expectations of their children.

Each of the above items suggested ways in which parents could be involved in their children's academic learning (Hess & Holloway).

#### *Epstein's Typology of Parental Involvement*

In trying to understand how parents can be involved in their children's academic life, researchers turn to Epstein's (1995) typology of parental involvement as a guide for parental involvement behaviors. Epstein suggested six types of behaviors through which parents could get involved in their children's academic life in order to enhance their academic success.

*Type 1--Parenting skills, child development and home environment:* This refers to the parents' obligation for the child's protection and preparation for school learning and provision of positive and supportive home environment for educational success.

*Type 2—Communication:* This refers to the obligations of the school to communicate with the parents to inform them about the student's progress and school programs. Communication could be done in different ways such as report cards, notices, and parents' conferences.

*Type 3--Parents as volunteers:* In this type, parents are involved by participating as volunteers at school in different school-related activities. For example, a parent can volunteer during school sports day, concerts, or go on a school trip with a class.

*Type 4--Involvement in students' learning:* Parents can get involved in their children's learning at home by helping with home work or any cognitive skill developing activity. Parents can help reinforce what children learned at school. For example, a parent can help a child understand or learn multiplication concepts.

*Type 5--Decision making, leadership, and governance:* Parents can be involved in their children's education by participating in school committees that influence decisions made in the school. For example, parents can become members of Parents and Teachers Association or School Health Team.

*Type 6--Collaboration and exchange with community organizations:* Through their involvement, parents can collaborate with the local or regional community to enhance the learning opportunities of their children. Parents can help get other parents to contribute to the school improvement activities.

In addition to her typology, Epstein's (1995) model demonstrates the relationship between the school, the family, and the community. This model depicts how the relationship influences the level of parent and school partnership in the upbringing and development of a child.



Epstein (1995) illustrated her model by drawing three spheres: one sphere represents the family, the second sphere represents the school, and the third sphere represents the community in which the child lives. The model shows that these spheres could be pushed together, overlapped, or pulled apart. Pertinent to this model is how close or apart the spheres are in showing the relationship between the teachers and the home. The separation and overlapping of the spheres indicate that parental involvement is not static (Epstein & Hollifield, 1996).

*Grolnick and Slowiaczek's Perspectives  
on Parental Involvement*

Other researchers also brought in their perspectives on what constitutes parental involvement. For example, in their study, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) concluded that parents engage in three different types of involvement in their children's academic life: behavior, cognitive-intellectual, and personal involvement. In behavior involvement, parents get involved in school activities such as attending conferences, helping with homework, and discussing school life with their children. In other words, parents engage in behaviors that could be observed. In cognitive-intellectual involvement, parents get involved by exposing their children to intellectually stimulating environments such as a library or museum. Researchers believe these exposures are effective in promoting children's academic achievement. Personal involvement refers to parents' knowledge about what the child is experiencing at school and how he or she feels about the school. Through personal involvement, the parent gets a vicarious feeling of what the child experiences. For example, through parent-child discussions, the parent experiences emotional and psychological feelings similar to those experienced by the child at school. Grolnick and Slowiaczek also indicated that although behavior, cognitive, and personal

involvement are positively associated with school performance, they were independent of each other in influencing the level at which the parents are involved.

### *Summary*

Due to its multifaceted nature, parental involvement is perceived differently by different researchers; this can lead to inconsistent outcomes. For example, Epstein's (1995) view differs from that of Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994); parents following each of these perspectives may find themselves engaged in their children's learning in different ways. However, it is important that parents get involved in each of them. Research shows that there are various ways that parents could get involved in their children's academic life. The question then becomes, with these various perspectives of involvement, why do some parents get involved while others do not?

### Why Do Parents Get Involved?

Even though parental involvement has been found to contribute positively to children's academic success, not all parents get involved. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) developed a five-level model of parental involvement. Level 1 of their model explains why parents choose to become involved in their child's education. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, parents get involved because they (a) construct parental role beliefs in their child's life, (b) develop a sense of efficacy beliefs in helping their child, and (c) feel the demand and/ or opportunity for parental involvement.

1. *Parental role.* In the parental role, parents observe and adopt what other parents are doing in relation to school partnership. The parents also reflect and evaluate how their parents were involved in school-related activities during their schooling. These observations and reflections help parents internalize the behaviors of being a parent.

Internalizing parental roles result in the parent understanding and adopting a parent's involvement in a child's education as part and parcel of raising a child. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) asserted that "parental role construction and functioning clearly begins before and extends beyond the child's years in school" (p. 9). Therefore, parental involvement can go hand-in-hand with being a parent; however, sometimes some parents choose to withdraw their involvement.

2. *Sense of self-efficacy.* Another important factor that determines a parent's involvement is the way the parent feels about his/her involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) indicated that parents get involved due to their acquired sense of efficacy in helping the child. The sense of efficacy for helping the child to succeed in school gives the parent a feeling that he/she has the capability to do what is expected in the child's education (for other levels, see Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler). The sense of self-efficacy develops as a result of direct experience, vicarious experiences, verbal communications, and the physiological state of the parent (see Bandura, 1986, for sources of self-efficacy).

3. *Demands and opportunities.* Parents get involved if they feel there is need for them to be involved. Sometimes parents get involved because they see the need to assist even when not asked. Parents can also get involved if they are invited by the teachers. For example, some parents volunteer if they perceive the need for involvement. Other parents will wait for the school to invite them. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) noted that the "parent and his or her decisions about involvement .... are best understood within the context of the model and the broader social ecology of the parent's life" (p. 7). On the

other hand, Achievement Motivation Theory (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler) purports that parents get involved in their children's academic lives because

1. Teachers invite parents into the school-related activities,
2. Their children are not performing well in school,
3. Parents are interested in improving their children's grades, and
4. Parents also perceive themselves as helping their children

#### Factors That Influence Parental Involvement

Although Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) developed a model of why parents choose to get involved or not, other factors can influence the level at which parents may get involved in their child's education. Some factors that may influence parents' level of involvement are socio-cultural factors, parenting style, and beliefs and expectations of parents towards their children's learning.

#### *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Perspective*

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecology theory assumes that a child is nested in different levels of social structures in his/her environment and these structures influence the child's development through social interactions. These social structures are, but not limited to, home, school, peers, and the community. Bronfenbrenner called the ecological levels *Microsystem*, *Mesosystem*, *Exosystem*, and *Macrosystem*. The ecological perspective believes that a learner could be better shaped if these levels work towards similar expectations, values, attitudes, and common goals in shaping a child. Bronfenbrenner represented his ecological theory by using circles of different sizes placed in the form of layers.

*Microsystem.* This refers to the innermost level/layer that is closest to the child and depicts the relationship between the child and his/her immediate environment. It includes parents in the home, teachers in the school, and peers. The microsystem can directly impact the child's academic performance. For example, if the home is not providing safety for the child, he or she may feel insecure and learning may be compromised. However, children can also influence the parents' level of involvement. For example, parents who believe their child is difficult to handle are not likely to be involved. Likewise, parents who view their child as easy to handle are likely to be involved in their child's school-related activities.

*Mesosystem.* This is the next level after the microsystem. It results from the interactions between the major settings and microsystems in which the child finds him/herself. The mesosystem for the child would be the interaction between the school and the home, or the parents and the teachers. The relationship between the school and the family can affect academic performance of a child. For example, if parents do not cooperate with the school in matters relating to the child, the child's performance at school may be negatively affected by this relationship.

Parents formulate perceptions about the school--how the school relates to them and values their involvement. Parents who hold beliefs and perceptions that the school is not welcoming are not likely to be involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). On the other hand, parents who perceive the school as welcoming are likely to be involved and highly contribute to the development of the school. Thus, the social ecological theory suggests that parents should not work in isolation of the school nor the school work in isolation of the parents.

*Exosystem.* The exosystem level extends from the mesosystem and does not directly impact the child. Rather, the exosystem impacts on the child by impacting on the microsystem. For example, the parents' work relations do not directly affect the child; however, they could affect the child if the parent does not have time to attend to children's needs because he/she is always at work. In addition, circumstances in parents' life such as work schedules, personal stress, relationships, and economic status are some factors that can affect parental involvement and, therefore, affect a child's academic achievement.

*Macrosystem.* Macrosystem refers to a large, over-reaching pattern of culture or subculture in the environment. This pattern of culture or subculture explicitly or implicitly impacts the individual and how he or she is raised. Macrosystem includes factors such as ideologies, beliefs, religion, cultures, and subcultures. The parents' level of involvement can also be influenced by the societal perspective on their children's education, e.g. value placed on parents' involvement by the parents themselves, the school, and/or the child. Societal beliefs and values have an effect in shaping a child. If the subculture believes that the school is not welcoming, parents may choose not to get involved because of these beliefs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). If parents have negative attitudes toward school, their children are likely to develop negative attitudes toward school as well.

The ecological perspective emphasizes cooperation and consistent expectations among all levels. The interactions of the systems are crucial in the child's development because these systems do influence and determine the nature of the child's experiences. Studying a child from one ecological perspective would not yield complete valuable

results that are similar to those that would be found if two ecological levels were taken into consideration.

### *Baumrind's Parenting Styles*

It is not only the positive relationship between teachers and parents that promotes parental involvement. Research has found that parents use different ways to raise their children; these different ways of child rearing influence parents' involvement in their child's academic life. Baumrind (1971) referred to the different ways of raising children as parenting styles. Darling and Steinberg (1993) defined parenting styles as "constellations of parental attitudes, and nonverbal expressions that characterize the nature of parent-child interaction across diverse situations" (p. 67). Parenting styles, parents' perceptions and beliefs about parenting, and their expectations toward their child's academic learning also influence parents' involvement in a child's education (Baumrind).

Furthermore, Baumrind (1971) suggested that parents' differences in parenting styles were determined by the parents' responsiveness and demandingness toward their children. Responsiveness refers to the extent to which a parent shows a positive relationship (acceptance, caring, involvement, and affective warmth) with the child. Demandingness refers to the extent to which a parent shows control, demand for submissiveness, and no warm relationship with a child. Based on this classification, Baumrind classified parents into three parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. However, Baumrind (1991) later classified parents into four patterns of parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful, adding that each parenting style influences a child's development differently.

### *Parenting Style and Parental Involvement*

Research indicates that the way parents raise their children influences their level of involvement in their children's academic life (Baumrind, 1991; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997; Lee, Daniels, & Kissinger, 2006; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). Cross-cultural studies also revealed that cultures differ in the way they raised children (Chao, 1996; Dornbusch et al.). Hence, parents from diverse ethnic backgrounds may interpret their role and parental involvement differently (Hill & Craft, 2003).

Research found a positive relationship between parenting styles and the child's performance at school (Deslandes, Royer, Potvin, & Leclerc, 1999; Glasgow et al., 1997; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Steinberg et al., 1992). For example, Okagaki and Sternberg (1993) found that young children whose parents emphasized conformity to everything--neatness, good manners, and good behaviors--performed poorly in mathematics, reading, and language learning.

### *Beliefs and Expectations*

Parents who hold different beliefs about a variety of things such as school, teachers, children's intelligence, and personality indicated how these beliefs are sometimes communicated in subtle patterns; yet they become influential in the child's performance as the child interprets them into parents' practices. These beliefs have an effect on the formation of parents' expectations of their children's success in school (Chao, 1996). Studies have found parents' educational expectations of their children to be the most important aspects of parental involvement, strong predictors of students' achievement at all age levels, and for students of various backgrounds (Halle, Kurtz-



Costes, & Mahoney, 1997; Kaplan et al., 2001; Mau, 1997; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998). In other words, parental attributions, beliefs, and expectations toward their children's education determine how parents socialize their children into academic life. Furthermore, beliefs and expectations also influence the type and the level at which the parents will be involved in their children's school life (Furnham et al., 2002).

*Cultural beliefs and expectations.* The cultural model (Ogbu, 1981) posited that parents of different cultural backgrounds take their children through different socialization goals. Parents perceive these goals as crucial for their children during the adaptation and their entire life. Cultural beliefs and expectations influence parents' involvement in their children's academic learning (Chao, 1996; Okagaki & Frensch, 1998). Parents with high socioeconomic status (SES) hold high expectations and beliefs that are close to the performance of their children, while parents with low SES hold higher expectations and performance beliefs that do not match their children's performance (Alexander, Entwisted, & Bedinger, 1994, cited in Kean-Davis, 2005). However, Halle et al. (1997) argued on the incompatibility of parents of low socioeconomic status' high expectations and their children's low academic achievement by noting their positive contribution regardless of the accuracy of their assessment: "High expectations and the positive attitudes of these students and their parents may aid their achievement goals" (p. 35). If a child fails to determine the parents' level of expectations regarding his/her academic performance, he/she uses the parents' level of education to gauge the parents' expectations (Kaplan et al., 2001).

*Beliefs about intelligence.* Parents' beliefs about intelligence and its origin can also influence their expectations of children's academic achievement (Dweck, 1999). For

example, “When parents believe success in school depends for the most part on effort rather than ability, they are more likely to encourage hard work and participation in activities related to academic achievement” (Mau, 1997, p. 268). On the other hand, parents who view success as a result of intelligence and perceive intelligence as stable are not likely to encourage their children when things get tough.

Parents’ perceptions toward characteristics of intelligence and the level at which they get involved in the child’s education influences the extent to which the child is likely to adopt intrinsic over extrinsic motivation (Dweck, 1999). In addition, Pomerantz and Dong (2006) argued that “parents’ perceptions of children’s academic competence play a powerful role in children’s development in the academic arena; such perceptions funnel down to the children so that they create self-fulfilling prophecy” (p. 1). However, Halle et al. (1997) have a different perspective; they claim that parents’ beliefs and expectations toward their children’s academic achievement are influenced by their children’s academic performance.

### *Achievement Goal Theory*

“Achievement motive is a pattern of planning, action, and feeling associated with striving for some kind of excellence” (Alschuler, 1973, p. 21). Similarly, achievement goal theorists believe that students set goals they want to achieve (Ames, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). These theorists focus on the purpose and meaning of students’ behavior in learning situations (Ames).

Research on achievement goal theory classified students into two groups: one group was for those who engaged in the task to improve their competence, understanding,

and mastery of the task (mastery-goal oriented); the other group of students engaged in tasks for external purposes (performance-goal oriented; Ames & Archer, 1988).

*Mastery-goal orientation.* Students who are mastery-goal oriented intend to achieve through learning. They want to develop their competence in the task or increase their understanding. They are aware that achievement comes through hard work (Ames, 1992; Wentzel, 1998). Students who are mastery-goal oriented use effective and deep processing learning strategies. These students are persistent when faced by challenging tasks; they are eager to search for goals that are more difficult even when there are no rewards (Lepper, 1988). Mastery-goal oriented learners perform the task for its own sake, not for any external purposes; as such, they are intrinsically motivated to achieve the task.

*Performance-goal orientation:* Students who are performance-goal oriented are motivated by a strong desire to out-perform others, show their superior ability, and sometimes may be more interested in out performing the set standards (Elliot, 1999). Ames (1992) also pointed out that performance-goal oriented learners are extrinsically motivated. They focus more on ability and are likely to compare their performance with that of others. Performance-goal learners also prefer gaining favorable judgment. They interpret success as the ability to beat others or surpass formative standards. Performance-goal oriented students are likely to develop low self-efficacy and learned helplessness as well as anxiety when working on challenging tasks (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). However, researchers differ in their interpretations of the goal orientations; some researchers suggest that, unlike mastery goals, performance goals have a negative impact on learning (Elliot; Meece & Holt, 1993; Midgley & Urdan, 2001; Schunk, 1996).

Differing views by researchers on the role played by the performance goal-orientation in learning have led to a continuous debate; some researchers suggest that there is no difference in achievement level of students who choose mastery or performance goal orientation (e.g., Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). However, Pintrich (2000) argued that academic achievement can be enhanced if a student holds both mastery and performance goals for the same task. Others believe that performance goals can increase academic performance for a short duration; later, the individual would regress or be completely unmotivated again (Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001). However, a breakthrough in mastery and performance goal debate emerged when performance goals were divided into performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals (Elliot & Church, 1997).

#### *Parental Involvement and Achievement Goal Orientation*

Parents can influence their child's choice of goals (Spera, 2006). Parents who place an emphasis on their children to be at the top of the class may influence their children to adopt the performance goals, while parents who stress understanding of material and development of new skills are likely to cultivate mastery-goal orientation in their children. In trying to understand why some children choose mastery goals while others prefer performance goals, Dweck and Leggett (1988) indicated that the choice between mastery and performance goal orientation is determined by the learner's *theory of intelligence*, i.e., the learner's belief about the origin and nature of intelligence. Students who perceive intelligence as incremental and controllable pursue mastery goals because they understand they can modify their ability through effort. On the other hand,

students who view intelligence as a fixed entity choose to pursue performance goals (Ames & Ames, 1984; Elliot & Dweck, 1988).

Parental behaviors have been found to affect learners' academic learning (Bronstein, Ginsburg, & Herrera, 2005). Parents' fear of failure could be translated in their child's own fear which may lead the child to adopt performance–avoidance goals in class (Elliot & Thrash, 2004). The child's choice between mastery goals and performance goals could be influenced by the child's perception of their parents' goals toward their children's education (Pintrich, 2000).

### Summary

The literature reviewed showed that there are a variety of ways in which parents can be involved in their children's school-related activities. It also stressed the relationship between parents' involvement and academic success. Reasons were also forwarded in the literature as to why some parents get involved in their children's academic learning while others do not. Finally, the literature indicated that there were various factors that could lead or become challenges to parents' involvement in their children's academic life.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on parental involvement and how it relates to children's learning in school. I also reviewed factors that might influence parents' involvement. In this chapter, I present the methodology of my study, the paradigm, and the steps I followed in my data collection up to analysis of the data.

Methodology refers to the way we approach a problem; in social science, the term applies to how research is conducted (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This methodological chapter first describes the (a) intentions of my research, (b) choice for qualitative perspective, (c) choice of the interpretive paradigm, (d) participants and sampling procedure, (e) data collection, (f) data analysis strategies, (g) trustworthiness, and (h) ethical steps taken to protect the participants.

#### Research Goals

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore parental involvement in school-related activities that parents in Botswana engage in with their children, how these parents perceived the effect of their involvement, and expectations of their children's academic achievement goals. In seeking to understand the phenomenon of study, the following questions were addressed:

- Q1 How do parents in Botswana perceive their involvement and expectations of their children's academic achievement?

- Q2 How do parents in Botswana perceive their past experiences with school with regard to their learning?
- Q3 What types of school-related activities do parents in Botswana engage in with their children in upper primary school?
- Q4 What expectations and academic achievement goals do parents in Botswana have about children who are in upper primary standards?
- Q5 What challenges do parents in Botswana experience while getting involved in their children's academic life?

### Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a basic set of beliefs that guide action (Creswell, 2007), a theory of knowledge embedded in a theoretical perspective that informs all aspects of the research process (Crotty, 2005). In a discussion of how paradigms are evolving, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) discussed in detail how paradigms in qualitative research differ as a result of the beliefs the researcher brings into the research. It is important to understand the four major elements of a paradigm and how they inform a particular research: *Post Positivism, Social Constructivism, Advocacy/Participatory, and Pragmatism* (Creswell).

1. Post positivism focuses on scientific approach to research; it emphasizes logic, empirical data, and is reductionist in nature.

2. Social constructivism/interpretive (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). In this paradigm, individuals seek to understand the subjective meanings of the experiences of the world in which they live. The meanings can be understood better by relying on the participants' view of the phenomenon of study (Creswell, 1998).

3. Advocacy/participatory advocates for marginalized individuals or groups as well as aims at action for reform. In this paradigm, the issues facing the marginalized are of paramount importance (Creswell, 2007).

4. Pragmatism is not committed to any one form of reality; researchers are free to choose methods, techniques, and procedures that best meet their needs (Creswell, 2007). Based on Creswell's (1998) contention of the four paradigms, the present study has adopted the Social Constructivism paradigm, which believes that meanings can be better understood by relying on the participants' view of the phenomenon of the study.

#### Interpretive Paradigm

The intention of this case study was to explore school-related activities that parents engage in with their children, how parents perceived their involvement, and expectations on their children's academic achievement goals. The decision to use an interpretive paradigm in carrying out this study was relevant because the choice to be involved in a child's academic life, like other choices an individual makes, is influenced by personal beliefs and expectations of the benefits of being involved. Beliefs and expectations are personal and subjective; however, the interpretive inquiry has the potential to thoroughly and holistically examine and make meaning from them. This study used the interpretive paradigm because, unlike other paradigms, an interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to interpret the subjective and personal phenomena being studied.

An interpretive paradigm fits well as it encourages the researcher to understand the world as it is (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) indicated that unlike the positivist perspective, the interpretive perspective views the researcher to be an active participant along with the participants in constructing, describing, and exploring knowledge. According to Rossman and Rallis, an interpretive paradigm believes that human beings are creators of their world. Their ability to shape the everyday world is



fundamental to the paradigm. In social constructivism, the researcher makes an interpretation of what he/she finds; the interpretations are shaped by the researcher's background as well as his or her experiences. The researcher interprets and creates personal meanings and participants' world views as he or she sees it. Creswell (2007) noted that because of its interpretive nature, qualitative research is sometimes referred to as interpretive research. Qualitative research has been defined as "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explores a social or human problem" (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). On the other hand, qualitative research has been explained as an umbrella concept of several forms of inquiry that helps researchers understand and make meaning of social phenomena with limited or no disruption to the natural setting as possible (Merriam, 1998). In trying to distinguish the qualitative approach from the quantitative, Merriam outlined the following characteristics of qualitative study: (a) it intends to understand the phenomena being studied from the participant; (b) the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; (c) qualitative research involves field work; (d) the researcher employs inductive research strategy to understand the situation; and (e) qualitative research is more concerned with meaning and interpretation, and its outcome is mostly narrative.

#### Researcher's Stance

As a teacher with biases and personal values, I have had experience with working with the parents through their children; however, as far as this research was concerned, data collection occurred with the parents only. Hence, I might have found myself to be interpreted by the participants as trying to find the limitations of the parents. Therefore, an environment was created where parents developed an unshakable trust. Merriam

(1998) acknowledged that in a qualitative research, the researcher comes with her or his own reality to the research. This reality then interacts with participants' reality or interpretation of the situation being researched.

#### Method: Case Study

To understand how parents in Botswana perceive their involvement and expectations in their children's academic achievement goals, a case study method seemed to be the best approach. Case study allows the researcher to study the phenomenon within the real life context, especially when boundaries of the phenomenon and the environment are not clear (Merriam, 1998). A case study can be bound by a setting, time, event, or grade of learners in a school (Creswell, 2007). In fact, Merriam noted that "a qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and an analysis of a single instance, phenomenon or social unit" (p. 21). A case study was suitable for this study as it offered a method for the researcher to discover and effectively document the phenomenon being studied. A case study can be based on the discipline of study in general or intent, i.e., whether the case study intends to describe, interpret, build a theory, or make judgments about a program (Merriam). Merriam also indicated that case studies can be described as pluralistic, descriptive, or heuristic based on their special features or characteristics.

#### Setting

The study was conducted in four villages in the Central District Council in Botswana: Serowe, Lerala, Maunatlala, and Mmashoro. The villages were purposefully selected because they differed in population size, geographical location, and level of development. This provided the opportunity to examine the potential differences in parents within the same village and across villages.

### Sampling and Participants

A primary school was randomly selected from each participating village to serve as a base school for this study. However, for one village, which had only one primary school, there was no option but to use the existing school. Each school invited parents of eight pupils from standards five, six or seven classes who were to participate in the study. The invitations took into consideration the pupils' performance in class. Through purposeful sampling, the school made sure that among the participating parents there would be parents whose children performed high, average, and low academically, allowing for the differing views as influenced by the child's performance. Purposeful sampling has been recommended when using a case study method because it allows the researcher to select cases that can show different perspectives (Creswell, 1998).

Participants in this study were 16 parents (15 females and 1 male) who were purposefully selected from four different villages in the Central District Council in Botswana. Although the participants were mostly females, they differed in age, education level, and place of residence. Their ages ranged from 33 to 60 years. Participants' education ranged from illiterate to receiving a Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE): one parent was illiterate and two had studied through adult education or adult literacy classes (Prima 2 and Prima 5). Six participants held primary education certificates (PSLE) and another group of six had a junior secondary education (Junior Certificate). Only one participant had a senior secondary education (BGCSE). Participants were parents of children within the respective schools. The average number of children within the participants' households ranged from two to seven. Participants'

children differed in their level of academic performance: five children were low achievers, five were average achievers, and six pupils were high achievers.

Participants from each of the four villages comprised of parents of high achieving students, parents of average achievers, and parents of low achieving students. Selection of the participants was based on the parent's willingness to participate in the study. Children's academic performance was determined by grades in the previous standard or grade level. The process of selecting parents was not restrictive; anyone who was a primary caregiver for the child was eligible to participate. Both the mother and father could participate if they had lived with the child for the past six months. If both parents participated, they were interviewed separately.

#### Procedure

In this section, I discuss the procedures followed in this study. Although this study focused on parents, schools were important as the link between the parents and the researcher. It was through the schools that the researcher gained access to the parents.

I started by telephoning the head teachers whose schools I had randomly selected to use as the base for my study. I explained the purpose of my study and how the school could help me identify prospective participants for the study. Then, I wrote a formal letter to each of the school heads to make my request official (see Appendix A). After getting the permission from the schools, I submitted an application to the University of Northern Colorado's Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Appendix B). Upon approval from the IRB, I then wrote a letter to the Botswana Government (see Appendix C) to obtain approval to conduct the study in Botswana. Consequently, I wrote another letter to my

academic sponsor (University of Botswana) to request funding (Appendix D) to carry out the study.

### *Gaining Entry*

Since I intended to use the schools for recruiting participants, I had to go through other gatekeepers, starting with the Ministry of Education. Although I received permission from the Ministry, the officer in charge of the research division advised that I go through the Regional Education Office to further solicit permission. I furthered my request with the Regional Education Officer (REO). REO is in charge of the education matters in the region. Although the REO permitted me to proceed with my study, he advised me to go through the Principal Education Officer (PEO) II responsible for the schools I intended to use in my study. The PEO II is a Ministry of Education official who supervises and monitors the progress of the schools; PEO II's are the immediate supervisors of the school heads. Each PEO II is assigned a group of schools that he or she supervises. The four schools I used fell under two PEO IIs who gave me permission but reminded me to go through the school heads. However, due to their schedule, formal written permission from the PEO IIs was delayed. Finally, even though the school heads had already given me permission, I still had to personally formalize my request.

During my first meeting with each school head, I explained the purpose of my study. I requested the meeting to be scheduled whereby I could recruit participants. The following week, I drove to the schools again--one school per day. I arrived at the school around 8:00 a.m.; the parents arrived mostly around 8:30 or 9:00 a.m. In each meeting, there were no more than eight parents. Most parents were mothers and grandmothers, except in Lerala where there was a father. Parents were purposely chosen by the school

because those who were knowledgeable about the school could share their experiences much better than those who were not familiar with the school. The purposeful sampling also catered to the proportional distribution of their children's academic performance as shown by the progress reports from the previous grade.

After the head teacher had introduced me to the parents, they usually left to go on with their duties. I explained the purpose of my study to the parents. I let the parents understand that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. However, I urged them to volunteer. At the end of the meeting, I requested parents furnish me with phone numbers so that I could talk to them privately about their individual participation. The parents seemed to be uncomfortable about giving me their phone numbers; however, when the meeting was over, they gave me their phone numbers when they realized through our conversations that I was not a stranger and I knew certain people that they also knew.

The use of the cellular phone when recruiting was to keep the participants' information confidential and anonymous. Parents seemed to be concerned about their homes and their standard of living; hence, they were not comfortable having me in their homes. Therefore, I promised them that I would not go into their houses. Later, I telephoned each of the prospective participants and requested that they participate in my study. I then made appointments for an orientation and familiarization meeting with those who volunteered to participate. During the week that followed, I drove to each of the villages to held conferences with each prospective participant.

### *Confidentiality*

The first meeting between the researcher and each prospective participant was to confirm their participation and to reassure participants that there was no danger in taking part in the study. Parents were initially uncomfortable with their participation. Participants indicated being worried that they might not give the correct answers. I assured them that I was not looking for any correct answer. I was not going to check what they knew or how much they knew. Parents were also worried about a stranger coming into their house. They were concerned about their socioeconomic status. Again, I reassured them that I would not go inside their homes. I promised that the interviews would be conducted in my truck or at any place of their choice. I had to give the promise because I could see the doubt and discomfort on their faces.

I also reassured parents that being a participant in my study would not jeopardize their lives. I let them know that it was meant to advance knowledge, knowledge that would later promote teaching and learning in the schools. I assured parents that their participation would be anonymous and confidential. From the reassurance, discussions proceeded to scheduling the dates, times, and places of subsequent interview meetings. This meeting was also utilized for introduction, rapport building, and confirming participation. In addition, the researcher also collected demographic data.

### Data Collection

#### *Piloting the Study*

The pilot study was conducted by interviewing two parents in Serowe who were non-participants in the study but had children in standard six. These parents were not participants in the study. The pilot study was conducted to determine whether the

interview questions were comprehensive. This pilot study also checked if the predicted length of the interviews was adequate. The intention of the pilot study was also to determine if the interview questions provided responses that were relevant to the topic being studied. Based on the results of the pilot study, some interview questions were modified (see Appendix I) as they were found not comprehensive enough to the respondents. Creswell (2007) indicated the importance of a pilot study; he pointed out that a pilot study provides the researcher with the opportunity to find out if the interview questions are comprehensive enough to the respondents or whether some questions need to be modified.

#### *Permission*

At the beginning of the first interview meetings, I assisted each participant in reading and understanding the consent form. I explained its purpose and addressed questions that were raised. In addition, I stressed the issue of confidentiality and anonymity because parents were not certain about what they were doing. Each participant was then requested to sign the consent form as an indication that he or she agreed to participate in the study. A consent form is a required document in the dissertation process or when conducting a study with adults. It provides legal protection and obligates the researcher to protect the rights of the participants by maintaining privacy and confidentiality of research data. In addition, the consent form informs the participants about their freedom to participate or withdraw from the study at any time during the research. Any parent who could not sign made a cross in the place of the signature. The cross is used in official documents in Botswana when the person cannot sign.



## Interviews

During the interview, the researcher had some materials that assisted her in capturing all data. Each interview was digitally audio-recorded (with the permission of the interviewee) so that the data could be transcribed verbatim later. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with the parents. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument in data collection (Creswell, 1998). The researcher is responsible for everything in the study including, but not limited to, planning, data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the findings to the readers.

Data collection was done through the use of semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix F). Parents responded to in-depth interviews guided by semi-structured questions. “When the researchers want more specific information, they use semi structured interviews” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 5). Interviews were also used to find out things from people that could not be observed directly and allowed the researcher to understand another person’s perspective (Creswell, 1998). Rubin and Rubin emphasized the importance of flexibility and continuous, rather than fixed, interview designs in a qualitative study. Rubin and Rubin also stressed that, rather than being locked into one set of questions for all the interviewees, the qualitative researcher can adjust the questions so that individuals are asked about the particular parts of a subject that they know best. The flexibility makes the interview effective if the researcher finds that some of the participants are not knowledgeable about some aspects of the phenomena being discussed (Rubin & Rubin).

Qualitative research allows the researcher to start with broad-based questions. The researcher can then narrow the questions and be more specific as more and more interviews are conducted (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Rubin and Rubin indicated that an iterative designed interview stops when additional interview questions do not add any more new ideas. Each participant in this study was interviewed for 45-60 minutes at least once every two weeks between the months of March and May of 2009. Although the study started with five participants in each village, some prospective participants failed to participate due to family commitments. However, I realized that some parents declined because they felt uncomfortable about participating in the study. For example, when I called to make an appointment, a lady who claimed to be the mother of the participant told me that the participant had gone to Selibe Phikwe. However, when I drove by, I saw the participant. I drove up to her home and she told me she was sick. This shows how parents were uncomfortable in participating in the study.

The interviews were conducted in Setswana (Botswana's official language). Since most participants felt uncomfortable having a stranger in their houses, most interviews were conducted in my truck or at a place that was chosen by the participant. Only the male participant had no problem with me coming into his house. Throughout the interviewing process, questions were asked in such a way that the participants would not feel being judged or scrutinized. At a later time, the interviews were transcribed verbatim.

### *Reliability*

Toward the end of the data collection process, one purposeful selected teacher from each base school responded to a one-time, semi-structured interview. The teachers' interviews were based on parents' involvement and expectations concerning their

children's academic lives (see Appendix G). The purpose of interviewing the teachers was to collect data to be used for triangulation. These interviews were conducted in both Setswana and English languages interchangeably to allow for better expression and to create a conducive environment for the discussion. Although the teachers' interviews generated data on how teachers perceived parents' involvement in their children's academic achievement goals, the teachers' perspectives were only used to corroborate the parents' perspectives. Pupils' progress reports for the previous standard were viewed to confirm the parents' perceptions of their children's academic performance. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) noted that it is better to have multiple sources of data because the convergence of sources helps to clarify the topic better than a single source.

#### Data Analysis

Through the processes of data analysis, consolidation, and reduction, the researcher makes sense of the data and interprets the participants' ideas. Data analysis helps the researcher interpret the data and make comprehensive meaning or interpretation of the findings of the study (Merriam, 1998). While collecting the data (interviews), I gradually embarked on transcribing the data verbatim. After transcribing, I then translated it from Setswana to English. I read through the translated version several times to acquaint myself with the English version. As I read each transcribed interview, I looked for common words and phrases used by the participants. With frequently appearing words and phrases, I formed categories and sub-categories. Then I developed coding strategies by marking the paragraphs and sentences with the code for the categories and sub-categories. I designed and labeled folders for the "cut up and put-in folder approach" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Each sentence or paragraph in the English version data was then marked or coded in a way that would show the folder in which it belonged and who said the statement. After coding both the Setswana and the English translated versions of the data, the coded data were sent to the research assistant who had experience with qualitative research to validate both the translation and the analysis. Although the researcher and her assistant were not able to discuss the reliability of the analysis at length, they had limited differences, especially as the analysis was based on the research questions. Later the coded data were sorted into categories and sub-categories that were then cut and put into the folders. The cut and put into folder approach suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) was used to generate the themes and sub-themes. As this study was based on four villages, it fit the description of collective or multiple case studies. Merriam (1998) pointed out that there are two stages of analysis in a multiple case study--within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis. These two forms of analysis helped test for similarities and differences within a case and across cases.

#### Trustworthiness

In narrative studies, the potential threat is rigor. Rigor comes from trustworthiness of experiences as told by the interviewee as well as written by the researcher. There could possibly be misinterpretation of the experiences by the researcher that could be a threat to validity. Validity refers to the perception that the findings are congruent with reality and that what the researcher is intending to investigate is really there (Merriam, 1998). Merriam argued that the important challenge in qualitative research is to understand that reality is subjective, multidimensional, and ever changing. Therefore, validity relates to confidence that the study is investigating what it is intended to investigate.

After the first three interviews with each participant, member checks were done. In member checking, the researcher takes the data and the preliminary interpretations of the data to the participants to check the plausibility of what the researcher has interpreted from the interviews. Member checks enhance the descriptive and interpretive validity of the study and also increase rigor and trustworthiness of the findings (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Each participant was given typed copies of their interviews to read and check if what the researcher had written was what they meant (content validity). The interviews were written in Setswana so that the participants could read and understand them well. For parents who could not read, the researcher read everything to them so that they could hear their comments. Each participant then appended his or her signature on the script to show that he or she accepted the narratives as a correct representation of what he or she said. Participant(s) who could not write were requested to make a cross where they were supposed to sign. The cross made in place of a signature is common; one of the parents who could not write told me, "This is how I always sign in the offices--X." Parents did not make any changes in the transcripts since the translation had been done verbatim. To obtain consistency and validity, member checks were used to clarify the researcher's theoretical perspectives (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also indicated the importance of member checking as a method of establishing agreement between the researcher and the participants for the purpose of ascertaining that the data analysis and data interpretation were reliable. The contents of this study were further validated by the following beliefs: (a) no one was lying; (b) in cases where information from the conversational partner differed from that

of an official one (individual versus institution), the word of the individual was accepted; (c) everything made sense to the subject; (d) the assumption that decisions were rational, even if they seemed illogical or unwise to the researcher; (e) everything was relevant to the study; and (f) there was no such thing as absolute truth (Wiseman, 1974, cited in Hagemaster, 1992).

The issue of reliability was taken into consideration by the lengthy interviews that were conducted; this followed the recommendation of Hagemaster (1992). A lengthy relationship between the researcher and the participant--asking the same questions over a long period of time--allowed the researcher the opportunity to detect any discrepancies in the content. Accuracy of information was also corroborated through other forms such as teachers' interviews (Hagemaster). "The depth, detail, and richness we seek thorough interviews is the description rooted in the interviewee's first hand experiences that the qualitative researcher then gathers and analyzes" (Geertz, 1973, cited in Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The re-matching of the data categories and subcategories to the original data also bring forth for trustworthiness

#### Research Ethics

Ethical issues were taken into consideration to protect the participants. Before participants were interviewed, permission to participate in the study was sought through the consent form. The researcher ensured that participants understood the consent form by reading it with them or explaining its contents to them. During the completion of the consent form and when the research began, participants were consistently reminded about their right to participate or not. Any time they felt they wanted to withdraw from the study, they were free to do so. Participants were also protected through the use of

pseudonyms as a means to protect their identity. Finally, results were not reported as individual perspectives but as part of the group results.

### Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the methodology, participants, and procedures used in data collection and data analysis. The chapter discussed the use of a multiple case study design to examine parents' involvement and expectations as they related to their children's academic learning. Although data were collected through parents' interviews, teachers' views regarding parental involvement were solicited for triangulation. The children's progress reports were also viewed to confirm the academic performance of the children whose parents were involved in the study. This chapter has deliberated the procedures used to carry out this study. In the next chapter, I will present the results of the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the investigations on how parents in Botswana perceive their involvement and expectations of their children's academic achievement goals. A total of 16 parents voluntarily participated in the study. Only parents who had children in the upper standards (five, six, and seven) could participate. Data were collected in four villages in the Central District Council in Botswana from March 1 to May 22, 2009. Parents from the villages of Serowe, Lerala, Maunatlala, and Mmashoro responded to semi-structured interview questions. All participants were fluent in Setswana, one of the official languages and the national language of Botswana. Teachers' perceptions were also sought to corroborate parents' perceptions of their involvement.

The four villages (Serowe, Lerala, Maunatlala, and Mmashoro) differed in size and in the level of development. These villages were chosen because they were close to where the researcher lived. They were also chosen to shed light on parents' involvement as to how it related to the size of the village. Qualitative analysis of data was performed on audio-taped interviews that had been translated verbatim. The results from each village are presented in the sections that follow.

#### Serowe

Serowe is one of the largest villages in Botswana with a population of 42,444 excluding the associated localities (Central Statistics Office, 2001). It is the main center



of the Central District Council, one of the 10 district councils in Botswana. Since Serowe is the largest village in the district, it has major facilities that also serve neighboring villages. These facilities include, but are not limited to, the district headquarters, financial institutions-banks, police station, post offices, a hospital, land board offices, and a “kgotla” (traditional office where the chief performs his leadership duties). In addition, there are 18 primary schools, five junior secondary schools, and one senior secondary school.

Residents of Serowe are engaged largely in some kind of employment in different sectors of the economy: government, parastatal organizations, and small-scale businesses. In addition, some of the Serowe residents are engaged in crop production and animal rearing for both subsistence and commercial purposes. Serowe is situated 45 kilometers (km) west of Palapye. A railway line runs north-south of Botswana through Palapye. Hence, Palapye can be used as a reference point in the location of the villages involved in this study. Although residents of Serowe depend on public transport to move from one side of the village to the other, most of them have their own vehicles and drive. Also, most residents have water taps and electricity in their homes. Some parents have their children attend private schools. Table 1 presents the profiles of Serowe participants.

Table 1

*Profiles of Serowe Participants*

Parent	PARENTS			CHILDREN			
	Sex/Age	Education	Employed	Sex/	Education	Age	Performance
SRP1-s	F-48	JC	Unempl.	F	7	13	Average
SRP2-s	F-33	JC	Self-Empl.	F	7	13	High
SRP3-s	F-50	PLSE	Empl	M	6	13	Low
SRP4-w	F-43	PSLE	Empl	F	6	12	Low

*Note.* PSLE--acquired primary education, JC--acquired junior secondary education: Empl—employed.

As shown in Table 1 above, four parents in Serowe took part in the present study. Pseudonyms--SRP1, SRP2, SRP3, and SRP4--were used instead of the participants' real names for confidentiality and anonymity purposes. The participants were single mothers except for SRP4 who was widowed. All the participants were fluent in Setswana since it was their first language. These parents had children who were in standard six or seven in one school. The school these children attended was used as the base school for this study.

Participant SRP1 was a 48-year-old mother of four children (two males and two females). Academically, SRP1 held a junior secondary education certificate (JC) that she obtained in the early 1980s. Although she did not do badly in her Junior Certificate Examination, she could not proceed further in her education because of economic reasons. She did not obtain any employment and therefore, decided to stay home to take care of her children and support them in their learning endeavors. SRP1's eldest daughter had finished secondary education and was already working in the city. Her second child

was completing his final year in senior secondary school. The third child was doing standard seven while the youngest was still in the lower standard. SRP1's 12-year-old daughter, who was doing standard seven, was an average achiever. SRP1 stayed with her three children in Serowe while her mother spent most of the time at the fields.

Another participant, SRP2, was a 33-year-old mother of three children. Academically, SRP2 had attained her JC in the 1990s and was self-employed. She ran a small tuck-shop (similar to a convenient store) in her home. SRP2's eldest child was a high achiever in school and was doing standard seven. SRP2's second child was in standard one and the third child was still an infant. SRP2 lived with her mother, grandmother, and uncle.

The third participant, SRP3, was a 50-year-old mother of four (one daughter and three sons). She held a Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) certificate that she obtained in the early 1970s. She worked as support staff in one of the primary schools in the village. Although SRP3's eldest child did not further her education, the second child was in a tertiary institution where he would attain a career upon completion. The third child was doing form one (Grade 8) in junior secondary school; the youngest son was in standard six (Grade 6) and his academic performance was low. SRP3 lived with her daughter, two sons, and a grandchild.

The fourth participant, SRP4, was a 43-year-old mother of three girls. She was a widow and had lost her spouse a few years ago. Her eldest child had just completed her senior secondary education. The second child was in standard seven and her performance was low. The youngest child was doing standard three. SRP4 had a PSLE that she obtained in the 1970s. Although she managed to get into a secondary school, she did not

finish her junior secondary education due to financial circumstances. However, SRP4 was working for the Central District Council as a supplies officer.

### *Personal Experiences*

Although the participants had different experiences during their primary schooling, a common theme was that their parents were farmers; most of the time, they stayed far away from their children. The parents worked in the fields taking care of crops and livestock while the children attended school in the village. Most of the participants who went to school in the 1960s and 1970s reported challenging experiences from both teachers and parents. The participants also pointed out that since their parents were not educated, they did not seem to be bothered about their children's school life. The parents tended to be content as long as the children went to school every day; hence, the children did not find education important either. In other words, both parents and children did not fully understand the importance of education. SRP1 who went to school in the 1970s had this to say:

Unlike my child who is still in primary school but already talking about how he wants to be a medical doctor when he finishes school and how he is going to buy a car similar to his teacher's car, during our time, you could not imagine buying anything that was similar to what a teacher owned. During our times, teachers were special; they were seen as having amazing powers. We never even dreamed of being one. It was like we thought they were designated by birth into those positions. That is why we always felt uncomfortable around them.

In her explanation regarding her experiences during her schooling, SRP3 stated:

I went to school in the 1960s to the 1970s. During my schooling, it was like we were staying by ourselves because my mother was single and she had a chronic illness. She was so sick that it was like she was not there. She could not play any of her parenting roles and life was very difficult for us. Even our failure to get education could be attributed to the difficult life we had. Teachers were strict and not kind. They used derogative words and were not patient with us as their pupils. If a child was not gifted with understanding easily, "It was just like forget

it.” When the teacher came into the classroom, our hearts started beating with fearfulness because we knew we were going to be beaten sooner or later.

However, the younger participants in the study, who went to school in the 1980s and 1990s, reported having better relationships with parents and teachers. Although they too reported staying by themselves as children while their parents were in the fields taking care of the crops or livestock, these younger participants reported learning under more conducive environments. They indicated that teachers were friendly and helpful.

We grew up staying by ourselves as children while the parents were at the lands growing food to eat in the home. Although we stayed by ourselves, it did not affect us that much. We did well in school. Parents still helped us even though they were at the lands. They were able to send us money to cater for our needs. My experiences did not affect my education in any way. I was not gifted at all but I struggled. Other children, with whom I stayed and went to school, have done very well; they all succeeded in senior secondary school. (SRP2)

In her comments about her experiences during primary schooling, SRP4 started by laughing as she remembered of a lot of things she had not thought of for a very long time.

Ha! ha! ha! (laughing) That was a long time ago! In the 1970s! I remember that at school the teachers were kind. Even if we were to be punished, it was done to show us direction. Teachers were approachable. Whenever I had a question, I just stood up and went to ask my teacher.

### *Perceived Responsibilities*

When talking about the importance of parents in their children’s education, participants agreed that it was important for them as parents to join hands with the teachers in the education of their children. Parents had different views on what they perceived to be the most important responsibilities. Some parents thought going to school to meet and talk with the teachers was the best. Other parents felt that encouraging the child to be serious with school work could do wonders. In addition, some parents noted

that there was a need for parents to make sure that their children were disciplined.

“Parents need to encourage children to study and do their homework. If parents do not encourage their children to study, the children will not benefit from schooling,” said the young SRP2. She also emphasized that parents should ascertain that their children are learning at school and doing what is expected by the teachers. The participants stressed the need for parents to go to school and meet with the teachers to find out how the children were performing in class and whether they were taking their studies seriously. SRP3 stated, “Sometimes parents go to school only to be told that their children were too playful in class and they never listen to the teachers. Other parents found that their children were not doing well in class because they are always sleepy and inattentive.”

SRP3 added, “Parents should not leave everything to teachers. They should join hands and build the child.” The participants stressed the need for parents to help their children succeed in school. In fact, they commonly agreed that it would be possible if they all put in the effort as parents: “We need to help our children when they still have a chance to succeed. If we let them fail now, they will be our burden in future” (SRP3). Some participants suggested that parents should look through their children’s books to see what the children did at school. Other participants suggested that parents need to monitor their children’s school work to check if the children are really doing their homework.

The participants in Serowe suggested that there was a need for parents to discipline their children rather than wait for the teachers to do it for them. SRP3 spoke vehemently on discipline: “Parents need to discourage their children from spending more time playing and visiting with friends than doing school work.” She said, “Lore lo ojwa

le sale metsi” (Parents need to discipline their children while they are still young). SRP4 added, “I always tell my daughter if you are well-behaved towards me and respect me as your parent, you should do the same with your teachers.”

### *Parental Involvement*

Sometimes people understand that they have responsibilities but when it comes to carrying out those responsibilities, they may act differently. However, parents in Serowe seemed to carry out their perceived responsibilities. Parents reported their involvement in their children’s academic life in different ways at different levels. The participants indicated that they were mostly involved with their children at home. Some parents went to school to ask for help for their children when they found themselves failing to offer satisfactory assistance. SRP2, whose child was a higher achiever, had this to say:

I always go through her books to check if her work has been marked. I also check whether she has done all her homework, corrections, and copied the notes. I do this because sometimes children just wait and do not copy the notes. Every day after school, I do the checking to find out what they were doing in class for the day and what she missed. I do not participate in the school activities such as sports competitions because my daughter is not involved in any sporting activities.

All the participants reported limited participation in extracurricular activities. They indicated that the spirit of volunteering in the school was low. Due to that, teachers no longer asked the parents to volunteer for anything. “We used to volunteer in fundraising by making fat cakes and selling them for the school. Most parents did not volunteer” (SRP2). Even though SRP2 indicated lack of time as the cause of her involvement, she noted that when the PTA executive committee or the teachers called for a meeting, she attended. Some parents showed dedication when their children were involved in activities. SRP1, whose daughter was in the school choir, said that she

attended music competitions when they were held at Lady Khama Centre in Serowe. She woke up and got there very early so that she could get one of the front seats. She wanted to see the choirs clearly. SRP1 believed she was very supportive of her child in her music activities. She encouraged her child by stressing how musicians were valued worldwide and how they earned a good living from their music. SRP1 even gave her daughter examples of musicians in the country who achieved their high status because of their musical talent.

Participants in Serowe indicated that they always helped their children with homework. When her child came home from school, SRP1 looked through her books to check how she performed on that day. Mother and child discussed the day's tasks to find out whether the daughter had understood the tasks. SRP1 also encouraged her daughter to be punctual for school and to complete her homework: "In the morning, I wake her up so that she goes to school early. I always say, 'Go early, maybe you have a morning class.'" SRP1 continued by saying,

Most of the time, I help her with homework. When she comes from school, I look at her books and I ask what they did. When she indicates lack of comprehension, I help her. Sometimes I find her work incomprehensible; I ask her if she asked the teacher and often she would say "no." The following day, I would go to school to ask the teacher for help and indicate to her what my child did not understand. The teacher then stressed to the class that if they did not understand what they were learning, they need to let her know. In addition, the teacher explains to me how to solve the problem. Then I come and I help my daughter. I always urge my child to do her work. When I see her idling, I ask her if she does not have homework. Sometimes she even thanks me for reminding her.

Some parents were not involved in any school-related activities but they had ways of staying connected with their children's academic lives. SRP3 believed continuous encouragement of her son to take education seriously always worked. When her son came home and complained that the teacher did not like him or the teacher said "this and that"



to him, SRP3 did not buy the idea; instead, she discouraged her child from engaging in emotional behaviors. She encouraged her son to put effort into his school work and stressed this to him: “The teacher is not education. A teacher is a person who has been employed to help you learn. She is not education by herself. So do not put your emotions on the teacher’s actions.” In stressing the effect of her encouragement, SRP3 added:

For example, my boy who is doing form one now used to complain about how his teacher was ill-treating and also giving up on him. On seeing that, I encouraged him to put more effort in his studies. He got a very good grade—a “B”--for his PSLE. Everyone was surprised because they had thought he would not make it. I had told him to ignore everything and study hard.

SRP4 also encouraged her child to work hard. Sometimes in the evening, she took her daughter’s books and looked through them. Wherever the child did not do well, SRP4 asked her why and the child always explained, “Mathematics is difficult. I do not really understand it.” SRP4 tried to help her child in whatever way she could; however, her comprehension of the tasks was usually limited. In addition, SRP4 said she really wanted to attend PTA meetings but sometimes she failed because she missed the times when meetings were scheduled. She alleged that teachers sent the messages through the children and her daughter usually forgot to tell or give her the note inviting her to the meeting. Sometimes her daughter informed her about the meeting on the day the meeting was scheduled and sometimes she learned about the meeting after it had already happened. “I really do not like to miss meetings at school because at these meetings teachers talk about important things regarding the education of our children,” she explained.

SRP4 also noted that she had volunteered to go with the pupils when they went on school trips. Her intention was to assist the teachers in supervising the children. She

reported that so far she had not been notified of any trip. She said that when informed well in advance, she would take a day off from work to accompany the children. SRP4 also gave an example of how she had spent the whole day during sports competitions cheering her daughter and other athletes from her school. She indicated that this was possible because her daughter had told her in advance about the upcoming sports competitions.

### *Parents' Expectations*

Participants had high expectations of their children's academic life. Most parents said that they communicated their expectations to their children. Even though parents were asked to say what they expected of their children in the next few years, the passion and desire to have their children educated made them go beyond those few years. As such, they expressed their long-term expectations. One could see the parent's face brighten up when talking about his or her expectations of his or her child. "My expectation is to have my children go to school and get educated up to the highest level with the view that times are changing," said SRP1 (with a smile).

When elaborating on her expectations, the youngest participant--SRP2 said that she expected good results for the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) which her child would be sitting for by the end of the year. She added:

I expect good results from my daughter's PSLE. I want her to continue to secondary school and then to tertiary education, such as the University of Botswana and then get a job. In fact, any job that she chooses, to me if she is working I am okay. I think she understands my dreams as she always says she wants to go to Malaysia to train as a nurse. I think to me it is fine if she can get something to do in order to earn a living.

SRP2 continued by saying, "My daughter understands my expectations though I do not say them that much; she has them ingrained in her." Furthermore, she said that

when she went to school to collect her daughter's progress report, the teacher did not have many comments except to say, "She is doing very well; encourage her to keep it that way." The teacher also noted that SRP2's daughter was responsible and hard working. SRP2 quoted the teacher who said, "When other children in her class play and make noise, she keeps quiet and does her work."

However, some parents had high expectations regardless of the child's performance in school. SRP3, whose child was a low achiever, also had high expectations of her son's academic success. Through her continuous encouragement, she expected her son to academically achieve and go farther into tertiary education like his older brother. When asked whether her child knew her expectations, the middle-aged SRP3 said, "My child knows my expectations because I spell them out now and then to all of my children." SRP3 said that every time before class tests, her son told her how he was going to perform in the tests. If by any chance her son did not meet the target he had set for himself, he asked his mother to pardon him for having failed to fulfill the promise. "He would say, 'I promise you mama; I will try my best next time.' And for sure, he tried harder in the test that followed," explained SRP3.

SRP4 had high expectations of her child's academic performance. She expected her daughter to do well in the PSLE and proceed to secondary school with a good grade. She believed that she gave enough support and encouragement to her daughter. SRP4 assumed her daughter would realize that her mother was rallying behind her. Even though she had not voiced her expectations to her daughter, SRP4 expected her daughter to graduate from the university. When elaborating on her expectations, SRP4 said,

I expect my daughter to do well in the PSLE and then proceed up to tertiary education... I would like her to go to university. By seeing me at her school

related activities, like she saw me at the sports competitions when she was one of the athletes, I believe that gives her the strength. I always tell her that what the teachers want her to do is what I want her to do too. I always tell her that I believe she is capable of becoming anything that she wants to become and she has to start now.

Thus far, one could tell that parents understood the need for their children to be educated. They believed education would benefit their children in many different ways, regardless of how much money they would make. Parents also wanted their children to get higher education that would enable them to succeed in future life.

### *Importance of Education*

This is what SRP1 always said to her children when she emphasized the importance of being educated: “You cannot get a good job without an education. You will not be able to build a big house, drive a beautiful car, or get a job of your choice if you are not educated.” SRP1 continued by saying, “Without education, you end up on piece jobs, drought relief projects, or digging trenches which are poorly paying jobs. But with education, one has all the advantages.” Still discussing the importance of getting an education, SRP1 said, “Education is important; it gives the person a promising future. It is like an inheritance that no one can take away from you.” She pointed out that educated people always had better opportunities in life. “Yes, it’s true; education usually leads to good jobs with better pay and better life.”

Parents emphasized the importance of education every time they created a relationship between the level of one’s education and the type of job that one obtains. This relationship could be interpreted that parents were emphasizing monetary benefits rather than education. However, SRP1 noted,

It is not always about getting employed; some people get educated and then do things with their own education. An educated person, instead of searching for a

good paying job, can use his or her education to come up with a better source of income for himself or herself. In addition, an education gives an individual a balanced life whereby the individual can look at life from different perspectives.

SRP2 said that she wanted her child to get good results in her PSLE so that she could continue to secondary school and then to tertiary school such as the University of Botswana. She believed through education her child could easily achieve her personal and national responsibilities. For example, Botswana Vision 2016 emphasized that Botswana should have healthy and considerate citizens by the year 2016. SRP2 noted that one could only achieve those values if he or she is educated. SRP2 also added that education was a basis for self development. She went on to stress, “Apart from employment, education gives the individual life skills that one would not acquire easily if she was not educated. For example subjects such as reading, math, English, social studies and others benefit us as individuals and as a nation” (SRP2).

SRP3 explained how education contributed to enlightenment of the individual person. She gave an example of how educated people understand lots of things. “They can read and understand what is going on in other places. Through their reading, they understand how to prevent themselves from diseases.” SRP3 went on to indicate how an educated person was different from an uneducated person. She pointed out how an educated person had the opportunity to become anything that he or she wanted to be. She also explained how an uneducated person was limited by lack of skill, knowledge, or qualifications. In her conclusion, SRP3 pointed out that education promotes the individual’s self-understanding.

In emphasizing to her daughter about the need to achieve academically, SRP4 said,

I want you to go further with school and have a job better than the one I hold. Through a better job, you can have a better future. I do not want you to have a job that is similar to mine that does not have a name (she says this while laughing). Education is important in the sense that it gives the person a promising future; it is like an inheritance that no one could take away from you. (SRP4)

### *School Relatedness*

Parents agreed unanimously that the teachers were welcoming and very helpful when they (parents) visited the school. In addition, teachers invited parents to ask questions if there was anything they did not understand. However, participants stressed that most of the parents in their school did not utilize the opportunity, adding that most parents did not come to school to find out from the teachers how their children were learning. Participants said they were surprised by this reluctance because they knew of parents who had challenges in helping their children. SRP1 said, “The school that my daughter attends is open to the parents. The teachers encourage us not to wait until the end of the term when time has run out. However, most parents are reluctant to come to school.” SRP1 went on to point out that teachers communicated with the parents on whatever activity they planned to do in the school but parents never showed interest.

Commenting on the relationship of the school with parents, the young SRP2 said she usually went to school when they (parents) were called for PTA meetings. Sometimes she went to school when teachers wanted them to come and do something at school, i.e., signing the forms or collecting progress reports for the children. “Nevertheless, I have no idea if it is possible for parents to come into the classroom and see the child’s work during the school time or when the teachers are teaching,” concluded SRP2. On the other hand, SRP3 said, “Teachers are willing to work with us anytime, but parents are reluctant

to take part.” In explaining her views on the school and how it related to the parents,

SRP3 gave a brief account of her experiences with the school and the parents by saying,

I have noticed that some parents, at the end of the term, when collecting progress reports complain and blame teachers for their children’s failure. Parents always complain that teachers are not doing a good job. One day I overheard one parent complaining about the teachers. I pulled her aside and said, yes, you may be right to blame the teachers; but at the same time, as parents we need to look at what our children are doing. Our children sometimes contribute to their failure. We need to educate our children. Show them that it is important for them to take school work serious. Some children are very challenging and not interested in their school work. When I listen to the parents, I get the meaning that parents believe that the teachers should make their children do well. Even if the child did not do anything, he or she must pass.

In explaining the openness of the school, SRP4 indicated that the school was open and welcoming to the parents. She pointed out that parents were reluctant to go to school and be involved in the education of their children.

### *Challenges in Involvement*

Participants showed interest in getting involved in their children’s education. They were also satisfied with the level at which they were involved and the assistance they gave their children at home. However, some parents indicated that the material learned by their children was not easy for them and therefore, it was difficult for them to assist their children. Instead, they always devised means of getting help for their children. SRP1 said that due to the advanced standard of education, sometimes she found what the child experienced difficulty in was also complex to her--“I am not as helpful to her as I was to the older siblings.” However, SRP1 was satisfied with the time she took to consult with the teacher on how she could help her daughter:

I help her and monitor her progress. Yes, I also check to find if she has understood the concepts that were taught at school on that day. Then I give her more practice. Furthermore, I understand my child’s strengths and challenges much better than before. (SRP1)

Parents of high achieving children had less challenges as their children took care of their academic assignments without much of their parents' assistance. SRP2, whose child was a high achiever, had this to say:

I do not have any challenges because my child understands all what she is taught at school. So I do not need to help her in anything. In fact, some of the things that she explains to me are beyond my comprehension. I just show her that I am interested in what she is doing by looking through her books. I am satisfied with the way I assist my child in her education. Although I struggle economically, I always try to provide everything that she needs for school. (SRP2)

SRP3 indicated that apart from the difficult subjects, she was satisfied with her involvement in her child's education: "I am really pushing him. When other people give up on him, I just stand by and encourage him until he feels confident again." SRP3 stressed that she never gave up on her children. However, she pointed out that her lack of education prevented her from assisting. SRP3 was concerned because most of the time when her child experienced some difficulties with his homework, she as the mother was unable to help him: "The material they are doing is difficult for me. I do not know how to explain it."

SRP4 noted that she was not really sure she was satisfied with her involvement and the assistance she gave her child. She indicated that sometimes she failed to help with homework. SRP4 indicated that her challenge was when the child had homework and she could not comprehend the assignment. So she believed her contribution was to remind her child about the importance of school and encourage her to work hard. "In addition, I come from work late and do not have time to get help for her from the neighborhood" (SRP4). In addition, SRP4 indicated that sometimes she failed to attend meetings at school.



*Serowe Teacher's Perspectives (SRT)*

A teacher from the school where the participants' children attended responded to some semi-structured interview questions. This was meant to validate the parents' views. However, since this was a small school, the profile of the teacher was withheld as a way of keeping the teacher anonymous. The Serowe teacher (SRT) indicated that although the school had a small enrollment, which led to a reasonable number of children per class, parents seemed not to adore the school. "Although it has always been a small school, pupil enrollment has lessened every year," said the teacher.

According to the SRT, parents were not involved in the school activities. They were lagging behind in attending school meetings and were not eager to participate in their children's academic life. She went on to say:

Parents' inability to get involved in school-related activities was a concern. Despite teachers' encouragement for parents to be part of children's learning environment, only a handful of parents came for meetings or came to meet with the teachers regarding their children's work.

The SRT indicated that the PTA executive committee existed. However, due to the lack of support from parents, it was not as active as it used to be. For this reason, the SRT had this to say:

Most of our parents are youth who have been to school. However, they do not show much interest in their children's education regardless of how their children are performing in school. Some of the children are doing well but their parents seem not to be interested. It is hard to tell whether parents in this school know whether they have a responsibility in their children's education or not. Since they do not respond to our invitations, we conclude that they are unwilling to be involved in their children's education.

When commenting on whether the school was welcoming the parents, the SRT said the school was open to parents: "In every meeting, teachers remind parents that they should come anytime to see their children's work." She indicated that these reminders

were always made, even when parents came to collect the children's progress reports.

Regarding whether parents understood the importance of their children's education, the SRT said,

Parents know and understand the importance of education. Sometimes I think it is only that the children are staying with the grandparents while the parents are at work. Nonetheless, even those parents who stay home in the village do not show interest in their children's work. In addition, those who stay far away at their work place do not take time to visit the school to find out how their children are doing when they are back in the village. Parents are not involved in such a way that the school no longer requests them to raise funds as it used to do in the past.

However, the SRT indicated that parents seemed to have high expectations because at the end of the term, they came in large numbers to collect the progress reports for their children, despite the fact that most of them were usually grandmothers.

### *Conclusion*

The participants indicated that during their schooling, they did not receive any academic support from their parents. That may be because their parents did not understand much about education. Probably, their parents assumed that by taking them to school, all was done. On the contrary, participants themselves had the desire and high expectations for their children to get an education that would help improve their standard of living. They expected their children to go up to the tertiary level as that would later help them get good jobs. Getting a good paying job would result in their children being able to uplift the family's standard of living. Participants said they did not want their children to struggle like they did. For these values, parents toiled and struggled to involve themselves in various ways and at different levels in their children's education.

The participants concurred with the teachers' perceptions that parents in their school were reluctant to be involved in school activities. The school felt discouraged to

keep on inviting parents as they showed less interest in its activities. However, the teachers continued to invite parents to consult with them. Despite the low participation at school, participants in Serowe were involved in school-related activities with their children at home.

### Lerala

Lerala is a middle-sized village of about 6,700 people including the associate localities (Central Statistics Office, 2001). It is 85 km east of Palapye and the railway line that runs north-south in Botswana passes through Palapye. Lerala is situated on the south-east of the Tswapong Hills, one of the outstanding features in the country. It is 20 km west from the boundary of Botswana and the Republic of South Africa. There are three primary schools in Lerala, one junior secondary school, a health clinic, a post office, a brigade (vocational institution), and a kgotla. Although not industrialized, Lerala has a small-scale diamond mining industry that has been operating for a few years. However, most of the residents are engaged in crop production and animal rearing, while others work in the towns and cities around the country. Tarred roads connect Lerala to Palapye and the town of Selibe Phikwe as well as the surrounding villages. Despite the fact that there is no mall, Lerala residents pride themselves in a well-stocked store that sells all sorts of quality merchandise. In addition, there are several small shops around the village. However, residents of Lerala still go to Palapye or Selibe Phikwe for major services. Table 2 presents the profiles of Lerala participants.

Table 2

*Profiles of Participants in Lerala*

Parent/Status	PARENTS			CHILDREN			
	Sex/Age	Education	Employed	Sex/	Education	Age	Performance
LRP1-m	M-55	PSLE	Employed	F	5	12	High
LRP2-s	F-53	PSLE	Un-	F	7	13	Average
LRP3-m	F-55	Prima 2	Un-	M	6	12	Low
LRP4-m	F-60	PSLE	Un-	M	6	12	Average
LRP5-w	F-40	PSLE	Un-	F	5	11	High

*Note.* m=married; s=single; Un- = unemployed; PSLE refers to a primary school certificate; prima 2= level 2 literacy class.

Due to the lack of job opportunities in Lerala, most of the youths who have done well in school have moved to the cities or bigger villages to work or search for jobs. Some of these young parents leave their children with the grandparents. Some grandparents are not well educated and the challenges of raising the grandchildren become overwhelming to them. Some of the parents in this village who declined to participate in the study were grandparents. One of the reasons why they did not want to participate was that they were not the children's real parents. The grandparents explained that the children's biological parents could better understand what the school expected. Even though some parents in the village declined to participate in the study, three mothers, one grandmother, and a father who had children in the upper primary classes in one school at Lerala volunteered. Each participant had a child in standard five, six, or seven. Their children had been going to this school for more than a year. The participants

were assigned pseudonyms--LRP1, LRP2, LRP3, LRP4, and LRP5--for anonymity purposes. All the participants were fluent in the Setswana language.

LRP1 was a man of 55 years. He was married and had five children. Four of the children were already grown up and working or in tertiary institutions. The youngest child was a 12-year-old little girl in standard five who lived with both her mother and father. LRP1's daughter did very well in school. LRP1 was not a resident of Lerala but had moved there a few years ago due to his job. Academically, LRP1 held a primary school certificate (PSLE); nevertheless, he held a reputable profession in the village. He appeared well informed on various current issues.

LRP2 was a 53-year-old single woman. She held a PSLE and was unemployed. LRP2 engaged mostly in crop production. The jolly but shy LRP2 was a mother of four children. The eldest two of her children had completed secondary education and were working in the city. The eldest daughter had taken the youngest sister to stay with her. Hence, LRP2 lived with one of her daughters who was in standard seven. Academically, LRP2's daughter was an average achiever.

Participant LRP3 was a 55-year-old married woman with seven children. Her older children were already working and economically independent. Although LRP3 had never been to school herself, she had learned how to read and write through adult literacy classes and went up to Prima 2. Despite that, LRP3 was eager to have her children educated; she has realized how the lack of education has been a deficit in her life. LRP3 was engaged in both crop production and animal rearing. Due to her husband's poor health, LRP3 was responsible for providing for the family; therefore, she was always busy trying to make ends meet. One of LRP3's children was doing standard seven in one

of the primary schools at Lerala. The little boy's academic performance was low. The easy going, quick to speak her mind LRP3 was a PTA executive committee member at her child's school.

LRP4 was a 60-year-old married lady who was raising her deceased daughter's three children. LRP4 was also caring for her aging mother. LRP4 had a grandson in standard six. The boy was an average achiever at school. Academically, LRP4 held a primary education certificate which she received in the early 1960s. Although she used to work in the Republic of South Africa, LRP4 no longer worked due to age and social responsibility. She had come back home to take care of her grandchildren and her aging mother. The active and vocal LRP4 was a member of various committees in the village of Lerala.

LRP5 was a 40-year-old lady. She had a child in standard five. LRP5 had lost her husband a few years ago. However, the young LRP5 was a PTA committee member in the school that was used in the study. LRP5 held a PSLE and was unemployed. Therefore, she engaged in farming to support her children. During the interviews, LRP5 moved back and forth between the fields and village as she had to keep an eye on both the children and the crops in the fields. Every morning, LRP5 walked to the fields and came back in the evening.

### *Parents' Experiences*

People who attended school in the 1960s and 1970s and those who had attended in the 1980s and 1990s had different experiences when it came to their upbringing and how they related with adults. LRP1, who went to school in the sixties, indicated that during his time learners were so scared of the teachers. Due to this fear, when a school

child walked along and had to meet a teacher on the way, the child would hide or change direction. Pupils tried hard to avoid meeting with teachers at close range when outside the classroom. Parents made the situation worse by using teachers as “threat symbols” to scare the children. The common threat that was usually used when a child had made a mistake was “I am going to tell your teacher.” This kind of remark made children more fearful of teachers; thus, children perceived teachers as unfriendly people.

When he compared teachers of his time and those of the present, LRP1 said, “Unlike during our time, today’s teachers are friendly and caring about their pupils. Teachers of our times would send you into a ‘panic attack’ just by looking at you. Our teachers were not friendly at all.” LRP 1 continued to explain the parent-child relationship of that time by saying:

Parents were strict disciplinarians and fast to yell at the children. This made it difficult for the children to communicate with their parents when they experienced challenges in life. In fear of triggering punishment, the child would rather keep the problem to himself. Parents did not understand if the child came home late from school. They would not listen to the reasons given by the child. Parents never thought that children could come home late just because they were still in class doing some schoolwork with the teacher. Even though parents sent their children to school, they were not keen about the children’s academic performance. They were much concerned about their livestock.

However, some parents who went to school during the same period had different experiences with both the teachers and the parents. Although LRP2 went to school in the sixties and seventies, she had this to say regarding her experiences:

I grew up staying with my aunt. She was kind and loving. I did not have any trauma although my mother had just passed away. My aunt was always here for me. She treated me like her own daughter. At school, teachers were kind. For example, if I had anything that I did not understand; I just went to the teacher and asked for help. However, discipline was always applied where necessary. I had the opportunity to study under good guidance and my performance was very good. However, my father later refused to send me to secondary school.

LRP3 has not been to school due to the type of life people were living at that time. She pointed out that not all parents had the foresight to realize that education would be worthwhile as we see it today. When she grew up, her tasks were to look after her parents' livestock and to do the household chores. "Realizing that I lacked somehow, I later attended literacy classes and went up to Prima 2. Now I can read and write by myself in Setswana without any difficulty." LRP3 continued to say, "Although I did not attend school, I make sure all my children go to school and benefit from education."

LRP4 went to school in the early 1960s. She completed her primary schooling in her village. As there was no middle school in her village, she attended middle high school in another village. She went as far as standard six, which was the final grade in primary education at that time. However, due to economic reasons, she could not go further to secondary education even though the famous secondary school in the area (Moeng College) was not far from her home village. LRP4 said, "I liked education but my parents could not afford to pay the school fees. In addition, education for the girl child was not emphasized." When she explained why the education for the girl child was not emphasized, she said:

The belief was that the girl child would get married, bear children, and stay at home raising them, while the husband goes out to work and supports his family. So when I could not go to college, my parents did not feel that bad. They knew I was going to get married. In fact, they were happy that I could read and write on my own. By then, the ability to read and write was the core of going to school.

In comparison to the present children, LRP4 said during their time, they were respectful to the teachers and all the elders. If a child made a mistake or misbehaved somehow, the parents would say, "I am going to tell your teacher." That comment on its own made the child consider his or her actions. LRP4 said that as children, they did not



want their teachers to know about what they did at home: “We were very respectful of the elders.”

LRP5 indicated that during her schooling, they stayed home by themselves as most children did. Parents stayed at the lands growing crops or at the cattle post looking after their livestock. However, she added that the parents’ presence in the home did not make any difference since parents did not show any encouragement in their school work. She said that it appeared as if parents did not know why they were sending their children to school. The children did not understand the importance of going to school either. With all that ignorance, LRP5 said that she did not benefit much from school, although she was not a poor performer in class. “Now I can see that education is important and I understand where it is heading. I do not want my child to have similar experiences” (LRP5). She added: “This makes me realize that I do not have to raise my children the way I have been raised; I grew up not knowing the importance of education as I lacked encouragement from my parents.”

### *Perceived Responsibilities*

Parents in Lerala had various views regarding their responsibilities in their children’s education, even though they did not differ much with other parents. They stressed that parents were charged with a lot of responsibilities in their children’s education. For example, LRP1 had this to say: “The first responsibility is to ensure that the child is adequately brought up with the basic needs fulfilled, ensuring that the child has what she is expected to have and what other kids at school have.”

Parents also emphasized the importance of going to school to meet with and hear from the teachers about how their children were doing. Parents indicated how

communication between parents and teachers could help shape the child. LRP2 said, “For example, when the child did something wrong at school, the parent is called. If the parent does not come, the child will continue with his or her undesirable behaviors.” In addition, “the teacher who teaches a child whose parents show no interest in what their child is doing will not be happy and will feel not appreciated or respected by the parents”

(LRP2). She continued to say:

Every time when the child goes to school you, as a parent, need to find some time on a particular day to visit the school. Take time to look through your child’s books. The child should know that his or her parents may come to school at any time to discuss his or her work with the teachers. This will make the child stay committed to her school work.

LRP3 emphasized the importance of going to school by saying, “Parents have to go to school and meet with teachers. If the child is playing and not doing the school work the teacher will say: ‘This child could be doing well if he was not too playful in class.’”

LRP3 went on to say, “Parents should also assist their children with homework. If they are not able, they can ask the older siblings to assist their little brothers or sisters.”

Although parents agreed that their visit to school was effective in enhancing the child’s academic achievement, some parents believed that the encouragement a child got from the parent(s) by urging him to take school work seriously was the most effective factor in the child’s academic success. Parents added that helping the children develop self-discipline could also be helpful. LRP4 said:

If parents do not encourage their children.... children who are encouraged will pass, while those who are not encouraged fail. Then their parents will complain that their children were cheated because most parents are much interested in passing than learning.

LRP4 stressed that if parents knew their children’s problems at school, they would help the teachers. When emphasizing discipline, she said parents need to be

explicit and train their children accordingly while they are still young. “My child knows what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. When I bought my television, I told him this television is not yours. Since then, he watches certain programs but not all programs. In fact, I can say he watches it sparingly,” LRP4 concluded.

### *Parental Involvement*

When it came to involvement, LRP1 said that most of the work was done by his wife. Every day when the child came from school, the mother looked through the books. Then the mother and child discussed the homework. “If I could say I do something with her, I would be giving myself credit for nothing.” However, LRP1 believed he had some contribution: he made sure that the child went to school well fed and clean. He provided some things that the child needed at school such as pens, snacks, or just P1.00 (money) to buy a snack at school. He further went on to say:

I believe being there to provide for her needs: knowing when and how to give to my child; understanding that giving more than necessary could be spoiling the child, and making sure that I give her accordingly, is a positive contribution. I believe I play my role and as such I contribute to her academic performance.

Most of the participants in this village believed that parents had to visit the school to learn from the teachers how their children were doing. Teachers also encouraged parents to come to school and find out how their children were learning. However, the participants complained that most parents in this school were not taking advantage of the invitation. In this village, some parents were involved with their children at home. They assisted their children with homework. Other parents were also involved in voluntary work. Some of these volunteers had their voluntary activities immeasurable while other parents did not bother at all.

LRP2 indicated that by virtue of being a PTA committee member, teachers always invited her to come and help solve some of the problems encountered by both the children and the teachers at school. “I always volunteer in different activities in the school. For example, when one of the cooks is not available I stand in for her to cook for the children. In addition, I am the one who voluntarily built and thatched the cultural hut for the school,” she said. Explaining her involvement with her daughter at home, LRP2 said:

When we are done with household chores in the evening, my daughter and I lie on the mat as she reads to me or does her homework. Time and again, she asks for my help and we try to find the solution. Sometimes we fail to find the solution to the problem and I always feel disappointed in myself after that.

LRP3 said that she did not go to school just because she was called: “I just choose any time that suits me and go to my son’s classroom. The teacher offers me a chair and calls my son to bring his books. The teacher then explains to me how my child is doing, his strengths and challenges.” LRP3 was a PTA executive committee member who always volunteered to take part in school activities. The previous year, during sports competitions, she volunteered to go with the school soccer team when it played in one of the neighboring villages. During the trip, she helped prepare meals and supervise the children. During the current year, she volunteered to weed the school premises. Her son is proud and appreciates his mother’s involvement in his school. However, when it comes to helping her child with school work, LRP3 finds it hard. She said, “I do not have much input in my child’s academic life. I do not have enough education. However, I usually ask the older siblings to help him with homework.”

Apart from going to school to see the children’s books, sometimes LRP3 went to school because she wanted to know what was going on at school. She explained that

sometimes children took advantage of parents when they realized that their parents were not aware of what was happening at school. LRP3 said:

A child may just say, my teacher does not like me. She punishes me for nothing. Then the parent would respond angrily by going to school to accuse the teacher based on the allegations. That is when trouble starts because some parents fail to use appropriate words toward the teachers.

Some parents were so involved in their children's education that they understood their children's learning and their expectations were congruent with their children's performance in class. LRP4 was one of those parents who was highly involved in their children's learning as well as in different sectors of the village. Regarding her involvement, LRP4 had this to say, "When my grandson leaves for school in the morning, I make sure that he is clean, neatly dressed, and he had good breakfast. To tell the truth, I do everything for him--I wash and iron his clothes and polish his shoes." After school, LRP4 went through her child's school work for the day. Although she did not understand most of what he was doing, she said, "I observe the teacher's marks; I know when there is a 'tick,' he got it right. But where there is a cross, I know he did not do that good."

During the school term, LRP4 went to school several times. She sat down with the teacher and as the teacher explained the child's strengths and the challenges, LRP4 made sure her grandchild sat next to her and listened. LRP4 also went to school when the school term ended to collect her child's progress report. In addition, LRP4 attended PTA general meetings. She said:

Sometimes I go to school on behalf of the VDC to teach the pupils about VDC, its membership, and its role in the village. I explain how the committee does the needs assessment of the village and reports to the councilor who then presents our requests during the council meeting. VDC is also responsible for the community

assets. After teaching them, I wait for two weeks; then I go back and ask them questions to check if they had understood. (LRP4)

In addition to being a VDC executive committee member, LRP4 was a member of the Circle of Support executive committee. This committee was chaired by the head teacher of Lerala Primary School. Since LRP4 was one of the people who were taken for training, she worked very closely with the chairperson. This committee oversaw the lives of the residents in the village. She gave an example of how they did the home visits to see how the needy, elderly, and orphans were doing and how well they were cared for. They also checked whether the services for these disadvantaged individuals were adequately provided. Not only that, the Circle of Support also traced and brought back pupils who had been withdrawn from school to go and work in the farms. Still on her involvement, LRP4 reported that she always volunteered at school when the grasses around the school premises needed to be cleared. She recruited some parents to go and cut the weeds and the tall grasses around the school buildings. She believed the children were still too young and immature to weed the school surroundings by themselves.

LRP5 was also a PTA executive committee member. Even before she was elected to the PTA committee, she always went to school to find out how her child was doing. At school, she always went through her child's books to see how she was performing. At home, she helped her child with homework. Regarding her encouragement, LRP5 had this to say:

I encourage my child to put effort. I let her understand why she needs to go to school. I indicate to her that in this era, life is based on getting an education. I always tell her that those who are educated have a better life. Those of us who did not get an education are hard hit by economic challenges. I always tell her to look at me and see how I am struggling. I tell her it is because I did not get an education. So I always advise her to take her school work seriously.

LRP5 went on to add, “Sometimes I am unable to assist her as the content is getting difficult. I usually go and ask my neighbor’s children who are in upper standards or those who attend secondary school to help my child.”

### *Parents’ Expectations*

Parents in Lerala had high expectations of their children’s academic life. They expected their children to get into higher education. They believed getting higher education would enable their children to get good jobs that would enable them to be economically independent when they are adults. Although all the parents had high expectations of success on their children, some parents did not communicate their expectations to their children. Being a professional whose older children had succeeded academically, LRP1 had this to say:

We have high expectations of our daughter, more so that she is intelligent. However, sometimes she gets disturbed but we keep on encouraging her. Like her siblings, I expect her to go up to tertiary education. In fact, I do not consider a child working if she does not have tertiary education. For example, my son wanted to join the military but I insisted that he get a career first. Now he is doing mechanical engineering at the university.

LRP2 said, “My wish is to have my child highly educated. She should study up to the university level. I want her to get a good job and become self-supportive in the future.” In addition, LRP2 expects her daughter to be educated so that she could later educate her own children. “If she is educated, she could become personally and economically independent regardless of whether she is employed or not” (LRP2). She went on to add:

My child understands my expectations. Time and again, she draws the attention of her younger sister if she fails the expectations. For example, after spending the holidays with siblings, she always talks about how her younger sister is doing at school and how she helped her.

Like in other villages, some parents in Lerala had expectations that were not congruent with their children's learning performance in class. For example, LRP3, whose child was a low achiever, had high expectations of her son. LRP3 stressed how she expected her son to study hard. She expected him to get an education that will enable him to get a good paying job such as teaching, nursing, or veterinary officer. She expected him to get a job that could later enable him to be self-supportive and also support them as his parents. LRP3 said, "Although my son is hard working and likes to do his school assignments, his performance is low. He is really struggling. Even his older siblings found school work challenging and their performances were low. (Hmm! she sighed) Ko o teng ke dilo tsa bati!" (I think it is hard luck!), she added. However, in her response to the question on whether or not her child understood her expectations, LRP3 said, "My child does not know my expectations. I have not communicated them to him yet."

In expressing her expectations, the elderly LRP4 said:

I expect my child to have a better life and help me out of this poverty. He should know that I am his parent and give me whatever I need. I should not live like I am living now, not being able to support him adequately and effectively. I believe he will make it because his end of term test results are always good. He always gets an outstanding "B." Through the encouragement and support that I give my grandchild, I know he will make it.

LRP4 indicated that her child knows and understands her expectations because she always tells him, "You need to study hard, more so that you are an orphan. When I die, your education will be your next parent." LRP5 had this to say, "I expect my daughter to get educated to the level that she can achieve economic independence. In fact, I wish she could go up the ladder until she reaches where education ends." In addition to her expectations, LRP5 went on to express what she wished for her child. When she said



what her wishes and expectations were, one could see the joy from her face. It was quite interesting to watch her as she sometimes closed her eyes when she said:

I wish my child could get a good job. With a good paying job, she will be able to support herself and myself as her mother. She will help me live a better life. I expect her to help other citizens of her country as suggested by Vision 2016 that advocates for sympathetic citizens. Although I have not communicated these expectations to her, I think by encouraging her to work hard and helping with her homework, I am communicating my expectations.

### *Importance of Education*

Parents expected their children to do well at school and go up to tertiary level. Most parents expressed the importance of education and how they wanted their children to go to the university. Although some parents had not made it up the education ladder, they desired that their children should reach the highest levels of education. Parents believed that if their children got a good job, then they would be able to improve their parents' economic lives. Parents stressed that they would be happy if their children could study hard so as to acquire the highest education available.

LRP1 said, "Unlike in the past, these days there are so many challenges in life. For example, there is so much competition for jobs that our children need to be prepared for this coming situation." He continued to say, "Without tertiary education, a person is not educated." On the other hand, LRP2 said she would be happy if her child could get a better education so that she could support herself and be able to educate her own children. She stressed how concerned she was about her child's future. "The future I am referring to is the ability to work and be self-supportive as well as being able to support me as her aging parent" (LRP2).

LRP3 said, "Every parent has some expectations of his or her children; we all expect our children to do well in school so that they can have a better future. Even those

parents who seem not to care expect their children to go the university.” LRP3 continued to say, “Parents do know the importance of education; it is only that they are not interested. Like I said earlier, they are not interested.” LRP4 said:

There is a great difference between an educated person and an uneducated person. When an educated person gets a job, he is keen and eager to make improvements in the family’s standard of living. While someone who is not educated may get a job and then fail to be responsible enough to think of where he or she is coming from. Individuals who have gone up with education develop life skills that work against drunkenness. If my grandchild can make it to the university, then I know I have done a good job because he will acquire personal life skills.

LRP5 noted that when a person is educated, his or her lifestyle becomes completely different from that of someone who is not educated. She went on to explain that life could be very difficult for a person who is not educated. Life becomes difficult due to lack of understanding as everything today is influenced by education. She gave an example of how most people who did not have good education failed to benefit from government grant programs. Although these programs were meant to lift the standard of living for the citizens, some individuals failed to benefit from them because they could not complete forms written in English. “Therefore, my child needs education so that she can benefit from the social and economic opportunities available to her. In fact, I would like my child to train as a teacher, nurse, or medical doctor” (LRP5).

### *School Relatedness*

Parents indicated that the school was very open. Although some parents went into the classrooms more often to sit down with the teachers and discuss their children’s progress, other parents did not know whether the school was open to the extent of letting the parents inside the classrooms during the teaching times. LRP1 had this to say:

When I attended the meetings at the school, I noticed that there was a good relationship between parents and teachers. I found that they were working together harmoniously. You can interpret the relationship when people talk in a meeting. Parents and teachers talked freely about what they thought could be done. No side seemed to be tense and there were no whispering and giggling.

However, LRP1 was not aware whether teachers in that school allowed parents to come into the classrooms and see their children's work. He had never made that request and he had not heard anyone mention it. However, he knew that teachers did communicate with the parents. LRP1 continued to say, "Teachers communicate by sending messages home with the children. Sometimes they send a note if they want an individual parent. Mostly the school calls meetings to consult with parents on various issues pertaining to their children's academic life." LRP2 added by indicating that parents were at liberty to communicate to the school whatever suggestion they had. She went on to say:

I always send messages to school mostly when my child is not well to let the teacher know that she will not come or she will be late. I feel free to communicate with the school. For example, this year when the school was preparing for the sports competitions, I went to the teachers to suggest they call the parents to school to come and help the children to clear the playgrounds where sporting activities were to be held. I am able to do this because the school is open to us as parents.

LRP3 indicated that teachers were open and welcomed parents to the school. She explained how teachers had extended invitations to parents into their classroom even beyond the normal school days such as "Open Days" and end-of-term days. "Teachers invite parents to come and sit in their classrooms anytime. They could go through their children's books while the teacher explained the strengths and limitations of the child" (LRP3). She went on to say, "Teachers want parents to come to school so that they could discuss the progress of the children."

When asked if the school was open to the parents, LRP4 said that the school had always been open. She indicated that as long as their children were there, parents were part of the school. She further stressed that teachers have always urged parents to come to school to learn about their children's progress and problems, but parents were reluctant to come. When responding to the question on how the school related with the parents, LRP5 said:

To my understanding, the school welcomes parents. Teachers are always pleading with parents, asking them to come to school. Teachers always tell us that this school is not owned by the teachers alone; it is for the teachers, the children, and the parents. Teachers are always urging us to feel free to come and see our children's work. They also urge us to come at any time to familiarize ourselves with the school.

### *Challenges to Involvement*

Although parents were satisfied with their involvement in their children's academic life, some parents seemed to have challenges in trying to get involved. Most of the participants found the primary school curricula challenging to them. This resulted from their minimal education or because they had been out of school for three to four decades. For example, LRP1 said:

I am satisfied with my involvement in my child's education. However, since we started this discussion, I realized that I have some limitations in my involvement. Ha! ha! ha! [she laughed]. I am satisfied because the limitations that I have realized made me take a step forward. I remember talking to my daughter saying, "By the way, I am aware that I have not been encouraging you to go to the library, so find time and get to the library to get books to read."

In her explanation of the challenges that she may be experiencing with involvement, LRP2 said, "I am satisfied with the support I give to my child. However, since I do not have much education, I always feel disappointed when she has a problem and I fail to help her." In contrast, LRP3 had this to say, "I am not satisfied with the level

at which I am involved because since I do not have that kind of education. I am not able to help my son with his school work; yet he is not doing well.” LRP4 said, “I am satisfied with my efforts in assisting my grandchild in his school work. Every time when I go there to see his work and talk to his teachers, I find that there are great improvements in his performance.” She added, “But I wish I could be able to help him with his homework.” LRP5 noted that “even though today’s education is good for the modern times, what the children are learning is difficult. It is not easy for all parents to assist children with their homework.” She emphasized that most of the content that children are doing today in standards six and seven is what used to be done in secondary school in the past. “However, it is mostly mathematics that gives me a headache,” she said.

#### *Lerala Teacher’s Perspectives (LRT)*

A teacher from the school attended by the participants’ children was interviewed using the semi-structured questions. The purpose of the interview was to get her perceptions on parents’ involvement and expectations toward their children’s academic school life. Although the teacher had provided her profile, I realized it would be easy to identify the teacher even if the profile was not written down. Therefore, for the sake of anonymity and confidentiality, the teacher’s profile was withheld. However, when talking about parental involvement, teacher (LRT) from the base school in Lerala said that parents did not attend meetings in large numbers and that was a serious concern to the school. She said, “As you know, for the child to succeed in her studies, parents and teachers have to work together. But here only a handful parents are involved and show interest in their children’s academic life.” LRT went on to say:

Parents are not only less interested in supporting their children in academic life; in essence, some parents are not interested even in the welfare of their children. For

example, when a child has ring worms...and the teacher calls the parent to come and discuss the health of the child, the parent refuses to come despite the failure to take her child to the health clinic.

LRT acknowledged that the few parents who were concerned about their children's work indicated that the work the children were learning was difficult for them. However, she went on to say, "One time, the standard one class was given word-cards to practice at home with the help of their parents; the following day, the pupils did not show any progress. Pupils had either lost the cards or received no help at all." The teacher indicated that these types of examples challenge the truth about the difficulty of the syllabus.

LRT also indicated that parents in their school did not seem to have any expectations or hope to see their children succeed. Although parents were young and had been to school, they still did not show interest in their children's education. She agreed with the fact that most parents were young and that they were all over the country, either working or looking for jobs while the children stayed with grandparents. Despite that, she emphasized that these young parents should just once in a while stop by to find out how their children were doing. "In fact, we do not know the real parents of the children we are teaching," she lamented. In discussing the validity of the allegations of parents' tight work schedules as the reason why they never come to school to see their children's work, LRT said:

Last year, the standard seven pupils did very well in PSLE. We threw them a party. Young parents had taken leave from work to come all the way from their work stations to attend the ceremony. Mothers came, grandmothers came, and even the fathers were present. It was unusual for our school to have fathers turn up for an activity. It was funny how most fathers came in escorted by their children. Some fathers remarked that they had not set a foot on the school premises for decades despite the fact that their children attended the school.

LRT said that it appeared as if parents were not aware of how much impact they had on their children's education. She said that most parents' interests lay mostly with their day-to-day life activities. They did not have time to come and meet with teachers to find out how their children were doing in school. To her understanding, the school was open and welcomed parents. Teachers always urged parents to feel free to visit the school at any time.

### *Conclusion*

Participants in Lerala had high expectations of their children to achieve academically and go up to the tertiary level. In fact, they expected their children to get well-educated and get good paying jobs that would result in gaining personal and economic independence. Unlike others, Lerala parents were not only involved at home, they also participated and volunteered in various activities in their children's school.

Although other parents did not participate in school-related activities, participants were satisfied with their own involvement in their children's education and they vowed to continue with that involvement. Among the four schools used as the base for this study, only the school in Lerala had a "cultural hut" (Tswana traditional hut built with mud and thatched with grass). This hut is used to keep cultural utensils and tools used as exhibits when teaching children about the Tswana culture. Parents also stressed that they were being challenged by the difficult syllabi when trying to assist their children with academic-related work. Parents indicated that due to the challenging syllabi, they were forced to leave everything that dealt with academics to the teachers. The commentary did not come as a surprise to the researcher as participants in Lerala held a PSLE certificate as their highest education. In addition, participants in Lerala were older and had long

been out of school. Regardless of their limited education, the older parents showed more interest and commitment in the development of the school and the education of their children. Among the four villages used in this study, Lerala was the only village that had not only five participants but also a male participant. Although the participants were busy with their social life activities during the data collection process, with tight schedules and moving between fields and the villages, they did not indicate time as a challenge during the interviews. This may be because they took time in their routine schedule and could prioritize the activities on a daily basis.

#### Maunatlala

Maunatlala is a village in the eastern part of Botswana. It is situated in the northeast of the Tswapong Hills. Maunatlala is 30 kilometers north of Lerala village and 78 km east of Palapye. Including its surrounding localities, the population of Maunatlala is 3,873 (Central Statistics Office, 2001). Tared roads connect Maunatlala to other places such as Lerala, Palapye, and Selibe Phikwe. Two primary schools, a junior secondary school, a health clinic, a police station, and a kgotla are located in Maunatlala. There are several small shops around the village where residents can buy their groceries. Most of the youth and educated residents of Maunatlala work in other villages, towns, and cities around the country. Residents who stay in the village are mostly engaged in crop production and animal rearing (farming).

Normally from the months of November to May, most farmers in the country are busy with crop production. People spend most of their time at the fields. In some areas, the fields are so far away from home that farmers have to literally move and stay there until they have harvested their crops with sporadic visitations to the village. However,



most of Maunatlala farmers spend their day at the fields and come back in the evening to spend the night in the village. This is possible because their fields are not far from the village. In this village, I managed to get four women whose children were doing standard six in one school to participate in my study. The pseudonyms of MAP1, MAP2, MAP3, and MAP4 were used for the Maunatlala participants. All of the women were single parents except for MAP2. Three of them were residents of Maunatlala except for MAP3 who came to the village because of her work. Table 3 presents the profiles of Maunatlala participants.

Table 3

*Profiles of Maunatlala Participants*

PARENTS				CHILDREN			
Parent	Sex/Age	Education	Employed	Sex/	Education	Age	Performance
MAP1-s	F-36	JC	Un-	F	6	12	Average
MAP2-m	F-48	-	Un-	F	6	13	Low
MAP3-s	F-50	JC	Employed	M	6	12	High
MAP4-s	F-33	JC	Employed	M	6	12	High

*Note.* m=married; s=single; Un= unemployed; PSLE refers to a primary school - certificate; prima 2= level 2 literacy class. JC= junior secondary education certificate.

MAP1 was a single woman of 36 years with two children. Her eldest child (daughter--aged 12) was in standard six and the younger child was only four.

Academically, MAP1 held a JC that she received in the 1980s. At the time of the interview, she was not employed. However, she said she was looking for a job. MAP1 lived with her mother and children. Every morning, MAP1's mother went to the fields to

keep an eye on crops while MAP1 stayed home with the children. At school, MAP1's daughter was an average achiever.

MAP2 was a married woman of 48 years with seven children. Three of the children had finished junior secondary education. The other children were still in primary school. One of the children was in standard six. The little girl was a low achiever at school. Although MAP2 had never been to school, she was eager to have her children go to school and get an education. MAP2 was a farmer; she and her husband reared livestock and grew crops mostly for subsistence. In addition, MAP2 was a PTA executive committee member in the school her children attended.

MAP3 was a woman of 50 years. She was a professional; academically, she held a JC. She had four children; the older ones had completed tertiary education and were already working and living independently. MAP3 worked in the school and lived with her youngest son who was doing well in standard six. In fact, MAP3 was not a resident of Maunatlala. She had moved there a few years ago due to her job. Every time when the schools closed, she went back to her home town.

MAP4 was a young parent of 33 years and a single mother of three. Her eldest child had just started in junior secondary school. The second child was in standard six while the youngest was in standard one. Academically, MAP4 held a JC. Since she did not have parents who could take care of her children, MAP4 could not look for a job in the city like other young parents. She stayed home with her children and contentedly worked hard to provide for them. However, during the interview period, MAP4 obtained a job in a construction company that had just moved into the village.

### *Parents' Experiences*

During her primary education in the 1980s, MAP1 and her siblings stayed by themselves while their parent (mom) was working far away in the city. The uncle provided everything the children needed such as food, toiletries, and money if necessary. They also stayed with an older cousin who did their laundry, assisted with homework, and prepared meals for them. Therefore, life was not very difficult for them. MAP1 reported that teachers were also kind and supportive. They guided and helped the pupils like their parents would do. However, MAP1 had this to say, “We (pupils) were not serious with our school work; we were too playful. We did not understand the importance of going to school or getting an education.” She added, “Pupils who failed were made to repeat the standard and I repeated standard four; that was when I realized that if you are not gifted, no matter how hard you try, you will not go far.”

On the other hand, the elderly MAP3 had this to say:

I did my primary education in the late sixties and up into the early seventies. During my primary education, I stayed with my mother and my siblings. We had just lost our father. Though my mother was not educated, she was eager for us to be educated. She did not go to the lands or cattle post as other parents. She did not want to part with us. She made sure that we went to school and got an education. My mother showed that she valued education when my uncles wanted to keep my brother at the cattle post. She refused and went to get him against my uncles' will so my brother came back and attended school.

When elaborating on her experiences as a child, MAP3 indicated that they respected their teachers. When a child did something wrong at school, he or she was punished. She went on to explain how a child could not report to the parents that the teacher punished him or her. “When the child reported, the parents concluded that the child had done something that warranted punishment. Hence, the parents would punish

the child again” (MAP3). When explaining further about the discipline, she had this to say:

The relationship between parents and teachers on discipline was very effective. Without the disciplinary approach shared by teachers and parents, most of us would not be where we are today. Their discipline helped shape us. Today, teachers are not allowed to discipline the learners. And that is why the children do not care about anything today.

MAP4 attended primary school in the 1980s and said that the school was good. Teachers were helpful and friendly. The learning environment was also suitable. The challenge was that the school was a little bit far from home. MAP4 and her friends walked in all kinds of weather. Regardless of whether it was sunny or rainy, MAP4 and her friends walked to school. Their parents had no vehicles to transport them to school; in addition, there was no public transportation that drove past their school.

#### *Perceived Responsibility*

Participants in Maunatlala did not differ from those in the other villages regarding their perceptions of parents’ responsibilities. Maunatlala participants emphasized the importance of encouraging children to work hard and take school work seriously. MAP1 explained how parents needed to encourage their children to take education more seriously. She believed that with education, the children could have a better future and help support their own parents.

By failing to get an education, the children’s lives are just going to be like their parents or even worse. Parents should never cease to encourage their children. They have to take time to go to school and find out from the teachers how their children are performing at school. Teachers cannot succeed by themselves if parents are not showing any interest in their children’s school work. (MAP2)

MAP3 also said that parents needed to show some interest in their children’s education in whatever way that fitted them. She suggested that parents could either help

their children at home or they could volunteer to do anything at school. She pointed out that the school expected parents to attend meetings. “As a matter of fact, parents should make sure their children are clean and well fed before they come to school” (MAP3.) In her response on what parents should do for the young, MAP4 said:

Parents need to monitor their children’s school work. They can do that by looking at the children’s books regularly. Parents need to encourage and help their children practice some academic skills at home. Parents should also make sure the children are in school uniform, are clean, and are well fed before leaving for school.

### *Parental Involvement*

Parents in Maunatlala village indicated that they were involved in their children’s academic lives in different ways. Some parents helped their children at home while others preferred to go to school and meet with the teachers on a regular basis. When talking about her involvement, MAP1 said that she was involved in her child’s learning. She explained that since children do not understand the purpose of schooling, parents have to push them or else they will not benefit from their schooling. When addressing how she was involved, MAP1 said:

My daughter does homework most of the time with her cousin who lives not far away from us. Since her cousin is in form one (equivalent to Grade 8 in U.S. education system) in junior secondary school, she is able to help her a lot. I always urge her to come back home after doing her homework. I sometimes help her when the homework is not that challenging to me. Since she is too playful, I try to keep an eye on her school work. I was once called to school about her being too playful. The teacher complained that she enjoyed the company of pupils who were “blockheads.” The teacher explained that she will not benefit from her friends as they know nothing.

Regarding her personal involvement, the middle aged MAP2 had this to say:

At school, I am a PTA executive committee member. I go to school to see what is going on and to find out whether or not my child is serious with his school work. I know a child does not only succeed because he or she is intelligent but sometimes because he or she puts forth more effort. In the evenings when we are done with

the household chores, I ask my child to read for me. I know some children have been given the gift of education naturally by the Almighty while others struggle. I can see that my child was not given the gift of education.

MAP2 continued to say, “Some children are failing and not because they are not serious at school. They fail because they do not have that natural gift of education (academics). Instead the child may have the gift of working with their hands and their minds in a different manner.” MAP3 worked in the school and she had a son in standard six. She also concurred with MAP2 that the parents’ involvement in their children’s education was crucial. However, she indicated that her involvement was mostly due to her job and not from the parenting perspective. When explaining her involvement in her son’s academic life, MAP3 said:

At home, I usually help my son with school business such as doing homework. After learning something in class, he would come (though not always) and say, “Mama, today we were working on this but I did not understand it well.” Then together my son and I will go over the material that he needs help with until he understands it. Sometimes he reads and wants me to ask him questions to check whether he had understood what he had been reading about. In addition, I am involved in school activities by virtue of my work in the school. For example, I am highly involved in music and sporting activities. However, I believe my participation is much more based on the fact that I work in the school rather than on being a parent.

Regarding involvement of other parents, MAP3 said that most of the parents in the school were interested and involved in school activities. She stressed that the parents participated in large numbers if informed well in advance. “We do not have any difficulties of parents’ involvement in this school. At least I could rate the parents’ participation at 70%. Our parents are really interested in their school” (MAP3).

When explaining about her involvement, the young MAP4 described herself as highly involved in her children’s education and said:

As for myself, I go to school all the time. I go whether a meeting is scheduled or not. I just go to my children's classes even when they are not aware that I will be coming to school. My son is no longer surprised to see me coming into his classroom. Now he knows that I can come at any time to see his work and hear from his teacher. Even my youngest child who started standard one in January this year, I have been to his class several times. I asked the teacher how far he has moved and let her know what I am teaching him at home. Since my son is a high achiever, he does not always need my help to do his homework. However, after doing his homework, he shows it to me and explains how he solved the problems. Most of the time, I do not understand the explanation because the mathematics they do is totally different from what we did when I was a student.

### *Parental Expectations*

When parents send their children to school, they have expectations that their children will learn and achieve what they are taught. In addition, parents as individuals have personal expectations of their children. Although MAP1 had high expectations of her child's academic life, she decided to express them as wishes. She wished her child could work hard; she believed if her child could work a little harder, she could make it. "I always tell her, you are smart; if you get serious, you can go up to the university," said MAP1. She indicated that her child understood her expectations as she (the child) always expressed how she wants to be a medical doctor. Regardless of her expectations and her daughter's dreams, MAP1 said that her child does not take her school work seriously. "She is too playful and does not devote much of her time to learning. If my child was serious, she would be an 'A' student" (MAP1). In her words, MAP2 said:

I expect my child to complete form five and then go to the university. I hope she will reach the highest level of education. These days, education is the only way. You cannot get a job if you do not have a form five certificate. Employers want people with a form five. If you are to survive in the future, you need to have an education. Every now and then when we are sitting by the fire in the evening, I tell my children how I wish they could study harder. I tell them how I expect them to proceed to higher levels of education. I let them understand that our economic life is at this level due to lack of education. If we had been educated, our lives would be different. Therefore, they need to work hard in school so that they can have a better life in the future.

MAP3 was not only a professional, her older children had progressed academically and economically. Regarding her expectations toward her youngest child, MAP3 had this to say:

My mother believed in getting us educated and I benefited from it. I have influenced my children's education, not only this child but all of my children, because I know the benefits of education. I encourage and support my child in his studies with a better understanding. I think that is why I have expectations that he can go further in education than where I stopped. What I expect is that he would later be self-supportive or independent. He should be able to provide for himself as did his other siblings.

With no choice of either getting further education or going to the city to find a job, the young MAP4 had high expectations of her son who was a high achiever.

Regarding her expectations, MAP4 said:

I wish and expect my child to do better than me. Yes, he should not be like me. Right now I am a youth but I am already suffering because I did not go further with my education. I want my child to go up to the university and complete his education. I would like him to work and be able to support himself and also help me economically.

MAP4 added, "My child knows my dreams for him. I always tell him to look at me, see how I am struggling right now. It is not because I have not been to school; I did go to school and it is only because I did not make it."

### *Importance of Education*

With regard to education, MAP1 said, "I wish my child could study hard so that she can pass form five and end up graduating from the university as that could help build her future." MAP2 added:

The benefits of education are that one could have a better life in the future. The better life coming from education can help her afford to take care of herself and her parents. This is possible because when she is educated, she will get a good paying job. When talking about the day-to-day life, there is a difference between an educated and uneducated person even if we do not bring in issues that relate to literacy.



MAP3 stressed that without an education, she would not be where she was economically. So she knew that if her child got an education up to the tertiary level, he would survive the challenges of the future. MAP4 concurred with MAP3 by saying: “Of late, employers are not hiring people who are not educated. Right now, the construction companies are moving into our village and people who are not educated cannot get jobs as they cannot complete the application forms or follow instructions in English.” MAP4 added:

Right now the government has introduced some programs that have been designed to help youths, small farmers, small business, and some others who need to be financially assisted. However, people who are not educated seem not to benefit from these programs. They fail to complete application forms written in English. Since some of these people seem to be hiding their lack of education, it becomes hard for them to ask for assistance.

#### *School Relatedness*

MAP2 said the school was open to parents at all times. Teachers encouraged parents to come to school any time, whether they had been invited or not. She said teachers wanted the parents to come into the classroom and have a look at their children’s work. She indicated that parents were permitted to ask questions if they had any. For example, if there is homework that has not been marked, the teacher would explain what might have led to that: an oversight, to be re-done, etc.

MAP3 also explained how the school had its doors open to the parents. She said they had been inviting parents to come into the classroom and see how the teachers were teaching their children. MAP3 further noted that “although parents do not come in large numbers, we interpreted the low attendance as being due to family life commitments, for example, being busy with the crops in the fields.”

MAP4 also indicated that the school was open to the parents. However, she commented on a tendency whereby teachers got so familiar with a parent and this parent would end up being the only one who did almost everything in the school when other parents were just idling. She further explained that sometimes the dominance by one parent occurred as other parents came to school once in a while. Despite that, MAP4 said, “Teachers encouraged us to visit the classrooms and see how our children are learning in school.”

### *Challenges to Involvement*

Most participants in Maunatlala were satisfied with their involvement. The level at which they assisted their children did not cause much concern to the school. However, a few challenges were noted by some parents. For example, MAP1 said:

I help my child and I always make sure that she does her homework. Sometimes I feel like I am not helping her enough. This is because what she is learning at school these days is not the same as what I did. Sometimes the homework is so challenging for me that I have to send her to her cousin to ask for assistance with her mathematics homework. I always wish I was able to help her myself.

MAP2 indicated that being unable to read and write was a challenge on its own. She said she could not help any of her children. It did not matter what material or standard they were doing, she was unable to assist. “I depended on the older children to help the younger siblings,” said MAP2. On the other hand, MAP3 had this to say: “I do not have any challenges in being involved in my son’s academic life because he consults with me any time he needs to, whether in school or at home.” When commenting on other parents, MAP3 said that most parents in their school were really trying to help their children with school work. She noted that most of the parents were the youth who had not gone far with education. She indicated how these young parents were challenged by the

new syllabi as it did not cover most of what they learned during their schooling. “Most of the time, I do not have any challenges because my son understands well when the teacher is teaching; if he does not understand, he asks his teacher,” added MAP4.

*Maunatlala Teacher’s Perceptions (MAT)*

MAT was a middle-aged female teacher. She had been teaching for more than two decades and had been in this particular school for several years. Although the teacher’s profile was available, I chose not to present it as a way of protecting her identity.

Therefore, the profile was omitted as it might jeopardize confidentiality and anonymity.

MAT had this to say:

In our school, parents are involved in different activities. However, they are not very active in coming to class to see their children’s work. When meetings have been announced well in advance, they attend in large numbers. They also get involved in other activities such as prize giving. During the prize giving ceremonies, parents assist in fundraising, entertainment, cooking, and everything for the day. When sports activities are held in the village, our parents come and support the school.

MAT indicated that when it came to academic assistance, parents were a bit slow. For example, she said she called parents of the pupils she taught at the beginning of every term with the intention to give them an idea of what the children would be doing throughout the term, and parents came in small groups. When she asked them to wait for other parents so that she could explain the contents of the meeting to all of them, parents became unhappy, especially as it was the season when they were busy at the fields. When she explained to them her suggestions on how best they could assist their children, most parents indicated that they did not understand what the pupils were learning. “They complained that what the children were learning at school today was not what they

learned. They really did not have much knowledge of how to assist their children” (MAT).

According to MAT, parents understood the importance of education. However, the problem was with the challenging content. She gave an example of a situation in which a parent would try to help a child with homework and even appended his or her signature to show that indeed he or she had assisted the child, only to find that they did not solve the problem correctly. Hence, both the child and the parent had no idea about how to do the assigned work. MAT went on to say:

Some of these young parents seem to be discouraged by their lack of success. They have given everything to the “Almighty.” Although they have dreams, they are slow to encourage their children toward those dreams. They do not take the initiative to discuss with their children about their life and let the children know they are struggling and not happy with the type of life they live. They do not show their children that there is an alternative to this type of life and that a better life could be attained through hard work at school. I think some parents are not sharing their life experiences and hardships with their children. They do not let the children know that they (parents) wish they had a better life than what they have now.

However, MAT concluded by indicating that although parents of this school had high expectations and dreams for their children, some parents were not nurturing their children toward their dreams: “They have entrusted their children’s success on luck.”

### *Conclusion*

The Maunatlala participants were of mixed age; there were two middle-aged parents and two younger parents. All the participants were mothers of standard six pupils. Maunatlala was the only village among the four villages in the study where teachers were not complaining about parents’ failure to attend meetings, participate in school activities, or even to keep their children clean (parental involvement). Parents of Maunatlala school children were trying their best to participate in school activities. Some participants

reported making regular visits to their children's classes in order to find out from the teachers how their children were doing academically.

The teacher concurred with the participants, indicating that parents were trying by every means to keep their children clean. She explained that since the school introduced a system whereby teachers check the children's cleanliness in the morning when they come to school, children have improved much in cleanliness. The teacher also indicated that when invited well in advance, parents attended the school meetings in large numbers. Regarding the parents' involvement in the academic side, the teacher indicated that some parents were really trying to help their children but they were challenged by the new curriculum. The teacher also indicated that parents had high expectations of their children with regard to academics. However, she felt that some parents did not communicate with their children in order to let them understand the importance of taking their education seriously.

#### Mmashoro

Mmashoro is a small village about 125 kilometers northwest of Palapye. A tarred road from Serowe to Orapa (a diamond mining town) passes through Mmashoro. The population of Mmashoro is around 1,628 (Central Statistics Office, 2001) including surrounding localities. There is a primary school, a junior secondary school, a health clinic, a few small shops, and a kgotla. Like residents of other villages in the country, some residents of Mmashoro work in other villages, towns, and cities. Most of the residents who stay in the village are engaged in animal rearing and crop production.

The nearest small village of Paje is about 60 km away from Mmashoro.

Mmashoro village is mostly surrounded by cattle posts. On orientation day at the school

with the parents of Mmashoro, only eight parents attended the meeting. Out of these, only three parents agreed to participate in the study while the rest declined. The pseudonyms MMP1, MMP2 and MMP3 were used to refer to participants from Mmashoro. Table 4 presents the profiles of Mmashoro participants.

Table 4

*Profiles of Mmashoro Participants*

Parent/status	PARENTS			CHILDREN			
	Sex/Age	Education	Employed	Sex/	Education	Age	Performance
MMP1-s	F- 36	JC	Un-	F	Std.7	13	High
MMP2-s	F-33	BGCSE	Employed	F	Std 7	12	Average
MMP3-s	F-50	Prima 5	Employed	M	Std 7	14	Low

*Note.* s= single. BGCSE=senior secondary education certificate.

The table shows that all the participants were single mothers and each had a child in standard seven. These parents were all residents of Mmashoro by birth and they spoke Setswana fluently. MMP1 was a soft-spoken 36-year-old mother of three girls. Although she held a junior certificate from the 1980s, MMP1 was unemployed. In fact, she had never been employed. In the previous year, MMP1 had moved to the city to find a job to support her children. When she came back, she realized that her children's academic performance had dropped; so she decided to stay home and be there for them. MMP1's eldest child was now in junior secondary school. The second child was in standard seven; the youngest was just a toddler. MMP1 lived with her three children in her own home and worked hard to support them. MMP1's daughter, in standard seven, was a high achiever.

MMP2 was an enthusiastic 33-year-old mother of two children. Her eldest child was a 12-year-old girl in standard seven. The little girl was an average achiever at school and the second child was a two-year-old boy. MMP2 held a BGCSE or senior secondary education and worked as a shop assistant in one of the village stores. Another participant, MMP3, was a hard working 50-year-old woman. Even though MMP3 had never had a formal education, she could read and write in Setswana; she furthered her education through adult literacy classes and had studied up to Prima 5. In spite of the limited education she had obtained, MMP3 managed to gain employment as a support staff in the school. She had seven children--five sons and two daughters. Five of her children had finished school. However, only one of her children made it to senior secondary and up to the tertiary level. MMP3 had a son in standard seven whose performance was low.

#### *Parents' Experiences*

During her primary education, MMP1 stayed at the cattle post with her parents. There were no big challenges as the parents were always available to provide whatever was needed. MMP1 reported that she and her siblings walked from the cattle post to school every school day. Nevertheless, the cattle post was not very far from the village; it was a good walking distance and did not pose any problem to them. In explaining her school experiences, MMP1 said, "At school, I was very much afraid of the teachers. I had so much fear that I could feel my body shaking. I was so afraid that when I had to walk nearby the teacher, I would change direction so that I would not meet with the teacher at short range."

MMP1 further explained that one of her teachers was her father's friend and the teacher used to come to their home to visit her father. But still MMP1 was afraid of this

teacher. MMP1 said, “When the teacher came to visit, I would hide in the bushes nearby my home until he left.” Sometimes MMP1’s father called her to come and listen as her teacher explained, “This little girl is not serious; she is too playful these days.” MMMP1 said her father would then recommend that the teacher should punish her. “Indeed he would punish me as he was told and it worked. I became serious with my school work such that I got a ‘B’ in my PSLE,” said MMP1, smiling.

For her part, MMP2 said, “During my primary schooling, teachers were kind and loving.” MMP2 described teachers of her time as teachers who had their students’ interests at heart. “The teachers were always willing to help the learners acquire an education.” She explained that even when the teachers punished the learners, it was out of love. The intentions of the teachers were to take the children to a higher level of thinking and understanding. MMP2 continued to say, “Nowadays, teachers are so loud that pupils seem to be afraid of them. Even when a child has a question, it is difficult for him or her to ask as they think the teacher will not tolerate the questions.”

Since MMP3 had not had any formal education, she had no experience of schooling and how it was like during her time. However, she noted that when she grew up, parents were in control as they decided everything the child had to do.

#### *Perceived Responsibility*

The participants in Mmashoro also had views on what they perceived as parents’ roles in their children’s education in the upper primary level. They indicated that parents had a role to play in order to provide for their children’s needs. In addition, participants indicated that there was need for parents to discipline their children. According to MMP1, parents need to teach their children good behaviors that are expected at school.



She stressed that parents ought to discourage misconduct such as being playful during the school time and encourage their children to take their studies seriously. “Parents need to make sure their children are clean, well dressed for the weather, and well fed before they leave for school” (MMP1).

Commenting on what she perceived as the role of parents in their children’s education, MMP2 said:

First of all you need to make sure your child is clean and has eaten something that will last him to the next meal. Make sure that your child has done the homework assigned for that day and that you have helped him/her. Parents should make their children’s education their responsibility. For example, parents who pay large sums of money for private schools, time and again, go to schools to find what their children are learning and how they are performing, unlike most parents who send their children to public schools. Parents who send their children to public schools wait for the end of the term to go and collect the progress reports, only to be disappointed when they find that the child has failed.

MMP3 emphasized that parents need to take care of the children both at school and at home. They need to make sure that their children are well fed before they come to school and even after school. MMP3 added, “Even if they eat at school, they need something at home before they come back for afternoon studies. Parents also need to make sure that the children are clean and sleep well so that they are well rested for the next day.”

### *Parent’s Involvement*

Although some parents in Mmashoro were involved in their children’s education, there was an outcry at the lack of parental involvement from the other parents and the school. MMP1 was not a member of PTA committee and was not active in school-based activities. However, when the PTA called a meeting, she always attended. For example, when the PTA committee members were elected, she was present to nominate. MMP1

felt satisfied with her involvement at home with her child. She communicated with the teacher who taught her child whenever there was something that needed the teacher's attention. When deliberating on her involvement, MMP1, whose daughter was a high achiever, said:

When my child started standard seven this year, I went to school because my child had a new teacher. I wanted to let the teacher know and understand that my child is sensitive and learns well when talked to in a calm voice. I think she is like me! [laughing] My child is sensitive to loud voices or being yelled at. Now the teacher has observed what I told her about my child and she understands her better. Often my daughter brings her homework home. However, sometimes she brings a library book to read and sometimes she reads to me. Once in a while, she asks for my help.

MMP2 was a mother who had much interest in her child's education. However, due to the nature of her job, she was minimally involved in school-related activities. She noted how she wished she had enough time so that she could volunteer as a member of one of the school committees. "Nevertheless, during the prize giving ceremony preparations when there was need for funds, I helped the fundraising committee to raise funds for the school. When the sports/house competitions are held in school, I go there for a few minutes during my lunch time" (MMP2). Her presence at the sports competitions made her child so excited that in the evening, they would continuously talk about what happened at the playgrounds. MMP2 said that during the music competition season, her daughter writes the song-notes in a book. She said that in the evening after helping her daughter with her school homework, they both practiced singing the songs. MMP2 stressed how her daughter was good at music and how she liked it. Therefore, MMP2 always encouraged her daughter to work hard on her music lessons because the music industry had just gained recognition and people were making a living from their musical skills.

During the school music competitions, MMP2 provided her child with all she needed: new socks, well braided hair, and food supplies for the day. Although the school fed them, her daughter always took a variety of food and snacks. Regarding school work, MMP2 said:

I have made it clear that her school life is my responsibility. I am almost a teacher by myself. I spend the evenings helping her with school work. I also give her extra work to do every evening. I go to school every other day to find out from the teacher how she is doing and how I can best help her. Actually, I am kind of nervous as she will be taking PSLE this year. I have realized the type of life I live; I leave home at 6 a.m. and come back at 7 p.m. with limited time off. This is not a good life. My child deserves something better.

MMP3 was a PTA executive committee member who saw her role as “the eyes of the community in the school.” When there were issues regarding children’s cleanliness, teachers called PTA executive committee members to intervene. Sometimes the executive committee delegated MMP3 to attend to such issues as she worked in the school. When the cooks needed help, MMP3 always volunteered to assist. Her son felt proud to see his mother walking around the school; in the past, it was only the teachers and the few who were employed who would be seen walking around the school premises.

MMP3 always went to sports competitions when they were held locally. Sometimes when she had time, she volunteered to go with the school teams to help the teachers in supervising and cooking for the children. MMP3 indicated that when sports or music competitions were held in a nearby village such as Paje or Serowe, she went there early in the morning. She gave examples of how they as parents sometimes got involved in their children’s school-related activities:

One time as parents we contributed money and hired a truck to take us to the sports competitions held in Paje village. Our children were not only surprised, they were excited to see us there cheering for them loudly. This did not only make them proud, it also gave them the strength to do more, such that they won first

prizes in various sporting activities. Last year, the school arranged an educational trip for children in the upper standards to visit Gaborone and the surrounding places. I volunteered to go and help teachers with cooking and supervising the children. Our children were fascinated by a lot of things. They were so amazed when they saw visually impaired people being able to read and write, especially as the children had the opportunity to ask them questions based on reading and writing. And the visually impaired responded perfectly well to their questions.

### *Parents' Expectations*

MMP1, whose child was a high achiever in standard seven, indicated that she was expecting an “A” for her child in the PSLE; a “B” would be a mistake as her child was a straight “A” student. She expected her daughter to do well in secondary school and end up training as a nurse as this had always been her aspiration. “I want her to succeed. I do not want my child to live the life that is similar to mine. I do not want her to struggle the way I am struggling right now” (MMP1). When responding to whether her child knew her expectations, MMP1 said, “Oh yes! My child knows and understands my expectations because we talk a lot about life. My child is serious and very competitive in her school work.” MMP1 gave an example of how her child was competitive academically: she competed for position one in her class during term-ending tests. She explained how the previous term, her daughter cried after the little girl she competed with snatched position one from her by being one point ahead of her.

In her view, MMP2 said that she preferred to call her expectations dreams because she believed things change as an individual grows older. She wished that her daughter could go further with education and become either a nurse, a teacher, or a business lady. As a business woman, she would open up her own business and employ other people. MMP2 said it was not about making lots of money. She just wanted her daughter to do something that could enable her to support herself and her family later in

life. MMP2 stressed that she was not much interested in money because lots of money does not guarantee a better life or happiness. MMP2 indicated that her child was aware of her dreams for her because she always discussed her job situations and challenges with her daughter. She said her child knew how she left home early in the morning and came back late at night just because she did not get an education that could offer her a good job. MMP2 stressed by saying, “I do not want her to experience this type of thing. If it should happen, then the business should be hers and the limited time experiences should happen to her by choice.”

MMP3 said she expected her child to pass and go to senior secondary school because four of her children did not do well. Only one of her children was able to make it into senior secondary and then tertiary education. In fact, she wants this child to continue with education to the extent that he ends up going overseas. She wants her child to get a good paying job so that he could support himself and his mother. MMP3 went on to say, “I would like him to later bury me with a coffin that has wheels. Ha! Ha! Ha! ( laughing). People these days put value on the coffin used to bury someone.” However, the child did not know his mother’s expectations because she said her prayers/wishes silently and never told the child what she was dreaming for him. MMAP3 said, “Despite that, my son always says that he wants to beat the performance of his brother who has performed well so far.”

### *Importance of Education*

MMP1 indicated that through education, individuals who had tough lives while young could change their lives by working hard to avoid living the same poverty life that they lived as children. “So if my child puts effort in her school work, she will have the

ability to change the standard of living in our family. I want my child to be educated and train as a nurse as has been her aspiration. In addition, I would like her to succeed so that she could help me live a better life that I am failing to accord her” (MMP1).

MMP2 said that she believed her child needed an education because through education, she could benefit economically and socially. Education would help her advance in thinking and comprehension of different problems. MMP2 believed with education her child would be open-minded when dealing with life issues. “It is hard for an uneducated person to put herself in a different position; her position is always right. An uneducated person easily sees other people’s mistakes, yet he may fail to critically examine his own stance” (MMP2).

MMP3 reiterated on the importance of education and how it has changed the lives of the people in her village. MMP3 continued to say:

Education has brought so much development into our village; the facilities are coming into our village through our educated children. We are just like the big villages. We have everything. It no longer is like in the past whereby a patient would die on the way while a tractor was taking him/her to the hospital. All these facilities come because our educated children speak to the government on behalf of this village. I really believe education is very important and my child must get it so that he can also contribute to the development of our village.

### *School Relatedness*

MMP2 said the school was open as it communicated with the parents a lot: “The teachers have realized that I am very concerned about my child’s work. I also communicate with the teachers if there is need.” She indicated that the school was open to the parents as the teachers were welcoming. “Teachers in this school are always welcoming the parents. They invite us as parents to come to their classes to see what the children are learning and how they are learning” (MMP2). MMP3 added: “If it was their

wish, parents would always be coming in and out of the classrooms every now and then.” MMP3 stressed that teachers wanted parents to come and see their children’s work and hear about their children’s strengths and weaknesses. In addition, teachers were willing to offer suggestions on how parents could help their children at home (MMP3).

### *Challenges in Involvement*

Participants were satisfied with their children’s work. On the other hand, they were concerned about how some parents in their village had challenges and were not forthcoming about seeking assistance from the teachers; instead, they just chose to let their children fail. MMP1 had this to say:

Personally, I do not have any challenges in assisting my child because she is intelligent; I am satisfied with the way I help her. In fact, most of the time I listen to her read and I make a few comments. For example, when she has composition writing homework, she writes and then she reads to me what she has written. I find that she has written even better than I could have done. Nonetheless, I know many parents who have challenges but are not willing to go to school and ask for help. For example, one standard three child (9-year-old) stayed at home for the whole term without going to school because he refused and the parents just accepted it.

### *Mmashoro Teacher’s Perceptions (MMT)*

Mmashoro was the smallest of the villages used in the study. Despite that, the school in Mmashoro was the largest of the four schools used for the study. However, the teacher I interviewed had outstanding descriptions that would jeopardize the confidentiality. Therefore, the description of the teacher from Mmashoro, just like those of the other teachers interviewed, was withheld.

Regarding parental involvement in the school, the Mmashoro teacher (MMT) had this to say:

We have a good PTA executive committee. But most of our parents are not involved in their children’s education. When the PTA executive committee calls a

meeting, only a few parents come. In addition, at every meeting you find the same faces all the time. Parents who attend meetings are those whose children are doing better in school. Parents whose children need help do not come. We don't know them, not even their faces.

MMT went on to explain:

When I say parents do not come to school, I mean you would only see a parent when she registers a child in standard one. If you are lucky, she will come again to register a sibling maybe after two years. We do not know the parents because after registering the children, they go back to the cattle posts. Most of the parents in this village are herdsmen and they stay at the cattle posts. Young children are left in the care of the siblings who also attend school. Due to their minimal wages, parents have difficulty in providing for their children. Hence, these children come to school without breakfast. No one is there to wake them up or make sure they bathed properly.

When asked whether parents had any expectations, the teacher responded by saying:

Despite all these circumstances, parents have high expectations of their children's academic achievement. I think it is because they do not have any clear idea about academics; they just have hopes that are not based on anything. The expectations can also be tied to parents' high attendance at the time they come to collect the progress reports for the children. However, most parents send the older siblings who had either dropped out of school or failed. The school becomes busy on that day as these youngsters treat it like a social activity where they meet their old friends; only a few would be real parents.

MMT said that when parents are approached about the potential of their children becoming teachers or nurses, they will just listen and look at the person speaking as if she was talking about things that did not happen on this planet. MMT said:

In my own view, parents seem not to understand that they have an impact on their children's education. They never look at their children's books and never come to meet with the teachers. They assume that all that the child has to do is spend a day at school.

MMT went on to say that the problem was that the majority of people in this village were not educated and did not understand the importance of education. She thought they lacked exposure; the few residents who were educated lived and worked outside the village. "Drinking is another problem. Although some children live with their



parents, they are no better than children who stay by themselves. Their parents spend a lot of time drinking or being drunk,” said MMT.

In trying to persuade her pupils to study hard, MMT always told them how her parents were poor. She said they struggled to send her to secondary school and she worked hard in school because she wanted to have a better life. In closing, MMT said, “If parents could come to school when invited, we could discuss such issues with them and try to educate them on the importance of being involved. We could show them the strategies of how they could be involved in their children’s education. Then there would be a difference.”

### *Conclusion*

Like the participants in Serowe, Lerala, and Maunatlala, participants in Mmashoro also stressed the importance of the parents’ role in their children’s education. Participants echoed the importance of parents ascertaining that children remain respectful to the teachers. The participants also stressed that children need to be well cared for and go to school clean and well fed. In addition, participants emphasized the need for parents to be involved in their children’s academic life, either by going to school to meet with the teachers regarding their children’s learning or assisting with homework. Parents believed these were the major responsibilities and children could learn effectively when these responsibilities were being fulfilled. Participants in Mmashoro were not satisfied by the rate at which Mmashoro parents participated in the school-related activities of their children. The participants concurred with the teacher on the reluctance of the parents. Participants agreed with the teacher on some of the problems related to the socioeconomic status of the parents. Participants also concurred with the teacher on lack

of role models for the youth. Hence, when role models visited their home village, their success was interpreted with the belief that they have made it because they lived in the city or in the big village. Their success was not related to the education they received from the school in their village. Despite being in a remote area with the fewest participants among the four villages, Mmashoro was the only village with a participant who held a BGCSE and was very committed to her child's education.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

“Nowhere in the world has sustained development been attained without a well-functioning system of education” (UNESCO, 1999). Botswana has made great strides in education with increased spending, number of teachers, enrollment, and educational outcomes (Lisenda, 2005). Further improvement may rest upon increased parental involvement in their children’s education (Lisenda; Molefe et al., 2008). This recommendation is consistent with research in North America which found that approximately one-third of educational achievement may be explained by parenting practices (Rosenzweig, 2000). Yet sound programs to increase parental involvement require increased knowledge of parents’ involvement, beliefs, and expectations in their children’s learning (Mathangwane & Arua, 2006). This qualitative study examined the school-related beliefs and activities of 16 parents from four villages in Botswana.

The following five research questions guided the study:

- Q1 How do parents in Botswana perceive their involvement and expectations of their children’s academic achievement?
- Q2 How do parents in Botswana perceive their past experiences with school with regard to their learning?
- Q3 What types of school-related activities do parents in Botswana engage in with their children in upper primary school?
- Q4 What expectations and academic achievement goals do parents in Botswana have about children who are in upper primary standards?

Q5 What challenges do parents in Botswana experience while getting involved in their children's academic life?

This chapter discusses the findings, meanings, and implications of the parents' beliefs and activities in terms of these questions.

#### Research Question 1

Q1 How do parents in Botswana perceive their involvement and expectations of their children's academic achievement?

The 30 parents who participated in the study were highly involved in their children's academic life. They wanted their children to succeed in school and in future life. The parents perceived themselves as having a critical role to play in their children's education and knew how they could be involved in education-related activities at school and at home. Among others, parents suggested behaviors such as providing for their basic needs, going to school to meet with the teacher, encouraging their children, helping with homework, and listening to the child read. Parents also added that helping the child develop self-discipline could be helpful: "lore le ojwa le sa le metsi" (A child needs to be disciplined while still young). Apart from going to school to discuss with teachers on the progress of the child (communication), parents perceived their involvement to be relevant outside of school. Parents perceived their involvement to be mostly relevant outside the school and the in-school activities to be the responsibility of the teachers.

The findings indicated that parents understood the role they played in their children's education; they felt obliged to help their children succeed in school. These beliefs were congruent with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model of parental involvement that suggested how parents could be involved and why some parents choose to be involved in their children's education when others do not. The model shows that

parents choose to be involved because (a) they construct a role in the child's life; (b) they develop a sense of efficacy to help the child succeed in school; and (c) the invitations, demands, and opportunities from school and their child make the parent feel obliged to be involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler). Using data from the Chicago Longitudinal Study, Barnard (2004) found that teachers' ratings of a parent's involvement were significantly related to the children's educational attainment. He found that the more years the teacher rated a child's parent participation as average or better was significantly associated with higher chances of their child achieving higher levels of education (Barnard). Pomerantz and Dong (2006) concurred that "parents' perceptions of children's academic competence play a powerful role in children's development in the academic arena; such perceptions funnel down to the children so that they create self-fulfilling prophecy" (p. 1).

In this current study, parents of low achieving pupils also maintained their high expectations toward their children's academic achievement. For example, one parent whose child was a low achiever expressed her expectation by saying, "My son is struggling. His older siblings were struggling too. I think it's hard luck! I always tell him how I want him to get educated up to the university. You can become a teacher, nurse or police officer. I always tell him." In another village, one parent had expressed how her son's performance was very low; surprisingly when expressing her expectations, the parent said, "I expect my child to continue with education to the extent that he ends up going overseas." These positive beliefs and expectations of parents of low achievers support the conclusions by Halle et al. (1997) when working with minority parents in the United States of America.

## Research Question 2

Q2 How do parents in Botswana perceive their past experiences with school with regard to their learning?

Most of the parents in the study had challenging experiences as children during their schooling that may have emanated from the social and economic aspects of their upbringing. Parents in the study reported staying by themselves as children when they attended school. Their parents mostly stayed at the fields taking care of the crops or livestock. However, the participants' relationship experiences with adults during their schooling varied. Most of the younger parents reported having good relationships with parents and teachers at school. These participants attributed their failure to further their education to other factors such as lack of funds. However, close to half of the participants in the study reported experiencing negative relationships with their parents or teachers when they attended school. One parent said:

Our parents were strict disciplinarians and fast to yell at us. This made it difficult for children to communicate with their parents when they experienced challenges in life. The relationship between the children and the adults during our time had a negative impact on our education. As children, we were restless and worried even when we engaged in a learning activity. Our minds were astray as we thought of the chores at home and the punishment if we failed to carry out the task on time. Despite their education, our teachers were no better than parents.

One parent added, "The parents' presence in the home did not make any difference because our parents did not show any encouragement in our school work." She continued by saying, "This made me realize that I do not have to raise my children the way I have been raised. I grew up not knowing the importance of education because I lacked encouragement from my parents."

Surprisingly, the relative negative experiences of the participants appeared to have had little effect on their expectations and support of their children. If anything, their

harsh experiences motivated them to support the education of their children. The parents' belief that education will lead to a better life for their children and themselves existed in spite of their own negative experiences with education.

### Research Question 3

Q3 What types of school-related activities do parents in Botswana engage in with their children in upper primary school?

Parents were involved in school and at home with their children. However, most parents in the study indicated that they engaged more with their children at home. First and foremost, parents supported involvement through verbal encouragement of their children. Parents believed that encouraging their children to take their studies seriously had the greatest effect on their children's academic achievement.

#### *Home-Based Activities*

Parents believed that going to school to communicate with the teachers kept them informed about how their children were learning. When parents visited the classroom, they got first-hand knowledge of what took place at school. They understood that the material could be challenging to the child. When parents go to school, they learn from the teacher the children's academic strengths and weaknesses. For example, one parent said, "As for myself, I go to school all the time...whether a meeting is scheduled or not. I just go to my children's classes even when they are not aware that I will be coming."

Some parents assisted their children with homework while others read with or listened to their children read. One parent indicated her involvement by saying, "When my daughter and I are done with household chores in the evening, we lie on the mat as my daughter reads to me or does her homework. Time and again she asks for my help." To show their involvement, one parent in Mmashoro village said;

I am almost a teacher myself even though I am not trained; I spend time helping my child with her homework. Then I give her some more work to do. Every evening, we work on something together. I go to school every other day to find from the teacher how she is doing and how I can help her. (MMP2)

Another parent in Serowe village added by saying, “Most of the time I help my child with home work. If I fail to help her, the following day I go to school to ask her teacher for clarification so that I can help her.”

Parents in this study who collaborated and helped their children with homework reported that the tasks brought them closer to their children psychologically. Parents reported that sometimes they found themselves and their children grappling together as the parents tried to assist with the homework.

Sometimes a parent would help child with homework and then append a signature to show that he or she had assisted the child, only to find that they attempted but did not solve the problem correctly. Hence, both the child and the parent had no idea of how to do the assigned work. (MAT)

These experiences support Grolnick and Slowiaczek’s (1994) model of parental involvement. In their model, Grolnick and Slowiaczek suggested that parents could be involved in behavior, cognitive-intellectual, and personal involvement. Parents in the study reported that through their parent-child discussions (personal involvement), they experienced emotional and psychological feelings similar to those experienced by their child when challenged by the homework. These feelings led most parents who could not help their children to seek assistance from older siblings or other children in the neighborhood who were in the upper standards as reported by one parent. Some parents reported also going to the school to seek clarification from the teachers regarding the academic tasks so that they could help their children.



Most parents did not mention providing basic needs as involvement in their children's academic life. However, through my observations in their homes, I realized that they were providing the basic needs such as accommodation, food, and good looking clothes to their children. My assumption is that parents interpreted the provision of children's needs as part and parcel of parenting. Since they provided for these needs on a daily basis, they considered them to be for survival.

#### *School-Based Activities*

Some parents were involved in their children's academic life through the activities they engaged in with their children at home; other parents were involved at school by volunteering in various school activities and being members of the Parent Teacher Association in the schools. Although parents in the four villages were involved at school, parents who reported most involvement at school were from Lerala village. Parents in Lerala volunteered in almost all the activities in the school such as weeding the school premises, building a "cultural hut," participating in sporting activities, and even giving presentations. One of the parents in Lerala sometimes volunteered to go and teach the pupils at school about the Village Development Committee (VDC) in their village: how it is elected and what it does. She gave an example of how the VDC liaised with the village councilor to put forward their request at council meetings for more teachers' houses when there was a shortage in accommodation for the teachers in their village.

#### *Summary*

The patterns of involvement by parents in Botswana fit well with Epstein's (1995) typology of parent involvement. Epstein suggested six different types of behaviors by which parents could get involved in their children's academic life in order to enhance

their children's academic success: Type 1--Parenting skills, child development, and home environment; Type 2—Communication, Type 3--Parents as volunteers; Type 4--Involvement in students' learning at home; Type 5--Decision making, leadership, and governance; and Type 6--Collaboration and exchange with community organizations.

The study found that parents were mostly involved in the following activities: Type 1--Encouragement, Type 2--Communication, and Type 4--Assisting with homework. Few parents reported their engagement in Types 3, 5, and 6. These findings were consistent with research in another developing country--Brazil. Bhering (2002) found that parents in Brazil were mostly involved with their children at home. As in the current study, parents understood the curriculum as the teachers' prerogative and they (parents) had their own areas at home where they could contribute to their child's learning.

#### Research Question 4

Q4 What expectations and academic achievement goals do parents in Botswana have about children who are in upper primary standards?

##### *Parents' Expectations*

The parents had high academic expectations for their children. These expectations were typified by one parent who expressed her expectations for her daughter: "I am expecting a straight grade 'A' for my child in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE); a grade of 'B' will be a mistake. My child is a straight 'A' student. I expect her to be educated and train as a nurse as is her aspiration." Parents expected and encouraged their children to study up to tertiary level so that they could get good jobs. Some parents in the study indicated that they expected their children to get an education that would enable them to be better individuals and effective citizens of their country. These high

expectations were corroborated by the teachers from the schools as shown by the parents' increased attendance when coming to collect the progress reports for the children.

Results from this study were consistent with a study conducted by Trivette and Anderson (1995). In their analysis of the four components of parental involvement (parental aspirations and achievement, parent and child communication about school and achievement, home environment and achievement, and parental participation in school activities and achievement), Trivette and Anderson found that parental educational aspirations exerted the strongest positive effect on students' academic achievement.

Although some parents in the study indicated that their children needed education for personal and social purposes, most parents stressed that their children needed education to gain economic independence as adults. Parents spoke continuously about how their children had to work hard and succeed to reach the tertiary education level and get a good job so that they could later take care of themselves and also be able to support their aging parents. In their statements, one could deduce the obligatory tone used to emphasize their expectations. Spera, Wentzel, and Matto (2009) indicated that the pursuit of upward mobility through their children's education may impact parental beliefs and attitudes toward the importance of education and the educational aspirations they set for their children.

Parents in the present study appeared to emphasize their future expectations instead of learning for the sake of learning. However, this might have been relevant with the cultural expectations as all parents expressed the need for economic assistance from their children. This may fit well with Ogbu's (1981) cultural ecological model: parents from various cultural backgrounds may emphasize different goals that they believe to be

crucial for their children to adapt and succeed in certain particular situations. Urdan et al. (2007) found that some high and average achieving children of immigrant workers felt expected and obliged to repay their parents for the sacrifices they made when immigrating to the United States so they could provide a quality education for their children.

While some parents in Botswana were involved in their children's academic learning through school-related activities because they perceived the school as open and welcoming, other parents were reluctant to come to school, even when requested, for critical issues regarding their children. This observation was consistent with research on the variation in parents' beliefs about education and school (McGillcuddy-De Lisi, cited in Chao, 1996). McGillcuddy-De Lisi indicated that parents' beliefs were capable of influencing their children. This was not surprising as most of the parents in the present study had challenging experiences during their schooling as children. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) noted that parents had perceptions about the school, especially on how the school related to them and valued their involvement. They noted that parents who believed that the school was not welcoming were likely not to be involved.

Some parents indicated that they looked through their children's books every day to check if the children had done the work for the day; in some cases, the child had to explain why they got the work wrong. Some parents just encouraged their children to take their work seriously and did not look into the books all the time. Regner, Loose and Dumas (2009) found that children can perceive their parents' involvement as academic monitoring or academic support. Academic monitoring that is related to evaluative pressure refers to supervising whether homework has been done, whether students are

making progress, or whether they are doing their best at school. In academic support, parents are perceived as non-evaluative. Students who perceive their parents' involvement to be academic support are more likely to strive for mastery goals while those who perceive their parents to be involved in academic monitoring are likely to engage in performance goals (Regner et al.). On the other hand, when learners perceive parents' academic help as pressure and controlling, their sense of competence and self-efficacy may be dampened, leading them to be dependent on external sources for academic achievement (Gonzalez-De Hass et al., 2005.).

Some parents whose children were high achievers emphasized their children's intelligence. For example, one parent said, "My daughter never reads but when the tests come, she gets position one." However, most parents in the study stressed the need for their children to put effort into their work in order to achieve. Mau (1997) noted that when parents believe that academic success depends mostly on effort rather than ability, they are likely to encourage their children to work hard. The encouragement some parents gave was evidence that parents understood that through hard work, their children could succeed. Based on Mau's contentions, these parents believed that intelligence could be improved through effort. The assumption is that when parents believe intelligence is incremental, they will influence their children to study hard.

Parents discussed the importance of their children's academic achievement as dependent on hard work. They attributed their children's academic success and failure to putting effort or not putting enough effort into their school work. The usual comments by parents were "O a leka tota go dira bojotlhe jwa gagwe" (She/he is trying very hard to do his or her best) or "O a tshameka" (she or he is too playful--meaning she is not serious

with school work). Students who perceived their parents putting emphasis on effort and academic achievement were more likely to be motivated than students whose parents did not value effort (Marchant et al., 2001). Parents encouraged and stressed to their children to work hard; mostly, they wanted their children to understand the tasks and also gain knowledge. This was shown by one parent's comments:

For example, my boy who is in form one now used to complain about how his teacher was ill-treating and also giving up on him. On seeing that, I encouraged him to study even more. And he got a very good grade, a "B" for PSLE. Everyone was surprised because they thought he would not make it.

### *School Openness*

Parents in the study indicated that the schools were open to them. The schools communicated with them. Teachers created a welcoming atmosphere when parents visited the school. Parents indicated that teachers communicated the intentions of the school through the meetings. Parents unanimously agreed that teachers communicated with them, either through regular meetings or end-of-term progress reports. When the school communicated to an individual parent, they wrote a note. However, information to all parents was verbally rallied through their children. Parents in the study reported that sometimes they sent messages to the school to communicate their child's ill health or why the child would be absent from school.

Some parents communicated with the school more than others. Epstein (1986) concluded that parents whose children were taught by a teacher who emphasized parental involvement tended to communicate more with the school. Parents sent messages to the school explaining their children's developmental (physical or emotional) challenges, i.e., stammering. Parents' and teachers' general communications were not much about

helping the child with school work. However, parents were satisfied with the level of communication from the school to the home (Epstein).

#### Research Question 5

Q5 What challenges do parents in Botswana experience while getting involved in their children's academic life?

#### *Challenges*

Parents had challenges in getting involved in their children's academic life due to their limited education. One parent who expressed disappointment because she could not help her child said, "I observe the teacher's marks. I know when there is a 'tick,' he got it right and where there is a cross, I know he did not do that good." Parents in the study stressed that learners were doing work that they (parents) had not done at that level. Although half of the parents in the study had a primary education or below, the study found that even those who had a Junior Certificate qualification (JC) found the upper primary curriculum challenging for them. Only parents of high achieving children indicated that they did not have any challenges; their children understood it all when the teachers were presenting the content in class.

Parents also reported lack of involvement due to time constraints. As data collection for this study was done during the planting season, most parents were busy moving between the fields and the village where the children lived. It was hard for the parents as they spent the whole day at the fields and came back in the evening when it was already dark; exhausted as they were, their children expected them to help with homework. One parent who was employed had this to say, "My outstanding challenge is time; I work long hours. By the time I get home, my child is about to go to bed. In addition, I am unable to attend most activities at school due to lack of time. Apart from

time constraints, I have no problems” (MMP2). Bronfenbrenner (1979) indicated that circumstances in parents’ life such as work schedules, personal stress, relationships, and economic status are some factors that can affect parental involvement and, therefore, a child’s academic achievement.

#### *Local Variations in Involvement*

In this study, the parents of Maunatlala village not only led in parental involvement, their behaviors also matched their high expectations. Parents’ deliberations on their involvement corresponded with the teacher’s perceptions. Compared to parents in the other villages, Maunatlala parents perceived themselves to be more involved. These parents were not only involved with their children at home; they also got involved in school activities. The teacher from the school in Maunatlala concurred with the parents’ perceptions regarding parental involvement, expectations, and children’s academic achievement.

Parents in Lerela had better perceptions about their involvement than did parents in the Serowe and Mmashoro villages. Although most of the parents in Lerela participated in activities at school, these parents indicated that encouragement was their option due to limited education. Hence, their participation in helping with homework was limited when compared with that of Maunatlala parents.

The teacher in Lerela corroborated the parents’ view that although some parents in the village were involved in their children’s learning, some parents still lagged behind in participating in their children’s education; yet they expected their children to succeed in school. The school-based involvement of parents in Lerela was unique. The parents were interested in the school-related activities even though they did not have much



education. When the researcher asked one of the parents whether all the parents in the village were involved in activities, she explained that most people in her village wanted to understand things, especially the older generation. A high turnover of parents was also reported by the teacher from the school as indicated by the high attendance rate during the standard seven parties they had the previous year. I interpreted these parents to be selectively involved; they chose activities that they felt comfortable to attend. Hence, I assumed lack of involvement of some parents was due to the discomfort associated with the school environment. The school environment may be uncomfortable if it requires parents to do some things they are unable to do. In this case, the school was interpreted as too demanding. One would conclude that limited education is the reason why Lerala parents were more active in non-academic activities than in academic-related activities.

Despite the Mmashoro village being remote and much smaller when compared to the Serowe village, parents in Mmashoro were more involved when compared with parents in Serowe. The few parents who participated in their children's education elucidated on the positive relationship between the school and the parents. Parents explained lack of involvement as related to cultural factors such as lack of education entangled with the lack of role models of educated people for the young parents. The parents' level of involvement could also be influenced by the societal perspective of children's education, e.g., value placed on parent's involvement by the parent, school, and/or the child. A teacher from Mmashoro confirmed that some parents worked hard to assist their children while other parents showed minimal interest in their children's academic life. Parents in Serowe were involved with their children at home. Their participation at school was centered on attending PTA meetings. However, some parents

in Serowe went to school regularly for assistance when challenged while trying to assist their children.

### *Researcher's Overviews*

The low attendance by parents in meetings was a common trend when the researcher scouted for participants in the study. Parents seemed to be overwhelmed even after volunteering to participate. Some parents even stopped answering their phone when the researcher wanted to make an appointment for the first meeting. It was not uncommon to get excuses from the parents in the first few weeks when trying to arrange for the interviews. As later explained, these excuses were due to the discomfort that came when parents thought about being interviewed. However, after a few weeks, that discomfort disappeared as the researcher was welcomed as a guest by that particular family.

Although at the beginning parents were not interested in participating in the study, the parents began to adapt to the interviews. They enjoyed these meetings such that when the participant was away, he/she would call the researcher and let her know that he/she would not be home on the day of the interview. The researcher and the participants in each village made a schedule of the interview days. The participants in each village knew the day the researcher was coming to their village and each participant knew the time when he/she would meet with the researcher; in case of any change, cell phones were available for communication. Participants were interested in the study to the extent that some of them wanted their children to meet the researcher. Some parents wanted their children who had failed to further their education to senior secondary school to meet with

the researcher. They wanted their children to find out from the researcher the academic and career opportunities available to them.

Parents were involved at home with their children. However, there was that feeling among the parents of uncertainty. Through my experiences as a teacher at this level, I came across parents' complaints that they did not know how to assist the children because they had no training. Some parents expressed a fear of confusing their children. Due to this lack of understanding, some parents did not want to attempt in assisting their children.

During one of my trips when conducting the interview with one of the school staff member in Maunatlala, a parent came with her son to inquire from the teacher about her child's work on that day. The child had not written anything in any of his books and the parent wanted to know why. The teacher explained that she had attended a workshop the whole day; the work was left on the board for the pupils to do. This incident showed the researcher how some parents were interested in their children's learning.

#### Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations to this study. First, parents gave their perceptions of their involvement and expectations on their children's achievement goals. Although the lengthy interviews validated the data, some parents' views may have been influenced by social desirability. Teachers' views were based on general parental involvement. Children's views could have helped to further understand parental involvement by parents in Botswana.

Secondly, participants were not randomly selected; most of the participants were parents who had close ties to the school. Many parents attended the initial meeting when I

familiarized and explained the purpose of my study, and how I expected them to assist me. However, at the end, I had three participants in one village. This might have been because they realized I was not the right person to address their perceived concerns about the school. The attendants wanted to express their concerns in that very gathering. However, as it was not the right forum, I asked them to hold their comments for the interview sessions. Hence, realizing that the invitation was to solicit their participation, they might have perceived their participation as a way to expose their limitations. As I was not going to address their perceived concerns in that forum, they declined their participation. The views of those parents who declined to participate in the study might have been different from those of the participants.

In addition, only one male participated in the study. Hence, the perceptions of the fathers' involvement in their children's education did not surface due to the limited number of fathers participating in the study. Since this qualitative study was based in the Central District Council of Botswana, its findings can neither be generalized to other districts in Botswana nor to other parents who did not participate in the study. However, the results of this study could be used as a basis for further research on parents' involvement in their children's education.

#### Educational Implications

The findings of this study have implications mostly for teacher education programs. In addition, the implications could influence the teachers, parents, and possibly trickle down to the learners. First, teacher education programs could design and incorporate strategies to equip pre-service teachers with techniques of how to involve parents. For example, although it is time consuming, teachers could be encouraged to

make home visits to familiarize parents in a positive one-on-one setting. Again instead of always sending negative reports about what the child did, teachers could send notes congratulating the child on something positive. Upon completion, these teachers would be in a better position to involve the parents of their pupils.

On the other hand, the education department could arrange with individuals who have expertise in parental involvement to mount workshops for teachers and parents. The workshops could show why parents should get involved in their children's education and assist with techniques of how they could get involved. In these workshops, teachers could elaborate on the extent of involvement they expect from parents. With the knowledge of what is expected of them and how their involvement can contribute to their children's achievement, parents would be in a better position to assist their children.

#### Future Research

This study did not answer all the questions on parental involvement in Botswana. A similar study could be conducted to examine the perceptions of teachers and the children on how parents are involved in their children's academic lives. Since both parents of high and low achieving pupils reported high involvement, there is a need for a study that would quantitatively examine how these parents were involved with their children. Another relevant study could examine the relationship between the types of activities parents engage in and their children's academic performance. A similar study could be carried out in urban areas to find how parents perceive their involvement in their children's academic life.

## Conclusion

This study advanced research by bringing in cross-cultural perspectives of parental involvement. The study showed how parents in Botswana were involved and what they expected from their children in upper primary school. The study found that parents had high expectations that their children would achieve a tertiary education. Parents believed getting an education would enable their children to get good jobs, improve their standard of living, and lead to support of parents. The study revealed that parents were involved with their children at home. However, due to their limited education, most parents could not assist with homework; hence, they relied on encouragement. Some parents were not educated because their parents did not support them during their schooling. In spite of that, the current parents vowed not to repeat that mistake with their children. Parents encouraged their children to take their studies seriously. Most parents assumed that their involvement was more suitable at home; the school was viewed as the teacher's territory.

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APPENDIX A  
LETTER TO HEAD TEACHERS

The Head teacher

1424 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Apt 406

Greeley, CO 80631, USA

---Primary School, Botswana

RE: Keinyatse Kgosidialwa- Ph.D. -Research Assistance

The Head teacher,

This serves as a follow-up of our telephone conversation held in December 2008; as I mentioned in conversation, the purpose of this letter is to request assistance in finding participants for my research. Through this letter, I will give the details of my request.

My request is for the school to identify parents of 15 standard six pupils who will be willing to discuss their views on parents' involvement and expectation as it relates to children's academic achievement. Parents should include parents of high, average, and low achieving pupils (flexible). Parent(s) can be mother, father, or any primary caretaker.

I intend to conduct my research March to May of 2009. Interviews will be conducted individually at the participant's home (optional), once fortnightly; each interview may last from 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews will be conducted in Setswana.

Participants' identities will be kept confidential and their responses will be kept anonymous as no names will be recorded. Pseudonyms will be used to replace the participant's name. Participation is voluntary; anytime the participant feels he/she wants to withdraw can do so freely and no entitlements will be lost.

Finally, even though this research will not have any direct benefits to the parent, it will help improve the teaching and learning process. It will contribute to teacher preparation program by opening avenues of how teachers can involve parents and make them partners in their children's education.

NB: Further communications will be done through the telephone.

Thank you,

Keinyatse T. Kgosidialwa

APPENDIX B  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION

## **Institutional Review Board**

### **SECTION I**

A number of meta-analyses conducted over the last 15 years have found that parental involvement is related to academic achievement (Crimm, 1992; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007, Rosenzweig, 2000, 2001). The magnitude of the relationship is consistently large enough to have a meaningful impact across ethnic group, socioeconomic level, and grade level.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Research has found that children whose parents are engaged in their school related activities academically perform better than children whose parents are not involved in their school-related activities (Barnard, 2004; Bhering, 2002; Fan & Chen, 2001; Fehrmman, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Ho & Willms, 1996; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Michael, 1999). Parents' communication with the school is effective in promoting the parents' involvement (Ames, 1992; Ho & Willms; Pang & Watkins, 2000).

Although various research studies relating parental involvement and academic performance have been conducted, no research has been conducted in Botswana targeting parents' perceptions of their involvement and expectations, and how parents perceive these factors influence their children's academic performance and academic achievement goals.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study is to explore school related activities in which parents in Botswana are engaged. Secondly, the study will explore parents' perceptions

on their involvement, beliefs and expectations in influencing their children's academic life, and academic achievement goals.

### Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

- Q1 How do parents in Botswana perceive their involvement and expectations of their children's academic achievement?
- Q2 How do parents in Botswana perceive their past experiences with school with regard to their learning?
- Q3 What types of school-related activities do parents in Botswana engage in with their children in upper primary school?
- Q4 What expectations and academic achievement goals do parents in Botswana have about children who are in upper primary standards?
- Q5 What challenges do parents in Botswana experience while getting involved in their children's academic life?

## SECTION II –

### Methods

#### *Procedure*

In this section, I will discuss the procedures to be followed in this study; although this study will focus on parents, schools are important as a link between the parents and the researcher. It is through the schools that the researcher will gain access to the parents.

The following steps will be taken:

1. Telephone the head teachers of the school that will be used, explain who she is and the purpose of her study, and how they can help by identifying 15 parents who have children in standard six and willing to participate in the research.

2. Write a formal letter to each of head teachers and make the request official (Appendix A).



3. Submit the IRB application to the University of Northern Colorado IRB (Appendix- B).
4. Write a letter to the Botswana Government (Appendix C) to seek approval to conduct the study in Botswana as that is where the study is based.
5. Write a letter to the University of Botswana (Appendix D) to request for funding; the University of Botswana is the sponsor for the researcher.
6. Randomly select five parents from the 15 parents and then telephone them to explain the purpose of my study.
7. Telephone each participant to make an appointment for the first parent/researcher conference to discuss the date, time, and place of subsequent interviews. During the first meeting, each parent who has agreed to participate will read and sign the consent form (Appendix E). The prospective participants will read and then sign the consent forms as an indication that they agree to participate in the study. A consent form is a required document in the dissertation process or when conducting a study with adults. It provides legal protection and obligates the researcher to protect the rights of the participants by maintaining privacy and confidentiality of research data. In addition, the consent form informs the participants about their freedom to participate or withdraw their participation in the study at any time during the research. It is in the first meeting that the researcher will remind their participants about the freedom to choose to participate or not.
8. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews (Appendix F). Setswana translated interview questions will be used if needed (Appendix G).

9. Class teachers of the children whose parents are participating in the study will respond to a one-time interview based on their perceptions of parent's involvement in academic achievement goals of their children (Appendix H).

### *Sampling and Participants*

I randomly selected a primary school to serve as a base for my study. Each school will purposefully invite parents of 15 standard six pupils to volunteer to participate in the study. After getting the names of the 15 parents from each of the four schools, I will randomly select five parents from each school. Therefore, participants in this study will be parents of 20 standard six pupils (standard six= Grade 6 in the United States) from four different schools in the Central District Council in Botswana. Parents or care takers will be above 18 years.

The process of selecting parents will not be restrictive; a parent can be the child's mother, father, grandparent, uncle, aunt, or someone who is responsible for the child. Both the mother and father can participate if they want to and have lived with the child since he/she started standard six. However, they will be interviewed separately. Each school will provide names of standard six teachers from which one teacher will be randomly selected to participate in the study.

### *Setting*

The interviews will be conducted at each parent's home unless the parent decides otherwise. The interviews will be conducted in English or Setswana (native language), one of the official languages of Botswana. The language used will be determined by the parent. The interviews in Setswana will later be transcribed and translated into English

### *Instrumentation*

During the interview, the researcher will use some materials that will assist her in capturing all the data. First of all in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument in data collection. The researcher will use a list of semi-structured questions that will guide the interviews with the parents (Appendices F and G); the other set of questions will guide the teachers' interviews (Appendix H). While conducting the interviews, the researcher will use a tape recorder and an electronic audio recorder to record the interviews (with the permission of the interviewee) so that data can be transcribed later. The researcher will have a diary to write memos to herself about what she is learning to help in the reflection process. Data from teacher interviews will be used for triangulating parents' perspectives. It is better to have multiple sources of data because the convergence of sources helps to clarify the topics better than a single source (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

### Data Collection

#### *Interviews*

Pilot study: Two parents who are non-participants in this study yet they have children in standard six will respond to the interview questions. Their responses will be analyzed to find if there are any discrepancies with the interview questions: comprehension, timing, interpreted the same way, and if they are soliciting for the relevant information.

### *Parents' Interview*

Parents of five standard six pupils from each of the following villages will be interviewed: Serowe, Lerala, Maunatlala, and Mmashoro. With the participants' permission, the interviews will be audio-taped.

The initial meeting of the parents and the researcher will be utilized for introduction, rapport building, and planning for the subsequent meetings. The researcher will also gather demographical data on each participant during the first interview and have the consent forms signed. I will also inform the participants about confidentiality of their participation and that they are free to withdraw any time they want.

Six repeated interviews will be conducted at different times between March and May of 2009 in Botswana. The estimated time for the interviews is 45-60 minutes every other week. Therefore, the estimated time for each participant is about 360 minutes/6 hours.

Parents will be asked the following questions:

- What do you expect your child to achieve in school regarding education?  
Why?
- To what extent does your child understand your beliefs and expectations about school? How do you know that?
- In which school related activities do you participate with your child?
- How do experiences with school as a child and as a parent influence your beliefs and expectations in your child's learning?
- -How do you ensure your child will academically achieve in school?

The interviews will be conducted individually at the parents' home using semi-structured questions (Appendix E). Rubin and Rubin (1995) emphasize the importance of flexibility and continuous rather than fixed interview design in qualitative study.

### *Teacher Interviews*

Teachers of children whose parents will be participating in the study will respond to an interview. The randomly selected teacher will be interviewed for about 60-90 minutes at his home or wherever he or she chooses to have the interviews conducted. The teacher interviews will be conducted towards the end of parents' interviewing process. The interview will be on perceptions of parent's involvement and expectations in their children's learning and achievement goal orientations. The intention of the interviews will be to obtain how, in general, teachers view parents' involvement and how they are seen to perceive their involvement, the effect of their involvement, and expectations towards their child's achievement goals (Appendix H).

### Data Analysis

Throughout the data collection (interviews), the researcher will transcribe and analyze data following the qualitative data analysis procedures as suggested by Merriam (1998). Data analysis is the process by which the researcher makes sense of the data by consolidating, reducing, and interpreting the participants' ideas. To make meaning from the findings, the researcher will generate themes or categories from the data through the use of comparative data analysis or coding, transcribing, and highlighting statements, sentences, or quotes that provide meaning about the phenomena (Merriam). The class teacher's interview data will also be analyzed and then used for triangulating the parents'

perspectives on a parent's involvement in their children's academic life and achievement goal choice.

### *Trustworthiness*

To solicit for consistency and validity, member checks will be used to clarify and triangulate the data (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998). In member checking the researcher takes the data and the preliminary interpretations of data to the participants to check the plausibility of what the researcher has interpreted from the interviews.

The issue of reliability can be taken into consideration by the lengthy interviews (Hagemaster, 1992). Data from teachers' interviews and the researcher's written memos from the diary will be used for triangulating parents' perspectives. It is better to have multiple sources of data because the convergence of the sources help to clarify the topic better than one single source (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

## **SECTION III**

### **Disposition of Data**

Participants' confidentiality will be kept through random sampling of the participants. Data will be collected through individual interviews; the researcher will use numeric identifiers or codes instead of participants' names for record keeping. Detailed descriptions of participants that may lead to identification of participants such as their jobs will not be included in the data. For example, the study will not show whether the participant is a nurse or a social worker since that can lead to identification of the participant, especially in small villages. Even the school will not be able to tell who is participating in the study. The data will not be traceable back to the individual participant since there will be several participants and only pseudonyms will be used. It will not be

easy to identify teachers who participated in the study. Participants' anonymity will be maintained and data will not be traceable back to the individual participant as there will be several participants and numeric identifiers/codes will be used. Even the researcher will not be able to trace data back to individual participants. The audio-tapes containing the data will be kept in locked file cabinets and then destroyed after three years from date of collection.

#### Risks/Benefits

The risks inherent in this study are no greater than those normally encountered during regular normal conversation between two adults.

#### **SECTION IV – JUSTIFICATION FOR EXEMPTION**

This study qualifies for exemption because the participants are adults. They are not a prejudice population and they have no psychological or mental limitations that can hamper their decisions to consider whether to participate or not. Data will be collected in a normal home or private setting of the participant's choice, the data are not sensitive in nature and accidental disclosure would not place the participants at risk, and no identifiers will link individuals to their responses.

## Parents' Interview Questions (Appendix F)

1. Describe your school experiences while you were a student.
2. What do you think of education today? Why?
3. What would you like to see done differently in our education system? Why?
4. What does it take for a child to succeed in school? Why?
5. What do you think is the responsibility of the parent in school and education of their children? Why?
6. What do you expect your child to achieve regarding education? Why?
7. To what extent does your child understand your beliefs and expectations about school learning?
8. In which school related activities do you participate with your child at school and at home?
9. How do your experiences with school as a student and as a parent influence your beliefs and expectations about your child's learning?
10. How do you ensure that you child academically achieve in school?
11. How do you perceive the role of education in the individuals' life?
12. How do you feel about the openness of the school for parents to be involved?



**Parents Interview in Setswana: Dipotso tsa potsoloso (Appendix G)**

1. A o ka nthaloetsa ka botlalo se o se gakologelwang fa one ole ngwana wa sekole.
2. O bona thuto ya malatsi ano entse jang fela? Ka goring?
3. Ke eng se o eletsang se ka chenziwa mo thotung ya malatsi ano? Ka goreng?
4. Go thokega eng gore ngwana a dire sentle mo dithutong?
5. Boikarabelo jwa batsadi ke eng mo thutong ya bana ba bone?
6. O solofela gore ngwana wag ago a ithute go fitha fakae? Ka goreng?
7. Ngwana wa gago o thaloganya ditsholofelo le dikeletso tsa gago go le kae?
8. Wena le ngwana wa gago lo dira eng se se mabapi le tiro ya sekole?
9. Wena tse o di itsing ka selole fa ole moithuti le ole motsadi jaanong di thotheletsa tumelo le tsholofelo ya thuto ya ngwana wag ago jang?
10. O thomamisa jang gore ngwana wa gago o dira sentle mo dithutong tsa gagwe?
11. O bona mosola wa thuto eleng mo botshelong jwa motho?
12. O kgotsofalela theresiano le tirisano ya sekole go le kae?

**Teachers' Interview Questions (Appendix H)**

1. How would you view parents' involvement in their children's learning in this school?
2. How do parents understand their effect in their children's academic life?
3. How open is the school to the parents?
4. To what extent do parents understand their role in parental involvement?
5. How do you view parents' beliefs and expectations in their children's academic achievement goals?
6. How do parents' involvement and expectations relate to children' academic performance?
7. What do parents view as source of academic success?
8. In which school related activities are most parents get engaged?

APPENDIX C

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL  
RESEARCH IN BOTSWANA

To: The Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Education  
P/Bag 005  
Gaborone, Botswana

15-02-2009

Keinyatse Kgosidialwa  
University of Northern Colorado  
Greeley, CO 80639

**Re: Permission to Conduct Educational Research in Botswana**

Sir/Madam,

I am a lecturer in the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Botswana. Currently I am working on my doctoral degree in Educational Psychology at the University of Northern Colorado, Colorado, USA. I have completed the prerequisite required of me before I may carry out the research for my study. Hence, it is the purpose of this letter to request for permission to carry out my research in Botswana. My research will be conducted in the following villages: Serowe, Lerala, Maunatlala, and Mmashoro.

My participants will be the parents of five (5) standard six pupils from each of the following schools: Motalaote Primary, Lerala Primary, Masupe Primary, and Mmashoro Primary. I intend to carry out my study from March to May 2009. All data will be used for the dissertation writing.

Sincerely,

Keinyatse T. Kgosidialwa

APPENDIX D

REQUEST FOR FUNDING TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL  
RESEARCH IN BOTSWANA

To: The University of Botswana  
Training & Manpower Development  
Private Bag 0022  
Gaborone, Botswana

15-02-2009

Keinyatse Kgosidialwa  
University of Northern Colorado  
Greeley, CO 80639

**Re: Request for Funding to Conduct Educational Research in Botswana**

Sir/Madam,

Since I have completed the prerequisite required of me before I may carry out the research for my study, it is the purpose of this letter to request for funding to conduct my research. My research will be conducted in the following villages in the Central District: Serowe, Lerala, Maunatlala, and Mmashoro.

My participants will be the parents of five (5) standard six pupils from one primary school in each of the villages.

My intention is to carry out my study from March to May, 2009. All data will be used for the dissertation writing.

Sincerely,

Keinyatse T. Kgosidialwa

APPENDIX E  
CONSENT FORMS



Department of  
Psychological Sciences  
McKee 014, Campus Box 94  
Greeley, CO 80639  
970-351-2957

Keinyatse Kgosidialwa  
Lead Investigator  
nyatsetebo@yahoo.com  
970-351-2957

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Project:

Hello,

I am a Motswana, currently reading for my Ph.D. at the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado USA. I am conducting research with parents of standard six pupils to investigate their perceptions of the effect of parents' involvement in their children's academic life. I am asking questions such as "How do parents get involved in their children's academic life?" "How do parents perceive their involvement to influence their children's academic performance, and their goals to achieve in school?" This information will help us to continually improve pre-service training for teachers and teacher/parent partnerships in their children's education.

The study follows a qualitative approach; therefore, interviews will be conducted through semi-structured questions. I foresee no risks inherent in participation in this study. There are no direct benefits accrued from participation in this study; however, your views are very important to the research.

Participation is voluntary; you may decide not to participate in this study. If you begin the questionnaire, you may decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your participation is anonymous. No names will be collected as part of the demographic information requested.

If you have any questions regarding this study or your selection, please feel free to contact me at 970-351-2957, or Dr. Steven Pulos, research advisor, at 970-351-2927. Thank you for helping me with my research. You can also contact the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1907.

Sincerely,

Keinyatse Kgosidialwa

Having read the above request, and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date





Department of  
Psychological Sciences  
McKee 014, Campus Box 94  
Greeley, CO 80639  
970-351-2957

Keinyatse Kgosidialwa  
Lead Investigator  
nyatsetebo@yahoo.com  
970-351-2957

Informed Consent for Participation in Research  
Project Title: Parental Involvement and Expectations on Children's Academic  
Achievement Goals: Parents' Perceptions

Hello,

KOPO YA GO TLHOTLHOMISA KITSO (INFORMED CONSENT FORM)

Dumela motsadi!

Mothothomise mogolo wa patlo kitso e ke Mme Keinyatse kgosidialwa, yo eleng mothathelela dithuto kwa university ya rona mo Botswana (UB). Mme Kgosidialwa mo bo gompionong ke moithuti wa dithuto tsa PhD. Kwa university ya Northern Colorado kwa America (USA). Patlo kitso e, e itebagantse le seabe sa batsadi mo thutong ya bana ba bagolwane mo dikoleng tse di potlana. **Parental involvement and expectations on children's academic achievement goals.**

Motsadi otlaa bodiwa dipotso mabapi le seabe sa gagwe mo thutong le mo thotoetsong ya ngwana wa gagwe. Karabo nngwe le nngwe e o tla e fang e tlaa nna sephiri. Leina la motsadi ga le na go senolwa, maduo a patlo kitso e a tlaa bolelwa ele a sethopho , eseng a motho ka bongwe ka bongwe.

Ga gona matshosetsi ape mo go tseneleleng patlo kitso e. O ka tlogela go tsaya seabe nako nngwe le nngwe e o batlang. Fa e kare o tswelletse wa ikutlwa o batla go tlogela, tlogela fela. Ga gona se se go kgoreletsang. Go na le maduo go tsenelela patlo kitso e: e tla thusa go tokafatsa thuto. Gape e tlaa fa barutintshi ba thuto botsipa jwa go dirisana le batsadi mo thutong ya bana. O le motsadi o tlaa itumela gore o nnile le seabe mo patlong kitso e.

O kopiwa go botsa dipotso pele o tsenelela go bodiwa dipotso mo tirong e. Maduo a patlo kitso e a tlaa romelwa mongwe le mongwe yo otlala bong a kopile jalo. Fa o batla go itse that ka patlo kitso e, kwalela kwa go: Professor Steven Pulos kwa [Steven.pulos@unco.edu](mailto:Steven.pulos@unco.edu) kgotsa kwa: Sponsored Program and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado. Greeley, CO. 80639. USA (Mogala-970-351-1907)

Ka boikokobetso,

Keinyatse Kgosidialwa

Fa o badile e bile o nnile le nako ya go botsa dipotso, gatisa monwana wa gago fa tlase go supa fa o dumela go tsaya karolo mo thothomiso kitso e. O tla a newa moriti wa fomo e go nna susupo sag gago.

---

Monwana wa motsadi

---

Date

---

Monwana wa mosupi

APPENDIX F  
PARENTS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe your school experiences while you were a student.
2. What do you think of education today? Why?
3. What would you like to see done differently in our education system? Why?
4. What does it take for a child to succeed in school? Why?
5. What do you think is the responsibility of the parent in school and education of their children? Why?
6. What do you expect your child to achieve regarding education? Why?
7. To what extent does your child understand your beliefs and expectations about school learning?
8. In which school related activities do you participate with your child at school and at home?
9. How do your experiences with school as a student and as a parent influence your beliefs and expectations about your child's learning?
10. How do you ensure that you child academically achieve in school?
11. How do you perceive the role of education in the individuals' life?
12. How do you feel about the openness of the school for parents to be involved?

APPENDIX G

TRANSLATED PARENTS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Potsoloso Ya Batsadi

1. A o ka nthaloetsa ka botlalo se o se gakologelwang fa one ole ngwana wa sekole.
2. O bona thuto ya malatsi ano entse jang fela?
3. Ke eng se o eletsang se ka chenziwa mo thotung ya malatsi ano?
4. A ko o nankolele dikai tsa moithuti yo o bothale? A o bona go tsena sekole go ka oketsa bothale jwa moithuti?
5. Boikarabelo jwa batsadi ke eng mo thutong ya bana ba bone?
6. Wena o solofela gore ngwana wag gago a ithute go fitha kae?
7. Ngwana wa gago o thaloganya ditsholofelo le dikeletso tsa gago go le kae?
8. Ke eng se o tsenelela eng mo ditirong tsa sekole? Wena le ngwana wa gago lo dira eng se se mabapi le tiro ya sekole?
9. Tumelo le ditsholofelo tsa gago di thotheletsa go ithuta ga ngwana wa gago jang?
10. Wena tse o di itsing ka selole fa ole moithuti le ole motsadi jaanong di thotheletsa tumelo le tsholofelo ya thuto ya ngwana wa gago jang?
11. O bona mosola wa thuto eleng mo botshelong jwa motho?
12. O kgotsofalela theresiano le tirisano ya sekole go le kae?

APPENDIX H

TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS

How would you view parents' involvement in their children's learning in this school?

1. How do parents understand their effect in their children's academic life?
2. How open is the school to the parents?
3. To what extent do parents understand their role in parental involvement?
4. How do you view parents' beliefs and expectations in their children's academic achievement goals?
5. How do parents' involvement and expectations relate to children' academic performance?
6. What do parents view as source of academic success?
7. In which school related activities are most parents get engaged?



APPENDIX I  
MODIFICATIONS

Based on the pilot study results, some of the parents' interview questions were modified.

The following questions were modified to read as follows:

Q4. What do you expect of your child as far as education is concerned?

Q7. Does your child know your expectations? Why do you think so?

Q10. Are you satisfied with your involvement in your child's learning? Why?

Q11. Do you think getting an education is important? Why?

Q12. How open is the school to the parents? Why?

**NB.** In some schools, participants included parents of standards five, six and seven pupils. This was due to the purposeful sampling used to get parents who were knowledgeable and could talk about the topic of discussion.

APPENDIX J

PROFILES OF ALL STUDY PARTICIPANTS

PARENTS				CHILDREN			
Parent	Sex/ Age	Education Level	Employed	Sex	Standard	Age	Performance
SRP1-s	F-48	JC	Un-	F	7	13	Average
SRP2-s	F-33	JC	Self-empl	F	7	13	High
SRP3-s	F-50	PLSE	Employed	M	6	13	Low
SRP4-w	F-43	PSLE	Employed	F	6	12	Low
LRP1-m	M-55	PSLE	Employed	F	5	12	High
LRP2-s	F-53	PSLE	Un-	F	7	13	Average
LRP3-m	F-55	Prima 2	Un-	M	6	13	Low
LRP4-m	F-60	Std 6	Un-	M	6	12	Average
LRP5-w	F-40	PSLE	Un-	F	5	11	High
MAP1-s	F-36	JC	Un-	F	6	12	Average
MAP2-m	F-48	-	Un-	F	6	13	Low
MAP3-s	F-50	JC	Employed	M	6	12	High
MAP4-s	F-33	JC	Employed	M	6	12	High
MMP1-s	F- 36	JC	Un-	F	7	13	High
MMP2-s	F-33	BGCSE	Employed	F	7	12	Average
MMP3-s	F-50	Prima 5	Employed	M	7	14	Low

*Note.* m=married; s=single; Un- = unemployed; PSLE refers to a primary school certificate; prima 2= level 2 literacy class.