Parental Engagement in School: Perspectives of Arabic-Speaking Parents of English Language Learners (ELLs) and Primary School Teachers.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

Souaad Srabiet

Abstract

Parents' engagement in the education of their children tend to have a positive impact for their academic, behavioural, social and emotional development regardless of their ages, socioeconomic, racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Parental engagement may have potential additional benefits for parents, teachers and schools as well. However, the levels of family-school engagement in culturally and linguistically diverse educational contexts might be complicated as immigrant parents might not be actively engaged due to many, immigration related, challenges (Turney & Kao, 2009; Kim, 2009; Koyama & Bakuza, 2017; Antony-Newman, 2019). As Ireland is becoming an increasingly diverse country, because of large-scale inward migration, the number of children in Irish schools for whom English is not the language spoken at home, referred to as English language learners (ELLs), is increasing creating challenges to the education system. Those challenges might include achievement gap between ELLs and their Irish counterparts as well as a diversity gap between homogenous white Irish teachers and the linguistically and culturally diverse pupils and their families. The way immigrant parents of ELLs are engaging with their children's education and schooling, in Irish schools, is lacking and needed close investigation. The aim of this research is to investigate the extent to which immigrant parents of ELLs and Irish primary school teachers work together to support ELLs in the context of four Irish primary schools in Dublin. Perceptions, experiences, patterns of engagement and challenges faced by parents and teachers were investigated. A mixed methods approach was taken combining quantitative and qualitative methods to develop understanding of multiple perspectives of both group participants. Teacher's perceptions were assessed using an online, anonymous survey containing quantitative and qualitative questions. Parents' perspectives were examined through individual semi-structured interviews, using both Arabic and English languages, as main source of data followed by focus group discussions in Arabic language to enrich data from the individual interviews. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyse the quantitative and qualitative data gathered.

Findings indicate that despite most teachers and parents' positive attitudes towards family-school engagement, the overall levels of parental engagement in most of the participating schools were limited and constrained by challenges resulting from many factors, some related to families and others related to schools. The most evident challenges were due to

linguistic and cultural differences between Arabic-speaking immigrant families and Irish schools causing many differing views and attitudes among parents of ELLs and teachers of how parental engagement should be. While parents of ELLs were perceived by teachers as not enough engaged in their children's education, lacking the knowledge about the importance of their children’s education, Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs, however, showed having awareness towards their roles in children's learning and development demonstrating many positive engagement practices at home that appeared to be impacted by their linguistic, cultural and religious values. To develop effective ELL parental engagement, Irish schools need to embrace culturally and linguistically responsive educational and parental engagement opportunities and to develop welcoming, equitable schools that represent the cultural backgrounds of the pupils, and their families.

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List of Abbreviations

CNS:	Community National Schools
COVID-19:	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CSO:	Central Statistics Office
DES:	Department of Education and Skills
EAL:	English as an additional language
ECRI:	European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance
EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
ELLs:	English language learners
ESA:	Equal Status Act
ESRI:	Economic and Social Research Institute
ESSA:	Every Student Succeeds Act
ET:	Educate Together
ETBs:	Education and Training Boards
EU:	European Union
GDPR:	General Data Protection Regulation
HEA:	Higher Education Authority
HSCL:	Home School Community Liaison
IFI:	Islamic Foundation of Ireland
IRE:	Islamic Religious Education
IRPP:	Irish Refugee Protection Programme
ISL:	Irish Sign Language
MENA:	Middle Eastern and North African
MFL:	Modern Foreign Language
NAPR:	National Action Plan Against Racism

NCCA:	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NPC–P:	National Parents' Council–Primary
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAC:	Parent Association Committee
PESP:	Programme for Economic and Social Progress
PIL:	Participant Information Leaflet
PISA:	The Programme for International Student Assessment
PTA:	Parent–Teacher Association
PTM:	Parent-Teacher Meeting
RCSI:	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
REC:	Research Ethics Committee
RSE:	Relationship and Sex Education
SFCP:	School, Family and Community Partnerships
TCD:	Trinity College Dublin
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA:	United States of America
WSE:	Whole School Evaluation

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The significance of parenting and schooling for children's development is well recognized. Both home and school are the most important places for children to learn, socialize and develop (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). However, the way of how homes and schools support each other is much less understood, at the same time, lack of complementarity between these two contexts have also been widely identified by many researchers (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Effective family-school engagement is associated with a wide range of academic, behavioural, and social-emotional benefits and the positive impact of parental engagement in improving children's learning is no longer a subject of debate (Wei & Zhou, 2012). Insufficient parent-school engagement, on the other hand, may adversely impact the student's academic success (Crosnoe, 2009). Parental engagement for primary school pupils has been shown to have a greater impact on their academic achievement than parental socioeconomic status (Jasso, 2007) or school quality (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). School children value education and learning more when their parents are more engaged, because when parents get involved, they send direct messages to their children that education is important (Domina, 2005). Therefore, scholars, policymakers, and educators have long endorsed the importance of parental engagement in policy documents, research papers, and schools themselves (Epstein,1991; Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). It is "one of the centrepieces of educational dialogue among teachers, parents, and political leaders" (Jeynes, 2003, p. 203). Parental engagement is a goal for many educational institutions as it stands as one of the most agreed-upon principles of good educational practice (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012).

Accordingly, parental engagement has become an important component of education policy in the UK and western Europe (Hujala et al., 2009). In the United States, federal legislation, namely Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed first in December 2015, requires schools to engage families in ways that support child learning (McGuinn, 2016). In Australia, engaging with parents has also been embedded in national professional standards for both teachers and principals, and nationally endorsed through the Family-School Partnerships Framework (Department of Education, Employment &Workplace Relations, 2008). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has, furthermore, identified family-school engagement as one of the five key policy levers for

improving the quality of education (OECD, 2011).

Despite the great influence and potentially positive impact of parental engagement for improving pupils' academic achievement, parent-school engagement in multilingual contexts is said to be complicated due to migration-related challenges (Turney & Kao, 2009; Koyama & Bakuza, 2017). As a result of increased immigration in Western host countries in recent decades, schools in those countries have witnessed a significant diversification of the pupil populations. According to Eurostat (2023), there are around 27.3 million non-EU people living in European Union representing nearly (6.1%) of its population (Eurostat, 2023). Increase in immigration across the world has significantly enhanced linguistic and cultural diversity in educational settings, yielding multifaceted benefits for students, families and educators alike. Exposure to diverse cultural perspectives in schools equips students with essential intercultural competencies, preparing them for a globalized workforce while fostering empathy and reducing prejudice (Hurd & Plaut, 2017). Interacting with peers from varied backgrounds exposes students to differing ideas, beliefs, and worldviews, enhancing critical thinking and deepening their understanding of human experiences (Seeberg & Minick, 2012). Moreover, diverse classrooms challenge stereotypes, mitigate discrimination, and promote socio-emotional growth by encouraging students to recognize shared humanity beyond superficial differences (Juvonen et al., 2019; Short, 2017). Academically, cultural diversity stimulates creativity, problem-solving, and intellectual discourse, leading to higher levels of academic achievement (Pascarella et al., 2014). Educators also benefit, gaining cultural expertise and pedagogical strategies that enhance their professional development (Nieto, 2013).

While cultural diversity offers significant benefits, it also poses pedagogical challenges, engagement issues, and classroom management difficulties that demand adaptive strategies. (Snider, 2015). Given the increasing diversification in many immigrant-receiving countries, schools in Western host countries often struggle to accommodate diverse families or sustain their engagement. This highlights the difficulty of enhancing parental engagement over time (Baquedano-López, Alexander & Hernandez, 2013; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Brown et al., 2022). Teachers, specifically, have struggled to meet the demands of socio-culturally diverse classrooms (UNESCO, 2020). Consequently, low levels of parental engagement have been found between schools and culturally and linguistically diverse immigrant families (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010). Such low levels of engagement could have negative consequences on immigrant children's academic achievement that could put them at a

significant disadvantage compared to their native counterparts (Antony-Newman 2020; Rodríguez-Izquierdo & Darmody 2019; Leddy, 2018). In OECD countries, for example, school age immigrant children, particularly first-generation immigrant students, tend to fall behind and perform worse than their native peers in reading and such shortcoming is related mostly to school policies (OECD, 2020; Cathles et al., 2021)

Increase in immigration across the world has increased the interest in how immigrant families get along with the new educational systems of the host countries. However, little research, in the international context, has focused on immigrant parents' perspectives regarding family-school engagement (Ennab, 2017; Antony-Newman, 2019; Gonzales & Gabel, 2017). Additionally, factors that influence their engagement have not been studied sufficiently (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Durand, 2011). At the same time, considering the schools responsibility to facilitate parental engagement, more knowledge is needed about what types of characteristics among school staff are associated with the ability to successfully engage with parents with immigrant backgrounds (Norheim & Moser 2020). Therefore, researchers and policy makers increasingly advocate that the focus must shift towards considering families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in host school contexts rather than the dominant groups in society. (Amjad, 2016; Bushaala, 2016; Hamlin & Flessa, 2018).

1.2 The Irish Context and Current Challenges

Ethno-racial diversity has long been a feature of Irish society (Fanning, 2021). Communities such as the Irish Jewish population, people of mixed heritage (often termed 'Black Irish'), and the indigenous Travellers represent longstanding threads of Ireland's social fabric (Fanning, 2021). However, over the past three decades, Ireland has experienced large-scale immigration from various parts of the world, now having one of the highest proportions of foreign-born residents in the EU (McGinnity et al., 2020). As a result, the country has shifted from being predominantly "Catholic, White, and Gaelic" to an increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse country (Faas et al., 2015: 84). It is reported that a fifth of the population of Ireland has been born outside the country with 12% being non-Irish citizens. In addition, the migrant population in Ireland is very heterogeneous in terms of country of origin and language (Central Statistics Office, 2022)

This context has led to increased linguistic diversity within Ireland's population. In the 2022 census, based on respondent's self- report, there are 751,507 people who speak a language

other than English or Irish at home which represents an increase of 23% from 618,018 people who spoke a language other than English or Irish at home in 2016 (Central Statistics Office, 2022). Irish schools, in turn, are also experiencing an increase in the inflow of immigrant students with 17% of them having an immigrant background (OECD, 2023). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results from Ireland in 2022 reported that 59% of students (at primary and post primary schools) with an immigrant background speak a language other than English or Irish at home (OECD, 2023). In addition, 8% of 15-year-old students in Irish schools are first-generation immigrants, meaning that they were born in another country and their families moved to Ireland only in recent years (OECD, 2023). These students, in the context of English-medium immersion schools are referred to as "English Language Learners (ELLs)". This context has, further, reflected the rapid increase in the number of children of immigrants who learn English as an additional language (EAL) in Irish schools.

The changes in the students' demographics, in the context of Irish education, have created recognizable challenges to the education system with little prior experience of dealing with such linguistic and cultural diversity (Smyth et al., 2009; Faas et al., 2015). Recent evidence shows that many Irish schools are failing to sufficiently accommodate students' socio-cultural diversity (Faas, Smith & Darmody, 2018; Hannigan et al., 2024; Adebayo & Heinz, 2023), even though, most immigrant students with different linguistic backgrounds receive additional English language tuition at schools supported by the Department of Education (Little & Kirwan 2019; Gardiner-Hyland, 2021). However, many other challenges have been reported such as the predominantly denominational (mostly Catholic) nature of the Irish education system (Darmody, Smyth & McCoy, 2012) which has left very little choice for culturally and linguistically diverse parents with respect to their children's education (O'Loinsigh, 2001). The second challenge is the mismatch between the linguistically and culturally diverse student populations and a homogeneity of the teaching population, with approximately 1% of primary teachers not from white Irish backgrounds creating the so called "diversity gap" (Heinz & Keane, 2018; Keane, Heinz & Lynch, 2023; Heinz, Keane & McDaid, 2023). Additionally, the proportion of females in primary teaching reached approximately 85% in 2019 (Heinz, Keane & Davison, 2023). Other issues relate to insufficient cultural training among Irish teachers (Hannigan et al., 2024; Foley et al., 2024), presenting another challenge to accommodating the various cultures and religions represented in Irish classrooms. Such context has led to a lack of mutual understanding

between Irish teachers and migrant-origin pupils and their families (Darmody et al., 2011; Darmody & McCoy, 2011). In addition, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results from Ireland in 2022 reported that there was an eight-score point difference between immigrant students from non-English speaking households in Irish primary schools and their non-immigrant/Irish peers in mathematics and a 13-score point difference in reading in favour of the non-immigrant/Irish group, after accounting for students' socio-economic profile, not significant difference was observed (OECD, 2023). Such difference in the academic achievement between immigrant students and their native counterparts may be explained by insufficient parental engagement (Jhang & Lee, 2018). Conversely, positive correlation between the ELL parental engagement and ELLs effective learning has been firmly established (Panferov, 2010).

Factors such as parental language difficulties in acquiring English, the dominant language of the host country, and lack of knowledge of the Irish education system are included in the most significant factors to contribute "quite a lot" or "a lot" to difficulties experienced by newcomer pupils (Smyth et al., 2009). Recent literature reported that immigrant parents of ELLs may also experience a "clash of cultures" in engaging with Irish school systems (O'Toole et al., 2019). Consequently, such linguistic and cultural differences will affect the extent and nature of their engagement with children's education (Daniel, 2015; Johnson et al., 2016).

1.3 Conceptualizations of Parental Engagement

1.3.1 Parental Involvement and Parent/Family Engagement

In the literature, the relationships between families and schools are often referred to using different terms, namely, parent involvement, parent/family engagement, or family-school partnerships. The phenomenon has been perceived as a complex construct and defined in different ways; its conceptual definitions are various though quite similar and are often used by researchers interchangeably, however, these terms carry significantly different connotations (Sheridan et al., 2016; Daniel, 2011). Parental involvement, historically, was defined by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) as parents' commitment of resources (e.g., time, energy, and money) to the academic context of children's lives. While more broadly, it has been defined as a parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) and "parents' interactions with schools and with their children to benefit their children's educational outcomes and future success" (Hill et al.,

2004, p.1491). The term involvement implied a one-way connection between parents and their children's education that was limited to parent-teacher meetings and parent-teacher associations (King & Goodwin, 2002). Parents were recognized as, merely, the ones who supervise the homework, check on the child's annual report, and talk with school personnel only when problems arise (Olmstead, 2013). Jeynes (2012) indicated that parents were only present in the school building when they were required to do so. Parental involvement, according to Jeynes (2012) has been characterized as voluntary participation of school activities such as attending school events, reading to one's child, and other demonstrable actions that contribute to a supportive educational environment. The connection in parent involvement was generally visualized, according to Christenson & Sheridan, (2001, p. 2), as a "flow of information from school to parent".

Parent/family engagement, on the other hand, has been defined by (Ferlazzo, 2011), as a partnership and a sequential collaboration or a linking of shared purposes and responsibilities between both parents and educators. Additionally, he indicated that parent engagement is about engaging families to become partners with the school and listening to "what parents think, dream, and worry about" (Ferlazzo, 2011, p. 12). Moreover, he emphasized the importance of educators encouraging parent engagement instead of parent involvement suggesting that engagement is preferable to involvement in terms of improving student achievement as it centres on learning and self-discipline (Ferlazzo, 2011). In this regard, Goodall and Montgomery (2014) argued that parental involvement and parental engagement represent a continuum, moving from stronger school agency to stronger parents' agency, broadening the traditional definition of school-led parental involvement which has been criticized for being too narrow and restrictive. Hammond and Ferlazzo (2009) specified that schools can achieve family involvement through identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can participate or how to be involved. Parent/family engagement, on the other hand, aims to understand each family's unique context and help parents and family members feel recognized for their expertise and sparks their interest in working collaboratively with school programmes. Parent/ family engagements strive to gain partners, not to serve clients (Hammond & Ferlazzo, 2009). The authors, Hammond and Ferlazzo (2009) also added that the preference for engagement over involvement does not mean that family involvement is bad, as research around the world demonstrates that any kind of increased parent interest and support of students can help. However, almost all research studies report that family engagement can produce even better results for students,

for families, for schools, and for their communities (Hammond & Ferlazzo, 2009). Reschly and Christenson (2012) indicated that the aim of family engagement is to engage families as partners in education rather than just invite parents to be present in the school building by attending meetings or events and helping with homework as is the case with family involvement. Toso and Grinder (2016) added to the concept of parental engagement, by advocating that parents should be given a voice when interacting with school officials on topics affecting their children, their schools, and the issues that involve them as adults and community members (Toso & Grinder, 2016).

1.3.2 Family-School and Community Partnerships

Epstein (1995, 2009, 2011) suggested a new conceptual framework to illustrate effective family-school engagement, differing from the above terms, namely, "family-school and community partnership". She criticizes the term parental involvement as insufficient because it is a narrowing and limiting label for the work that families, educators, and community partners must do together. She defined family-school partnerships as collaborative, non-hierarchical relationships in which educators (e.g., teachers, administrators, school psychologists) and families (e.g., parents, caregivers) interact to improve student outcomes (Epstein 1995, 2009, 2011). Other researchers advocated Epstein's concept of partnership ensuring the bidirectional relationships in which families learn from the school's experiences with the student and schools' benefit from perspectives provided by families (Christenson, 2004). For instance, Auerbach (2010) defined family-school partnership as "respectful alliances among educators, families, and community groups that value relationship building, dialogue, and power sharing as part of socially just, democratic schools" (Auerbach, 2010, p. 729). Sharing power here refers to equity, inclusion, reciprocal support, empowerment, and social justice; "inviting stakeholders to the table as full partners, working in coalition with them, and empowering them to share leadership" (Auerbach, 2012, p. 38).

In the literature, the terms parental involvement, parental engagement, and family-school partnership are often used interchangeably. However, this study adopts parent/family engagement as the preferred, broader term. It encompasses both parental involvement and family-school partnership, reflecting a more authentic parent-school relationship. Furthermore, parental engagement serves as an inclusive construct that bridges the conceptual gaps between these terms and acknowledges both visible school-based activities such as attending parent-teacher meetings (PTMs), participating in school events, and

volunteering (Jeynes, 2012; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001) and invisible home-based activities (Hammond & Ferlazzo, 2009) such as parental attitudes, trust, and learning-supportive interactions, which may not be recognised by teachers. It also integrates the concept of family-school partnerships, collaborative, power-sharing alliances (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011) into a broader framework of engagement. Such a conceptualization ensures that both noticeable and unnoticeable contributions of families are recognized as essential to fostering equitable and effective educational outcomes.

This conceptualization is particularly appropriate for understanding immigrant English Language Learner (ELL) parental engagement in Irish schools. It captures the population's unique engagement practices alongside the barriers they face due to linguistic, cultural, and religious differences, while transcending the limitations of narrower terms of parental involvement. Accordingly, the study operationalizes engagement as a continuum (Hammond & Ferlazzo, 2009) where schools and families co-construct shared goals.

1.4 Research Aims

This study aims to shed light on the way immigrant parents of English Language Learners (ELLs), and primary school teachers work together to support English as Additional Language (EAL) pupils in the context of Irish education. In particular, this research attempts to provide important insights into the actual levels or patterns of parental engagement among a sample of Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs and Irish primary school teachers in the context of English-medium Irish primary schools in Dublin (See Section 1.8.2, for Irish primary school context). Arabic-speaking parents and primary school teachers' perceptions of family-school engagement, the activities in which teachers engage parents in their children's schooling and the different challenges that face both groups of participants are investigated. In addition, recommendations for the development and implementation of practices which promote ELL parental engagement to ensure student achievement in Irish primary schools are suggested.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Examine perspectives, experiences, and challenges in relation to parental engagement expressed by Arabic-speaking parents in their children's education in Irish primary schools.

2. Examine perspectives, experiences, and challenges expressed by primary school teachers in relation to parental engagement in their students' education.
3. Suggest recommendations for the development and implementation of practices in relation to parental engagement of parents of ELLs in Irish primary schools.

1.6 Research Questions

The research questions that this study intends to respond to are:

1. What are teachers' attitudes and actions towards ELL parental engagement in the context of Irish primary schools?
2. How is parental engagement perceived and enacted by Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs?
3. What are primary teachers and Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' perspectives of challenges to family school engagement? What practices promote effective parental engagement?

1.7 Purpose of the Study

Family-school engagement might have academic, behavioural, and social-emotional benefits for pupils, parents, schools, as well as teachers (Jeynes, 2012; Smith et al., 2020; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Therefore, educators and scholars have been increasingly concerned about the degree to which parents are engaged in their children's education. However, most of the existing ELL parental engagement research has been found in countries that have a long history of immigration such as the USA, Australia, and Canada, less is known about ELL parental engagement in countries where significant immigration is a relatively new phenomenon, such as Ireland. Literature in the context of Irish education provides minimal empirical evidence in the area of ELL parental engagement, as the perspectives of ethnic minority immigrant parents, to which this study contributes, are, generally, missing (Darmody & McCoy, 2011; O'Toole et al., 2019).

Accordingly, recent research highlights the importance of understanding the patterns of immigrant parents' engagement with the education of their children among teachers and school leaders in the context of Irish schooling (Devine, Darmody & Smyth, 2023). Such research that investigates the views of immigrant parents in the Irish context is essential for understanding how best to respond to the needs of children from different cultural

backgrounds (Adebayo & Heinz, 2023). Recent research in the context of Irish education also has highlighted the importance of the recognition, understanding, and appreciation of cultural diversity to foster inclusion in education, as it can have a significant impact on societal development as the perception of difference and diversity is linked to students' perception of themselves and the world they live in (Heinz, Davison & Keane, 2018; Hannigan, Faas & Darmody, 2024)

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to measure and define ELL parental engagement in the context of Irish primary education due to the increasing population of ELL pupils in the Irish school system, also because it is important to understand how parents of ELLs and teachers can establish effective partnerships for immigrant pupils academic, behavioural, and social development. While both parents and teachers view parental engagement from different perspectives (Myers, 2015); teachers' behaviours, beliefs and attitudes towards family-school engagement have been found to be a significant factor in enhancing parental engagement (Leithwood, 2009). Accordingly, this study, specifically, investigates the way that a sample of Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs, and a sample of Irish primary school teachers work together to support English Language Learners (ELLs) within the context of selected Irish primary schools.

Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs were chosen as research participants because there are many Arab immigrant parents who have children who are enroled in the public Irish education system (See Section 1.8.1, for research population). Another reason for this direction is because ethnic minority and immigrant community voices are often left out of public debates (Valdes, 1996) and are often under-represented (Modood, Triandafyllidou, & Zapata-Barrero, 2006). Furthermore, the population is an under-researched group of parents, Muslim Arab immigrant parents rarely receive attention by researchers in the Western context (Gurr, 2010; Al Khateeb et al., 2015). Thus, through focusing on Arabic-speaking parents and Irish teachers' perspectives, this study fills a gap in understanding of how families of ELLs construct their roles in supporting children's education in Ireland and provides insights into how to optimize parental engagement through responding to the research questions which seek to capture the lived experiences of parents and teachers.

1.8 Population and Research Context Overview

1.8.1 Arabic-Speaking Immigrant Parents in Context

Arabic-speaking parents, whose experiences of engagement are the focus of the current research project, are defined as people having origin from one of the 22 Arab League nations, though not all persons originating from these countries identify as Arab (Haboush, 2007). The Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) population is a broader name for people living in Arab countries who, mostly, are ethnically Arab and religiously Muslim (Gregg, 2005). Islam is perceived as a unifying criterion for the vast majority of Arabs (Helbling, 2012). Arabs form the largest ethnic group among Muslims in the world (Nydell, 2018). Arabic language is the mother tongue of over 420 million people across the Middle East and North Africa (Nydell, 2018). Arabs have strong relation to their language as it is more than a powerful symbol of Arab national identity or a medium of communication, it is a symbol of belonging to the Islamic civilization (Giles & Saint-Jacques, 1979; Holes, 2004). Thus, scholars such as De Ruiter (1998), who have observed Muslims throughout Europe, reported that they use Arabic language extensively to establish identities and religious communities committed to Islam. It should be noted that even though Arabs share a common language and religion (Hadidi & Al Khateeb, 2015), there is a variety of differences based on their social norms, culture, ethnic, national identities and in socio-economic backgrounds as some Arab countries are considered the richest in the world, whereas others are the poorest (El-Ghonemy, 2002; Assaad et al., 2016; Bibi & Nabli, 2009; Hassine, 2015). In addition, there are substantial inequalities in the levels of education and higher education in those countries (Assaad, Salehi-Isfahani & Hendy, 2014; Salehi-Isfahani, Hassine & Assaad, 2014).

In Arab culture, the family is perceived to be the most important unit of society (Britto & Amer, 2007) consisting of married parents and children where fathers are perceived to be the family leaders and mothers are perceived to be the primary caregivers (Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1995; Kazarian, 2005). In western culture, fathers tend to play a key role in family dynamics and tend to share responsibilities with mothers not only in childcare, but also in household tasks (Cabrera et al., 2018), while mothers tend to be more involved in the labour force participation (Marsiglio, Day & Lamb, 2014). Parenting styles of Arab parents have been found to be greatly influenced by culture and different across the Arab societies (Dwairy et al., 2006). The differences have been found in the level of permissiveness (encouraging children's autonomy and enable them to make their own decisions/ regulate

their own activities) and authoritarianism (emphasizing parents' control of the child and his/her obedience) and less in the authoritativeness which refers to having good nurturing skills and exercise moderate parental control allowing children to become progressively more autonomous (Dwairy et al., 2006). Such differences were attributed to differences in the socio-political differences between the societies (Dwairy et al., 2006). Arabs parenting patterns include also great respect toward parents and elders as children are raised to not question elders and to be obedient to older brothers and sisters (Kulwicki, 2021).

Many cultural differences might be found with respect to communication that might interfere with Arab families' needs and impact their way of communication. For example, in conversations, Arabs often find it impolite to use the word "no" even when they disagree with others (Wilson, 1996) and Arabs speech is likely to be characterized by repetition and gesturing, particularly when involved in serious discussions (Kulwicki, 2021). Arabs may also be loud and expressive when involved in serious discussions to stress their commitment and their sincerity in the subject matter (Kulwicki, 2021). Arab communication has been described as highly nuanced, with more communication contained in the context of the situation than in the actual words spoken (Kulwicki, 2021). Some Arabs may place a high value on privacy and might resist disclosing personal information to strangers in certain contexts (Kulwicki, 2021). Communication in the family context is characterised by anticipation relying more on unspoken expectations and nonverbal cues than overt verbal exchange (Kulwicki, 2021). In addition, as one of the most important and distinctive aspects of Arab culture is religion, an Arab man, when talking to a woman, should keep much greater distance and never stand closer, stare at, or touch her in public (Feghali, 1997). furthermore, Islamic teachings forbid unnecessary touch including shaking hands between unrelated adults of opposite sexes (Kulwicki, 2021).

Research shows that some parents from Arab/Muslim countries express concerns about building a strong moral and cultural foundation in their children after immigration (Gurr, 2010). For example, Baghdasaryan et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study involving 50 migrant parents mostly from Arab countries in a small city in Sweden. The parents in this study revealed that after immigration they often attempt to adhere to their customs and cultural identities, however, they face many challenges, that hinder their integration into the new society (Baghdasaryan et al., 2021). Arab participating parents, further, reported the loss of their social, cultural and financial capital after immigration leaving them feeling disempowered and with a threatened sense of identity as parents and caregivers of their

families (Baghdasaryan et al., 2021). Likewise, it has been reported that many Arab families have been forced to live a double life in host countries, one outside the home that conforms to host-country social expectations and one at home that preserves their original cultural ways (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011). In addition, they have specific prior educational experiences and expectations which may define their engagement with their children's education in the Irish context. Consequently, investigating the perspectives of Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs in the context of Irish primary school provide complex research challenges and opportunities. This study uses the term Arabic-speaking parents to refer to the population in general, and the ethnic group or national origin of participants is used when referring to specific research findings.

1.8.1.1 Arab Immigration to Ireland

Arabs have immigrated to Ireland over the last seven decades. There have been multiple major waves of Arab immigration to Ireland. The first wave, from early 1950s to mid-1960s, represented a moderate level of immigration of Arab nationals who were mainly medical students in the (RCSI) Royal College of Surgeons, followed by greater number of immigrant postgraduate students who came from Libya, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq (Scharbrodt & Sakaranaho, 2011). The second wave of Arab immigration to Ireland was after establishing the Irish-Arab Society in 1969 and diplomatic relations with Gulf countries in the mid-1970 to encourage cultural, educational, economic, and political interaction between Ireland and the Arab world, students continued to be a central group of immigrants to Ireland from Arab Gulf region (Miller, 2004; Scharbrodt, 2012). The third wave, which has occurred from the economic boom in the 1990s onward included many asylum-seekers from Algeria, Libya, Sudan, and Iraq (Scharbrodt, 2012). Following an immigration wave represented post-Arab Spring revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 and has consisted of more people fleeing war or conflict in countries such as Libya, Syria and Yemen (Meaken, 2016). In addition, when the Irish Government developed the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) in response to the European Union “refugee crisis” in 2015, accordingly, between 2015 and 2020, the Irish government agreed to accept 4000 Programme Refugees from refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Greece (Department of Justice and Equality, 2015). In 2020, a total of 3358 refugees, mostly Syrians, had entered Ireland, of which 1913 were permanently resettled into their own housing across the country (Government of Ireland, 2020).

Even though not all Muslims are Arabs, but Islam is perceived as a unifying criterion for

Arabs in general (Helbling, 2012). Muslims are a small ethnic minority within the Republic of Ireland but one of the largest religious groups in Ireland after the Catholic and Protestant churches (CSO, 2022; Scharbrodt & Sakaranaho, 2011). Muslim population in Ireland is extremely diverse as they originate from several regions of the world, having various cultural and religious traditions and speak different languages (Fanning, 2018). Muslim population in Ireland is growing rapidly as they increased from under 20,000 in 2002, to 60,000 in 2016, to nearly 82, 000 in 2022 (Central Statistics Office, 2022). It is also important to mention here that, Muslims, according to 2022 statistics, comprise 1.6 per cent of the whole Irish population, have a relatively advantaged socio-economic profile in Ireland as they are disproportionately young, urban, professional and highly educated; 37,458 of Muslims live in Dublin and its suburbs (Central Statistics Office, 2022; McGinnity et al., 2018). Data on gender show that there are more Muslim males (44,695) than Muslim females (37,235) in Ireland due to the greater number of male migrants who originally arrived (Central Statistics Office, 2022). Furthermore, over 55% of Muslims in Ireland were either Asian or African nationals with 30.7 % having Irish nationality (Central Statistics Office, 2022). In addition, around 3% of pre-school and school aged children (0 to 9 years) in Ireland are Muslims constituting third largest religious group in Ireland (Central Statistics Office, 2022).

1.8.2 Irish Primary School Contexts

Irish primary education is referred to as first level education where children, normally, attend school between the ages of 4 / 5 and 12 years of age. Primary school covers eight years - a two-year infant cycle, known as junior infants and senior infants, followed by six years from first to sixth class (Department of Education and Skills, 2019).There are three officially recognised languages in Ireland, Gaeilge (Irish) and English. While Irish, a minoritized language, is the first official language of Ireland and an official language of the European Union (Walsh & McLeod, 2008), English is the mother tongue of the majority of the population (O'Laoire, 2005). Irish Sign Language (ISL) is also a recognised official language in Ireland since 2017 (Conama, 2019). Both English and Irish are mandatory subjects taught in all Irish public primary and post primary schools. While English is the primary medium of instruction at all levels in most schools across Ireland, there are also Irish-medium schools where Irish language is the primary medium of instruction at all levels and English is taught as a second language. Irish-medium schools are attended by approximately (8%) of school children in Ireland (Department of Education and Skills, 2022).

Primary schools in Ireland are free and mostly denominational owned by and are under the patronage of Christian denominations accounting 95% of all primary schools (Department of Education and Skills, 2023). According to the Irish Department of Education and Skills (DES, 2023) about 88.4 % of these schools are controlled by the Catholic Church serving 88.6% of the primary school pupils, while 2.9 % are controlled by the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian schools as well as one Methodist school. Apart from that, there are two schools are operated by the Irish Islamic community and one school is operated by the Jewish community (Hyland & Bocking, 2016). Those schools provide religious education according to the practices and beliefs of communities to make sure that different religious communities, in Ireland, can put their children in their respective religious traditions and each is managed by a board of management. (O'Mahony, 2013). All teachers in Catholic primary schools are contractually required to obtain a Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies and to teach the Catholic religious education curriculum, which includes specific faith formation goals (Heinz, Davison & Keane, 2018).

Due to Ireland's growing diversified population, changing ideological beliefs, negative attitudes toward religion, and the declining influence of the Catholic Church (Connolly, James & Murtagh, 2023), the Irish educational system has sparked an ongoing debate about educational rights and concerns that current school policies could segregate students along religious lines (Faas, Smith & Darmody, 2018). Thus, in response to the increase in child population, approximately 8 % of primary schools are non/multi-denominational schools, attended by 8.1 % of primary school pupils. These schools including both multi-denominational schools such as Community National Schools (CNS) and non-denominational or non-religious ethos schools such as, Educate Together (ET) were established to provide an alternative to denominational schools and facilitate education for children from varying religious backgrounds within an ethos of "equality and inclusion". (Department of Education and Skills, 2023). The patron of multi denominational schools is usually the board of trustees, (ET) Educate Together or the (ETBs) Education and Training Boards (Connolly, James & Murtagh, 2023). These schools are the fastest growing at primary level as their numbers has risen in the Republic of Ireland from 97 in 2012 to 168 in 2023, an increase of 73.2 percent. (Department of Education and Skills, 2023). These non/ multi-denominational schools are based on child-centred approach meaning that all children have equal rights, and their social, cultural and religious backgrounds are equally respected notwithstanding their specific ethical curriculum, which comprises ethics and values with a

comparative view of world religions (Darmody, Smyth & McCoy, 2012).

1.8.2.1 Muslim National Schools

In Ireland, the system of education has certified that different religious families are able to enrol their children in schools according to respective religious traditions (Sakaranaho, 2018). The Muslim community in Ireland has "managed very smoothly" in establishing their own schools (Sakaranaho, 2006). Two, co-educational, public Muslim National schools operate in accordance with the Islamic ethos, while adapting to the requirements of the Irish educational system, were founded by the Islamic Foundation of Ireland (IFI) in Dublin. It is important to note that while there is another private Islamic primary school in Ireland, only two public Muslim schools receive funding from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and are recognised as state-funded schools. Both Muslim primary schools receive the same capitation grant as other national schools in Ireland (Scharbrodt & Sakaranaho, 2011). The financial aid received from the Department of Education covers the salaries of qualified teachers, who must be accepted by the Department of Education. The capitation grant pays for 85 per cent of the general costs of the school and the rest must thereafter be provided by the patron (Scharbrodt & Sakaranaho, 2011). One of these two schools is in South Dublin and was established in April 1993, and the other in North Dublin was established in September 2001. Both schools are run under the patronage of the Islamic Foundation of Ireland (IFI) and have school boards with representatives of Muslim parents (Sakaranaho, 2015; Sai, 2018a). Both schools combine the requirements set for a primary Irish school, administered jointly by the state, a patron body, and local representatives (Walshe, 2014).

Both Muslim national schools' medium of instruction is English and they follow the Irish primary school curriculum and promoting an Islamic ethos. This is reflected in the fact that all pupils come from Muslim families. Second, the Islamic ethos is seen in various practices such as daily prayers and other school activities. Additionally, an hour per day is set aside for Islamic Religious Education, including the study of Arabic, Islamic Studies, and the Qur'an (Honohan & Rougier, 2011). These classes are taught by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers who work on a part-time basis with a basic salary generated mainly from parents' voluntary contribution as well as from Islamic community donations. Most (IRE) teachers in Islamic schools normally do not possess any formal academic third level Islamic studies or pedagogical qualifications (Sai, 2018a). The school uniform required for girls is in accordance with Islamic way of dressing. Additionally, unlike other national schools, where the schedule follows the Christian calendar, Islamic schools have been

granted some concessions by the Department of Education and Skills (Sakaranaho, 2015). These adjustments allow Muslim schools to take their holidays during the main Islamic festivals, celebrated annually according to the Islamic lunar calendar (Sakaranaho, 2015). Accordingly, in addition to the ordinary Christmas and Easter holidays, the Muslim schools are closed for eight school days at the end of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr) and for five school days during the feast of sacrifice (Eid al-Adha). In sum, one may note that the Islamic ethos permeates the school life in many ways.(Sakaranaho, 2015)

1.8.2.2 Arabic-Speaking Parents' School Choice in the Context of Irish Primary Schools

Immigrant students' educational success is not only influenced by family-school engagement, but also greatly impacted by their experiences of the school system in the host country (McGinnity et al., 2015; Baysu et al., 2018). In Ireland, migrant families historically faced difficulties finding places in schools for their children because some schools are oversubscribed, with admissions policies that favour settled communities, such as waiting lists and prioritisation of children of previous students (Smyth et al., 2009). Additionally, parental choice of their children's school was previously limited because of many reasons such as the availability of spaces, school resources and "the multi-denominational character and inclusive ethos of the school" (Darmody, Smyth & McCoy, 2012, p. 2). However, these barriers have been addressed by the introduction of Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and (ESA) Equal Status Act in 2018 (Doyle, Muldoon & Murphy, 2020). These legislations mark a significant step toward improving accessibility in Irish schools. Key provisions include ending waiting lists, replacing the "first come, first served" system with an Annual Admissions Notice to ensure fairness, and prohibiting primary schools from using religion as an admission criterion. Additionally, the (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 mandates non-discrimination based on gender, disability, race, and other grounds (Doyle, Muldoon, & Murphy, 2020).

However, it has been found that other reasons such as parents ethnic background, social class (parents' religious beliefs and educational level) also influence school selection, for example, parental beliefs act as strong influences on school selection (Darmody & Smyth, 2018). Children whose mothers define themselves as having no religious denomination are significantly more likely to attend multi-denominational or minority faith schools than they are to attend Catholic schools (Darmody & Smyth, 2018). Children whose mothers are in a minority faith group are much more likely to attend minority faith schools but are also

significantly over-represented in multi-denominational schools, therefore, a higher proportion of middle-class families in multi-denominational (ET) and minority faith schools compared to Catholic schools in the same locality (Darmody & Smyth, 2018; Darmody et al. 2012). Such reasons led to variations in cultural and linguistic diversity among Irish schools (Fischer, 2016; Darmody & Smyth, 2018 a). As some schools have many ELLs or pupils from immigrant families, some have only a few and some have none (Little & Kirwan, 2019). Thus, immigrant-origin students are often over-represented in larger schools, schools located in urban areas and those with a socio-economically disadvantaged intake (Fahey et al., 2019).

Arabic-speaking immigrant parents tend to value education, and they stress the importance of education as part of their children's social growth and have similar aspirations for their children (Suleiman, 1996; Kulwicki, 2021). Moreover, Arab immigrant parents tend to view schooling and education by having a true dedication to their children, and to their educational and financial attainment (El-Badry, 2008). Arabic-speaking Muslim parents' school choices in Ireland are limited; they may either choose an Islamic education, which is limited because there are only two publicly funded Islamic primary schools in the country, and both are in Dublin. Alternatively, they may send their children to local schools, which for the most part are run by different religious denominations, or to multi-denominational schools; however, in the majority of cases, the schools they choose are Catholic (Sai, 2018b; Sakaranaho, 2018). However, when non-Catholic children, such as Muslim pupils, attend these schools, they are legally entitled to opt out of Catholic religious classes and are offered alternative subjects (Smyth, Lyons, & Darmody, 2013). It has been also reported that some Arab (Algerian) Muslim mothers living in Ireland prefer to send their children to a Catholic school instead of a Muslim school (Shanneik, 2012).The reason is due to the over presence of non-Muslim teachers and principals in the Muslim schools (Shanneik, 2012). Algerian Muslim mothers, by sending their children to a Catholic school, hope to avoid any misunderstandings and confusion among their children as "binary oppositions are much easier to construct when it is possible to draw clear lines of distinction between who is who" (Shanneik, 2012: p, 89). In Islamic Irish primary schools, according to Algerian Muslim mothers, boundaries are very hard to detect since Muslims and non-Muslims are located in the same Muslim space. Therefore, to avoid any misunderstanding, the Algerian Muslim women in Shanneik (2012) study perceived a Catholic school to be a better environment for their children in order to construct the world they want their children to grow up in

(Shanneik, 2012). In this regard, there have been many critiques regarding having non-Muslim school staff, including teachers, administrators and principals in both Islamic Schools (Scharbrodt & Sakaranaho, 2011; Sakaranaho, 2015). Such critique is due to the fact that teachers and school principals, at both schools, are qualified native Irish non-Muslim teachers who do not personally subscribe to the Islamic ethos (Sakaranaho, 2015; Sai, 2018a). In addition, it has been reported that non-Muslim teachers in Irish Muslim schools, faced several challenges, including adjustment to an Islamic ethos (Sakaranaho, 2009; Sai, 2018a). In this regard, Kid (2014) qualitatively investigated, through observation of classes, interviews with two teachers, a parent focus group, and an interview with a school principal, how non-Muslim teachers in one Irish Muslim national school in Dublin incorporated an Islamic ethos into Physical Education, English and Drama. Findings indicated that even though there was a willingness on the part of non-Muslim school personnel to implement the Islamic ethos into the school, however, a lack of Irish teachers understanding and creativity in incorporating the ethos into specific subjects, resulting in the curriculum being "narrowed, neglected, or almost nulliied due to a fear of possibly disrespecting the faith" (Kid, 2014. p,71).

Sakaranaho (2018) noted that some Muslim parents in Ireland whose children attend Muslim National Schools expressed dissatisfaction with the management and governance of these schools. This discontent has led to tensions between Department of Education regulations and parental preferences regarding various aspects of schooling, including curriculum delivery. For instance, many parents criticized the teaching of some aspects of music, history, and physical education, arguing that these subjects conflicted with their Islamic faith (Reilly, 2009; Sakaranaho, 2015, 2018). However, the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) report from Department of Education 2005, as cited in Sakaranaho (2018), responded to parental concerns that even though these two schools follow the ethos of Islam and are governed by a school board consisting of the patron, principal and Muslim parents, the Boards of Management should make sure that the school curriculum of Islamic schools should entirely meet the requirements of the Irish national curriculum. The report also suggested that parents, in these two schools, should not interfere with decisions regarding the governance of the Muslim schools (Sakaranaho, 2018). In addition, the WSE 2005 report stated other significant governance challenges, including conflicts within the board of management and non-compliance with administrative policies. Particularly, the evaluation report mandated a reduction in time allocated to religious education and prayer to meet legal

requirements for Irish education (Sakaranaho, 2018). There was an emphasis in the report that such decisions are not infringing the parental right of school choice regarding their children's education, which is granted by the constitution of Ireland ensuring that parents could always decide not to enrol their children in this particular school (Sakaranaho, 2018). This emphasises the fact that constitutional parental right to decide on their children's education in accordance with their faith are restricted by state policies implemented from the top down (Mawhinney, 2015; Sakaranaho, 2015).

In attempting to capture the voices of the Arabic-speaking immigrant parents and primary school teachers, selecting schools with a significant population of Arabic-speaking English Language Learner (ELL) pupils was necessary for the purpose of the study. Thus, this research project included four Irish primary schools (two Catholic and two Islamic) in the greater Dublin area, all of which had a considerable proportion of Arabic-speaking ELL pupils. These Catholic primary schools were chosen because they have a large number of Muslim pupils (Hogan, 2011, Sai, 2018b; Sakaranaho, 2018). Islamic schools, on the other hand, were chosen because the majority of their pupil populations are Arabic-speaking Muslim pupils, concurrently, research suggests that the voice of teachers and parents, in both Irish Islamic schools are still under-researched area (Sai, 2018a). Moreover, little research was conducted in the context of Islamic schools in western countries regarding parental engagement (Gurr, 2010).

1.9 Significance of the Study

Through the investigation of ELL parental engagement patterns and understanding the challenges that both Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs and teachers face will, primarily, help to develop a deeper understanding of how both groups perceive their roles and how they work together to support the learning process of ELLs in the context of Irish primary schools. Thus, Irish schools with high ELL populations, in turn, will understand the phenomenon and have access to suggestions on how to better engage parents of ELLs.

Additionally, this understanding will enable Irish policymakers to respond to cultural and linguistic challenges faced by diverse immigrant families coming from outside Ireland regarding their children's education. Therefore, this research will explore culturally inclusive methods to empower parents of ELLs in supporting their children's education and to help establish effective partnerships between schools and families. At the same time, this research will also identify the challenges teachers face when working with diverse student

populations and their families.

This focus is necessary in light of reported gaps in cultural and systematic intercultural pedagogical training for in-service teachers (Keane, Heinz, & Lynch, 2020; Ní Dhuinn & Keane, 2021; Hannigan et al., 2024), alongside persistent deficiencies in teacher confidence and inclusive practice, despite advancements in initial teacher education programmes (Adebayo & Heinz, 2023; Hannigan et al., 2024). Accordingly, by exploring the perspectives and attitudes among Arabic-speaking parents and teachers in Irish primary schools, more decisions can be made regarding the training of educators for the purpose of boosting true partnerships with parents and families whose backgrounds are different from their own (Baquedano-López, Alexander & Hernandez, 2013). Simultaneously, Irish primary teachers, in the future, will develop better understandings of immigrant parent's perspectives and experiences around family engagement so that they can better deal with parents of ELLs from diverse backgrounds and provide them with opportunities that support student learning and achieve better educational outcomes for children from migrant families.

Besides, through understanding of the phenomenon of ELL parental engagement will, assist Irish primary schools to better understand strategies and methods to enable parents of ELLs and teachers to work in partnership in the school setting. Through strengthening linguistically and culturally diverse family's engagement in the education of their children will contribute to the reduction of educational inequality that might face immigrant students and encourage social/educational inclusion of those students and their families in the host schools (Hajisoteriou & Neophytou, 2020). Finally, one of the main goals of this research is to inform the fostering of reciprocal partnerships between educators, schools, and ELL parents to increase ELL family school engagement through involving parents of ELLs in their children's educational careers.

1.10 The Researcher

In qualitative research, it is valuable for researchers to identify their positions (West et al., 2013). This study's researcher is an Arabic-speaking Muslim woman, a first-generation immigrant from Libya, a mother of children within the Irish primary school system, and an academic with expertise in applied linguistics studies. Having experienced parental engagement both as a child in Libya and as a parent in Ireland, she brings direct insight into the phenomenon under study. These positionalities form a critical lens shaping the research perspective and methodology. The researcher's upbringing in Libya involved an education

system characterized by rigid discipline, teacher-centered authority, and rote memorization. This background instilled expectations contrasting sharply with Ireland's emphasis on child-centered learning. This dissonance became evident when navigating her own children's schooling in Ireland. Initial uncertainty about her expected role in her children's schooling and unfamiliarity with the Irish education system directly motivated this study. Furthermore, observing similar challenges faced by other Arabic-speaking immigrant parents, whose perspectives on ELL parental engagement remain marginal in Western educational contexts, strengthened her resolve to investigate patterns of their engagement and the challenges they face within the Irish system.

Researchers are considered insiders when they share experiences with participants (West et al., 2013). Consequently, the researcher occupies a complex position as an insider researcher (Schneider & Laihua, 2000). Sharing language, Arabic as a first language, faith (Islam), immigration status, and the lived experience of parenting within Irish schools fostered deep rapport, cultural fluency, and facilitated communication, particularly around culturally sensitive practices and challenges, with the parent participants. However, her academic background and critical perspective on systemic barriers also position her as an outsider researcher, necessitating constant self-reflection to mitigate the risk of conflating her own experiences with the diverse realities of participants.

The researcher's belief that Arabic-speaking parents were highly motivated and eager to share their experiences significantly influenced the research design. Accordingly, incorporating parental language preference (Arabic or English) in interviews proved effective, grounded in the understanding that parents possess a deep need to express their lived experiences authentically. Therefore, the researcher's stake in this research is both personal, seeking clarity and equity for linguistically and culturally diverse families in the Irish education system; and scholarly, aiming to transform authentic lived experiences into rigorous analysis to deepen understanding of the complex interaction between culture, language, and educational equity in the Irish context.

1.11 Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 1 has presented the background to this study and outlined the current challenges that needs attention in the Irish context. A distinction between researchers' perspectives regarding the concept of parental involvement/ engagement and family-school partnership was clarified, and the purpose of this research, and the research questions outlined. An

overview of the researcher and Arabic-speaking immigrant parents in the context of Irish primary schools has also been presented. Chapter 2 outlines the history, forms and benefits of parental engagement, reviews international literature regarding theoretical underpinnings of parental engagement and outlines theoretical frameworks used for this study. Chapter 3 also presents a review of empirical international and national literature regarding immigrant ELL parental engagement in international educational contexts. Chapter 4 discusses the methodology used; it provides the rationale for using mixed-methods and details of the research design, ethical assurances, and details about data collection/ storage/ translation, and data analysis. Researcher's Positionality has also been explained in chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides quantitative and qualitative findings from the responses of primary school teachers who participated in this research. Chapter 6 provides qualitative findings in relation to parental engagement among Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs in the context of Irish primary schools. Chapter 7 interprets and discusses research findings in relation to theoretical frameworks used in this research study and in relation to current research. Finally, Chapter 8 marks the conclusion of the thesis and presents recommendations in relation to implications for future use and future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Parental engagement in the context of children's schooling and education have long attracted the attention of researchers and educators with their potential to shed light on what drives effective parental engagement. Therefore, in this chapter, parental engagement literature is reviewed including historical background of parental engagement in the international context and in Ireland. Then the distinction of different forms of engagement and their importance of children's development will be explained. Following this, evidence on different benefits of engagement on children's academic and social achievement, and its benefits for families, schools and teachers is reviewed. Then, theories in relation to family school engagement will be explored with a focus on Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence model (Epstein, 1987, 1990, 1992) and conceptual models of parental engagement and their relevance to this research will be outlined. The chapter concludes with a summary that provides a brief overview of the key points covered in the chapter.

2.2 A Brief History of Research into Parental Engagement

The interest in parental engagement as a key role in the learning process of children's academic careers, (as cited in Seginer, 2006), was primarily prompted by three factors. First, the findings of Coleman's large-scale study entitled Equality of Educational Opportunity about the aspects that influence students' academic achievement. The study sampled 567,148 students in first, third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth grades; 3,941 principals; and 44,193 teachers in approximately 4,000 schools in the USA. The study indicated that non-school factors such as family background and environment characteristics have a stronger impact on children's educational achievement than school characteristics, provoking debate and prompting a new wave of research on the role of families (Coleman et al., 1966). Coleman and his colleagues, in their report of the study, also stated that "the sources of inequality of educational opportunity appear to lie first in the home itself and the cultural influences immediately surrounding the home" (Coleman et al., 1966, 73–74). The second factor of increasing the interest in parental engagement was after a comparative study of Japan-US cross-cultural research of preschool and school age children that reported low achievement of children from families with lower socio-economic status compared to their native counterparts was due to differences in their family backgrounds (Hess & Holloway, 1984). The third factor

which led to increasing interest on parental engagement was Bronfenbrenner's influential work on "bioecological theory" (1976) and the development of his ecological framework which focused on the importance of the dynamic relationship between individuals and the broader contexts in which they are situated (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1989). Bronfenbrenner highlighted in the developmental ecological framework the benefits of social, community, and political contexts in human development, theorising that to understand human development, researchers must consider the entire ecological system in which child growth occurs ranging from the immediate surroundings (family) to broad societal structures (culture). Children's development, according to the bioecological theory, is affected by child factors such as their gender, age and health, and by their surrounding world, which comprises mainly the family and school. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, furthermore, viewed the child's environment as a nested arrangement of concentric structures arrayed into five different systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1976, 1979).

The microsystem emphasizes the significance of direct interactions among individuals within their immediate, everyday environments. These environments include settings such as family, school, the workplace, neighbourhoods, friendship groups, and religious or community groups. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined it, "a microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (p. 22). The exosystem includes the settings and institutions such as parents' workplaces, local school board, extended family members, and the media. The mesosystem includes the interrelations among two or more settings such as school, home, and neighbourhood (i.e., microsystem and exosystem) in which the child is an active participant. While the macrosystem refers to the unity of "in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26). In the macrosystem, the attitudes and ideologies of the cultures are represented. Finally, the chronosystem refers to change or consistency over time in the life of a person, such as the transformations in the familial demographic characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Afterwards, other researchers such as Joyce L. Epstein of the National Network of Partnership Schools at John Hopkins University was also involved in research and theory development in the area of parental engagement for nearly 40 years and greatly influenced by the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1976) as it emphasizes the cooperation of schools and families and

encourages communication and collaboration between the two institutions (See Section 2.7 for Epstein's theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence). Since the 1980s, Epstein carried out many investigations into how schools and teachers involved parents, how students reacted to this engagement, and how their achievement was affected by this family-school engagement (Epstein, 1985, 1986, 1987). Accordingly, parental engagement, which plays a crucial role in children's educational success, has been widely acknowledged (See Section 2.7 for Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence and Section 2.8.1 for Epstein's Six Types of Engagement Model). Over the past three decades, the concept of parental engagement has become a major component of school reform efforts and federal education policies in the U.S., such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) and Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (McGuinn, 2016). These policies mandated parental engagement as a school accountability metric. Additionally, educational policies have played a key role in stimulating empirical research to identify the benefits of parental engagement and determine which forms of engagement yield measurable improvements in children's academic success (see Section 2.5 for a discussion of empirical research on benefits of parental engagement).

2.3 Parental Engagement in the Context of Irish Education

Mac Giolla Phádraig (2010) showed that growing awareness of the important role that parents play in their children's education has emerged in the context of Irish primary education since 1970. The formal recognition of parental engagement by the state came around fifty years ago with the introduction of parents on boards of management in primary schools in 1975 (Mac Giolla Phádraig, 2010). However, the formation of the National Parents' Council–Primary (NPC–P) in 1985 was one of the first visible results of raising awareness of parental engagement in education. Since then, involving parents in their children's education has begun to gradually develop as stated in the DES Circular 7/88: 'Discipline in National Schools' which recommended that schools should consult guardians about the development of a code of behaviour, besides involving them regarding school policy on behaviour (Mac Giolla Phádraig, 2010).

Later, in official policy terms, the positioning of parents as partners came into effect in 1991 when the Department of Education (1991) published a circular entitled "Parents as Partners in Education" (Department of Education and Skills, 1991). The circular stated that "partnership for parents in education is a policy aim of the government" and that the

promotion of parental engagement in the education of their children was an essential strategy of educational policy and practice (Department of Education and Skills, 1991). The Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) also indicated that parental engagement in schools is required for good policy and practice. “Positive parental interest is crucial to a child’s educational attainment. It must, therefore, be an essential strategy of educational policy and practice to promote parental involvement in the education of their children” (Haughey, 1991, p. 35). Therefore, it was issued to primary school principals, and they were advised to develop partnerships with pupils’ parents by providing them with all information related to their children's education as well as establishing an active parents' association in each school. Further parental engagement provisions require that schools share information with parents on access to students’ progress records, information and consultation regarding school plans and the objectives of the school, (Byrne, 2019). More importantly, Mac Giolla Phádraig’s (2010) claims that Irish schools often involve parents in volunteering at school through helping with fundraising, going on trips, and taking on roles in Boards of Management and in Parents’ Associations. However, prior to this, in 1999, a report from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), pointed out that Irish primary schools were not effectively involving parents and were minimising their role in the school context (NCCA, 1999).

More recent policy, as cited in (Byrne, 2019), places emphasis on school principals to encourage the engagement of parents and greater onus on the education system to be accountable to student, their parents and the state for the education provided. Irish schools currently have an obligation to report to pupils' parents at least once a year through Parent Teacher Meetings (PTMs) and to produce academic report cards to inform parents of their children’s development and achievement, subject choices, and progress in all aspects of academic work (Byrne, 2019). A more recent development in how school partner with parents through the use of “Parent- Student Charter”, which outline how parents, school staff and students will share responsibility for improved educational success (Department of Education and Skills,2016a). Every school is also currently required to consult with parents, students and publish a Charter, placing increasing responsibility on school to consult with many aspects of schooling (Byrne, 2019)

Despite the gains that parents have made as a partner in education, in recent years, there is an accountability discourse regarding parental engagement in education policy documents (Byrne, 2019). A recent Action Plan for Education (2016-2019) published by the

Department of Education and Skills (2016b) places considerable emphasis on parents and their roles in improving the learning experience and their role has become more central to curriculum development in Ireland (Byrne, 2019). More literature in ELL parental engagement in the Irish context will be outlined in the third chapter (See Chapter 3, Section, 3.12) .

2.4 Forms of Parental Engagement

Apart from the wide variation in the concept of parental engagement, parental involvement and family-school partnership as outlined in chapter one, researchers criticized dealing with the term as a homogeneous or a single construct recommending considering the multidimensional measurement of parental engagement through defining the distinct ways that parents can become involved in their child's education (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005). Accordingly, to effectively measure parental engagement and avoid generalizations, it is recognized as a multi-faceted construct with multidimensional context-based definitions. Parental engagement is also characterised by the location in which it occurs including family activities that not only takes place at schools, but also other activities that families do at home and in the community, and transactional activities between family, school and community (Downer & Myers, 2010). Therefore, researchers provided various forms of engagement such as Epstein (1987) who identified four types of parental engagement starting with "basic obligation", "school and home communication", "parental involvement at school", and "parental involvement at home" (cited in Fan & Chen, 2001). Others identified three types of parental engagement focusing on home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing referring to "direct communication between a parent and teacher" (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Later, Hill and Tyson (2009) proposed three categories framework classifying the construct into: "home-based involvement", "school-based involvement", and "academic socialization" (Hill & Tyson 2009). Academic socialization in this framework refers to parents-child communication about the importance of education involving parents' educational beliefs, expectations and behaviours to manage the child's development of attitudes and motives that, largely, impact the educational and career aspirations of the child (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Apparently, when parents hold high expectations and standards of success for their children, they communicate the usefulness of education with their children and thus emphasize high academic aspirations (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Thus, beyond school-and home-based involvement, parental engagement also takes place in the context of academic socialisation which

encompasses the variety of parental beliefs and behaviours that influence children's school-related development including parental expectations, aspirations and positive attitudes towards education (Taylor, Clayton & Rowley, 2004).

2.4.1 Parental Home-Based Engagement

It is defined as parents' assistance and support of all kinds of school-related learning including motivational, social and cognitive activities that takes place outside the school, but not exclusively, at home (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Barger and colleagues (2019) stated that home-based engagement, specifically, includes different dimensions and can take different forms including, first, "discussion and encouragement" which consists of talking with children about academic and school matters and encouraging children in their academic endeavours (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Second, "cognitive-intellectual involvement" which includes the provision of cognitively stimulating activities or environments such as reading with children or taking them to the library (Grolnick et al., 2000). Third, "involvement in homework" which means helping children complete homework and creating a quiet place for children to do homework (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). Other practices may include parental emotional and spiritual support given at home and meeting a child's daily physical needs (Armor, 2006). Such parental engagement at home provides guidance for children as they complete achievement-related activities (Grolnick & Rafteryaw-Helmer, 2015).

2.4.2 Parental School-Based Engagement

This form of engagement represents parental practices outside the home that require making authentic contact with school personnel (Pomerantz et al., 2007). It is kind of parenting support comprising of three types of practices, that is parent's presence at school functions, formal and informal communicating with the school, and involvement in school governance as well as administrative processes (Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Informal contact sometimes occurs spontaneously with school staff, while formal contact occurs when parents visit the school and participate in organised school activities or volunteering in afterschool and extracurricular activities. Such communication, either formal or informal, increases parental familiarity with the school system, school curriculum, and promotes social capital, and social networking amongst parents, fosters community spirit and enhances the effectiveness of home-based learning (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wilder, 2014). A higher level of engagement consists of involvement in school decision-making

committees such as Parent–Teacher Association (PTA) or school board (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

2.4.3 Influence of Different Forms of Engagement on Students' Academic Achievement

In the first place, the importance of parental engagement in educational process stems from the fact that parents are important stakeholders for the education of their children (Al-Hail et al., 2021). The relationship between parental engagement and children's academic achievement might be explained as a parental contact with their children with regard to learning, schooling/education where parents serve as supporters. In turn, children's learning engagement and motivation might be raised, and they might view doing well in school as valuable (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Al-Hail et al., 2021).

In general, literature suggests that all forms of parental engagement (home-based, school-based engagement, family-school communication and academic socializing/ parental expectations) are positively linked to students' educational success in school (Garbacz et al., 2017; Jeynes, 2012). However, forms of engagement at home are very different in nature compared to forms of engagement at school (Boonk et al., 2018). In addition, each form of engagement relates differently to children's academic development and the effects of each form of parental engagement have yielded conflicting results according to other factors such as the age of the child (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Therefore, researchers suggest that when considering the connection between parental engagement and students' academic achievement, the distinction between home-based and school-based forms of engagement is crucial (Boonk et al., 2018).

Several researchers have indicated that home-based engagement has stronger associations with students' academic outcomes than school-based engagement (Xia et al., 2020; Jeynes, 2005; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). However, others have found that school-based engagement including visiting the school, volunteering at school, and attending school events is more positively related to achievement (Park et al., 2017) claiming that certain kinds of engagement at home, such as helping with homework, can even negatively influence their academic performance (Hill et al., 2004; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Shumow & Miller, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009). The negative relation may be due to parental interference with pupils' autonomy, to excessive parental pressure, or to

differences between parents and schools in how they present the material or to the possibility that some parents may be ineffective tutors of the homework material (Hill & Tyson, 2009). For example, working-class parents were found to have difficulties pronouncing academic words in books or conduct simple calculations when helping primary school children with homework (Lareau ,1996). However, such findings have been criticised as several factors related to home-based parental engagement on children's success are likely to have been underestimated because measuring of this relationship have not been sensitive to culturally contextualized behaviours and values of increasingly diverse families have in the multilingual contexts (Hall, Yip, & Zárate, 2016).

A third group of researchers found that parental engagement that creates an understanding about the purposes, goals, and meaning of academic performance; communicates expectations about involvement; and provides strategies that students can effectively use (i.e., academic socialization) greatly influence children's school-related development (Taylor, Clayton & Rowley, 2004). Academic socialization may have the strongest relation to academic achievement compared with other two forms of parental engagement namely, home-based engagement and school-based engagement (Singh et al., 1995; Jeynes, 2011). In this regard, Hill and Tyson (2009) conducted a meta-analysis (across 50 studies) on research on parental engagement to determine whether and which types of parental engagement are related to achievement. Findings revealed that parental engagement was positively associated with achievement, with the exception of parental help with homework (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Findings also indicated that engagement that reflected academic socialization had the strongest positive association with achievement than home-based and school-based engagement as it supports the development of children's autonomy and the internalised valuation of education (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Parents' educational expectations and aspirations, for example, are associated with increases in reading, math and grades for children regardless of their socio-economic status or ethnicity (Boonk et al., 2018).

Due to inconsistencies in the findings regarding the relationship between different forms of parental engagement and academic achievement, several meta-analyses have been conducted summarizing the findings on the effectiveness of different forms of engagement to determine which type have the strongest relation with student engagement and achievement. In this regard, Wilder (2014) synthesised nine meta-analyses published between 2001 and 2012 that examined the impact of various forms of parental engagement on student academic achievement. The researcher, specifically, investigated different

definitions of parental engagement that were grouped into several broad dimensions including parent–child communication, home parental supervision, educational aspirations for children, and school contact and participation (Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2012), Fan and Chen (2001), Erion (2006), Senechal and Young (2008), Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008), and Hill and Tyson (2009). Wilder (2014) has found a positive relationship between parental engagement and student academic achievement regardless of students age, ethnic background and the conceptual definition parental involvement (home-based, school-based engagement) or the measure of achievement. Wilder also added that the association was strongest if engagement was defined as student parental expectations for academic achievement of their children. The results further showed that the impact of parental engagement on academic achievement was weakest if parental involvement was defined as homework help; in other words, assisting children with their homework was negatively correlated with student achievement in Wilders' study too. Barger and his colleagues (2019) conducted a quantitative synthesis of (448) studies, which included (480,830 families) published between 1964 and 2016. They examined the link between parents' engagement (at school and at home contexts) in their children's academic, social and emotional adjustment whose ages range from preschool to secondary school.

Findings confirm that parental engagement is positively associated with children's academic, social, and emotional adjustment, demonstrating stability over time. However, significant variability exists based on the form of engagement. For example, school-based engagement such as volunteering, participating in school activities and taking part in decision making show consistent, though small, positive links to academic adjustment. Home-based engagement such as daily academic discussion/encouragement and cognitive-intellectual activities also yield positive associations of similar significance, yet Academic discussion seemed more strongly linked to engagement. However, homework assistance negatively associating with academic achievement while positively connecting with engagement. Academic discussion, encouragement and cognitive activities remain similarly effective from elementary through secondary school, contrasting with the reduced efficiency of school-based engagement, particularly in the secondary school. Particularly, the negative association between homework help and academic achievement continues consistently from preschool to secondary school.

2.4.4 Relationships Between Different Forms of Engagement

Apart from differentiating various forms of engagement in which parents can be engaged in their children’s education, there is also evidence suggesting that all forms of engagement aim to support students and positively influence their academic achievement (Epstein,1990; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Some studies reported a positive relationship between home-based and school-based forms of engagement, that is, parents who are more involved in school activities are also more effective at home-based engagement (Bonanati et al., 2021; Dettmers et al., 2019). Apparently, school-based engagement is considered here as additional support for parental home-based engagement as parents may receive important guidance and information through contacts with teachers (Epstein,1990; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). For example, when parents attend parent–teacher meetings and have various conversations with teachers, they increase their support for their children at home who, in turn, appreciate their parents’ support and thus positively impacts their motivation in learning (DePlanty et al., 2007). Recent research by Bonanati and Rubach (2022), also demonstrated that parental home-based engagement increased due to greater parental school-based engagement. The authors, for example, reported that parents' home literacy environment was positively influenced by parents' participation in school-based family literacy interventions (Bonanati & Rubach, 2022). Furthermore, parents' perception of the usefulness of contact with teachers is positively associated with parental home-based engagement (Dettmers et al., 2019; Yotyodying & Wild, 2019).

2.5 Benefits of Parental Engagement

2.5.1 Benefits for Children

Parental engagement has many benefits, as mentioned above, that have long been recognised. Several meta-analyses statistically reported significant and positive relationship between parental engagement and children's academic achievement as well as their behavioural, and social-emotional outcomes (Boonk et al., 2018; Castro et al., 2015; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Hill & Tyson, 2009). In this regard, a study by Henderson & Mapp (2002) produced a meta-analysis of 51 studies related to family engagement in schools in the USA. The authors demonstrated that the influence of parental engagement in children’s education has a greater impact on their learning than any other variables such as social class, level of parental education or parental income. They also reported that parental

engagement has been linked to numerous positive improvements in students' academic, behavioural, and social skills. In other words, research indicates that students with engaged parents tend to make better social relationships with classmates and community members, besides, they attend school regularly with greater motivation and lower dropout rates (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The researchers also added that when effects of teacher and parent efficacy were combined, higher grade point averages were shown amongst students who had both high teacher support and high parent engagement when compared to students who had effective teachers and less engaged parents (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Epstein (2001) proposed that parental engagement is a fundamental component to achieve effective learning at school for all students regardless of their ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and ethnic origins. Jeynes (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of research including 77 studies to determine the impact of parental engagement. All studies examined highlight the effects of parental engagement on academic achievement. This includes the impact on children of minority communities (I.e., African American, Asian American, and Latinx students) in the context of primary and secondary schools in the USA. Jeynes' meta-analysis indicated that parental engagement had an important and positive impact on students' academic achievement across different racial, ethnic, social class, and linguistic groups. In addition, the study revealed that effective family engagement included participation in school settings and presence at school events.

For English Language Learners (ELLs), the engagement of their parents is important for academic success, because children whose parents are more involved in their education have higher levels of academic performance than children whose parents are involved to a lesser degree (Hill & Craft, 2003). Jung and Zhang (2016) used data on immigrant parents and school-age children (n=1,255) from the New Immigrant Survey to examine immigrant families from diverse backgrounds in the United States. The authors explored the relationships among parental engagement, children's own aspirations, and achievement in new immigrant families. The results of the review revealed that when children observe that their parents are participating in school events and feel that their activities, at home and at school, are being closely monitored by their parents, they achieve better academic outcomes, perform better in school and their English language ability progresses. Moreover, Jung and Zhang (2016) stated that "when immigrant children have parents who are supportive and involved in their education, they may be less likely to engage in substance use or delinquent behaviours that can detract from academic engagement" (Jung & Zhang, 2016, p.345).

A recent large-scale meta-analysis carried out by (Smith, Sheridan, Kim, Park and Beretvas, 2020) who synthesized 77 studies to determine the effect of family-school partnership interventions on children's academic and social-emotional competencies. The results revealed that family-school- partnership interventions dramatically and positively improved children's academic achievement and behaviours, social-behavioural competence, and mental health. These positive effects were also consistent for all children regardless of minority ethnic status (Smith et al., 2020). A key idea in this vein has been that parents' engagement builds children's cognitive skills (e.g., receptive language capability and phonological awareness) which subsequently enrich their achievement (Rowe, Ramani, & Pomerantz, 2016).

2.5.2 Benefits for Parents

Apart from child's academic, social and emotional benefits, parental engagement has additional benefits for families. Parents' engagement in their child's learning, primarily, builds a good relationship with their children and gives them a good idea of their children's academic abilities (Barger et al., 2019). Engaged parents in a school context can, further, become empowered through social interaction opportunities that arise via their engagement in their children's academic life (Delgado-Gaitán, 1992). Through social relations with their children's friends and their families, parents become even more confident and enthusiastic towards their children's learning and education (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011). Parents who are involved in the context of school can provide more resources to school and effectively increase teachers' enthusiasm towards teaching (Park et al., 2017). Moreover, even though parental engagement at school may not directly impact children's academic achievement, it creates supportive places for children regardless of what their parents do at home (Park et al., 2017). In addition, when parents regularly communicate with teachers and attend parent-teacher meetings and volunteering in school activities, they not only learn and exchange useful information with the school, but they also can make social networks with teachers, other school personnel and, benefit other families at the same school (Walsh, 2008). At the same time, they can have specific strategies for enhancing children's achievement (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Sheldon, 2003). Such relationships make it easier for parents to closely monitor their children's behaviours at school and gives parents access to "insider information" so whenever their children have troubles at school, they learn about those troubles and address them sooner (Domina, 2005). Recent research also suggests that effective parent-teacher communication as well as resourcing parents with school strategies

and practices is positively associated with greater parental home-based and school-based engagement (Dettmers et al., 2019; Yotyodying & Wild, 2019).

2.5.3 Benefits for Teachers and Schools

Parental engagement has a variety of benefits for schools and teachers as well. Primarily, when schools involve parents either at school or at home, they reduce distance between the two parties and increase parents' feelings of ownership, therefore, they become advocates for the school, thus, positively improves school reputation (McConchie, 2004). Additionally, this improves the school climate as well as teachers' confidence and they may feel more rewarded, accepted and will have reduced job stress and greater job satisfactions (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, Garcia, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002). Moreover, teachers who work on involving parents appear to be willing to adopt a pupil-oriented teaching style and improve their teaching skills (Desimone et al., 2000; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002). Additionally, they report relatively high levels of teaching efficacy and support from parents and tend to be perceived by parents as better teachers (Epstein, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). Parents and teachers are perceived as important allies who are both working together for the benefit of the students and through strong parent–teacher partnerships, teachers become able of forming a better understanding of children's multiple needs (Molland, 2004). Therefore, when educators and school leaders work together with families to support learning, children may become motivated to succeed not just in education but throughout life. A recent meta-analytic study conducted by (Smith et al., 2022) on the impact of family–school engagement on parent–teacher relationships reviewed a total of 23 group-design studies, this study coded based on parent–teacher relationship characteristics (i.e., joining, parent–teacher communication), relational pre-requisites, child characteristics (i.e., race/ethnicity, age, externalizing behaviours), and community characteristics (i.e., community type). They found that strong family–school engagement interventions significantly and positively impacted parent–teacher relationships regardless of the child's age or the grade level. This was true of both parent–teacher relationships, they also added that by developing a strong, communicative relationship with families, everyone involved (parents, teachers, and students) could benefit (Smith et al., 2022).

2.6 Family-School Engagement Theories

Theory defines the phenomenon under study as it helps focus attention on specific events or activities relevant for the research and it gives researchers a framework for making sense of their observations by providing an overarching structure to their studies (Maxwell, 2012). To understand the phenomenon of parental engagement, various theories and conceptual frameworks have been outlined by researchers to explain the phenomenon in the literature over the last decades. It has become clear, as research suggested, that becoming partners with families in education does not occur automatically (Grant & Ray, 2010). In addition to Bronfenbrenner's influential work on "bioecological theory" which focused on the importance of the dynamic relationship between individuals and the broader contexts in which they are situated (1976, 1979, 1986, 1989), as outlined above (See Section, 2.2). Vygotsky (1978) developed "Sociocultural" theory regarding child's cultural/social development that is considered as one of the earliest theories along with Bronfenbrenner's "bioecological theory". Vygotsky, in the Sociocultural theory, highlighted the relationship between people and the environment where they live indicating that both social and cultural factors are critical in the development and learning of children (Vygotsky, 1978). The author also indicated that the family is the first child's teacher and the interaction between children and family members in the community is a key factor for their learning and development as they gain knowledge and learn about the world through this interaction. Thus, this theory relates to Bronfenbrenner's (1976, 1979, 1986, 1989) "bioecological theory" in the way suggesting that individuals' development is not an isolated entity, but rather confined to an overarching sociocultural system. Other theories that have been developed over the years to, further, explain the theoretical underpinnings of parental engagement from different perspectives such as "overlapping spheres of influence" (Epstein 1987, 1990, 1992). Understanding Epstein's "overlapping spheres of influence" theory is crucial for the present research because it forms the basis for Epstein's six types of engagement model.

2.7 The Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Based on years of research, Joyce Epstein (1987, 1990, 1992) developed the theory of overlapping spheres of influence combining psychological, educational, and sociological perspectives on social institutions to describe and explain the relations among parents, schools, and local environments (Sanders & Epstein, 2013). Epstein's concept of family school partnership involves support from multiple providers, the family, the school, and the

community. The theory was, originally, inspired by the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) as it emphasizes the cooperation of schools and families and encourages communication and collaboration between the two institutions (Epstein, 1987, 1990, 1992). Epstein's theory outlines three main spheres (contexts) for parents' participation to support children to develop and learn, namely, the home, the school, and the community. Specifically, it asserts that children learn and grow at each context, and they benefit when parents, teachers, and others in the community collaborate and share interest and responsibility for children's education in ways that encourage their learning and development (Epstein, 1987, 1990, 1992). Epstein (1987, 1990, 1992) highlights that child, before starting school, is already a part of families and communities. When children enter school, the school becomes a third sphere of influence. Schools then should make an effort to bring these spheres of influence closer together to achieve partnership. In this context it is presumed that those three contexts have a shared interest in students and that how they interact with each other will affect students and their successful progression in school (Epstein, 1987, 1990, 1992).

Epstein (2011) describes, in her theory developed in (1987, 1990, 1992), two models of overlapping spheres of influence, an external model and an internal model, both of which are included in the same framework acknowledging that there are three key areas where students participate in learning: at home, in school and in the community. Both models locate the child at the centre of overlap. The external model of overlapping spheres of influence recognises that these three major contexts (the family, the school, and the community) in which children learn and grow may be drawn together or pushed apart, depending on forces of each sphere such as the experiences, philosophies and practices of families, philosophies and practices of schools, and community practices.

Epstein (2011) added here that the extent to which the spheres overlap is also influenced by the factor of time (time spent at school, the age of the child, the grade level). Each sphere (context) is filled with ideas and characteristics held by the individuals who function within that sphere. In this regard, cultural traditions of families, daily family routines, parents' knowledge of formal school systems, parent's levels of education attainment, and previous interactions with school personnel are examples of philosophies and practices of families' force. Concurrently, the school climate, rules, extracurricular activities, and policy that govern a school are examples of philosophies and practices of school's force. Thus, if there are commonalities among the forces (experiences, philosophies, and practices of families;

the philosophies and practices of schools; and historical time) they push, or merge together and consequently maximum overlap in the spheres of influence occurs when partnerships are created overlap, and students receive maximum support and succeed (Epstein, 2011). However, when there are disconnecting or conflicting views or practices, the forces pull apart and the students learn less effectively. Therefore, the three spheres must be forged together to best meet the needs of the child as a learner and achieve a successful partnership. Conversely, when there are differing views, different cultures, or practices among the forces, there will be minimal or no overlap of the spheres, thus, they are pulled apart or separate (Epstein, 2011). Time, according to Epstein, plays a crucial role in the overlap too, as overlapping of spheres may occur more during different periods of a student's development based on the child's age, individual needs, and grade level. The younger the student, the more powerful the family sphere; the older the student, the more likely the family leave the school to work separately. (Epstein, 1987, 1992, 1995, 2009, 2011). (See figure 1)

Theoretical Model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence External Structures

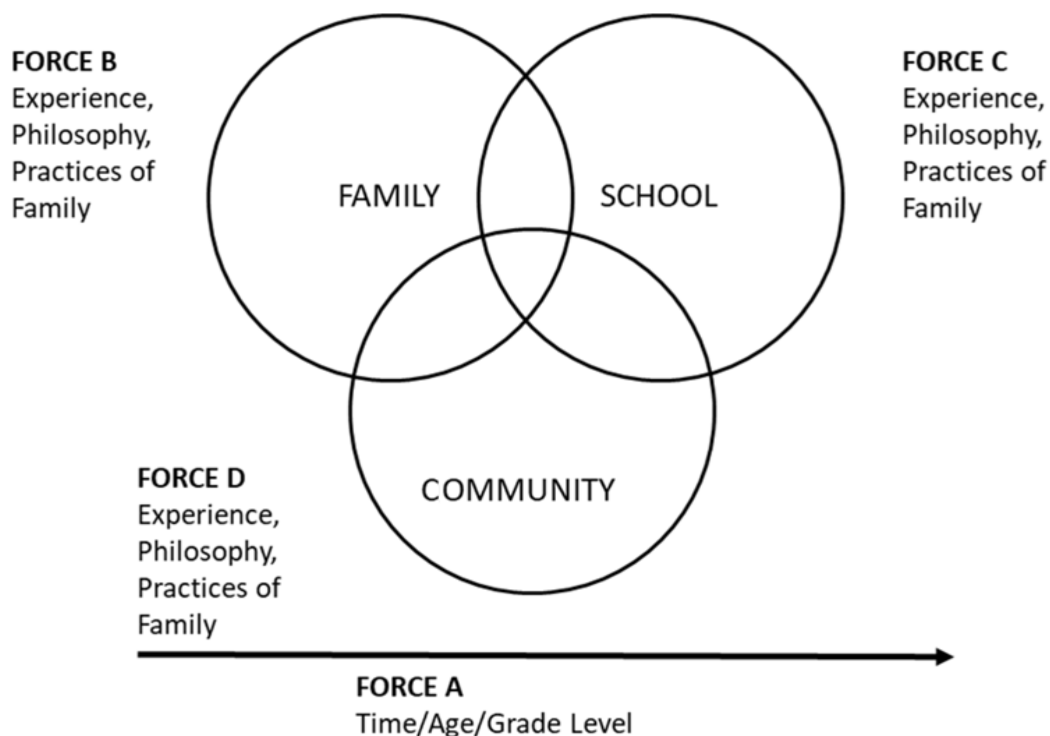


Figure 1 Overlapping spheres of influence (external model). Source Epstein (2011, p. 32).

The internal model of the interaction of the three spheres of influence also recognizes the student is the central actor in learning and specifies the complex relationships and interactions of parents, teachers, and community partners. It specifically, shows how complex and essential interpersonal relations and patterns of influence occur between individuals at home, at school, and in the community (Epstein, 2011). The internal model represents how the inter- and intra-organisational interactions occur and who is involved in these interactions within the central area of the overlapping spheres. It suggests two types of interpersonal relationships that are formed in each of the spheres (between parents and children, and between parents and teachers). Parents and children's interpersonal relationships are commonly formed within the same (family) sphere, including non-school-related matters of interaction (Epstein, 2011).

At the same time, social relationships may occur across the spheres of home and school (between parents and teachers). This interaction is mostly at an institutional level (school), for example, when all families are invited to attend an activity at school or when families receive the same communications from the school or it might occur at an individual level, for example, the teacher may communicate with a parent through a phone call or in a parent-teacher meeting to discuss matters regarding an individual student (Epstein, 2011). Likewise, interactions between teachers, parents and community groups, agencies, and services can also be represented and studied within the internal model (Epstein, 1987, 1992, 1995, 2009, 2011) (See Figure 2).

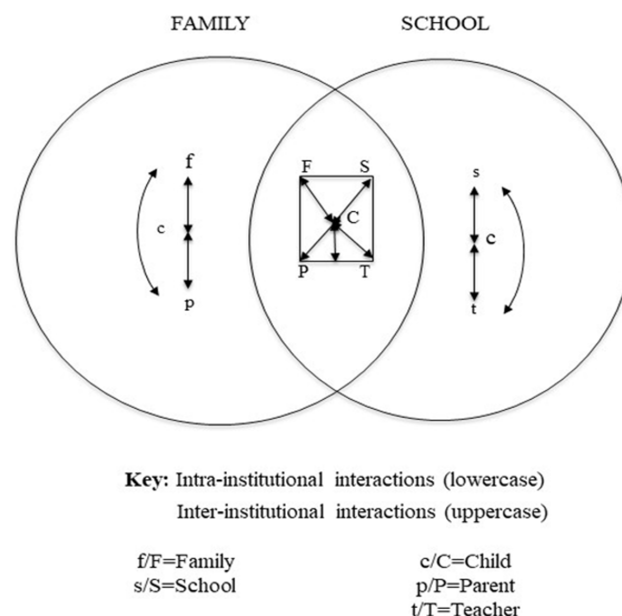


Figure 2 Overlapping spheres of influence (internal model). Source, Epstein (2011, p. 32).

Accordingly, through such partnership, Epstein reported that teachers and administrators can create more "family-like" schools and "recognizes each child's individuality and makes him/her feel special and included. Family-like schools aim to advocate for their students, students are meant to feel as though they belong to a "school family," and the uniqueness of individuals is rewarded (Epstein, 2011, p. 36). Such schools welcome all families and not just those that are "easy to reach" (Epstein 1995, p.702). It is the same in relation to parents who, through partnership, can create "school-like" families through reinforcing the importance of schoolwork and educational activities in the home (Epstein, 2011). Such school-like families recognise that each child is a learner and encourage building children's academic skills through providing them with tasks similar to those in school, and children are encouraged to be active learners where they are rewarded for success (Epstein 1992, p. 502). Likewise, "communities-minded" families and schools help bridge each other's needs, while communities provide supplemental support for "school-like" opportunities to both families and schools. (Epstein et al., 2009, p. 11). Communities may also create "family-like" environment through providing useful community programmes and services, organise and invite families for community events to enable them to better support their children (Epstein et al., 2009).

2.8 Family-School Engagement Models

A conceptual framework "explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be investigated, the key factors, concepts, or variables and the presumed relationships among them" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 18). With regard to family school engagement, conceptual frameworks are crucial in guiding teachers, parents and other parties to understand their roles in building up the partnership as well as an essential component of research as they shape the quality and scope of investigations (Epstein, 1998). Through reviewing parental engagement literature, three theoretical models have been used extensively by researchers to measure and define parental engagement at school, namely, Epstein's (1995, 2009, 2011) Six types of parental engagement, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parent engagement (1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) and Hornby and Lafaele's (2011) framework of barriers to engagement. Epstein's (1995, 2009, 2011) model of the six types of engagement is used as the main theoretical framework that guides this study and is explained in detail below, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) and Hornby and Lafaele's (2011) frameworks are also reviewed and given particular attention as both supports understanding the patterns and

barriers of family school engagement. Even though those three models differ in their scope and approach, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model focusing on the motivational factors that influence parents' decisions to become involved in their children's education, Epstein model taking a more comprehensive and partnership-oriented approach, whereas Hornby and Lafaele’s (2011) model focus on the various factors that create the barriers to family school engagement. However, three of them share the goal of increasing parental engagement in education as they all encourage family school engagement and partnership and emphasize the importance of creating a welcoming school environment and recognizes the diverse roles that parents play in supporting their children’s education. The following sections outline the three theoretical models used in this research study in detail, afterwards, the rationale of using these three models to understand the phenomenon under study is also justified.

2.8.1 Six Typologies of Parental Engagement

Through Epstein's investigations into the home, school and community relationship, she expanded her theory of the overlapping spheres of influence into a framework to show, in a systematic way, what educators can do to facilitate various forms of family engagement and identify different ways that schools and families can do to increase their overlap (Epstein, 1995). Thus, Epstein, (1995, 2009, 2011) proposed a classification of six types of engagement for organising behaviours, roles, and actions performed by the sphere members of the school, family and community to increase engagement at each context and enhance student achievement. Each type of engagement, according to Epstein (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011) requires two-way communication, similarly, each kind of interactions between individuals in each sphere fall under those six types of engagement so that educators and families exchange information and ideas with each other and honour their shared responsibilities for children's education. Additionally, each type of engagement can consist of a number of different types of initiatives (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011). At the same time, there are many practices for each type of engagement that increase positive interactions among parents, educators, students, and others in the community, although each type of engagement poses clear challenges that must be addressed to reach all families (Epstein et al., 2009). These are partnership practices that schools and parents should follow, separately and jointly, with the aim of maximising learner’s academic outcomes while taking into consideration the diversity of linguistic and cultural backgrounds of parents. The model assumes that an exchange of skills, abilities and interests between parents and teachers that

is based upon mutual respect and a sharing of common goals will benefit children's learning and development (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011). These six types of engagement are defined and categorized in the follow ways:

Parenting: this typology explores the family's roles at home as they best understand the child and their own family dynamics at every age and grade. Schools, in turn, should help parents to become aware and knowledgeable about child development, and providing resources that enable them to support their children's learning, for example, through facilitating parental seminars and provide training at school to assist families to create a supportive environment to help children grow and learn at home (e.g., scheduling children's time at home, monitoring media consumption). Through positive parenting practices, children, in turn, may have improved attendance, awareness of importance of school, and develop respect for parents (Epstein et al., 2002).

Communication: this type of engagement recommends that schools should have a strategic two-way communication. Schools, through designing meaningful and effective forms of school-to- home and home-to-school information exchanges, can communicate regularly with families about students' progress by using traditional and new technologies to communicate with each other, their learning difficulties and needs as well as about school programmes. In the same way, parents who are not speakers of the dominant language of the society should be given the opportunity to communicate effectively with schools either by providing language translators or by collaborating with trained interpreters, such communication may take the form of teacher–parent meetings. Effective two-way communication will benefit children as well, they will have awareness of their own progress, understanding school policies, and improving communication skills (Epstein et al., 2002).

Volunteering: this type suggests that schools should offer a variety of volunteering opportunities suitable for parents and encourage them to be engaged with the school extracurricular activities. In particular, schools should recruit parents as volunteers in the classroom as well as in the schoolwork to help and support the children's learning. Parents, for instance, may play specific roles such as audiences for children's presentations. Children, subsequently, can improve communicating skills with adults and increase learning skills from tutoring by means of these volunteering activities (Epstein et al., 2002).

Learning at home: it is suggested, here, that schools must provide families with opportunities to enhance learning outside of school; this can be achieved through providing

parents with ideas to help their children learn efficiently at home (such as, assigning interactive homework to engage parents with their children, supporting parents who are non-native speakers of the language of education to help their children with homework). This typology is more schoolwork-specific than parenting where parents may become engaged at home by providing books or computers, talking with their children about school, assisting with homework, encouraging hard work in school, and emotionally supporting the child in her/his academic challenges. Children will benefit also by achieving higher homework completion rates and enhanced self-concept as learner and due to parents' support and guidance for learning at home, they will be seen by their children as more similar to their teachers (Epstein et al., 2002)

Decision-making: this engagement practice means that parents become partners with school personnel to take part in the development of school decisions. This partnership can be enhanced through contributing and taking action in the decision-making process by exploring leadership roles in school through school councils, committees, and joining Parent Association. Shared decision-making with school leaders has the potential to help give voice to all stakeholders and those who traditionally are not considered in the governance of schools while impacting greater outcomes in student achievement (Gordon & Louis, 2009; Leithwood & Prestine, 2002). Awareness of representation of families and understanding that student rights are protected are some of the outcomes for children (Epstein et al., 2002).

Community collaboration: this type highlights the importance of promoting collaboration with community resources to aid parenting, learning at home and at school. This kind of community collaboration can be enhanced through several activities and facility provision. This includes community agencies, such as public libraries, religious based institutions, and health care institutions, which can improve educational outcomes in schools (Epstein et al., 2009). Research has indicated that engaging with community resources helps children behave appropriately in different situations that might occur in society (Cross et al., 2018). In addition, children's skills and talents will be increased, and specific benefits linked to community programmes may also have positive outcomes for children (Epstein et al., 2002)

2.8.1.1 Contribution of Epstein's Six Types of Engagement Framework

Epstein's six types of engagement model, clearly, highlights the direct role that schools need to play in promoting parental engagement, at the same time, it intensifies the essential role that parents need to play in their children's academic life in order to increase their success

(Epstein, 2011). The model has provided the most outlined roles that families can play to support their children's education which led to make it as the most used framework for involving parents (Yamauchi et al., 2017). Additionally, the framework supported the meaning of parent engagement and identified the premise stating that parent engagement should go beyond school and home, inviting a partnership between homes, schools and communities (Wright, 2009). Epstein's model not only suggests that parental engagement should go beyond the traditional contexts (school and home) inviting a partnership between spheres of homes, schools and communities but also it suggests what exactly educators can do to create more overlap between those spheres by providing well-defined and useful guidelines to follow (Epstein & Sanders, 2000). The framework is, purposefully, a detailed as a tool to support schools manage and design effective and comprehensive programmes of partnership with parents (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). Research on the effectiveness of the Epstein's' six types of engagement model on students' achievement and development also reported a positive impact on student performance when schools use these six types of engagement framework as a partnership model (Epstein, 2016, 1995, 1986). Accordingly, Epstein's framework has become a national standard in some countries to be applied in education and a lot of primary and post primary schools around the world have been found using it to promote positive outcomes for students, families, and schools (Epstein et al., 2002; Sanders, 2008). For example, the framework is being used as a guidance for family, school partnership, in primary and post primary schools in countries such as the U.S.A and Canada, due to the usefulness of its psychological, educational, and sociological aspects of cooperation among families, schools, and communities. In this regard, in Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010) used the Epstein framework in its parent engagement policy document to be applied in all Ontario Schools (Wong, 2015).

Even though Epstein's model intends to promote equal opportunity, however, some researchers identified some limitations to Epstein's model as being a framework that works only under certain geographic, socio-economic, and cultural contexts (McLaren & Dyck, 2004). For example, the framework has been criticized for being Euro-centric that is largely based on school formed from middle-class, western cultural norms without consideration of social or cultural factors of how culturally diverse families want to be involved (Bower & Griffin, 2011, Smith et al., 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Hill & Craft, 2003).

2.8.2 Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's Parent Engagement Model.

Due to the importance of parental engagement in school led to interest in factors that promote

or hinder family school engagement. This model is a social-cognitive in nature that emphasized the role of parents in the education of their children. This model presents parents' basic decision to become involved in the child's schooling and the factors associated with their decision. It emphasized that parents must perceive the importance of education and their own ability to help their children succeed in school. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model (1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) specifically presents the psychological perspective of parents about parental engagement and it further explains why parents choose to be involved in the home-based and the school-based activities, and how their engagement makes a difference in their children's academic outcomes. The authors of this model theorised that parents become involved in their children's education due to four reasons, namely, role construction, sense of efficacy, perception of invitation to involvement, and life-context variables (See Section 2.9, for the rationale behind selecting this model in the present research). Parental role construction means primarily parents understanding of their role and their perspectives on their child-rearing and development as well as their roles at home to support their child's education. Role construction according to Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) determines what activities parents consider as necessary when interacting with their children. Such beliefs are socially constructed, are subject to change, and are mostly influenced by parental culture (Antony-Newman, 2019; Andrews, 2013; Sohn & Wang, 2006). Parents' "sense of efficacy" or parental sense of responsibility refers to their believes that they can be effective and make a difference in their children's educational careers is considered the second reason for parental decision to be involved in Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler model. This factor is, mainly, predetermined by the schooling experience of parents so that their own academic success or failure shape how able they are of helping their children succeed. Parental perception of "engagement invitations" presented either by their children at home for homework support or by their teachers to attend curricular activities in the classroom, or by the schools to attend school-based events is the third factor for parental decision to be involved in Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler model (1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Lastly, life course variables of parents or parental perceptions about their life contexts including parents' skills, knowledge, socio-economic status, time available for involvement, and family culture. (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover Dempsey et al., 2005).

In sum, these four factors are important to consider when conducting research on ELL family

school engagement because they are associated with the ways in which immigrant families become involved (Harkness & Super, 2002). Some constructs in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model are more crucial to parental engagement than others. For example, the factor role construction is particularly important for understanding how engagement is perceived by immigrant parents and the differences in engagement patterns between immigrant and native-born parents because it is highly dependent on parents' cultural ethnotheories (Harkness & Super, 2002). For example, in Mexican immigrant families, parents tend to be more engaged in the home-based strategies, many of which are rooted in the Latino culture while the school is responsible for their children's academic development (Goldsmith & Kurpius, 2018). Whereas Chinese immigrant parents tend to be more involved in some types of school-based activities (e.g., attending parent-teacher conferences and school events) than others such as volunteering in classrooms and attending PTO meetings/school council (Yamamoto & Bempechat, 2022). In addition, reasons behind parents' preferred type of engagement are variations in parents' role construction regarding whether and how they need to be involved in their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Parental role construction, for example, is a more critical factor regarding parents' decisions to be engaged than engagement invitations, that is to say, if parents do not consider the importance to be involved in their children's education, their sense of efficacy and perception of invitations will not be enough to their engagement. In other words, parents with active role construction tend to believe that schools and parents are both responsible for children's education and thus become involved in their children's schooling (Walker et al., 2005). On the other hand, parents with passive role construction tend to rely on the school for their children's education and become involved only when invited by schools (Walker et al., 2005). Simultaneously, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) indicated that parents' role construction is influenced by various parental variables which include socio-economic status, education level, and self-efficacy (For a deeper exploration of parental role construction in relation to the experiences of the participating Arabic-speaking parents, see Chapter 7, Section 7.5.2.3).

2.8.3 Hornby & Lafaele (2011) Barriers to Engagement Model

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) significantly shed light on the challenges that may hinder parents' ability to be engaged in the three spheres designated in Epstein's model (i.e., home, school, and community). Hornby and Lafaele (2011) identified some negative impacts that

are commonly explored in the functioning of both schools and families. Accordingly, they proposed a model categorizing the most and less frequent explored negative influences which may act as barriers to the development of effective parental engagement. Findings were grouped under the following headings:

(a) Individual and Family Factors

Under this category, the authors cited parents' perceptions of school invitations regarding parent engagement, parents' beliefs, parents' lifestyle, educational attainment, and gender. These factors may, according to authors, act as barriers to effective parental engagement. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) also indicated that differences in class and ethnicity may play a role in determining the degree to which parents are involved with schools. Likewise, in the context of multicultural and multiethnic contexts, it is the dominant group that defines the boundaries of social inclusion for subordinate groups such as immigrants (van Dijk, 2005). Accordingly, racism entails the domination of one group over another based-on race and ethnicity and is presented by discriminatory practices and motivated by stereotypical, prejudiced attitudes (van Dijk, 2005). In this context, Islamophobia is a multifaceted form of discrimination surrounding hostility, exclusion, or social stigma directed against Islam as a religion and Muslims as individuals or communities (Chaudry, 2021). At the same time, Islamophobia, greatly influenced by media, fuels hate speech, segregation and verbal and physical violence against Muslims in the West (Farooqui & Kaushik, 2020). Muslim women are the most affected, as their dress and veiling exposes their religious identity, which singles them out and isolates them, making them even greater victims of physical and verbal violence, both because of their religion and their gender, a phenomenon known as gendered Islamophobia (Khokhar, 2022).

In the school context, research have shown that Muslim migrant students and their families are victims of various discriminatory practices in their schools, which cause them to face some barriers to inclusion, both because of their migrant status as well as their religious identity (Chen et al., 2019). For example, Prokic (2024) qualitatively investigated the most common perceptions towards immigrants in intercultural school contexts held by parents (N=32) from the ethnic majority from nine public and three private primary schools in Barcelona and how these views influence their trust in public Spanish schools. Findings reveal that cultural and social distance, particularly regarding language and religion, underpins racism and Islamophobia, with immigrant communities often stereotyped as unwilling to integrate, imposing backward norms, and threatening local values (Prokic,

2024). Muslim families face significant stigmatization, with Islam viewed as incompatible with secular education (Prokic, 2024). Non-European immigrants are racialized and hierarchized below European migrants. These perceptions erode trust in school governance and broader institutions, though teachers and native families remain trusted. The study highlights the need for anti-racist education, inclusive curricula, and institutional transparency to mitigate bias and foster intercultural dialogue (Prokic, 2024). Accordingly, the rejection of Muslim families has been included as a barrier to the inclusion of Muslim students because the impact of parental exclusion influences the child's educational experience and their own predisposition towards school (Torres-Zaragoza & Llorent-Bedmar, 2023).

In the Irish context, Rougier (2013) indicated that the Irish education system has been able to offer a level of structural and practical accommodation to diverse religious minorities including Muslims. For example, Muslim school girls are widely allowed to wear hijabs, and there is no public prohibition of such dress (Rougier, 2013). However, in Irish schools, Muslim students and children of colour, are exposed to many forms of racism, such as bullying and initiation (McGinnity et al. 2020). A recent cross-cultural qualitative study by Brooks, Ezzani, Sai & Sanjakdar (2023) investigated the racialization of Muslim students in Ireland, Australia and the United States, focusing on their experiences of anti-Muslim racism in the context of secondary schools. In the Irish context, Muslim students reported navigating Islamophobia in their day to day lives, including stigmatization, harassment from non-Muslim class mates and teachers (Brooks, Ezzani, Sai & Sanjakdar, 2023). Despite expressing pride in their Muslim identity, Muslim students in the Irish context faced systemic marginalization, with Catholic and Protestant schools failing to integrate Islamic perspectives into religious education, leaving Muslim students passively isolated during compulsory lessons. The study underscores the need for educational leaders to address the sociohistorical roots of anti-Muslim oppression and implement inclusive practices to counteract racialization in schools (Brooks, Ezzani, Sai & Sanjakdar, 2023).

(b) Child Factors

Factors such as children's age, learning disabilities, behavioural problems, and talents are listed under this category. Parents of talented or gifted children usually feel pleased to attend parent–teacher meetings. However, when parents consider their children as academically gifted, but this view is not shared by teachers, this may act as a barrier because parents may then lose confidence in the school, reducing their engagement with teachers. (Montgomery,

2009).

(c) Parent–Teacher Factors

This category includes factors such as, opposing goals, dissimilar attitudes, and different. languages between parents and teachers.

(d) Societal Factors

This category is focused on politics, demography, and the economy. These factors act as barriers to parental engagement at national levels. Particularly, when there is an absence of specific legislation on parental engagement at schools, there will be a reliance on voluntary participation by schools which may result in uneven practice (Hornby, 2000). Moreover, the absence of funding may work as an economic factor to prevent effective parental engagement.

When there is little, or no money assigned to develop parental engagement, limited programmes, training, and further research will not be possible (Sanders, 2005). Hornby and Lafaele (2011) also suggested that through a greater understanding of the barriers to parental engagement, policy makers will be able to develop more effective parental engagement in education. Moreover, they recommended that all influences on parent involvement be explored in future research and suggested school leaders who are seeking to increase parent involvement consider all impediments to parent engagement (See section 2.9 for the rationale behind selecting the Hornby & Lafaele (2011) model in the present research).

2.9 Theoretical Frameworks for the Present Research Study

The present research is primarily guided by Epstein's model of six types of parental engagement (1995, 2009, 2011). This model was chosen because it is an inclusive school-centred framework of parental engagement that combines the various practices of home-based, school-based engagement, home-school communication and collaboration with communities. At the same time, Epstein's model is uncomplicated and may efficiently be operationalised as it breaks the complex multifaceted construct of parental engagement down into easily recognisable categories (Patte, 2011). At the same time, through using this model for research purposes, the researcher can easily locate their questions and results in ways that inform and improve practice (Epstein, 1995, p. 704). Accordingly, the model has become widely used framework for scholars studying parental engagement and it has been identified as one of the most widely referenced frameworks for parental engagement

(Jeynes, 2007). The framework has, further, been used extensively to capture multiple dimensions of parental engagement among immigrant parents in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia (Beauregard, Petrakos, & Dupont, 2014; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Poza, Brooks & Valdés, 2014). For example, Ji and Koblinsky (2009) conducted an exploratory mixed-methods study examining Chinese immigrant parents' (n=29) engagement in their children's education in the U.S. The findings revealed that while parents provided basic parenting responsibilities related to health and safety, significant time constraints and limited English proficiency restricted deeper engagement at home. Chinese parents had minimal communication with their children about school-related matters and rarely interacted with teachers or attended school events, with only 35% participating in parent-teacher conferences and fewer than a third volunteering due to work schedules and language barriers. Epstein's (1995, 2009, 2011) framework highlighted these limitations, showing that while some parents supported homework (14%), engagement in decision-making and community collaboration was absent. Parents limited English proficiency, emerged as a key factor hindering communication, volunteering, and participation in school events constraining their ability to influence their children's academic development. While Poza, Brooks, and Valdés (2014) drawing on semi-structured interviews with 24 Latino immigrant parents in the USA indicated that Latino parents consider engagement in the their children's education as participating in home-based activities such as (reading with children at home, helping with homework) that help students, and not necessarily on the traditional model of engagement such as volunteering, attending school activities, and taking part in decision making (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011). Their research found that Latino parents want to understand how to best help their children succeed in their schools, but more importantly are focused on engagement that helps their children develop as people and not just within an academic setting. Accordingly, Latino parents emphasized non-traditional engagement through community organisations, religious institutions to develop children's character and counter negative peer influences, strategies often unrecognized by schools (Poza, Brooks, & Valdés, 2014, p. 132). Additional empirical research studies based on Epstein's Six Types of Parental Engagement framework will be discussed in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.5 for findings from Beauregard et al., 2014)

Using Epstein's model for investigating ELL parental engagement in the Irish context, thus, provided the foundational understanding of the structure of parental engagement and facilitated focusing the attention on specific activities relevant for the present research,

besides, it helped in framing the structure for data collection and data analysis in this study. In addition, since there have been fewer research studies on ELL parental engagement in Irish schools (O'Toole et al., 2019), perceptions of Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs and Irish teachers in this study may reveal whether one type of Epstein's six types of engagement is more important than another for each of the group participants (See Chapter 7, Section 7.5.2.1 for the discussion of the research findings in light of Epstein's six types of engagement model). Alongside exploring parental engagement patterns among Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs and primary school teachers and the way both groups engage each other in the context of Irish primary schools, the present research also investigates the perspectives of Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs regarding the concept of parental engagement and how they define their roles in the learning process of their children in the context of Irish education. Thus, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of Parent engagement (1995, 1997, 2005), further, facilitated understanding those perspectives (See Chapter 7, Section 7.5.2.3 for the discussion of research findings in light of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model). Additionally, an aim of this research was to identify barriers to ELL parental engagement that face Arabic-speaking parents and Irish primary school teachers; thus, Hornby & Lafaele (2011) model critically outlined the most prominent challenges that hinder parental engagement at home, at school and in the community, therefore, the model provided a greater understanding of the barriers to parental engagement and helped for this exploration (See Chapter 7, Section 7.5.2.2 for findings discussion in light of Hornby & Lafaele model). Taken together, understanding the three models of parental engagement reviewed in this chapter (Epstein's Six Types of engagement (1995, 2009, 2011), Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) and Hornby & Lafaele, (2011) aided to frame the approach taken in the current study (See Figure 3 for theoretical frameworks used in this research).

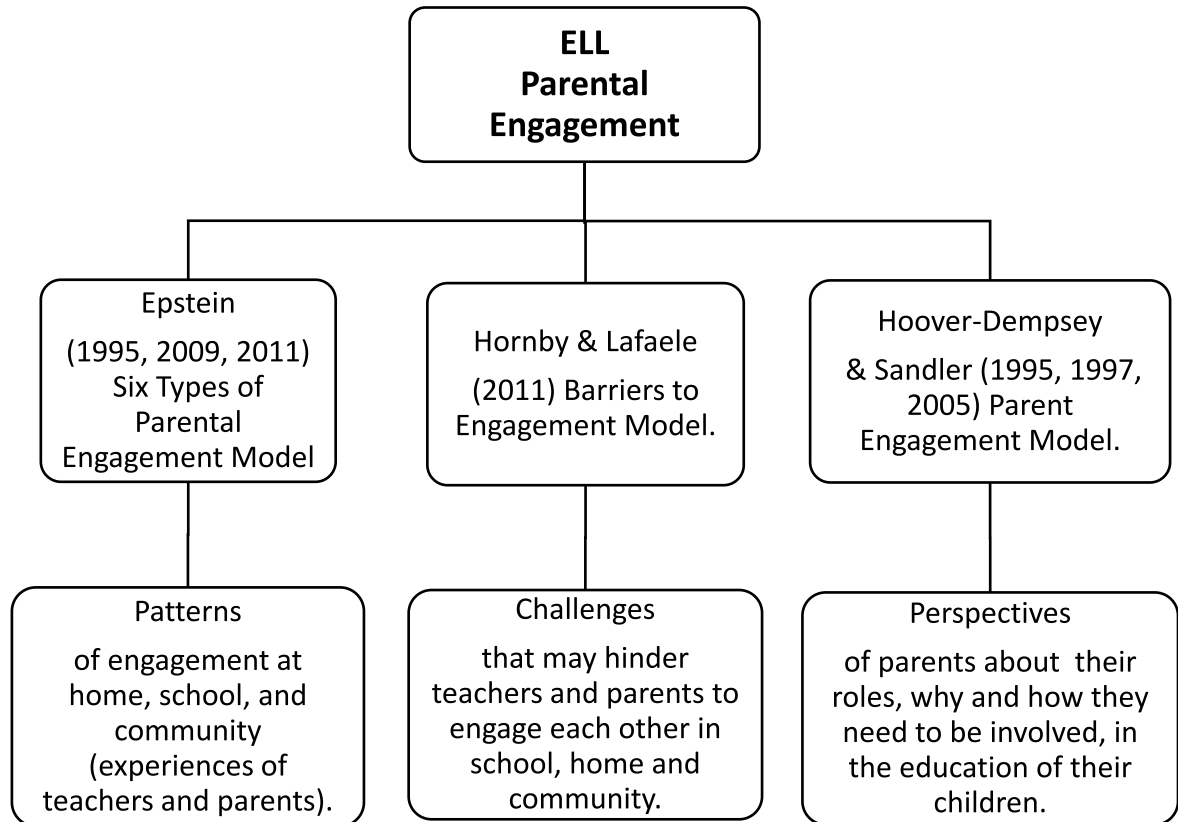


Figure 3 Theoretical Frameworks for the Present Research

2.10 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has presented a review of the literature on parental engagement, outlining the history of awareness of parental engagement as an important component of the learning process of children at schools, both in the international context and in Ireland. The benefits of family-school engagement for pupils, parents, and teachers have been outlined. This chapter also presented the theoretical underpinnings including theories and conceptual frameworks and the rationale behind the use of the theoretical models for the present research. For the purposes of the present research, it is also necessary to consider the literature on ELL parental engagement in culturally and linguistic diverse educational contexts internationally and in the Irish context; this forms the basis of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: ELL Parental Engagement Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Numerous qualitative and quantitative studies have been conducted in many countries of immigration that have measured and defined ELL parental engagement from different perspectives. This chapter will review empirical research that closely investigated the patterns of ELL parental engagement from different perspectives. The literature reviewed in this chapter initially includes information that documents differing patterns of parental engagement evident between immigrant parents of ELLs and the native parents. Then, perspectives of different stakeholders that may influence the degree of parental engagement among immigrant parents of ELLs as well as the challenges that hinder effective ELL parental engagement in the school context are reviewed. Here, the perspectives reviewed include those of parents from various linguistic and ethnic backgrounds as they have sought to become engaged in the education of their children. In addition, the perspectives of teachers and school administrators (including school principals) are also reviewed. The review also includes research that considered comparing both parents of ELLs and teachers' perspectives with regard to family school engagement. Finally, literature on ELL parental engagement in the context of Irish education will be reviewed.

3.2 Family-School Engagement in Multilingual Contexts

As outlined in the previous chapter, despite the mounting evidence that there is a positive connection between parental engagement and ELLs academic achievement, substantial challenges have been reported in relation to ELL parental engagement (Ramirez, 2003). Therefore, since increasing the awareness of the positive impact of parental engagement for improving pupils' academic achievement, variations of parental engagement patterns between ethnically and linguistically immigrant parents of ELLs and dominant "white" parents have been measured in many research studies indicating that immigrant parents of ELLs might be less engaged in the education of their children in comparison to the other

dominant "white" parents (Delgado-Gaitan 1990; Moles, 1993). The lack of visibility of immigrant parental engagement has been explained differently by researchers, Moles (1993), for example, explained that parents of ELLs often feel uncomfortable and fearful when visiting their children's schools because they cannot communicate effectively with the school due to lack of adequate majority language skills. Therefore, immigrant parents of ELLs were usually misjudged by educators who believed that immigrant parents generally do not care about their children's education as much as the native parents who have more representation in the education of their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Guo, 2006). The way immigrant families from different cultural backgrounds communicate with the school or involve with their children's learning was also misinterpreted by educators as being disinterested and careless about their children's education (Theodorou, 2008). However, these misconceptions have been empirically proven to be incorrect as research has confirmed that the value of children's education is very important to immigrant parents who were found to have high academic aspirations and expectations for their children (Sibley & Dearing, 2014). For example, Ramirez (2008) has examined parental values toward education indicating that immigrant parents often have even greater aspirations for their children's educational success than do U.S.-born parents, so "the myth that parents of ELLs simply do not value education seems to be without merit" (Vera et al., 2012, p. 186). As a matter of fact, many families were found to migrate from their country of origin to settle in the United States, for example, to open the door for their children for greater educational opportunities (Hill & Torres, 2010). However, immigrant parents' knowledge and values regarding the importance of their children's education is often unrecognized and marginalized by teachers and school administrators (Jones, 2003). This marginalization sometimes is explained by the mismatch between teachers' and parents' expectations of schooling and how these expectations are represented in their interactions with students (Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell & Drury, 2012). Lately, misperceptions of low levels of ELL parental engagement have been explained by different factors related mostly to immigration such as differences in language and cultural norms between immigrant families and the host schools (Caplan, 2000; Koyama & Bakuza, 2017) and parental role construction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) as immigrant parents of ELLs may construct their roles regarding their children's education in the middle-class, Euro-American school culture environments differently than dominant white parents (Auerbach, 2007; Hill & Torres, 2010; Matthiesen, 2016). There are some culturally embedded values that immigrant parents tend to instil in their children, for example, parenting practices among

Latinos are shaped by cultural values and have been characterized as strict or authoritarian emphasizing parents' control of the child and his obedience (Hill & Torres, 2010; Yan & Lin, 2005). Accordingly, several empirical research studies have looked at differences in parental engagement patterns among native and immigrant parents. In this regard, Turney and Kao (2009) in the United States, used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Cohort (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001) to examine differences in barriers to parental engagement among immigrant parents compared with native-born parents (N= 12,954) at primary school level. The data were collected from parents in a multistage sampling frame from 1,000 schools in 100 counties. The authors investigated whether immigrant parents are disadvantaged in relation to parental engagement compared with native-born parents. They also explored the barriers to participation for immigrant, non-English speaking parents from Hispanic, African, and Asian backgrounds. Findings reported more barriers to participation among immigrant parents compared to the native ones, therefore, they were subsequently less likely to be involved at school. (Turney & Kao 2009). Findings also indicated that immigrant parents of ELLs engagement in their children's schooling at home was no less than for native families. Nonetheless, they stated that there was a gap in the context of school-based engagement that ELL parental engagement was lacking because when comparing immigrant parents of ELLs to native parents, they tend to have more challenges in relation to school-based engagement and, subsequently, they are less likely to participate in school activities (Turney & Kao 2009). They also explained that some challenges that led to lack of engagement resulted from the host schools' expectations that put parents in a specific role and, in some cases, challenged the values and beliefs of those immigrant parents with a new and different school system (Turney & Kao, 2009). Last, the authors also found that among immigrant parents, time in the United States and English language ability were positively associated with engagement. (Turney & Kao, 2009). Similarly, Kim (2009) reviewed literature, a total of 69 studies, on school barriers and minority immigrant parents' participation in their children's school and reported that lack of parental engagement in the context of school could be related to the fact that the school system sometimes creates a barrier for minority parents to be engaged in school-based activities. In fact, parents of ELLs may be less engaged in school-based activities due to negative attitudes that schools have towards their ability to support their children. In addition, the absence of effective communication between parents and teachers, as well as the lack of parental engagement programmes in the school setting could also be the reasons behind challenges regarding ELL parental engagement (Kim, 2009). Moreover, Kim (2009)

indicated that many immigrant parents are hampered by language barriers, limited educational experiences, limited economic resources, differences in child-rearing practices, physically demanding jobs, lack of social networks and cultural differences (Kim, 2009). Later on, based on the assumption that immigrant pupils and their families are a growing in the international educational context but under-researched group, Antony-Newman (2019) conducted a meta-synthesis of 40 qualitative and quantitative studies on immigrant families in Asia, North America, Europe, and Australia. The meta-synthesis showed that immigrant families face many challenges to engagement such as linguistic barriers, unfamiliarity with the host country's school system, racial and cultural discrimination as well as low teacher expectations. Antony-Newman (2019), additionally, reported that immigrant families face increased pressure to show more responsibility for their children's academic performance in ways that further expand educational inequalities.

3.3 Culture and Parent Engagement

Parental engagement was found to be influenced by culture as several researchers have found cultural differences in parent engagement in schools. As cited in Huntsinger and Jose (2009) that differences in levels of parental engagement can be found based on ethnic background and immigrant status. For example, research indicates that Chinese parents usually do not attend school without an explicit teacher's invitation out of their respect for a teacher's authority (Zhang, 2021). Different ethnic groups tend to engage in their children's education in different ways that closely related to their educational backgrounds and their professional and personal history in their countries of origin (López, 2001; Pushor, 2008). They compare education in the two countries and perceive their children's education through a dual frame of reference (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). The more positive their educational experiences are the more positive attitudes toward school they have that result in greater levels of engagement. Conversely, parents with negative experiences with school can impact their engagement with their child's learning (Colombo, 2006). Research has been conducted in many multilingual contexts to examine engagement patterns and strategies of specific cultural groups to find out ethnic variations and barriers to engagement among those groups. Given differences in parental engagement across cultures, Huntsinger and Jose (2009) conducted longitudinal study to investigate engagement patterns and cultural differences of three parental engagement practices communication, volunteering at school, and learning at home (Epstein, 1995) in two cultures (immigrant Chinese American (N=35) and European American (N=38) within the United States. They found that Chinese

American parents were more likely to be engaged in teaching practices to boost their children's learning at home. Further findings also indicate that immigrant Chinese American parents think that their children are not having enough homework in the American schools, therefore, they regularly supported learning at home through assigning their children with extra homework, made up tests for them to take, and pre-taught their children math for the next grade level during the summer. In addition, Chinese parents were also found to support learning at home through using workbooks/ books from their home country to help in teaching their children maths because they believe that learning through multiple ways of solving problems leads to deeper understanding (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Research also finds Chinese American parents were more critical of typical primary school report cards without ABC grades and showed more desire to know exactly what their children need help with (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). European-American parents, however, were found to be more likely to visit the school in a regular basis and be involved in volunteering activities at school (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Other studies also noted that immigrant parents are less likely to be involved in the forms of school-based involvement such as participation in school activities, volunteering and parents' interaction with school personnel that are commonly expected by schools (Kao, 2004; Klugman, Lee, & Nelson, 2012). Such difference in engagement patterns may be explained by the family cultural background as "being coming from different cultures and being shaped by different educational experiences, immigrant parents are often caught between the two extremes of inadequate and excessive involvement" (Antony-Newman, 2019. p, 368). For instance, many immigrant parents tend to hold higher expectations of success and be more involved in schoolwork at home, while non-immigrant parents tend to be more involved in engagement activities at the school (Turney & Kao, 2009; Villiger et al., 2014). In addition to differing patterns of engagement and cultural differences between immigrant parents and native-born White parents, immigrant parents were also found to experience other obstacles that influence their school-based engagement (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Turney & Kao 2009). Turney and Kao (2009) found that Hispanic immigrant families were 2.8 times more likely to report feeling unwelcome at school than their native-born non-Hispanic White counterparts, over 4 times more likely to report safety concerns, and 5.5 times more likely to report perceiving language as a barrier to family engagement.

3.4 Empirical Research on ELL Parental Engagement in International Educational Contexts

Due to the complex, multifaceted and flexible nature of parental engagement, as discussed in chapter 2, which can take various forms and involve various stakeholders, researchers recommended that when addressing parental engagement in the school context, it is important to take into consideration the different stakeholders' perspectives (Daniel et al., 2016). Therefore, parental engagement in English-dominant contexts of education has been studied and analysed differently, in different contexts and from different perceptions. The following sections outline literature that focuses on the way ELL parents and teachers engage each other in the primary school context and barriers that hindered parental engagement as well as ways to increase that engagement.

3.5 Immigrant Parents' Perceptions of Parental Engagement

It is important to understand the barriers and facilitators associated with family engagement (Christenson, 2004) because addressing the challenges that parents of ELLs face in their children's education is a critical factor that may help to foster parental engagement (Panferov, 2010). Listening to immigrant parents' voices and expectations, regardless of their ethnic or linguistic background, and engaging them in their children's education is a necessity in order to create a good learning environment for ELL students (Ritblatt et al., 2002). Hence, Vera and colleagues (2012) surveyed a diverse group of immigrant parents representing 28 different cultural backgrounds in four primary school districts in the US. The authors specifically examined the relationships between barriers to parent engagement and a variety of forms of (home-based and school-based) school engagement. Findings indicated that the most common types of engagement among surveyed parents were home-based practices including monitoring children's homework and talking with children about their daily experiences at school. While the least common forms of engagement were utilizing community resources such as family visits to local libraries. The authors also highlighted that forms of engagement among ethnically diverse parents of ELLs were mostly affected by the challenges they faced such as the overall of the school climate, that is to say, when immigrant families perceive schools as uninviting, they are less likely to make efforts toward engagement at the school context or seek out community-based resources, and more likely to report adverse interactions with the school system (Vera et al., 2012). Other factors such as lack of knowledge about the educational system, avoidance of what they perceived

as interfering the teachers work, and parental stress from other parental responsibilities are also barriers to engagement. Accordingly, Vera and colleagues recommended educating immigrant parents about how schools work in the host country and expectations about their roles as parents, at the same time, educating teachers about the cultural differences of ELL parents which were found to be crucial factors in increasing their engagement (Vera et al., 2012).

Similarly, in the context of primary schools in Canada, Beauregard et al (2014) qualitatively explored engagement patterns, using Epstein's model of six types of engagement among a diverse group of immigrant parents of ELLs. Research findings showed that immigrant parents engagement practices were interdependent and that parents have their own representations of their roles and intentions underlying the practices could vary from one parent to another. Study findings also revealed that certain engagement practices were more prevalent than others, for example, home-school communication and learning at home was the most important form of engagement, while collaboration with the community, volunteering and participation in decision making were less important and less frequently mentioned among the immigrant parents. Such disproportion was mostly determined by the immigrant family's linguistic and cultural background alongside attitudes of school personnel. That is to say, the lack of parental engagement in volunteering and decision-making committees was due to the language barrier for parents and time constraints while taking part on the school board of management was perceived by some as unapproachable. Accordingly, Beauregard et al (2014) recommended that educators and researchers working with immigrant parents need to consider their actions and look beyond their choice of practices and investigate the reasons why they use specific practices rather than others. Through such consideration, school leaders will be able to develop conditions that promote the development of effective parental engagement programmes for immigrant families at the school. Conversely, non-recognition of the way immigrant parents engage in their children's education are mostly attributed to misconceptions of difference and lack of knowledge among teachers and schools about different cultures (Guo, 2009). Cultural misconceptions might, further, lead to immigrant students' feeling as if they are not welcomed in the schools because their values and traditions are not recognized. This feeling of discrimination may be due to schools' failure to recognize the beliefs, values, and practices of diverse families (Valdés, 1996; Harris & Goodall, 2008). Additionally, Antony-Newman (2019) asserts that school personnel often possess a narrow conceptualization of family-school engagement and

that the practices of ethnic minority parents often go unnoticed. Immigrant parents, thus, do not have the confidence to support their children in their education as they feel that their social and cultural backgrounds are not valued, and sometimes marginalized by school personnel (Harry et al., 2005). In this context, Guo (2013) qualitatively explored the way immigrant families (N=38) construct their knowledge to support their children's education in Alberta, Canada. Findings showed that almost all parents criticized the way their children's schools ignored the culture and first language knowledge of their children at school, which led them to maintain their cultural and linguistic values at home through informal teaching. Additionally, immigrant parents in this study were found to learn how to be involved in their children's schooling through informally interacting with and observing other parents' practices. They were also found to use online resources to support themselves learn about the Canadian school system, the school curricula, and services so that they can support their children's learning at home (Guo, 2013). In addition, immigrant parents reported that their children face some negative stereotypes and discrimination at school, therefore, they stated using a variety of approaches to support their children construct a counter-discourse to racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious forms of discrimination (Guo, 2013). The findings of this study also suggests that immigrant parents did not usually volunteer at school functions or attend school council meetings, however, they supported their children's learning at home in the form of passing on cultural and linguistic values. Such findings illustrate the significance of informal learning about parental engagement for immigrant parents and the need for school personnel to recognize the unique ways in which immigrant parents are already involved in their children's education such as culture and heritage language maintenance instead of only trying to engage them in the ways that is used to engage the dominant group of native parents. Therefore, Gou (2013) recommended validating the first languages and incorporating the home cultures of immigrant parents into the school curricular and extracurricular activities. For example, acknowledging immigrant parents' cultural values through inviting them to the classroom to share their knowledge. In addition, teachers may assign homework that require immigrant parents to be involved and share their cultural values, thus, make them feel they can provide valuable contributions. Additionally, such practices help pupils make better connections between the school curriculum and their personal experiences (Gou, 2013).

Understanding the cultural backgrounds of immigrant families is the first step in establishing effective engagement between teachers and ELL parents (Abadeh, 2006). Reza (2013)

interviewed eight Muslim Pakistani parents in the USA. Findings from the study demonstrate that Pakistani parents are very interested in passing cultural and religious traditions such as teaching their children the Holy Quran (Reza, 2013). Findings, further, indicated that though the Pakistani parents were very engaged in their children's education, especially at home, and they recognized the importance of their children doing well in school, the parents also desired their children to maintain their cultural identity by celebrating the traditional holidays of Eid and Ramadan. The major reasons cited by Muslim Pakistani parents regarding why they were not more involved in their child's school related to time constraints, language barriers, an unwelcoming school environment and negative stereotypes. Muslim Pakistani parents also reported being singled out due to religion as school personnel sometimes do not understand the religion and culture of their students (Reza, 2013). Therefore, parents included in the study made several recommendations to advance cultural sensitivity in their children's schools. Pakistani parents suggested the need for appropriate teaching focused on understanding and recognizing Muslim Pakistani cultural and religious traditions (Reza, 2013).

Research also suggests that other family factors such as race or ethnicity may hinder school-based engagement, as pointed out by Hornby and Lafaele (2011). In this regard, Allen and White-Smith (2018) conducted interviews to examine school experiences and parental engagement practices of four minority ethnic working- class mothers of African American students in the USA. The results showed that the four mothers experienced exclusion from the school; this has been experienced through their volunteering in the classroom as teachers did not welcome them sufficiently. The mothers described difficulties in accessing the school and its personnel and how they felt ignored, treated differently or made to feel sometimes unwelcome, despite their attempts to make themselves available to the school. As a result, this exclusion negatively limited their engagement. Thus, the authors reported that racial barriers can also hinder parental engagement in school settings. Parents who feel ignored by office staff, teachers, and parents' networks may not feel motivated to become involved in their children's education (Allen & White-Smith, 2018). Correspondingly, in order to deal with such barriers and implement effective engagement, families and educators need to create mutually agreed-upon plans that are characterized by flexibility, and robust personal networks are fundamental to yield the desired impact (Dunn-Shiffman, 2019).

Demographic characteristics, such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and cultural background, and other parental characteristics are systematically associated with parent

school engagement (Hornby & Lafael, 2011). Hill and Taylor (2004) emphasized that, overall, parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be involved in schooling than parents of lower socioeconomic status. A higher education level of parents is positively associated with a greater tendency for them to advocate for their children's placement in honours courses and actively manage their children's education (Hill & Taylor, 2004). In addition, parents, generally, who have children with different ages will have less time to be engaged with their school age children's education (Lawson, 2003; Hill & Taylor, 2004). Due to such challenges, strong partnerships and clear communication among families, schools, and communities are vital to effective family school engagement (Dunn-Shiffman, 2019). Accordingly, to enhance parental engagement, schools must make "relationship" and "pragmatic" investments by getting to know families and children well (Sibley & Dearing, 2014, p. 828) and "working in collaboration with parents as opposed to a more paternalistic approach where parents are told what to do" (Vera et al., 2012, p. 198).

3.6 Experiences of Arabic-speaking Parents with Parental Engagement

Research suggests that immigrant parents of ELLs with diverse cultural backgrounds tend to be engaged in different ways in their children's education (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Patterns of parental engagement of Arabic-speaking parents have been investigated in recent years in some international contexts and results of those studies found that they face uniquely similar and intersecting challenges. Cranston et al., (2021) qualitatively investigated (21) recently arrived, Arabic-speaking refugee parents in Winnipeg (Canada) to better understand their experiences with parental engagement with their children's schooling. Results indicated that parents' limited level of English language proficiency and employment commitments were the two main barriers to their engagement within either the home sphere or the school sphere. Their findings also noted that due to the lack of translation services at school, parents were unable to understand simple communication with the schools' personnel and to even understand what is required from them as parents (Cranston, et al., 2021). At the same time, Cranston, et al., (2021) also reported that the lack of cultural and religious understanding among teachers and other school personnel in Canadian schools was regarded by Arabic-speaking refugee parents as barriers to their engagement. Differences in cultural views with respect to the amount of homework which the parents viewed as insufficient. In addition, Arabic-speaking parents in (Cranston, et al., 2021) study perceived RSE (Relationship and

Sex Education) curriculum as problematic as most of them considered that the coverage of such sensitive topic as unusual and unwanted because it conflicted with their cultural sensibilities. Parents, moreover, explained that they simply needed more communication about what was being taught in the sex education classes so that they could make comments to their children on the content from their own cultural perspectives (Cranston, et al., 2021). Considering the challenges reported, Cranston and his colleagues suggested that more culturally relevant understandings of parental engagement will enhance more collaborative partnerships between home, school and the community. The authors, specifically, indicated that an increased understanding of Islam and Arabic cultures might facilitate Muslim Arab families' engagement at Canadian schools. They, further, recommended that educational leaders and policy makers question the dominant engagement models, such as Epstein's framework of engagement (2011) that is relevant for families from the majority group, but exclude immigrant parents who may lack the social capital to be involved in the manner outlined in current models of engagement (Cranston et al., 2021).

Al-deen and Windle (2015) conducted a qualitative study of 25 Muslim Iraqi Arabic-speaking mothers focusing on their cultural and social capital engagement strategies and practices relating to their children's education in the Australian school context. Cultural and social capital refers to forms of cultural and social power including education, knowledge, contacts, social networks and economic resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Al-deen & Windle, 2015). Their findings identified different modes of engagement that were connected to Muslim Iraqi mothers' cultural and social capital. That is, mothers with high levels of cultural capital (who came from middle-class families, had university qualifications and were fluent in English) found to have high levels of parental engagement in their children's education both at home and at school. Besides, those mothers with access to the type of cultural capital were found to meet the Australian educational system standards and expectations and they also had access to a wider social network of others with this form of cultural capital (Al-deen & Windle, 2015). While mothers with low cultural and social capital, on the other hand, experienced low engagement patterns in their children's schooling due to many barriers such as low levels of English language, unfamiliarity with the education system, lack of or lower levels of education and lack of access to social capital and financial resources. However, those mothers showed great interest to preserving their cultural heritage and teaching their children Arabic literacy. Therefore, Al-deen and Windle (2015) noted that education is perceived and interpreted differently by different cultural groups and suggested

that considering what different groups of immigrant parents bring with them into the education of their children is essential when considering parental engagement programmes. Further, Al-deen and Windle (2015) concluded that forms of racism, such as Islamophobia, has a role in shaping those migrant mothers' engagement levels with schooling of their children.

It is very important to mention that immigrant family-school engagement issues are not only relevant to the English- dominant context. In the Turkish context, for example, Karaagac et al (2022) conducted 20 in-depth interviews with Arabic-speaking Syrian parents to examine their engagement patterns in their children's primary education. The findings, generally, indicated that although Syrian parents were interested and involved in their children's education, their engagement at home (help with homework) was the most dominant form of engagement for most parents and this appeared to be unrecognised by teachers. Some Syrian parents, however, showed lack of ability to support their children with homework due to their lack of knowledge of the Turkish language. This has led to limiting their direct engagement; therefore, they sought help from others, often an older sibling (Karaagac et al., 2022). The authors also reported that Syrian parents were found to be less engaged in other forms of engagement (school-based and parent-teacher communication) because of a variety of challenges such as lack of Turkish language knowledge, lack of confidence in their capability of taking part in curricular/ extracurricular activities at school, a non-inclusive school environment, and teachers' discriminatory attitudes toward parents who cannot communicate in Turkish language (Karaagac et al., 2022).

Cureton (2020) qualitatively interviewed 19 Muslim refugee parents from Syria and Iraq in Chicago in the US. The study revealed that a welcoming and inclusive school environment supported by school personnel who shares racial and ethnic similarities to immigrant families facilitated higher levels of immigrant parental engagement. In other words, Arabic-speaking Syrian and Iraqi parents reported more connection to the school when teachers or supportive staff members identified as Middle Eastern or Arab and/or engaged with them in Arabic (Cureton, 2020). However, discrimination and xenophobia instigated against their children, caused parents to develop a level of distrust in the school staff, thus, limited the level of their engagement (Cureton, 2020). In addition, parents in this study were found to be less engaged if they perceived their children were performing well academically and behaviourally at school as many of them perceived engagement as only necessary if their children performed poorly (Cureton, 2020). Other barriers also hindered parents from being

actively engaged in their children's academic development including their low levels of English language proficiency, and their unfamiliarity with school expectations of how to be involved in their children's education (Cureton, 2020). Accordingly, the author suggested that after-school programmes, particularly those run by trusted community organisations with linguistic and cultural competence, can help adolescents learn the language and culture of the host country and meet academic demands (Cureton, 2020).

3.7 Experiences of Immigrant Parents of Engagement during COVID-19 and Online Schooling

The COVID-19 school closures during the years 2020/2021 forced parents to partake in the role of teachers because the home became students' primary place of learning (Rozentale et al., 2021). This context was found to negatively affect parents who assumed more responsibility due to helping their children with their education, while trying to manage to work at home at the same time (Garbe et al., 2020). Current literature notes that parents varied in their abilities to assist their children in pursuing their education virtually during Covid-19 lockdowns. However, various obstacles faced immigrant multilingual parents in helping their children at their academic level especially when the home language differed from the instructional language (Guruge et al., 2021; Cioè-Peña, 2021; Santiago et al., 2021). Research also shows that English language learner (ELL) parents' experienced feelings of marginalisation of being left uninformed and unprepared for navigating online platforms and online learning tools and thus needed more school support during the Covid-19 pandemic (Cioè-Peña, 2021, Daniela et al., 2021; Guruge et al., 2021).

Various challenges have been reported regarding immigrant parents of ELLs perspectives on online learning, Blagg et al., 2020, for example, noted that parents with limited English language proficiency experienced trouble in understanding and interpreting teacher and school communication, assignments, and activities (Blagg et al., 2020). In addition, Dong and colleagues (2020) found that Chinese parents had negative experiences of supporting their children while managing their professional schedules and responsibilities (Dong et al., 2020). Other parental challenges related to the children's disengagement and lack of motivation while learning at home. In this regard, Soltero-González & Gillanders (2021) conducted phone interviews with twenty Latinx Spanish-speaking parents in the US to explore the challenges that these parents encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they supported their children's learning. Findings revealed that most parents

experienced feelings of pressure due to the demands of remote education as well as due to their children's feelings of boredom regarding online lessons. Moreover, the authors reported that challenges relating to economic hardships faced by many families from low-income backgrounds were abundantly reported in parents' accounts (Soltero-González & Gillanders, 2021).

Likewise, in the context of Canadian schools, Chen (2021) conducted online interviews with Chinese mothers to investigate their experiences with their children's remote learning in the pandemic. The study revealed that due to the shift to online learning and due to language and culture dissonance between home and school, parents had concerns over their children's English language development, even though participants had devoted enough time and energy in assisting their children to navigate the online learning systems. Research also indicated that remote learning magnified parental feelings of anxiety and insecurity when communicating with teachers through virtual platforms as English was the only possible language for oral communication with the teacher. Chen (2021) concluded that the remote learning environment in the COVID-19 quarantine period undoubtedly "widens the gap between" the mainstream schools and the minoritized families (2021, p. 73).

Despite the challenges reported, Chen (2021) has also indicated that immigrant parents, during the remote learning period, realized the importance of well-being and emotional stability for their children and took initiatives to utilize their own cultural and linguistic knowledge and resources to support their children at home with all the resources they could access in the home context, such as family activities, shared reading, board games, and outdoor play. In addition, Spanish speaking parents in Soltero-González & Gillanders (2021) study appreciated having flexible communication with teachers through various means (either online via school platforms or through phone calls and text messages). Spanish speaking parents were also found to create a wide range of practices to respond to their children's interests and support their learning and well-being, for example, play-based learning to support literacy skills and outdoor activities to exercise and explore in nature. (Soltero-González & Gillanders, 2021).

3.8 The Role of Teachers in ELL Parental Engagement

The phenomenon of parental engagement has historically been treated as the parent's responsibility as they are the outsiders of schools (Epstein & Sheldon 2016). However, when defining and measuring parental engagement, the school environment is also critical and

needs to be considered as well because the attitudes of teachers and school personnel towards families have been found to greatly impact the process and they can also be a possible barrier to high levels of engagement (Matsagouras & Poulou, 2007; Williams-Jones, 2012). Researchers have identified structural and institutional barriers to family-school partnerships that may impede immigrant families from being engaged in their children's education (Kim, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). At the same time, research has indicated that the benefits of family–school engagement policies have not been equally extended to minority communities (Yull, Blitz, Thompson & Murray, 2014).

Teachers are supposed to be the leaders for parental engagement as their positive attitudes towards families, initiating effective communication and inviting parents to participate in their children's education can contribute to successful engagement (Edwards & Warin, 1999). However, it is claimed that engaging culturally diverse families may be a challenging task for teachers (Hargreaves, 2014) due to different reasons, some are related to immigration issues such as, the racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences between teachers and immigrant parents and others are related to institutional issues. These reasons can lead to a gap between two parties and, thus, may lead to low levels of engagement and issues such as poor communication and different perspectives about importance of education (Wright, 2009; Cranston, et al., 2021). The other reasons related to the teachers themselves who have not always been found to be adequately prepared to interact and work with linguistically diverse families (Coady, 2019; Epstein & Sanders, 2006). In some studies, teachers were also found to have negative perceptions on the role of immigrant parents play in their children's education even though they have been aware of the importance of family engagement (Amatea, Mixon, & McCarthy, 2013). For example, Andrews, (2013) reported that when teachers are not familiar with the culture of immigrant parents, they often see their parenting practices as deficient and tend to devalue their engagement.

3.9 Teachers' Perceptions of ELL Parental Engagement

When school personnel exhibit positive attitudes toward families and family engagement, there seems to be an increase in parents' feelings of being welcome in the school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). However, in relation to this issue, Jones (2013) has identified numerous school-based barriers in engaging immigrant parents of ELLs. These challenges were mostly practical barriers related to the school policy such as lack of planning for family-school partnership, inadequate parental support, and lack of vision for incorporating families into

school (Jones, 2013). In addition, teachers' attitudes towards immigrant pupils and their families were identified as a barrier for engagement especially when teachers conceptualize families' differences as deficits instead of strengths (Jones, 2013). This perspective prevents teachers from recognizing and applying unique skills, knowledge, competences and expertise that students and their families have "funds of knowledge" referring to the ways of knowing, learning, and acting, and perpetuates a worldview based on equality and uniformity instead of equity and diversity (Jones, 2013). At the same time, families, sometimes, feel mistrustful toward or alienated by the school system, which may stymie their willingness to be involved with family-school engagement efforts (Jones, 2013).

Regarding the need to conceptualize immigration-related barriers and fostering meaningful engagement for all linguistically and culturally diverse families, Soutullo and colleagues (2016) identified the most common barriers, from teachers' perspectives, that hindered facilitating immigrant family engagement programmes in the context of eight primary schools with high rates of immigration in the US. Overall, numerous barriers to effective family engagement were identified, several of which are directly related to immigration and residency status of immigrant families as several teachers reported that the schools in which they work had adopted policies specifying that volunteers must register using social security numbers. Therefore, for parents who are undocumented, such policies preclude meaningful family-school collaboration via volunteering (Soutullo et al., 2016). Other institutional barriers related to school policies and teachers' practices have been found in this study. Soutullo and his colleagues explained that the linguistic and cultural differences between families with lower levels of English proficiency and school personnel and the lack of bilingual skills on the part of teachers and school staff limited the school ability to form effective communication and engagement programmes that empower partnership with immigrant families (Soutullo et al., 2016). To overcome such challenges, Dunn-Shiffman, (2019) recommends supporting ELL teachers and multilingual families through the incorporation of "language ambassadors" or "bicultural agents" from the school who can act as cultural and language brokers for the parents (Dunn-Shiffman, 2019). In the same context, it is recommended that to build effective relationships between immigrant parents and school personnel, schools' interpreters need to be trained to ensure they remain inconspicuous, so the communication is between the parents and the school personnel and not the interpreter and the parents (Parsons & Shim, 2019).

Evans (2013), based on a comprehensive literature review, reported that teachers are

generally unprepared to work with linguistically and culturally diverse families and the lack of adequate teacher's education and training that does not address parental engagement in a useful way (Evans, 2013). Linguistically and culturally diverse families were sometimes found to be unable to effectively use their rich language and cultural resources available at home due to inadequate training of teachers (Antony-Newman 2019). LaRocque (2013) has claimed that teachers face other issues related mainly to time constraints, so they may feel that it is additional work to include parents. This has also been found by Bromley and Yazdanpanah (2021) who qualitatively examined, through semi-structured interviews, White monolingual English-speaking teachers' perspectives (N=4) about experiences on ELL parental engagement at a primary school comprising of 81% of immigrant pupils speaking languages other than English at home in Australia. Their findings revealed that evidence of parental engagement and links to the children's home lives was low due to teachers' work demands and also culturally specific mindsets common in the school. Such barriers were found in lack of translation services when communicating with immigrant parents, few references to parents in the school website, and a lack of requests for parental support through programmes run within the school. Bromley and Yazdanpanah's (2021) study also reveal that immigrant parents were inadvertently being marginalised without white monolingual English-speaking teachers being aware that their traditional set-in-stone views of parental engagement was contributing to this marginalisation. Accordingly, the researchers suggest that in-service teachers need training to gain knowledge, skills, and to be able to establish an equal cooperation among school and culturally and linguistically diverse families along with assistance from school management so as not to add to teachers' heavy workloads (Bromley &Yazdanpanah, 2021).

Sanders-Smith et al (2020) qualitatively examined the perspectives of primary school teachers and principals regarding what prevents them from greater success in developing and sustaining culturally responsive family-school partnerships in the context of eight American schools serving culturally and linguistic diverse families. Data was collected through four focus group interviews with teachers (N=18) after their participation in a course designed to promote understanding of student and family culture and recognition of personal biases. While principals' data was collected through individual interviews (N=8); both teachers' focus groups and principals' interviews were guided with Epstein's (2011) framework of six types of engagement to find out how Epstein's types of engagement were addressed in their schools. Their findings showed that the teachers were aware of the cultural

and linguistic diverse families, and they developed some successful engagement practices such as encouraging the use of home languages of immigrant families through assigning reading activities in the students' L1s (Sanders-Smith et al., 2020). However, the authors have found other barriers to family school engagement; some attributed to the families and other attributed to the school system. The barriers attributed to the families were due to mismatch between home and school culture as well as their perceived unwillingness to engage, parental lack of linguistic and literacy knowledge, lack of resources at home and lack of understanding of the school system. Other barriers attributed to schools were reported such as difficulties regarding enabling meaningful communication (lack of material printed in a language that parents could read, time of parent-teacher meetings (PTMs) during working hours) and volunteering difficulties due school policies and practices. For example, the school has an online system for parental volunteer registration that requires background checks for anyone who might interact directly with children, therefore, parents with criminal backgrounds and those who were undocumented immigrants cannot volunteer in the school (Sanders-Smith et al, 2020). While some concerns were attributed to the Epstein framework in capturing family interactions across cultural groups as mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.8.1.1 (Bower & Griffin, 2011), Sanders-Smith et al (2020) noted that the framework was effective in prompting the teachers to think of different ways (e.g., helping with volunteer sign-ups, creating reading activities using materials from around the home) in which they had or could build relationships with families.

While social, language and cultural differences have been found to negatively influence ELL parental engagement, conversely, when parents of ELLs and their teachers share the same language and culture, both parties were found to have shared trust and understanding, and their relationship was reinforced through face-to-face interaction (Dunn-Shiffman, 2019). Additionally, researchers also suggest that when immigrant parents of ELLs and teachers share ethnicity and language, families are more likely to attend school-based events (Mundt et al., 2015; Tang et al., 2012). Hence, Smith (2020) explored, from teacher's perspectives, the role of shared language and culture between immigrant parents and their bilingual children's teachers (speaking Spanish and English). Findings revealed that shared language and culture indeed facilitated communication between both parties, because teachers were able to have more casual conversations and share more accurate information with families. The authors additionally reported some strategies that teachers used for reaching out to immigrant parents emphasizing the importance of creating a welcoming environment such

as inviting families on field trips or to volunteer to encourage parents get engaged at the school context. Moreover, this research suggested that the use of interpreters and written communication between home and school can be problematic for developing family school engagement as teachers in the study noted that these practices are only effective when materials are reliably translated, and even so, they can exclude families who are not proficient readers (Smith, 2020).

3.10 Principals/School Administrators' Perceptions of ELL Parental Engagement

Researchers reported that teachers' beliefs and practices with regard to parental engagement are not only shaped by their own educational experiences, but also by the school culture and policy (Suoto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Marschall and Shah (2016) asserted that teachers cannot work alone in engaging culturally and linguistically diverse families. Teachers need the support of school leaders who have the power and resources to shape the school culture through planning school policies and implementation of family school engagement (Marschall & Shah, 2016). Research reveals that when examining the school environment, it is also important to consider the school administrators and principals perspectives as their roles can significantly impact developing effective family-school engagement (Auerbach, 2010). Parsons and Shim (2019) conducted mixed-method research using an online survey (N=71) and in-person interviews (N=5) to investigate primary school administrators and school principals' perspectives on barriers that may hinder ELL parental engagement and how effective ELL parental engagement can be implemented in the context of primary education in the US. Their findings revealed that the language barrier was the factor most reported by administrators who noted that there is a smaller chance that parents of ELLs will be involved in schools or in their child's learning because of their low levels of English proficiency which prevent effective communication, engagement at home, and participation at school. Therefore, families of ELLs face difficulties attending school events or getting involved in volunteer work such as field trips, volunteering to read a book in their child's class, or being a guest lecturer. Parents of ELLs might also work hours that do not align with when events in the school are taking place because they work multiple jobs. Parsons and Shim (2019) also found that differing expectations between teachers and parents of ELLs and lack of trust of school personnel were also significant barriers to ELL parental engagement (Parsons & Shim, 2019). Thus, the authors recommended that making parents

of ELLs feel welcomed is another way for school personnel to increase parental engagement because it will allow families to feel comfortable and more willing to be involved in their child's school. Parsons & Shim, (2019) further suggested that school staff and teachers can promote school-based engagement by inviting families of ELLs to partake in family social events, parent teacher meetings, and/or bilingual events such as heritage and culture nights (Parsons & Shim, 2019). Other research suggests that school administrators and their staff must be open to having parents and outside organisations use their spaces by cultivating a "joining process" within the school for educational and community-building activities to occur (Mapp, 2003).

3.11 Parents and Teachers Perspectives on ELL Parental Engagement

Both immigrant parents and school personnel tend to view parental engagement from different perspectives (Myers, 2015). Immigrant parents of ELLs and educators may have dissimilar views and attitudes on the role of parents in the education of their children due to cultural and linguistic differences between two parties(Anderson & Minke, 2007; Harry, 2008; Lawson, 2003) Based on literature reviewed so far, immigrant parents have been found to perceive their role mostly in the home domain, setting academic expectations, arranging enrichment activities, and monitoring homework (Vera et al., 2012; Beauregard et al., 2014) . However, teachers tend to focus more on school-related activities for parents, ranging from curriculum events to classroom volunteering and fundraising (Winton, 2019). Such differing views between educators and parents regarding role constructions in children's learning has increased interest in examining the perspectives of all individuals involved in family-school engagement. For example, Baker et al (2016) qualitatively examined teachers (N=76) and immigrant parents (N=50) perceptions, through focus groups, about barriers and suggestions to family engagement in the context of six primary schools in the US. Their findings reported that immigrant parents and educators were able to identify barriers to engagement including language barriers, time conflicts either with parents' work schedules or with other events, lack of quality and clarity of school to home communication. However, both groups had differing views regarding their perceptions of how engagement should be. The parent group were able to suggest more applicable solutions that directly addressed the barriers identified and supported shifting from parent involvement to engagement. For example, to overcome barriers to being present at the

school, parents suggested the school offer childcare for siblings, weekend activities, and provide food as a part of weeknight events. In addition, to overcome barriers to communication, parents suggested frequent and multiple forms of communication for school events and expectations of parents via email, text message, and paper flyer in the child's backpack. At the same time, parents strongly believed that teachers who communicated consistently had more academically engaged students with fewer behaviour incidents; therefore, they suggested more proactive communication especially in relationship to academic performance and behaviour. Baker et al (2016) findings, on the other hand, showed that educators posed disconnected solutions that did not directly address the barrier identified, reiterating parent involvement. Accordingly, Baker and colleagues (2016) highlighted the importance of schools in addressing such barriers through listening to immigrant parents and improving parental involvement (being physically present in the school building) and moving into engagement via focusing on the strengths and resources that they can bring to their children's education (Baker et al, 2016).

A qualitative study was conducted by Snell (2018) using (individual and focus group interviews) of parents (N=16) who speak languages other than English at home (Arabic, Spanish and Swahili) and teachers (N=12) to solicit their perspectives on the challenges they faced regarding parent engagement at a primary school in southern Arizona in the USA. Interviews with immigrant parents were conducted in parents' preferred languages with using adult interpreters. Her findings revealed differing views between teachers and parents with regard to the roles they should play in the education of children, while parents viewed themselves as responsible for teaching their children the things that they don't learn at school including, manners, respect, and life skills as well as their own language and culture, they viewed teachers as being responsible for academic growth. These views caused misunderstandings with teachers, who expected parents to support their children academically in their schooling. Findings also revealed that while parents were found to rarely attend curricular and extracurricular school activities, they reported enjoying the multicultural festivals that the school organised on an annual basis (Snell, 2018). Thus, the author recommended ways that the school could privilege immigrant parent voices through inviting them more to school-based events that allow children to display their work and talents, and to involve parents in planning these events (Snell, 2018). The author also recommended the incorporation of other languages into different school communication programmes and to involve parents in discussing policy, particularly, the language policy.

Finally, Snell (2018) also suggested that schools need to address parents' concerns, even the ones they cannot "solve" immediately, and that teachers and other school staff communicate openly about expectations, rather than assuming parents are not involved or do not care (Snell, 2018).

In the context of Arab parents and non-Arab teachers' perspectives regarding parental engagement, Moosq, Karabenick, and Adams (2001) investigated how Arab (N= 45) and non-Arab (N=87) teachers and first-generation Arab mothers (N=39) experienced parental engagement in the context of an urban nine elementary schools in the United States. Through a mixed-method (quantitative & qualitative) research study, the authors reported conflicting perceptions between teachers and parents of how engagement should be. According to teachers' perspectives, Arab parents tend not to be involved in their children's education due to matters of culture. This means that the phenomenon of parental engagement with schools is not familiar in Arab culture, because Arab parents considered the school as solely responsible for their children's education and that they were, therefore, less likely to participate. However, Arab mothers claimed they would be willing to participate in their children's education if requested to do so. The authors claim that this mismatch of perceptions between Arab families and teachers in the US schools may be due to a lack of teachers' cultural knowledge about appropriate forms of communication for interacting with Arab parents (Moosq, Karabenick & Adams, 2001). However, despite these beliefs among teachers, several participants also noted the barriers that these parents experienced regarding higher levels of engagement, including a lack of confidence in their English language skills, and family demands. The authors recommended that teachers and parents could come together and use joined-up strategies to achieve mutual goals. For example, communication and cultural awareness must be reciprocal. This means it is important for parents to understand their host culture and language, at the same time, teachers need to understand how to become more effective and to accommodate the individuality of Arab families. This can be accomplished by activities such as roundtable discussions, during which both teachers' and parents' assumptions and values are examined (Moosq, Karabenick & Adams, 2001).

In the context of Muslim parents and non-Muslim school personnel in primary Islamic school in Australia, Gurr (2010) interviewed the school personnel including principal and teachers (N=5), and Muslim parents (N=6) to conceptualize their perceptions regarding engagement strategies implemented in the school and how parents responded to such

strategies, as well as factors influencing parental engagement. The findings revealed that both teachers and parents showed agreement on the importance of family-school engagement for children's success, however, they showed a lack of mutual understanding on how engagement might look like. The author also noted that although important aspects of Muslim culture were clearly present in that Islamic school, parental engagement patterns were limited and basic due to different reasons, for example, linguistic and cultural differences between teachers and parents. In addition, the flow of communication was found, almost, one-way from the school to parents. Other factors that impeded effective family school engagement included parental work demands, parental educational background and lack of transportation caused by the distance from most of the families' homes to the Islamic school. Teachers also reported other factors related to the school's policy and procedures on parental engagement, and lack of efforts by the school to educate parents as to how they might be involved in the school. The researcher suggested three major areas to increase engagement in the school including establishing a shared vision regarding family-school partnership, improving communication, and fostering professional development (Gurr, 2010).

More recently, Jones and Palikara (2023) explored the conceptions of ELL parental engagement held by (103) parents and (40) teachers at one large English primary school in the UK using (qualitative & quantitative) online questionnaires. The findings showed a mismatch between both groups surveyed as they perceived patterns of and barriers of parental engagement differently even though they are at the same school. The vast majority of teachers conceptualized parental engagement in the context of school overestimating the impact of school-based activities for pupil academic attainment "only a quarter of them conceptualized parental engagement in relation to learning at home". Whereas almost all surveyed parents reported that they are more engaged through home-based activities, including reading at home, encouraging access to educational resources, and talking to children about their learning. Both parents and teachers also had striking differences in relation to the barriers to engagement as parents identified issues around the timing of events and lack of notice. While most staff reported that parental lack of educational skills and shortcomings about the importance of their children's education were significant barriers to their engagement at school. The authors suggested that education leaders, researchers, and policy makers need to consider these differences in parents and teachers' perceptions to avoid the misdirection of time, efforts and resources when establishing effective parental

engagement programmes (Jones & Palikara, 2023). Furthermore, Jones and Palikara (2023) also provided, based on parents and educators views some parental engagement activities to develop more effective family-school engagement. The authors suggested more opportunities to refocus parental engagement efforts on learning at home and in the community, rather than focusing only on engagement with the school itself. For example, providing educational resources to support the home learning environment, facilitate interaction between families and educational places such as museums and libraries, and support parent-to-parent networks (Jones & Palikara, 2023).

3.12 ELL Parental Engagement in the Irish Context

Literature in the area of ELL parental engagement shows that the perspectives of non-Irish parents regarding family-school engagement is an under-researched area. This needs attention to better understand present issues regarding diversity in Irish schools in relation to parental engagement (Smyth et al., 2009; Darmody & McCoy, 2011; O'Toole et al., 2019; Devine et al., 2023). As in other contexts, literature in the Irish context also noted that Irish schools are facing various challenges regarding how to effectively involve culturally and linguistically diverse families within the school life of their children (Daniel, 2015; Johnson et al., 2016; O'Toole et al., 2019). Many pupils from immigrant backgrounds and their parents might not be sufficiently proficient in English to communicate effectively with school officials and communities, therefore, both pupils and parents face a number of challenges navigating their way in a new country with an unfamiliar education system (Smyth et al., 2009; Horgan et al., 2022; McGinnity, Darmody & Murray, 2015).

From educators' perspectives, primary school teachers in Dublin reported that the lower proficiency in the school language among parents of ELLs limits school-parent communication (McGorman & Sugrue, 2007). Most principals in Irish schools also reported lack of school language ability among almost all or "more than half" of the parents of ELLs (Smyth et al., 2009). In the context of Irish post primary schools, Darmody and McCoy (2011) investigated barriers to school engagement based on the perspectives of educators including principals, guidance counsellors, resource and language support teachers and other teachers who had worked with ethnic minority students and parents in eight urban/rural post primary schools. They explored how the lack of cultural and social capitals of ethnic minority parents impacted their engagement in their children's education using data gathered for a large-scale research project which explored how primary and secondary schools cope

with the growing heterogeneity of the student population (Smyth, et al., 2009). They found that the major challenge to activating the cultural and social capital of ethnic minority parents is their lack of proficiency in English as well as their unfamiliarity with the new educational system (Darmody & McCoy, 2011). They additionally found that language barriers made it difficult for school personnel to explain the school processes to the parents and to involve them in parent-teacher meetings, thus, children of those ethnic minority parents, sometimes, had to act as interpreters between their parents and schools (Darmody & McCoy, 2011). The authors also added that limited language proficiency among these parents is likely to influence their children's academic progress as they may not be able to seek additional assistance from school or help their children with homework. To overcome such challenges, Darmody and McCoy (2011) recommended developing culturally sensitive programmes that would provide ethnic minority parents with the necessary information about the Irish educational system and encourage their meaningful engagement in school life. Culturally responsive family-school engagement should recognize the value of the cultural background of diverse families who came from different backgrounds and use it as a resource rather than merely assimilating them into the majority culture (Darmody & McCoy, 2011).

Apart from the language barriers that parents of ELLs face, researchers have spotted other possible obstacles including the difficulty for parents of ELLs to preserve their own sense of linguistic and cultural identity (Eriksson, 2013; Kraftsoff & Quinn, 2009). In this regard, Kraftsoff and Quinn (2009) explored, through a mixed-method study, the opinions of 16 Russian-speaking parents about why and how they maintained the Russian language in their school-age children within the Irish context. The authors found that Russian-speaking parents strongly supported Russian language maintenance in their families and wanted their children to be as fluent as possible in the Russian language (Kraftsoff & Quinn, 2009). They also identified some potential challenges such as their difficulty to maintain their own sense of linguistic identity, while at the same time supporting their children to make a life for themselves and succeed at school in Ireland. Other research in Ireland indicated that parents of ELLs from migrant backgrounds are keen to pass their native languages and cultural beliefs to the next generation, considering both important in their children's socialization process (Adebayo & Heinz, 2023; Frese, Röder & Ward, 2015).

In this regard, Pedrak (2024) conducted 34 semi-structured individual interviews with pupils (N = 14), parents (N = 8), and teachers (N = 12) from Polish complementary schools to

investigate their perspectives on the importance of Polish complementary schooling in Ireland. Findings revealed that parents and pupils engage in complementary schooling not only to develop advanced Polish literacy skills but also to foster cultural identity, facilitate transnational family communication, and enhance future educational and professional opportunities within Ireland. Significantly, enrolment was not contingent upon plans to return to Poland; rather, participants emphasised long-term benefits, such as preparation for the Irish Leaving Certificate examination, improved university admission prospects, and enhanced employability through bilingualism (Pedrak, 2024). Further, research findings indicated that Polish complementary schooling provided structured instruction in Polish history and geography, addressing gaps in home-based cultural transmission and reinforcing a sense of "Polishness." The study underscores the schools' role in sustaining intergenerational ties to heritage while supporting integration into Irish society, illustrating the intersection of transnationalism, identity preservation, and strategic investment in children's future mobility (Pedrak, 2024).

Machowska-Kościak (2017, 2020) conducted a longitudinal ethnographic study, using (observations, semi-structured interviews, and audio-recordings of meal conversations) of four immigrant Polish families who's their children attend post primary schools in Ireland. The researcher investigated parental attitudes/ ideologies toward the Polish language /culture maintenance. Findings revealed that the Polish language and culture are very important to Polish parents who were very positive about speaking Polish to their children and maintaining the Polish language in the family. However, only two families successfully maintained their language and culture supported by actions that greatly influenced their children. Those actions were clearly seen through sending their children to Polish complementary schools, having rich contacts with the wider Polish community in Ireland and being active membership in Polish associations. Further findings also revealed that the other two polish families, unfortunately, did not support their desire to maintain their children's multilingualism as well their heritage language maintenance with actions. Therefore, the author recommends that it is important for immigrant children to have outside opportunities for heritage language socialization, either through parental engagement with associations or heritage language communities, their own visits to their country of origin and membership of heritage networks. At the same time, Machowska-Kościak (2017, 2020) suggests that mainstream Irish schools should support minority languages tuition which would enrich and benefit not only students from immigrant backgrounds but also Irish

society in general. The author explains that recognising the value of each language would promote greater social cohesion among pupils and their families from immigrant backgrounds who would be empowered to share their cultural heritage with majority language pupils within school contexts. In this way, there would be greater understanding of cultural values and norms among all groups of students without empowering one group over another (Machowska-Kościak 2017, 2020). In the same context, Little and Kirwan (2019) likewise argue that the education system in Ireland needs to consider language education needs to address the diverse requirements of learners. Therefore, they recommend the importance of adopting inclusive teaching practices that cater to the varied needs of students and their families including adapting teaching methods, incorporating diverse perspectives, and utilizing culturally relevant materials (Little & Kirwan, 2019). In addition, due to the reported linguistic and cultural barriers of ELL parental engagement in the Irish context, Little and Kirwan (2019) suggest that engaging parents of ELLs can be enhanced through the inclusion of their home languages. The authors suggest that schools may empower and involve parents of ELLs at school even though they may have low levels of English language proficiency. They recommend schools to invite parents of ELLs to participate in school-based activities to foster their home language inclusion. For example, when inviting ELL parents, schools should make efforts to ensure that their invitations to attend school events always include some visual support to facilitate understanding. In addition, parents of ELLs, from time to time, may be invited into the classroom to support language learning activities using their home language. Moreover, they can be used as a source of linguistic expertise when multilingual posters and charts are needed for display in classrooms and they may help schools by translating basic information and school circulars into their native languages, so they can support each other at the school. According to the authors, these kinds of practices will help parents provide a linguistic model for pupils who share their home language, at the same time, parents will show other pupils how to communicate the same information using different languages (Little & Kirwan, 2019).

In the context of the two Muslim, state-funded, primary schools in Dublin Ireland, Sai (2018b) investigated the educational choices of Muslim parents based on data collected in 2014 through semi-structured individual interviews in English with 22 Muslim parents (11 in each school), 6 Islamic Religion Education teachers (3 in each school), and 2 principals. The findings revealed that, for most parents, the schools' Islamic ethos was an underlying motivation for enroling their children at Muslim schools. In addition, parental school choice

was also due to cultural differences between Muslim homes and non-Muslim schools as most of the parents in Sai s' study expressed their worries regarding exposing their children to non-Muslim environments which in turn might negatively influence their children's Islamic culture and values. Other reasons for parents choosing the Muslim school environment that facilitated, for their children, not only Islamic practices such as daily prayers, wearing hijab and learning Quran and Arabic language but also acted as a platform for social interaction among parents who share common beliefs and values (Sai, 2018b). Further findings also indicated that parental previous negative experiences with their children's former non-Muslim schools including Catholic schools such as the lack of accommodation of their cultural/ religious needs as well as children and their families' feelings of isolation further intensified the perspective that Muslim schools in Ireland as a safe environment that protect the cultural and religious identities of Muslim children and their families (Sai, 2018b).

More recent investigation of ELL parental engagement patterns, in the Irish context, from teachers and immigrant parents' perspectives likewise suggest many linguistic and cultural barriers of ELL parental engagement in the Irish context. Devine, Darmody & Smyth (2023) investigated the patterns of contact and engagement of immigrant parents of ELLs using two sources of data. First data source, the authors used national-level data 'Growing Up in Ireland, Cohort 08' to investigate contact patterns through the lens of teachers. They analysed the difference in teacher perceptions of parent-teacher contact and on the perceived interest of immigrant parents at two intervals, when the children were aged five and nine. Their analysis was between different migrant groups (UK, Western European, Eastern European, African, Asian and others) and Irish parents. The second data source was a qualitative analysis of patterns of engagement between immigrant parents comprising of 17 nationalities (N=25), teachers (N=10) and principals (N=5) in five primary schools drawn from an intensive qualitative study of immigrant parents (Devine, 2011). The results of the "Growing Up in Ireland" data indicated that teachers noticed Eastern European, African and Asian parents as less interested in their children's education and had less contact with them than parents who were Irish, English or Western European who communicated more frequently and showed greater interest with their children's education. Even though differences in communication were not apparent with different migrant groups when their children were younger (at age five), teachers perceived immigrant parents from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia as having lower levels of interest in their children's education at

both five and nine years of age. Such findings suggest a cultural distance between teachers and non-Western European parents (Devine, Darmody, & Smyth, 2023). The analysis of the qualitative data, second source of data in the study, indicated that immigrant parents reported, opposite to the perceptions of teachers, high levels of interest in their children's education, however, faced various challenges in navigating the Irish education system as well as access to parental networks. Immigrant parents' differing levels of linguistic, social and cultural know how cut across their capacities and confidence to become more directly involved, and visible, with their children's schooling (Devine, Darmody, & Smyth, 2023). Further findings of this study suggests that schools also varied in their levels of readiness to engage with immigrant parents, especially with the parents who came from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. The authors, therefore, highlights the importance of inter-cultural competence and pro-active engagement by schools in fostering meaningful engagement with immigrant parents (Devine, Darmody & Smyth, 2023).

Adebayo and Heinz (2023) qualitatively investigated the perceptions of 20 parents from different minority (non-White) ethnic backgrounds coming from (African / Asian countries) about their experiences with their children's education in Ireland. Findings revealed that although minority ethnic parents showed strong interest and commitment to supporting their children's education, some complex challenges for children and their parents were found as they crossed between, learnt about, or tried to adapt to or combine cultures. This was attributed to tensions between "Irish" and "home-culture" values and parenting practices. For example, some common cultural attitudes and practices in Ireland such as giving children "so many rights" was perceived as challenging for minority-ethnic parents. Concurrently, placing greater respect for parents and elders played a much stronger role in the home cultures of minority ethnic families compared to Ireland. Adebayo and Heinz (2023) also found that limited understanding of Irish school culture as well as lack of experience with Irish schools raised as a significant challenge and source of insecurity for minority ethnic parents. Based on minority-ethnic parents' experiences with and advice for teachers and schools in Ireland, Adebayo and Heinz (2023) suggest promoting more culturally inclusive learning environments in the school contexts through teacher professional development, learning about differences and a more diverse teaching population (Adebayo and Heinz ,2023). Apart from that, Adebayo and Heinz (2022) also explored migrant students' schooling experiences from their parents' perspectives. The findings highlighted some transitional challenges confronting migrant families as they

navigate the Irish education system, including children's experiences of isolation, bullying and stereotypes that negatively impacted their children's mental health and wellbeing. Further findings highlighted that teachers and school leaders were, sometimes, complacent in responses to bullying in schools, especially when the victims were students from migrant or culturally diverse backgrounds (Adebayo & Heinz, 2022).

Due to the large-scale inward migration in Ireland in recent years, the creation of culturally responsive school environments became a major concern in Irish policy discourses. Even though the introduction of several government legislation and policies in recent years aims to support cultural diversity inclusion in the Irish educational system, such as the Equality Act (2005), National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2005), Intercultural Education in the Primary School, Intercultural Education Strategy (2010–2015) and others, however, reports have highlighted a misalignment between policy and practice (Adebayo & Heinz, 2023). Therefore, Foley, Faas & Darmody (2024) investigated the challenges associated with implementing policies related to creating culturally responsive school environments as well as the factors that can assist in reducing the gap between policy and practice. They conducted a comparative case study design across eight primary schools in Ireland using a mixed-method research methodology including semi-structured interviews and surveys. The study involved 15 teachers (14 Irish native/ 1 non-Irish native), principals (N=6), and parents (N=16, 7 Irish native, 9 non-Irish native) in the context of the four major primary school types in Ireland (Catholic, Church of Ireland, Educate together and Community National School). Findings revealed that even though efforts are being made across the different school types in Ireland to respond to the increased cultural diversity within the country, the institutional ethos of a school can influence the extent to which immigrant pupils feel a sense of school belonging. For example, non-denominational and multi-denominational schools were less bound by perceived structural limitations found in denominational schools. Teachers in denominational settings reported their ability to make adaptations to the curriculum based on the classroom composition with some limitations due to the institutional ethos of denominational schools. Such findings illustrate that despite developing an ethos and curriculum that is inclusive to diverse religions and cultures, challenges are encountered in its implementation (Foley, Faas & Darmody, 2024).

With regard to challenges of family school engagement, Foley, Faas & Darmody (2024) found a gap between policy and practice regarding decision-making processes of the school as a result of the inconsistency between the school's staff make-up and the community of

the school, as minority groups of immigrant parents were found marginalised in the decision-making processes (Foley, Faas & Darmody, 2024). Further research findings also revealed that teachers faced many other challenges in their efforts to enhance pupils' cultural and religious literacy including time-constraints due to pressures such as curriculum demands as well as the recent COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. At the same time, teachers expressed challenges of being in difficult situations while covering sensitive subjects such as gender, and LGBTQ+. School principals were found in this study to play a critical role in creating an inclusive school environment by creating open lines of communication with parents, welcoming new families to the school and exemplifying culturally responsive attitudes. This study also found that cultural differences between immigrant families and the school culture make immigrant families integrate more with communities who share similar cultures and therefore they avoid mixing well with the schools. In other words, the extent to which families from migrant backgrounds feel they are already part of their own communities outside of school can act as potential challenges for becoming engaged in the school life of their children (Foley, Faas & Darmody, 2024). To develop culturally responsive school environments in Irish primary schools, Foley, Faas and Darmody (2024) recommend culturally responsive pre-service teacher training and achieving the Government's goal of increasing the number of non/ multi denominational primary schools to provide wider choice for parents in one hand, and denominational school need to accommodate migrant parents and their children through adoption of more culturally responsive school environments on the other hand. Finally, the authors recommended involving different stakeholders in the decision-making process and encouraging 'bottom-up' initiatives that reflect the needs of the communities where the schools operate.

3.13 Relevant Policies in Ireland

Due to the growing challenge to respond to the increased cultural and linguistic diversity within Irish education, the NCCA report "Primary Curriculum Framework" (NCCA, 2023) builds on the successes and strengths of previous curricula while recognising and responding to challenges, changing needs, and priorities. The framework suggests many principles of learning, teaching, and assessment for high-quality primary and special education, emphasizing adaptability to diverse school contexts and children's needs (NCCA, 2023). Primarily, the framework explicitly prioritizes the recognition of children's individual identities, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic repertoires, asserting that schools must ensure all learners feel included, valued, and visible through responsive pedagogies. Accordingly,

the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) into Irish primary education, targeting students from 3rd to 6th grade, constitutes a strategic national reform (NCCA, 2023). This initiative aligns Ireland with broader EU norms, where all member states already teach MFL at the primary level (Council of Europe, 2020). Furthermore, the framework strengthens its commitment to community engagement by advocating for partnerships with families and the wider community to enrich and extend children's learning by acknowledging and supporting their lives in and out of school (NCCA, 2023).

3.13.1 The National Policy Context for Anti-Racism

As Ireland is becoming more multi-ethnic and multi-culturally diverse country, the Irish government recognises the importance of meaningful action to address racism and its impacts in Ireland. Accordingly, the National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPR) (2023-2027) provides a framework for tackling racism across various sectors, including education. The plan proposes actions to help make Ireland a place in which the impacts of racism are fully acknowledged and actively addressed. The NAPR builds on earlier efforts to promote inclusion and sets out strategic actions to combat racial discrimination, emphasising the role of schools in fostering intercultural understanding (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2023).

Given that schools function within this broader policy landscape, the NAPR provides a crucial reference point for institutional strategies to address racism. For example, Action 2.4 (NAPR, 2023) address ethnic inequalities in education regarding (enrolment, retention, attendance, progression, outcomes) by 2027, focusing on groups affected by racism and Covid-19 impacts. Likewise, Action 2.5 (NAPR, 2023) promote inclusion and anti-racism across all education levels, including curriculum reform and intersectional/intercultural approaches (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2023).

Beyond Irish national policies, anti-racism efforts are also shaped by European frameworks. At the European Union (EU) level, the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan (2020-2025) outlines a comprehensive strategy to combat racism through legislative measures, funding programmes, and institutional reforms (European Commission, 2020). The plan explicitly calls for stronger anti-discrimination policies in education, aligning with broader EU commitments to equality and social inclusion. Similarly, the Council of Europe's European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) provides monitoring and recommendations to member states on combating racism, including in schooling. ECRI's

reports often highlight disparities in educational outcomes for minority students and advocate for policy measures to ensure equitable access and inclusion (ECRI, 2021). These European-level initiatives reinforce the importance of embedding anti-racism into national education policies and practices.

3.13.2 The National Policy Context for Teacher Diversity in Irish Schools

Another relevant policy is the Higher Education Authority's (HEA) Race Equality Action Plan (2022), which focuses on improving racial and ethnic diversity within higher education institutions. This plan emphasizes the need for structural changes to support underrepresented groups, including prospective teachers from minority backgrounds. The HEA's work is especially pertinent when considering the "pipeline" issue in teacher recruitment, as increasing diversity in the teaching profession is a key factor in fostering inclusive school environments (Higher Education Authority, 2022). The report underpinning this action plan further underscores systemic barriers in higher education that may indirectly affect teacher supply, reinforcing the need for policy-aligned interventions at multiple levels of the education system.

3.14 Summary of Chapter

The present chapter has presented a review of the literature on ELL parental engagement, outlining empirical research studies that have measured and defined ELL parental engagement form different perspectives within international, English-dominant contexts, of education. The first section reviewed comparative research that considered how immigrant parents of ELLs engage in their children's education after immigration to new school context in comparison to their native counterparts. Findings from a review of the extant literature suggested that immigrant parents of ELLs perceive engagement quite differently than the majority of native parents. Subsequently, it was necessary to review and understand the actual patterns of and barriers to ELL parental engagement from the perspectives of parents, teachers, school administrators and principals, while also considering studies which examined and compared both teachers and parents' perspectives. Barriers to ELL parental engagement were identified as coming from many sources, some related to the challenges that families face, some related to the constraints facing teachers, and others related to language, cultural, and socioeconomic dissonance between families and schools. Finally, it was also necessary to consider literature in relation to ELL parental engagement in the context of Irish education. The review of this literature indicates the lack of comprehensive,

in-depth exploration of ELL parental engagement in the Irish schools, a need which the present research aims to address. The full outline of the present research methodology is provided in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the research methodology and design used in this research study. The chapter begins by presenting the research aims and research questions followed by an overview of the mixed-methods research methodology. An overview of the research population and research context will also be provided below. Then, the design of the present research considering the two participant groups that have been examined using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus group is outlined. A description of data collection processes followed by a summary of research validity, reliability and ethical considerations are presented below. Afterwards, data translation and data analysis methods used to analyse the data collected are briefly outlined followed by comments on the positionality of the researcher and the last section focuses on the challenges encountered in the present research.

4.2 Research Aims, Objectives and Questions

The research project focused perspectives on ELL parental engagement in primary school education. Specifically, this research investigated the perceived, based on participants views, levels and patterns of parental engagement among a sample of Arabic- speaking immigrant parents of ELLs and Irish primary school teachers in four Irish primary schools in the greater Dublin area. The researcher used Epstein's (1995, 2009, 2011) framework of engagement to identify patterns of engagement among participating parents and teachers. In addition, both participant groups suggested recommendations for the development and implementation of practices which promote ELL parental engagement. These suggestions may create opportunities to support ELL student learning and ensure their achievements in Irish primary schools. Accordingly, the following research questions were addressed:

1) What are teachers' attitudes and actions towards ELL parental engagement in the context of Irish primary schools?
2) How is parental engagement perceived and enacted by Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs?
3) What are primary school teachers and Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' perspectives regarding challenges to family school engagement? What

practices do they regard as promoting effective parental engagement?

4.3 Mixed-Methods Research: An Overview

The current study used a mixed methods design. Mixed methods research has been defined as an approach to research that combines or integrates qualitative and quantitative research data in a study (Creswell, 2013). It is a research methodology concentrating on research questions that demand understandings of multiple perspectives, and their cultural effects in real-life contexts (Curry et al., 2009). It employs quantitative research, measuring size and frequency of constructs, and qualitative research discovering the meaning and understanding of constructs through making use of multiple methods (Curry et al., 2009). Mixed methods research purposefully combines both research methods (qualitative and quantitative) to take advantage and draw on the strengths of both, at the same time, it allows to get rich information that could not be obtained using each method alone. It is viewed as a major form of research method alongside isolated quantitative and qualitative methods (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). Mixed-method research approach helps "to overcome the epistemological differences between quantitative and qualitative paradigms and to provide a royal road to true knowledge" (Bergman, 2008, p. 4). Both paradigms, (qualitative and quantitative) when utilised alone, have been criticised for the objectivity and the validity of their findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The quantitative approach has been criticised because many vital characteristics including individuals and communities' voices and meaningful interpretations, beliefs and insights cannot be simply reduced to numbers or sufficiently understood without reference to the local context in which people live (Dudwick et al., 2006; Toomela, 2008). By contrast, critics of the qualitative approach as lacking scientific rigour or objectivity (Bryman, 2012). Others criticised the process of qualitative data analysis as time-consuming (Yauch & Steudel, 2003). Qualitative approach may also have limited interpretations, some issues may be overlooked, others could go unnoticed as well as findings in the qualitative approach cannot be generalisable (Gelo, Braakmann, & Benetka, 2008).

Mixed methods approach has been known, as a research methodology, since the 1960s, however, it has become widely used by 1980s (Loomis & Maxwell, 2003). Due to the need for a more pragmatic approach to scientific enquiry, researchers were keen to integrate both qualitative and quantitative perspectives together into a combined approach seeking both generality and particularity (Creswell et al., 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Bazeley

(2003), for example, reported that mixed method approach has become an emerging area with a growing amount of interest across several discipline areas and has been particularly popular in the areas of applied social research. Other mixed methods research advocates such as Johnson and Turner (2003) suggested that scholars should use different strategies and approaches and collect data from various resources in a way that the outcomes are likely to result in complementary strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses. Since then, mixed methods research has been increasingly used by a growing number of researchers (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Mixed methods research design has several advantages, and many of the approach advocates supported their rationale behind endorsing it for numerous reasons. Jick (1979), for instance, stated that all research methods have limitations, accordingly, using multiple methods can neutralize or cancel out some of the disadvantages of certain methods. Mixing different types of methods can strengthen a study (Greene & Caracelli, 1997). Other advantages include better data collection procedures; discovering new ways of thinking with better understanding of analysis and results; triangulation of findings and more actionable policy recommendations (Dudwick et al., 2006). Additionally, a mixed methods approach may provide a more balanced perspective because the approach designs may answer research questions either qualitatively or quantitatively, simultaneously, taking advantages of the strengths of each methodology and minimizing its weaknesses (Morse & Chung, 2003; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Mixed methods research can also give a greater understanding of a phenomenon under study and permit researchers to generate richer and deeper findings as compared with mono-method research either quantitative or qualitative alone (Schulze, 2003). Greene (2008) indicated that in mixed methods research methodology, everyone is invited to take part because it provides various viewpoints and perspectives. “A mixed methods way of thinking is an orientation toward social inquiry that actively invites us to participate in dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued and cherished” (Greene, 2008: p,20).

In order to conduct a mixed method research study, researchers must follow several steps, many of which are similar to those taken in mono-method research. According to Johnson and Onwuegbzie (2004) mixed methods research is a process comprising eight distinct steps, they suggested a model starting with determination of the research question as the first step, then, determining whether a mixed-method design suits the addressed research question.

Selecting the type of mixed method design that is appropriate to carry out the research followed by collecting data, then, analysing and interpreting the data. Afterwards, legitimating data, followed by drawing conclusions and writing the final report as the eighth and final step. For the purpose of this mixed method research study, these steps were followed in order.

There are different classifications of mixed methods that mainly categorized into two major categories (sequential and concurrent). Each category has a different design that matches the objectives of the research needs as well as the timing of the stages. The sequential design contains two stages, the first stage collects either the qualitative or quantitative, then, followed by the second stage when the other data is collected. The concurrent design, on the other hand, involves collecting both data types at the same time (Creswell et al., 2003). Later, sequential and concurrent mixed methods approaches have been more expanded and categorized into various design approaches and the most common and well-known approach to mixing methods is the Triangulation Design. (Creswell et al., 2003). The method approached for the current study can be categorised as a concurrent triangulation approach design that involved collecting both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time, this will be outlined in more detail below.

4.4 Population and Research Context Overview

This research, concurrently, recruited two different samples of participants, namely, primary school teachers and Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs. The research was conducted in four primary schools which have considerable Arabic-speaking EAL pupils during the academic year 2021/2022. Research sites were purposefully selected following a strategy called purposeful sampling. This method is usually used for the selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). Accordingly, the sampled schools are based in the greater Dublin area, one of main cities where immigrants tend to settle upon arriving in Ireland (Economic and Social Research Institute, 2019). The reason behind choosing primary schools for this PhD research project is that parents, generally, tend to be more involved in their children's education at primary level, and their engagement decreases as children grow older, especially when children start secondary school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

4.5 Design of the Present Research

4.5.1 Research Methods Applied

The research objectives of the present study demanded using a research approach that suited the two different group participants (teachers and parents). The researcher chose a mixed-method approach to facilitate understandings of multiple perspectives of both group participants (teachers and parents). In addition, to overcome the limitations of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, it allowed the researcher to collect rich data that could not be obtained using a single method alone. Further, using different data sources can enable data triangulation that, in turn, increases the validity of the study (Yin, 2009). Thus, the mixture of quantitative and qualitative data allowed the researcher to use "all methods possible to address the research problem" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 13). Accordingly, this research investigated ELL parental engagement by involving two participant groups. Data were collected through multiple methods, questionnaires, semi-structured individual interviews, and focus group interviews, each informing the other to deepen the analysis.

This research is divided into two phases, the first phase focused on Irish primary school teachers' experiences of ELL parental engagement in the context of four Irish primary schools. This part of the study is a concurrent triangulation approach that concurrently collected both qualitative and quantitative data. It investigated primary school teachers' perspectives and experiences through administration of an anonymous online questionnaire that contains quantitative and qualitative questions. The second phase of the study, on the other hand, investigated Arabic-speaking parents' perspectives and experiences regarding their engagement in their children's education in the context of four Irish primary schools. This phase of study was qualitative in design through utilizing data obtained from semi-structured interviews followed by focus group discussions.

This study is grounded in a pragmatist paradigm, which prioritizes research questions and practical outcomes over rigid adherence to a singular ontological or epistemological stance (Morgan, 2014). Pragmatism acknowledges multiple, context-dependent realities (ontological flexibility) and treats knowledge as a tool for problem-solving (epistemological practicality), justifying the mixed-methods design. The study's ontological assumptions recognize that reality is multifaceted, evident in the integration of teachers' quantitative/qualitative survey data with Arabic-speaking parents' qualitative narratives.

Epistemologically, knowledge is co-constructed through interaction, facilitated by the researcher's dual role as an insider sharing linguistic/cultural background with parents and outsider as academic observer, which informed methods like member-checking to enhance validity. Axiologically, the study explicitly values actionable insights, aligning with its theoretical frameworks (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) which emphasize context-sensitive understandings of parental engagement. Methodologically, pragmatism enabled the concurrent triangulation of (Phase 1) teacher surveys, blending quantitative and qualitative questions and the qualitative focus of (Phase 2) parent interviews/focus groups, bridging divergent perspectives to address the research problem holistically. The paradigm's emphasis on utility justified methodological choices, such as using surveys to identify structural barriers and interviews to explore cultural nuances such as parents' home-based engagement practices. The two phases of the study will be presented sequentially.

4.6 Collaboration with Schools

After obtaining Research Ethics Committee (REC) approval (See appendix 1 for ethical approval letter), the researcher identified some potential primary schools that have considerable Arabic-speaking ELL pupils, thus, best suited the research needs of the present project in Ireland, as almost all school contexts are experiencing unprecedented immigration growth in recent years. Muslim National schools, for instance, are welcoming immigrant families with a rapid increase in the number of Arabic-speaking EAL pupils as 94% of pupils' families in both Islamic schools speak Arabic language as the first language at home (Sakaranaho, 2009). In addition, as many Irish Catholic schools serve many Muslim pupils and their families (Hogan, 2011, Sai 2018a, Sakaranaho, 2018), and because a high proportion of children whose parents are in a minority ethnic/ religious group are in multi-denominational Educate Together schools (Darmody & Smyth, 2018). Therefore, the selection of non-Muslim schools, including both Catholic and Educate Together school contexts, was primarily based on the ones that have part time programmes for teaching Quran and Arabic language either in early mornings (before school hours), or in the evenings or at weekends, as this gives a hint that many Muslim/ Arabic speaking families are enroling their children in these schools. The researcher, also, through social networks with a lot of Arabic-speaking Muslim families was able to identify some Catholic and ET schools that have many Arabic-speaking families (see Chapter 1, Section 1.10 for details about the researcher). Therefore, by the start of the academic school year of 2021/2022, the researcher

contacted a few Catholic, Educate Together and both Islamic school principals (gatekeepers) asking their permission to conduct the research in their schools. A gate-keeper Email was sent to each of the targeted school's principals that explained the purpose and significance of the study, detailed research procedures/methodology and provided assurances of data confidentiality (See Appendix 2). The permission, afterwards, was granted from four (two Islamic and two Catholic) schools that have considerable Arabic-speaking EAL pupils. Once permission was granted, the researcher, personally, visited each of the participating schools and discussed with the schools' principals face to face about the research phases. This step led to further explanation of the research needs and what was expected from school principal as gatekeeper at each stage of the research. The researcher explained further the research plans which involved conducting a survey with the teachers in the school and interviewing Arabic-speaking parents individually and in a focus group discussion during the school year 2021/ 22. It was clearly stated that this research is not an evaluation for a particular parent or a teacher but a means of gaining insights into the nature and the extent of family-school engagement of immigrant parents of ELLs, which may help school officials understand how to engage those parents in opportunities that support student learning.

4.7 Phase 1 of the Study

Investigating Teachers' Perspectives and Experiences on ELL Parental Engagement

4.7.1 Research Method

The first phase of the present research examined the teachers' experiences on engaging parents of ELLs in their children's education in the context of four Irish primary schools. This phase is considered a concurrent triangulation study aimed to "to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic" (Morse, 1991. p,122) to best understand the research problem. The concurrent triangulation is a mixed method research design used when both quantitative and qualitative methods are implemented simultaneously at the same time (Creswell et al., 2003). This allowed concurrent, but separate, collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data that enabled an understanding of the teachers' perspectives regarding ELLs parental engagement.

4.7.2 Recruitment, Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

4.7.3 Teachers Survey (Online Questionnaire)

Quantitative methods typically refer to utilizing standardized questionnaires that are administered to individuals, which are identified through various forms of sampling across large geographic regions (Creswell, 2015). Online questionnaires, furthermore, have significant advantages over other formats where diverse types of questions can be standardised such as, multiple-choice questions, scales, questions in a multimedia format, and open-ended questions (Evans & Mathur, 2018). Administering online questionnaire is practical that can be managed in a time-efficient manner, minimizing the period it takes to get a survey into the field and for data collection, data inputting and data analysis (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Wilson & Laskey, 2003). However, online questionnaires may have some disadvantages as well, for example, one of the most significant issues of online surveys is that the participation rate might be lower compared to the offline survey method (Nayak & Narayan, 2019).

The questionnaire was constructed using the online survey platform Qualtrics which was the suitable online survey platform to survey primary school teachers where they can pick the convenient time to answer questions, they can also start and then return later to the question where they left off earlier. Further, this instrument was the best practical option to overcome many problems associated with traditional administration methods especially during the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions made by schools at that time (See Section 4.14, Research Challenges). The researcher, while constructing the questionnaire in the online survey platform could, also, create four copies in order to differentiate each participating school; each survey contained the same content but had a different link generated by Qualtrics.

4.7.4 The Design of the Questionnaire

The researcher searched the literature and other resources to find a validated questionnaire on parental engagement. The most relevant of the available surveys found was "School and Family Partnerships: Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in the Elementary and Middle Grades" which was created by Epstein and Salinas (1993). The survey is based on the framework of six types of engagement and was distributed by the Centre for School, Family, and Community Partnerships (SFCP) at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, USA for use by both researchers and practitioners. The researcher, initially, emailed the

centre of SFCP requesting permission to use and modify the teacher survey to satisfy the needs of the PhD project and permission was granted to use and adapt the survey to suit the current research study by the centre staff in September 2020 (See Appendix 3).

The original teacher survey is seven pages long including 12 focus areas with more than 125 items of information related to teacher attitudes about parental engagement in different contexts. Accordingly, some questions in the original Epstein survey were not included for this research project because they were more related to the American education context. The other questions have also been modified according to the research needs in the Irish context. The quantitative questions in the original survey were in the form of a 4-point Likert scale option, however, the researcher added one more option to be 5-point Likert scale, so that, teachers might use the added middle category "neither agree nor disagree," or "neutral" to assess their attitudes and actions toward parental engagement.

To provide an overall picture of why and how a particular phenomenon influence learning while surveying teachers, researchers might take advantage of combining qualitative and quantitative data resources (Day et al., 2008). Additionally, while quantitative questions are objective and relies only on figures and statistics, the qualitative questions, on the other hand, are subjective and makes the use of language and description (Kuhn, 1970). Accordingly, based on research questions to be investigated, the researcher created some qualitative questions and added them to the questionnaire to give teachers some space to express their perspectives more freely. The modified questionnaire consisted of 28 quantitative and 6 qualitative questions. Apart from that, five background and experience questions were included in the introductory part of the questionnaire to pull together the information on teachers' characteristics, namely, gender, age, total years of teaching experience, years of teaching experience at their particular school, nationality and education attainment. Thus, the first part of the questionnaire consisted of 10 items measuring teachers' general attitudes about the importance of family- school engagement. In this part teachers rated, on a five-point scale, the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements concerning their perspectives about parental engagement. The second part consisted of 10 items measuring teachers' engagement practices that ask teachers to indicate how important or not important it is to involve parents in various engagement activities (derived from Epstein's six types of parental engagement). The third part consisted of 8 items that measured teachers' perspectives on what schools who serve culturally, and linguistically diverse populations should do to involve families who have different needs and skills. The

last part of the questionnaire consisted of 6 qualitative questions that asked teachers about challenges that faced them in engaging parents of ELLs. Questions that focused on teachers' experiences of successful practices that they have used in the past and that might be used in future to involve immigrant parents who speak languages other than English (See Appendix 4 for Teachers' Survey).

4.7.5 Reliability of Teacher Survey

The validity and reliability of the teacher's questionnaire used for this part of study were grounded on many facts. Primarily, the questionnaire was designed by Epstein and colleagues (1993) who assured that the surveys were used in various studies and were considered acceptable. Secondly, questionnaire items were based on Epstein's Six Types of Engagement for a School-Family and Community Partnership (SFCP) that is used to measure internal consistency where every group of questions is focused on the same concept or idea (Epstein & Salinas, 1993; Epstein, 1996). The questionnaire used, moreover, has face validity because it has been used for thirty years as a measure to determine teachers' perceptions of parental engagement. For example, the questionnaire has been administered in various research studies and in different contexts around the world to gather data regarding the perspectives from teachers in elementary and middle schools and was considered valid (Graham, 2009; Demircan & Erden, 2015; Yulianti, Denessen, Droop & Veerman, 2021).

4.7.6 Sampling Strategy for Questionnaires

The sampling strategy of any research needs to be specified in advance, given that the sampling method may affect the sample size estimation (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2014). The sample population of this study was the full time (Junior Infants to Sixth Class) teachers at the four participating schools. Without a rigorous sampling plan the estimates derived from the study may be biased (Suresh, Thomas & Suresh, 2011). Thus, as two of the participating schools are Islamic, Arabic language and Islam religion are taught by Islamic religious education (IRE) teachers who work on a part-time basis. Those teachers, sometimes, do not possess any formal third level pedagogical qualifications (Sai, 2018a). Accordingly, the researcher asked school principals (gatekeepers) of the two Islamic schools to send the link of the questionnaire to only full-time classroom teachers, excluding the part time IRE prteachers in both Islamic schools. The exclusion of IRE teachers is because the current research aimed to investigate family-school engagement patterns from the perceptions of

Irish (full time) teachers and Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs. Accordingly, IRE teachers, who mostly belong to the Arabic-speaking Muslim community, are not representative of the target population. In addition, to encourage the largest number of teachers from the four participating schools to take part in the questionnaire, the researcher discussed with each school principal that all teachers working with all classes should get the opportunity to fill in the questionnaire, therefore reminders to take part in the survey were sent by gatekeepers to all potential teachers accordingly.

4.7.7 Administration of the Questionnaires

The survey was administered online through the collaboration with the four primary schools. The researcher sent an anonymous questionnaire link to each school principal (gatekeeper) of each of the sampled schools; each school questionnaire was coded using alphabetical letters (school A, school B, school C, school D). Therefore, the researcher could track the total number of teachers who completed the questionnaire from each of the sampled schools. Consequently, the gatekeeper sent the link of the teacher's questionnaire to all class teachers in the school through the school's email system. The teachers' survey was anonymous, so the researcher did not make any direct contact with any of the primary school teachers in the recruitment phase. Therefore, it was important to offer convincing reassurance of confidentiality to teachers, so, special attention was paid when designing the first page of the questionnaire (Ganassali, 2008). Hence, The Participant Information Leaflet (PIL) included in the first section of the questionnaire, fully, outlined the purpose of the study and explained the importance of participating and assurance of the anonymity of the voluntary participation of the questionnaire (See Appendix 4). Teachers were, also, provided with sufficient information about the importance of the questionnaire to encourage them to take part. Responses to questionnaire were not attributed to individual teachers because the survey link that was sent to each principal of the participating schools was anonymous (no names, emails or IP addresses included). However, teachers were informed that by clicking on the link in the text of the e-mail, afterwards, they had also to tick Agree, after reading the opening information in the questionnaire. Once teachers completed the online questionnaire, they gave their consent to participate, and their data was included in the analysis. The estimated time to finish the survey was 20 minutes. One week after sending the initial teachers' online questionnaire by the schools' email, the researcher sent a follow-up email to the gatekeeper asking to send a reminder email to potential teachers once more for their voluntary participation in this study. There was no financial payment for participation for

teachers in this part of study.

4.7.8 Questionnaires Response Rate/ Number of Responses

The target population for this part of study was all (Junior Infants to Sixth Class) teachers who were employed at the four sampled primary Schools during the school academic year 2021/ 2022. In the recruitment stage, the researcher asked each school principal about the number of full-time teachers at each school. The overall response rate of teacher questionnaires was 61.6 % in the four sampled schools and the actual questionnaire data gathered from teachers consisted of (N=45) in total. Data collected through Qualtrics was afterwards downloaded and securely stored electronically as Excel Files in TCD One Drive for analysis. The table below presents the number and response rate for each of the sampled primary Schools.

Table 1 Teacher Questionnaire response rate and number of participants.

School Name	Expected Population	Response rate	Actual participants
School A	27 approx.	55.5%	Total (N=15)
School B	18 approx.	66.6 %	Total (N=12)
School C	16 approx.	75%	Total (N=12)
School D	12 approx.	50%	Total (N=6)
A, B, C and D Schools	73 approx.	61.6%	Total (N=45)

4.8 Phase 2 of the Study

Investigating perspectives and experiences on parental engagement among Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs.

4.8.1 Research Methods

The second aim of the present research project is to examine the Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' experiences regarding their engagement in their children’s education in the context of four Irish primary schools. In this part, to understand the Arabic-speaking parents’

perspectives, a qualitative approach was the best method as it provides an understanding of their experiences through illuminating and conveying their perspectives (Fossey et al., 2002). Qualitative research is used to observe people in natural settings to become better familiar with the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In addition, when members of an ethnic group are unable to give their opinions, about any human or social problem, through a predetermined format (such as surveys or questionnaires), it is appropriate for studying the phenomenon qualitatively (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Accordingly, by asking the parents group to respond qualitatively to certain questions yielded rich information and more nuanced than data derived from questionnaires (Dudwick et al., 2006).

Through approaching qualitative methods in this part of study, the researcher was able to explore the views and experiences of Arabic speaking parents regarding parental engagement within the context of Irish primary school communities. The researcher considered a qualitative research design to be appropriate for this part of study for different reasons, first the quantitative approach has been criticised of neglecting important aspects of human lives (McCracken, 1988). The researcher, could also, through utilizing the qualitative approach to dig deeper into the data using both Arabic and English languages, thus, decreased the linguistic gap with some of the Arabic-speaking parents. This allowed for verbal investigation that utilized the participants' native language (Arabic), for participants who felt more comfortable communicating through Arabic, to effectively communicate and critically investigate their lived experiences. Commonly, non-English speaking respondents are excluded by English-speaking researchers because of the investigators' own limitations (Esposito, 2001), also, because (cross-cultural) research may be time consuming and expensive (Choi et al., 2012). However, given the researcher's language fluency in Arabic and English, this has the advantage of giving non-English-speaking parents opportunity to express their perspectives about the phenomenon in a proper way. This is the first insight into understanding the Arabic- speaking immigrant parents of ELLs experiences of parent engagement in their children's education in the context of Irish primary schools.

4.8.2 Recruitment, Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

4.8.3 Data Collection Tools

Qualitative research refers to a range of data collection methods. This approach mostly uses multiple forms of semi-structured, open-ended individual and group interviews based on

purposive sampling to allow in-depth analysis of social processes (Krishna & Shrader, 2000). Accordingly, to learn how Arabic-speaking immigrant parents are engaging with their children's education in Irish schools, data was collected through Face-to-face individual semi-structured interviews as the main source of data, as this is the most widely used data collection method in qualitative research (Taylor, 2005; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Individual semi-structured interviews initially explored the perceptions, patterns of engagement and challenges of engagement of Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs followed by focus group interview discussions of the same participants as a second source of data. The rational of choice of these two methods is that the individual in-depth interview allowed the researcher to delve deeply into the phenomenon under study by allowing the parents to be a part of "the meaning making rather than a conduit from which information is retrieved" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). Whereas the focus group discussion allowed to collecting high quality data from a wider range of experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). At the same time, focus group interviews "can help people to explore and clarify their views in that would be less easily accessible in a one-to-one interview" (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299). Therefore, the focus group discussions of participants who were from the same pool of individual interview participants, allowed to enrich data, for the current study, from the individual interviews through various perspectives where the group interview questions were based on themes that had arisen during the individual interviews.

4.8.4 Designing The Interview Guide of Semi-Structured Interview

In qualitative research, interviews should be based on a well-prepared interview guide that involves previous research in the topic. Such planning is fundamental because it influences the results of the study (Kelly, 2010). Taylor (2005) recommends that the interview guide should contain a focused structure for the discussion that covers the main topics of the study. Thus, through using the interview guide, the researcher is providing the participants with guidance on what to talk about (Gill et al., 2008). Accordingly, the researcher based the questions for the interviews on the parental engagement framework by Epstein (1995, 2009, 2011) in the form of loose structure and open-ended questions to define the area to be explored. Participating parents were asked about the nature and extent of their participation of the six typologies of parent engagement, i.e., parenting, communicating, volunteering at school, learning at home, decision making, and community collaboration. Up to 23 open-ended questions were asked in each one-to-one interview. Questions one through eleven

were background information questions and were designed to elicit the information on parents' characteristics and family background factors. The questions twelve through nineteen provided information regarding the parents' perspectives on the importance of parental engagement and the different practices they are engaged or unengaged in (derived from Epstein's six types of parental engagement). The final four questions were about parents' experiences on positive and negative experiences that they had experienced regarding their engagement, challenges that they faced in their children's education and finally their suggestions on how parental engagement can be improved (See Appendix 5).

4.8.5 Sampling Strategy for Interviews

The sample of the study should be representative to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of some aspect of human experience of the population under investigation (Polit & Beck, 2010). Crabtree (1999) stated that no matter the research's focus, however, each research question needs to be appropriately focused so that a relatively homogenous group will have shared encounters about the phenomenon (Crabtree, 1999). Arabic speaking immigrant parents of ELLs in this qualitative study were purposeful sampling which seeks to maximise the depth and richness of the data to address the research question (Kuzel, 1992). This involves selecting participants that are especially experienced in the phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The researcher, therefore, wanted the sample of parents to be homogenous and share similarities related to the research question. In accordance with the selection criteria, all participating parents were first generation native-Arab immigrants (born in Arabic-speaking country) and speak Arabic as a native language. Parents, at the time of interviews, had at least one school-aged child in the participating school, both fathers and mothers were invited to take part. Additionally, to take part in the research, they were encouraged to speak in the language of their choice, either Arabic or English, provided that it allows them to narrate their experiences in a way that best facilitates their ability to make meaning out of them.

4.8.6 Recruitment Procedures

Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs were recruited via their children's school principal (gatekeeper). The researcher, initially, sent the participant information leaflet (PIL) and consent form with English and Arabic versions to each school principal (gatekeeper) of each of the schools involved in this research, asking them to share information about the

study with parents. Each school principal of the four participating schools, then, sent out invitations through the school contact system to all parents inviting them to participate in the research study. The invitations were sent to all pupils' parents in the school, not specifically targeting Arabic speakers. Invitations were sent through emails and through the schools' digital online platforms (Aladdin/Seesaw) by the gatekeepers. Both invitations sent contained a link with the Participant Information Leaflet (PIL) and consent form with English and Arabic versions. The researcher's contact information was also included in the PIL, informing potential participants to directly contact the researcher if they are interested in taking part in the study. Each family received bilingual information related to their participation via English and Arabic. In addition, information pertaining to time commitments for being involved with the study was clearly explained. All participants were also informed that they are invited to participate in one individual interview with the researcher, afterwards, they are also invited to participate in one focus group discussion with Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs to discuss themes that are found during individual interview analysis.

The parents were given two weeks to respond to the first invitation and contact the researcher about their participation in the study. Subsequently, to improve recruitment results, the researcher asked gatekeepers to send reminders to potential parents through a written text message via mobile phone to all parents, as schools have all parents contact details, after two weeks. The rationale for this was to reach out voluntary participants through different media means, so if parents were not familiar with school online platforms, they got an invitation through SMS text message in their mobile phones.

The researcher then started receiving some responses from interested Arabic speaking parents who, voluntarily, contacted the researcher showing their desire to take part in the research after they received the invitation. Some parents contacted the researcher through phone calls, SMS text messages and some others sent emails. The researcher, in turn, offered them the time and space to ask questions about the research and what participation involves prior to them consenting to participate. At that point, also, their eligibility for inclusion in the research study was established. The researcher, then, asked parents who volunteered to participate for their contact details to re-contact them to arrange for recording the interviews and when needed based on research needs. Consequently, at each stage of data collection, the researcher, directly contacted parents who have volunteered to participate in person over the phone (phone calls and/or text messages) to arrange a convenient time to conduct the

interviews and focus group discussions.

4.8.7 Recording Face to Face Semi-structured Individual Interviews

The researcher individually interviewed (N=25), using face to face semi-structured interviews, first generation Arabic- speaking immigrant parents of ELLs, all of whom over 18 years old, which is the age of legal consent. They were distributed to (N=7) participants in school A, (N=6) participants in school B, (N=6) participants in school C and (N=6) participants in school D. Well-prepared and thoroughly developed interview schedule is foundational in contributing to trustworthiness (Kallio et al., 2016). Thus, all participants were interviewed at a time and location that suited each individual parent. Participating parents were informed that a signed consent form is necessary, so the researcher read over the consent form in English or in Arabic, according to the parents' preference and obtained signed informed consent from all parents prior to the start of the interview. Most participating parents had difficulty in communication using English language, thus, the researcher, according to their preference, interviewed (N=18) mothers using their native language (Arabic), the rest (N=7) participating parents were interviewed using English. Parents were provided with a copy of the interview questions in English or Arabic, (See Appendix 5), for their reference as the questions were read to them. The researcher also made it clear that the participant may choose to decline answering any uncomfortable questions and that they can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The researcher used a digital audio recorder to record the interview that allowed the researcher to focus on the participant rather than on notetaking. Creswell (1998) also emphasizes that the researcher's role during the interview recording should be as an active learner and active listener. Each interview lasted 30- 60 minutes. All the interviewees were mothers, no fathers took part in the study. It is important to mention here that the lack of fathers' participants may be due to the nature of the functioning roles of Arab mothers as the primary caregivers of children (Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1995). There was no financial payment for participation for parents in this part of study. Another recruitment method was also used to recruit more parents by asking the interviewees if they know other eligible parents and inform them about the study. The snowball technique is most applicable in small populations particularly for accessing hard to reach due to their closed nature (Breweton & Millward, 2001). Key themes from these individual interviews were extracted and used to structure the subsequent focus group discussions.(See Figure 4 for Phase 2 research methodology).

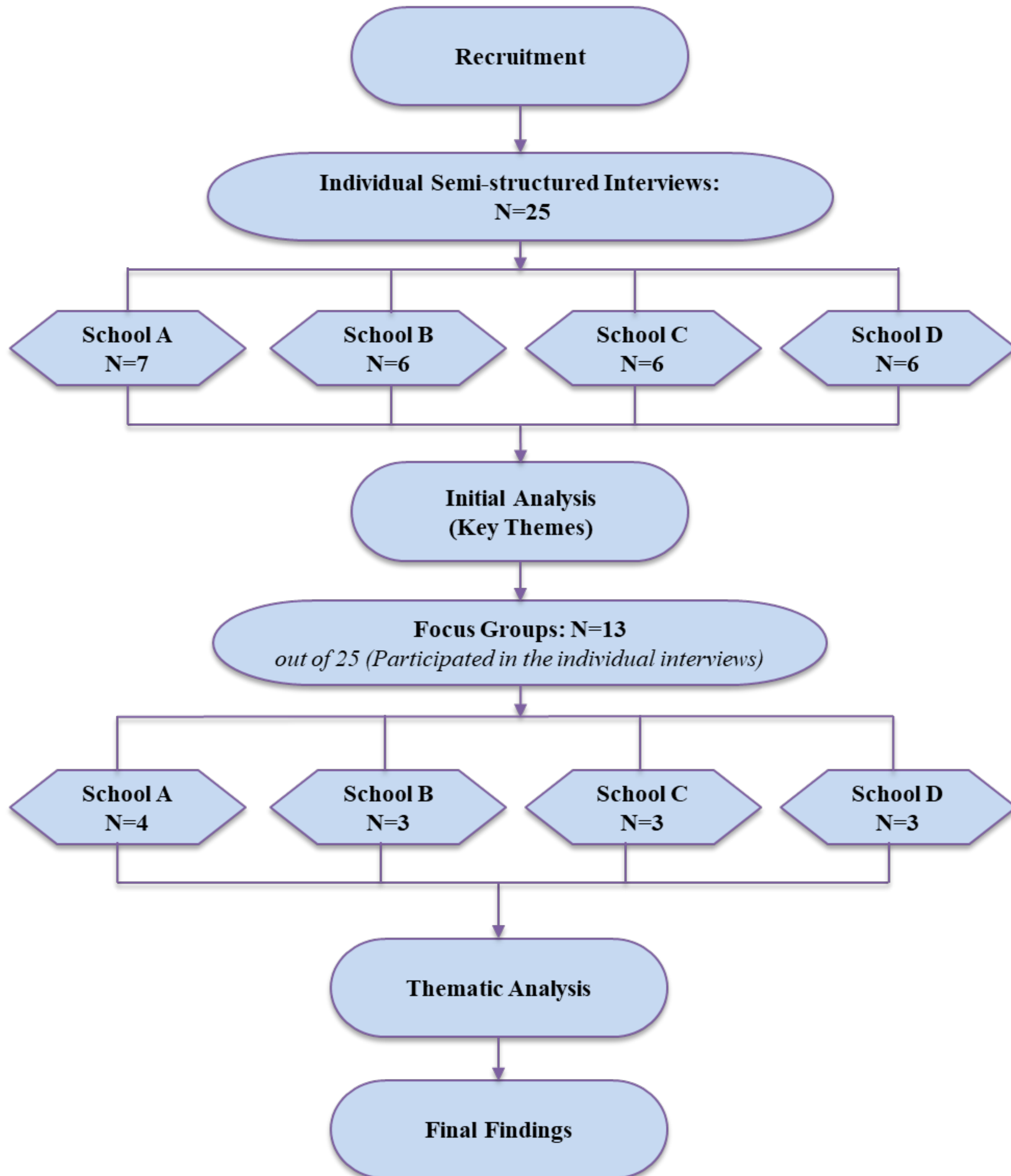
4.8.8 Recording Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interview is a means of qualitative data collection used to gather lots of information from a group of participants to allow them to expand on each other's responses (Beyea & Nicoll, 2000). In focus groups, a purposive sampling is, mostly, used to choose a specific population to comprehensively discuss the topic in group interviews, thus, this group is focused on the phenomenon under study (Thomas et al., 1995). In order to take advantage of the shared experiences of the group, the groups should be homogeneous (Kitzinger,1995). Accordingly, the rationale of focus group discussions was to investigate the participating parents' perspectives further based on their initial participation in the individual interview. Additionally, it was also utilized to use multiple methods to validate the research findings and achieve triangulation (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

From the initial pool of (25) individually interviewed Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs, (13) participated in four follow-up focus groups conducted in Arabic. After conducting the individual interviews, the researcher contacted the focus group participants who had primarily been recruited through the (gatekeeper) school principal to arrange the focus group discussions. These sessions allowed deeper exploration of individual experiences, validation of initial findings, and expansion of insights through group discussions. Each school had one focus group discussion of (N=3) parents in each group, except for school A, where (N=4) parents were involved in the focus group discussion. The groups were held in common, agreed upon, and private location where mothers felt free to discuss their perceptions and experiences as immigrants in the Irish context with parental engagement. The focus group interviews were scheduled no longer than two months after the individual interviews. The focus group's content was based on (13) questions based on literature and themes that emerged during the individual interviews (See Appendix 6). Focus group discussions, in this part of research, were sources of additional data that enriched the individual interviews through various perspectives. All focus group discussions were conducted through the parent's native language (Arabic) to facilitate communication. Each focus group interview lasted no longer than 60 minutes. At the beginning of the focus group, the researcher explained to the participating parents in Arabic the group discussion's aim, that is, to talk with each other rather than directly to the interviewer. Informed consents (both English and Arabic versions) were written in clear language to facilitate ease of understanding. The researcher reviewed and obtained signed consent from each participant prior to the start of the focus group. The focus group discussions were digitally audio

recorded and subsequently transcribed and translated. The Phase 2 research methodology is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Phase 2 Research Methodology Diagram



4.9 Trustworthiness of Interviews and Focus Groups

To increase validity, data triangulation was achieved by using multiple methods for data collection (Urquhart, 2013). Hammersly and Atkinson (1983, p.230) stated, "data source triangulation involves the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving

from different phases of the fieldwork or different points in the temporal cycles occurring in the setting". Therefore, the researcher utilized multiple methods to validate data for each participating group. First, the researcher was able to triangulate data collected from Irish primary school teachers through administering online anonymous survey including both quantitative and qualitative questions. Data collected from the participating Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs in this study triangulated using semi-structured interviews as main source of data followed by focus group discussions.

Valid qualitative research refers also to the authentic application of methods undertaken, and the accuracy of findings precisely reflect the data (Long & Johnson, 2000). To increase validity, member checking was used to validate and verify the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Doyle, 2007). The researcher, therefore, after one week of recording the semi-structured one-to-one interviews, before starting data translation and analysis, sent original transcripts to parents. They were given a time limit of two weeks to check and respond back to the researcher. This step allowed some parents to provide some feedback on the researcher's transcription of their responses, thus, enhanced accuracy of the data.

Reliability defines consistency within the employed analytical procedures (Long & Johnson, 2000). To increase reliability, the researcher adapted Epstein (1993) School and Family Partnerships framework that guided the teacher's questionnaire and interview questions that responded to the research questions. Interview questions were written using wording and vocabulary that were comprehensible by the participants in both languages. All research tools used to examine Arabic-speaking parents' perspectives, were translated into Arabic by the researcher before the data collection started. Accordingly, both (Arabic/English) versions of the participant information leaflet, consent forms, one-to-one interview questions and focus group questions were available during parents' recruitment and data collection stages. Arabic/ English bilinguals, speaking English and Arabic fluently, were asked to read the individual and focus group questions to make sure all questions were understood by participants. This facilitated understanding the research needs, objectives and what was expected from parents at each phase of research and enhanced communication throughout recruitment and data collection time. All individual and focus group interviews were completed by the researcher; therefore, the misinterpretation of data was minimized. Additionally, no third-party professional transcription or translation services used in any stage of data processing.

4.10 Data Translation

Offering participating parents, a choice of Arabic or English for interviews, and consequently conducting most individual interviews and all focus groups in Arabic, was fundamental to this study. Employing the parents' native language was not only practical but also critical for establishing the trust and rapport necessary to engage Arabic-speaking immigrant parents openly. This linguistic approach facilitated more authentic and comfortable dialogue, enriching the data collected. Translation, in qualitative research, is a conversion of language to construct representations of, oral or written, participants narratives to gain equivalence in meaning (Halai, 2007). Following the recording of individual interviews and focus group discussions on a digital recorder with the permission of the parents in the language of their preference, the researcher, immediately, transcribed the recorded data based on the language of the interview. Then, following each transcription, the researcher sent a copy of one-to-one interviews to parents for member checking before starting translating the transcribed data in Arabic to the target language English. Eighteen of the twenty-five individual interviews and the four focus group transcriptions required translation from Arabic to English. However, translating the interview and focus group transcripts from Arabic to English constituted a substantial undertaking, requiring particular attention to transparency and methodological rigour in cross-language research.

To maintain consistency and reliability in translation, a key factor in data analysis, the researcher alone translated all the data, as recommended by Twinn (1997). By avoiding the involvement of multiple translators, the researcher ensured a coherent and valid translation process, thereby strengthening the reliability of the data analysis (Twinn, 1997). Furthermore, the researcher’s familiarity with the cultural and social values of the parents group helped contextualise the narratives effectively (see Chapter 1, Section 1.10 for details about the researcher).

While translating the transcripts, the researcher carefully considered how to render the data meaningfully to uphold the study's overall rigour. Accurate translation was crucial, as errors could significantly impact the study's findings (Twinn, 1997). Thus, understanding the meaning of the parents’ experiences in this phase of the research was fundamental to reporting valid and reliable results. Jootun, McGhee, and Marland (2009) suggested that translating qualitative data is a meaning-making process, requiring researchers to engage deeply with meanings and discourses to produce accurate translations. This involved

translating Arabic transcripts into grammatically correct English while paying careful attention to idioms, local syntax, and avoiding poor grammar. However, not all concepts are universal, and some meanings may not be fully translatable (Jones & Kay, 1992). Therefore, the researcher prioritized conveying the true contextual meaning of participants' experiences over word-for-word translation. Once completed, the researcher reviewed the entire transcripts in both languages to ensure translation accuracy. Beyond the considerable time and effort invested in transcription and translation, the process demanded careful consideration of linguistic nuances, cultural context, and the precise conveyance of participants' meanings to ensure analytical integrity. Although data translation was time-consuming, this investment enhanced the study's rigour and trustworthiness. The researcher prioritised both content and semantic equivalence to produce accurate and meaningful textual representations.

Through repeatedly listening to recorded data during transcription and, critically, engaging with data translation that was extremely time consuming and challenging, but it offered the researcher by valuable insights into the data. Frequent examination of transcripts in both languages allowed the researcher to be intimately familiarised with data content and make strong connections between the parents’ comments and the research questions. After getting all data in a consistent and organised format, the researcher started the coding data process. When analysing data, all stages of coding were conducted through English.

4.11 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the individual interview and focus group data collected from Arabic- speaking immigrant parents. Thematic analysis was also used to analyse the qualitative data resulting from teachers’ responses to qualitative questions on the teacher’s online survey. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the quantitative questions in the questionnaire for teachers. Thematic analysis emerged first as an analytic approach in the 1970s that was originally used to analyse classifications and present interpretations that relate to data in diverse subjects (Merton, 1975). The use of thematic analysis as type of qualitative analysis has increased after Boyatzis (1998) description of thematic analysis as a translator for those speaking the languages of qualitative and quantitative analysis, enabling researchers who use different research methods to communicate with each other. More recent uses of thematic analysis reveal more values of the method, demonstrating that it gives an opportunity to understand the potential of any issue more widely (Marks & Yardley,

2004).

Thematic analysis has been variously defined as a method for analysing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse, and report repeated patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It illustrates which themes are important in the description of the phenomenon under study (Daly et al., 1997; Joffe, 2011). Thematic analysis is a method for summarizing large data sets to generate rich, detailed and complex final reports (King, 2004). Thematic analysis has been described as one of the most common methods of analysis in qualitative research (Swain, 2018; Krippendorf, 2018). Thematic analysis provides the flexibility for approaching two research patterns that can be either inductive or deductive (Braun et al., 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2021). In thematic analysis there is a process of data categorization called coding. Codes, in inductive approach, are derived exclusively from the data (Thomas, 2003; Varpio et al., 2020). Thus, these codes are data driven and are not reflecting the exact questions asked to respondents and are not predetermined by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By contrast, in deductive approach, Codes are derived from a framework or pre-existing theory. Such an approach is usually taken when the aim is to test or to expand an existing theory (Varpio et al., 2020). Both approaches have both positives and negatives. Taking a deductive approach generates themes that could be understood in the context of a pre-existing frame or theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Taking an inductive approach provides a broader, more expansive analysis of data that are based on familiarisation with the data, or sometimes a mix of both (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme, in thematic analysis, is differentiated from a code, it "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Its importance is not necessarily based on the frequency within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Themes can be classified as either semantic or latent. The semantic approach ignores the hidden meaning of data and themes are identified based merely on what is explicitly stated. Conversely, the latent approach goes beyond what is obtained in the semantic approach focusing on underlying meanings and involves an element of interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research study, both deductive or theoretically driven codes and inductive codes grounded in data were used for interpreting Arabic-speaking parents' perceptions and experiences with regard to ELL parental engagement. At the same time, both latent and manifest set of themes were generated to achieve high-quality qualitative work. With regard to how to conduct thematic analysis,

several frameworks such as (Boyatzis, 1998; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Joffe, 2011) have been found in literature. The present research follows the method as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022a) that involves six phases of: familiarisation; coding; generating initial themes; reviewing and developing themes; refining, defining and naming themes; and writing up. Even though thematic analysis has been criticised for not being a distinctive method, but as a process for identifying patterns that is common to many qualitative approaches (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017). Bryman (2016), further, indicated that thematic analysis is rather a "diffuse approach lacking sufficient agreed principles for defining the core themes in data" (p. 697). In addition, another major critique of thematic analysis is that it can yield an unconvincing analysis, where the themes do not appear to work, where there is too much overlap between themes, or where the themes are not internally coherent and consistent (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, a weak thematic analysis can also come from a failure to provide adequate examples or enough evidence from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, such risks may occur only if the researcher fails to provide a rich description and clear interpretation, with enough evidence of the data, therefore, the researcher made sure, during data analysis, that all aspects of the theme are cohere around a central idea as well as provided enough evidence while reporting research findings.

Thematic analysis was chosen over other analysis methodologies for several reasons. Interpretative phenomenological analysis, for instance, was not chosen as it focuses on personal experience and meaning making of small sample, maximum 10 participants (Moustakas, 1994). Grounded theory was not chosen as it aims to develop or modify a theory (Charmaz, 2000). Instead, thematic analysis was the ideal method and more straightforward to analyse experiences, perceptions and understandings. It is a flexible method which can be applied within various theoretical frameworks and it, also offers a practical guidance of how to analyse data from a relatively large sample, more than (N= 10) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, thematic analysis allows researchers to identify themes across the data set derived from various resources such as interviews, focus groups, and qualitative open-ended questions (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2022b). However, this method was chosen over another methods because it is the most widely adopted method of thematic analysis within qualitative literature (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017).

The researcher used NVivo 12 software to code the data. It afforded many benefits to successfully conduct thematic analysis as it saved considerable time and reduced a great number of manual tasks. It also allowed the researcher to discover tendencies, recognize

themes and derive conclusions (Wong, 2008). Even though using NVivo as a software for data analysis has been criticised as being less helpful than using traditional manual methods (Welsh, 2002). However, using NVivo 12 for this research data analysis facilitated managing data and carrying out many phases of reading the data and code construction. Some coding choices were informed by the literature on ELL parental engagement. While other codes were informed by engagement with the data. The researcher then clustered codes into categories and subcategories over multiple reading and rereading through the data. Thus, coded data in NVivo enabled the researcher to identify themes that were common across all parents and teachers (See Appendix 7 for NVivo data codebook). Then, the researcher did a constant analysis of the data until final themes arose through several rounds of discussion with the research supervision committee.

4.12 Ethical Assurances

Research involving human participants requires ethical review for two purposes, that is, to protect human subjects' rights and privacy (Wagner, 2003). Therefore, to avoid any ethical issues that may arise, the current research has been through multiple procedures to ensure that all research aspects, including recruitment, sampling, data processing and collection procedures were conducted ethically. Thus, the following procedures were applied as ethical considerations: first, the researcher has completed a Trinity GDPR online course on conducting research with human subjects, this helped the researcher to be aware of all ethical issues that might occur during research different stages including recruitment, data collection, processing and data storage. Second, the REC application form along with all requested documentation were submitted by the researcher to be reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences of TCD in November 2020. Full ethical approval was obtained in January 2021 (See appendix 1 for ethical approval letter).

School principals' permission to conduct research in their schools gained before any recruitment procedures started. Since privacy and confidentiality are one of the main issues that have been addressed through the design of the study, school principals were assured that privacy and confidentiality of the research sites will be coded using alphabetical letters (i, e. school A, school B). Additionally, both group research participants were given all information about the nature of the study, including potential risks and benefits, prior to their participation through the Participant Information Leaflet and the informed consent process.

As stated on the informed consent form completed at the onset of the study, participants' participation in the study was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. Participants were also informed that they might choose to decline answering any uncomfortable questions and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The participants continued to have their privacy respected and protected using pseudonyms and securing the records to the data and transcriptions into TCD OneDrive managed by the Trinity College Dublin and stored securely. In addition, no third parties had access to any type of data at any stage of the research. Trinity College-controlled secure cloud storage was used for the storing of personal data which is appropriate technical measure to protect personal data against accidental loss, destruction or damage resulting from unauthorised or unlawful access.

4.13 Researcher's Positionality

Researchers should evaluate how their own positions and experiences might contribute to their interpretations of people's lived experiences (Scharp & Thomas, 2019). The researcher, in qualitative research, is the instrument of data collection. So, his/her experiences influence the manner of data collection and analysis (Couture et al., 2012; Pezalla et al., 2012). Consequently, being able to speak the native language of the participants under study, the researcher was able to interview the Arabic-speaking parents' group of the language of their preference to increase communication and establish a relationship with many of them (see Chapter 1, Section 1.10 for details about the researcher). This has also allowed the researcher to enter the research with established trust with the parents who felt comfortable sharing their lived experiences in a way that best express their thoughts and feelings. Thus, being immersed in the context of parental engagement of Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs and understanding of the culture of the participants, allowed the researcher to be fully embedded in the study and be critically engaged with the data. The researcher acknowledges that her positionality influenced the study and ensures the study was guided by her collective cultural knowledge and expertise. It should be acknowledged that there are some risks of being insider researcher of a familiar relationship with any of the participants, with concerns related to the risk of coercion during recruitment (Asselin, 2003; Johnson & Clark, 2003). However, this risk, in the present research, has been minimised because the researcher utilized a third party, school principals as (gatekeepers), to recruit participants (Etherington, 2007). In addition, as the researcher's background, prior knowledge, and experience of the research subject may influence the collection, analysis and findings of data (Sloan & Bowe,

2014), It should be also acknowledged that there are some risks of potential bias of being an Arabic-speaking immigrant parent having children attending Irish primary schools. However, the researcher minimised such potential bias, that may lead to subjective interpretations, through using of open-ended questions while interviewing Arabic speaking immigrant parents of ELLs allowed them to describe their own experiences candidly while researchers main task was listening to the participants' lived experiences, interpreting the oral narratives, and applying the interpretations to the phenomenon under study. Moreover, to further strengthen the objectivity of the current research findings, this was achieved through using triangulation of data that was collected from multiple sources and methods so that research findings remain as unbiased and faithful representations of both participant groups perspectives as possible.

4.14 Research Challenges

Investigating the phenomenon under study "ELL parental engagement" is a school-based study, its main objectives were to online survey Irish primary school teachers and interview Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs, face to face, individually and in focus group discussions. The researcher, while conducting the present research, experienced some challenges. Initially, the original plan was to commence data collection soon after receiving TCD REC ethical approval in January 2021. However, the lockdown and social distancing measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to closures of schools at that time. This, in turn, caused some delays in data collection timeline until schools were back to classroom learning and ready to let research conducted in their schools started contacting schools to acquire permission and start data collection in August 2021. Additionally, the present research, aimed to collaborate with at least four primary schools, though it was not easy to get a fourth school involved from the beginning because schools were under considerable pressure due to staff shortage due to COVID-19 outbreaks and other factors at that time. Moreover, scheduling focus group discussions was another challenge. It required significant planning as the researcher had to accommodate each focus group discussion participants in the exact time and place. This meant that the researcher had to reschedule the focus group discussions several times. Another important challenge was the language. Although the researcher is bilingual and could conduct individual and focus groups in either English or Arabic, the translation of transcripts was time consuming.

4.15 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has presented an overview of the methodology for this research study. It has given an overview of the research population and research context. It has also detailed the research design and the justification of the research study. This chapter, moreover, gave an overview of the sampling, data collection procedures, data collection tools and how participants were to be recruited of the two phases of data collection. It has, primarily, outlined the study phase 1 design of the teacher's questionnaire, sampling strategy for questionnaire and how the questionnaire was administered. Afterwards, the design and justification of the data collection tools used in the phase 2 of the study of Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs, selection criteria for the sample population and how parents were to be recruited were also outlined in detail. This chapter also has outlined the ethical considerations taken during the different stages of the research study including data storage, data translation, ethical assurances and how the confidentiality of the participants was protected to show the reflexivity and the trustworthiness of the study. Finally. the researcher presented her positionality statement and the different challenges that faced the different stages of the current research.

Chapter 5: Research Findings (Teacher Survey)

5.1 Section 1: Introduction

This chapter outlines the quantitative and qualitative responses made by Irish primary school teachers who completed an online anonymous questionnaire entitled "School and Family Partnerships: Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in the Elementary and Middle Grades". The questionnaire was adopted as the measurement tool to investigate teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding ELL parental engagement (Epstein & Salinas, 1993). The sample population for the questionnaires was described in the methodology chapter (See Chapter 4, Section 4.7.6). In this chapter the researcher will report data that was anonymously obtained from participating teachers in four participating primary schools in Dublin. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative data generated from survey including teacher's demographic information, teachers' attitudes about the importance of family school engagement, teachers' engagement practices and their perspectives on what schools should do to involve diverse families who have different needs and skills. Descriptive statistics were conducted using Microsoft Excel that offered a range of tools that effectively facilitated quantitative data analysis. Thematic analysis, using NVivo 12 software, has also been used to analyse teachers' qualitative responses that identified successful engagement practices, challenges that face teachers/ schools in engaging parents of ELLs as well as their schools' strategies in engaging parents of ELLs.

Quantitative data are reported in this chapter based on Epstein's six types of engagement framework, so that instead of reporting findings in the order in which the items were presented in the questionnaire, similar items are grouped together and outlined under headings based in Epstein's six types of engagement. The first topic is teachers' characteristics including background and experience information such as gender, age, total years of teaching experience, years of teaching experience at their particular school, nationality and education attainment. The five remaining headings were based on teachers' perspectives on communication, learning at home, parenting, decision making and finally, collaborating with community. Teachers' qualitative data are reported under four topics namely, volunteering at school, successful practices that teachers use to engage ELL parents, challenges that face the sample of teachers and schools they work at in engaging parents of ELLs and suggestions for support are also reported as the last topic.

The research questions that investigate teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding ELL parental engagement and guide this mixed-method part of research were the following:

(1) What are teachers' attitudes and actions towards ELL parental engagement in the context of Irish primary schools?

(2) What are primary teachers' perspectives of challenges to family-school engagement? What practices promote effective parental engagement?

5.2 Analysis of Quantitative Data

5.2.1 Demographic Information Questions

Six background questions were used to generate information on teacher context. These questions concerned gender, age, total years of teaching experience, years of teaching experience at their school, nationality and education attainment. These questions were asked to give an insight into the teachers who participated in the questionnaire.

Table 2 . Characteristics of Teachers in Survey

Characteristic		Number N	percentage %
Gender	Female Male	39 6	87 % 13 %
Nationality	Irish Other	44 1	98 % 2 %
Age	20-30 years old 31-40 41-50 51-60 61 +	17 14 8 4 2	38 % 31 % 18 % 9 % 4 %
Total years of teaching experience	Mean (N=45) Standard deviation	10.3 9.7	
Years of teaching at this school	Mean (N=45) Standard deviation	6.3 6.5	
Education attainment.	Bachelor's	14	31 %
	Bachelor's & professional certifications	14	31 %
	Masters	10	22 %
	Master's & professional certifications	7	16 %
	Doctorate	0	0 %
Total Responses		(N=45)	

A total of 45 of teachers participated in this investigation, within the context of four Irish primary schools. Overall, the largest percentage of survey responses gathered through the surveys came from Catholic School A (33%, N=15), followed by Islamic School B (27%, N=12), Islamic School C (27%, N=12), and Catholic School D (13%, N=6). While the researcher anticipated diversity in school types, the inconsistency in response rates was notable, Catholic School A contributed twice as many responses as Catholic School D, despite both being of the same type.

Overall, 87% of participating teachers were female, while 13% were male. Additionally, 98% identified their nationality as Irish, with one teacher in School C identifying as non-Irish. The demographic profile of the teachers who participated in the survey largely matched what the researcher anticipated. The high proportion of female teachers (87%) was expected, reflecting well-documented gender imbalances within primary teaching in Ireland and internationally (Heinz, Keane & Davison, 2023). Similarly, the predominance of Irish nationality (98%) aligns with the demographic makeup of the teaching profession in Ireland (Heinz & Keane, 2018; Keane, Heinz & Lynch, 2023; Heinz, Keane & McDaid, 2023). This homogeneity is a significant factor when interpreting findings related to differing attitudes between Irish teachers and Arabic-speaking parents. These differences pertained to various aspects of ELL parental engagement, which acted as challenges in cultural understanding and barriers to family-school engagement, as further discussed in Chapter 7 (Section 7.5.2.2).

The teachers range in age from their early 20s to their 60s with most teachers were under 40 (38% in their twenties and 31% in their thirties). Teachers were asked to indicate the highest level of education they had completed. As can be seen from (Table 2) above, there is a high proportion (62 %) of teachers in the current sample (N=45) who have attained at least a bachelor's degree (31 %) and same percentage (31 %) who had a bachelor and professional certifications, while 38% of teachers have also attained master’s degree. Over half (58%) of total number of teachers (N=45) had over 10 years of experience, while (42%) of them were at their school for over three years.

5.2.2 Teachers’ Attitudes Towards Importance of Family School engagement

Statements from section (1) of the survey were used to investigate teachers' general attitudes about family and community engagement. Teachers responded on a 5-point Likert Scale where a response of 1 indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement and a response of 5 indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement. One hundred percent of teachers surveyed (N=45) responded to all statements on section one of the teacher survey. Responses to eight out of ten items in the first part of questionnaire are explained below in detail (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10) including overall mean and standard deviation scores, calculated on Microsoft Excel, in relation to each statement.

Table 3. Statement 1, Parent engagement is important for a good school.

Statement 1	Total (N=45)	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	2	4.44%
Agree	14	31.11%
Strongly Agree	29	64.44%

(Mean = 4.6, Median = 5, SD = 0.57)

The data contained in (Table 3) indicate that (64.44%) of teachers who responded to this statement (N=45) strongly agreed, and (31.11%) of them agreed that parent engagement is important for a good school resulting in a mean rating of 4.6 (SD= 0.57) and a median rating of (5). Therefore, a majority (95.55%) of teachers surveyed agreed and strongly agreed that parent engagement is important for a good school.

Table 4. Statement 3, Parent engagement can help teachers be more effective with more pupils.

Statement 3	Total (N=45)	Percentage
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	1	2.22%
Neutral	2	4.44%
Agree	23	51.11%
Strongly Agree	19	42.22%

(Mean = 4.33, Median = 4, SD = 0.67)

The third Statement in section one stated, “Parent engagement can help teachers be more

effective with more pupils". The data indicate that the most common response from teachers (N=45) was "agree" by 51.11%, followed by "strongly agree" by 42.22%. On average there was a tendency for teachers to agree that parent engagement can help them be more effective with their pupils given a mean rating of 4.33 (SD= 0.67) and a median rating of (4). Overall, (93.33%) of teachers surveyed agreed and strongly agreed that parent engagement can help them be more effective with pupils.

Table 5. Statement 4, Parents of children at this school want to be involved more than they are now.

Statement 4	Total (N=45)	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	2.22%
Disagree	13	28.88%
Neutral	26	57.77%
Agree	3	6.66%
Strongly Agree	2	4.44%

(Mean = 2.82, Median = 3, SD = 0.77)

Statement 4 stated "parents of children at this school want to be involved more than they are now". The summarised responses presented in (Table 5)indicate that the most common response was to neither agree nor disagree (neutral) with the statement (57.77%) followed by disagree (28.88%). The mean rating of 2.82 (SD= 0.77) and the median rating of (3) indicate that presented in (Table 4) indicate that the most common response was to neither agree nor disagree "neutral" that there was a tendency for teachers to feel neutral regarding the statement. However, only a minority (11%) of teachers agreed and strongly agreed that pupil's parents at the school they work at want to be more involved than they are now.

Table 6. Statement 5, Teachers do not have the time to involve parents in very useful ways.

Statement 5	**Total (N=45)**	**Percentage**
Strongly Disagree	2	4.44%
Disagree	21	46.66%
Neutral	7	15.55%
Agree	12	26.66%
Strongly Agree	3	6.66%

(Mean = 2.84, Median = 2, SD = 1.08)

Statement 5 stated "teachers do not have the time to involve parents in very useful ways". The summarised responses presented in (Table 6)indicate that the most common responses of teachers (N=45) were "disagree" by (46.66%) that they do not have enough time to involve parents in very useful ways followed by (26.66%) of teachers who selected "agree" that they do not have time to involve parents in very useful ways. The mean rating of 2.84 (SD=1.08) and the median rating of 2 indicate that there was a tendency for teachers (over half of them 51.1%) to disagree and strongly disagree that they do not have the time at school to effectively involve parents of their pupils. Even though over third of them 33.32% agreed and strongly agreed that they do not have enough time to engage parents of their pupils in useful ways.

Table 7. Statement 6, Teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent engagement practices.

Statement 6	**Total (N=45)**	**percentage**
Strongly Disagree	1	2.22%
Disagree	7	15.55%
Neutral	10	22.22%
Agree	23	51.11%
Strongly agree	4	8.88%

(Mean = 3.48, Median = 4, SD = 0.94)

Statement 6 stated "Teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent engagement practices". The summarised responses provided in (

Table 7) indicate that the most common response from teachers (N=45) was to "agree" by (51.11%) that they need in-service education to implement effective parent engagement practices followed by a slightly high percentage of teachers who indicated neutrality that they need in-service education by (22.22%). In addition, the mean rating of 3.48 (SD=0.94) and the median rating of (4) indicate that there was a tendency of teachers to agree and strongly agree that teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent engagement practices by around 60% even though some of the teachers 17.77% disagree and strongly disagree that they need in-service education to implement effective parent engagement practices.

Table 8. Statement 7, Parent engagement is important for pupil success in school.

Statement 7	**Total (N=45)**	**Percentage**
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	2	4.44%
Neutral	1	2.22%
Agree	21	46.66%
Strongly agree	21	46.66%

(Mean = 4.35, Median = 4, SD = 0.74)

Statement 7 stated "parent engagement is important for pupil success in school". The descriptive data presented in (

Table 8) indicate that the most common responses of teachers (N=45) was to "agree" and "strongly agree" with the statement by (46.66%) for each category. Therefore, a very large majority (93.32 %) of teachers agreed and strongly agreed the importance of parent engagement for pupils' success in school. This was further illustrated by the mean rating of 4.35 (SD= 0.74) and the median rating of 4 that the majority of the teachers viewed parents as important partners and viewed their engagement as fundamental for their children's success in school.

Table 9. Statement 8: This school views parents as important partners.

Statement 8	**Total (N=45)**	**Percentage**
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Disagree	4	8.88%
Neutral	4	8.88%
Agree	17	37.77%
Strongly agree	20	44.44%

(Mean = 4.17, Median = 4, SD = 0.93)

Statement 8 stated "this school views parents as important partners". The data presented in (Table 9) indicate the most common responses from teachers (N=45) were "strongly agree" (44.44%) followed by "agree" (37.77%). The mean rating of 4.17 (SD= 0.93) and the median rating of 4 indicate that there was a tendency for teachers surveyed to strongly agree with the statement. Therefore, the majority (82.21%) of teachers agreed and strongly agreed that their school views parents as important partners in the education of their children.

Table 10. Statement 10, Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best school climates for teachers, students, and parents.

Statement 10	Total (N=45)	Percentage
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	5	11.11%
Neutral	15	33.33%
Agree	10	22.22%
Strongly agree	15	33.33%

(Mean = 3.77, Median = 4, SD = 1.04)

Statement 10 stated "Compared to other schools, this school has one of the best school climates for teachers, students, and parents." The data presented in (

Table 10) indicate the most common responses from teachers (N=45) was equal for two categories "neutral" as well as "strongly agree" by (33.33%) for each category, followed by "agree" (22.22%). Over half (55.55 %) of teachers agreed and strongly agreed that they have a good school climate for themselves, pupils and their parents even though many of the teachers (33.33%) selected "neutral" and (11.11%) of surveyed teachers "disagreed" that the school they work at has one of the best school climates comparing to other schools. This was further illustrated by the mean rating of 3.77 (SD= 1.04) and the median rating of 4.

5.3 Communication

Several items from section 2 and section 3 of the teachers' survey were used to gather data about school to home communication, The following four items from Section 2 of teachers' questionnaire investigated teachers' general perceptions on how important for the schools

they work at to communicate with all, including native and immigrant, families at school (See Appendix C, for Teachers' Questionnaire). These statements were:

11, "Have a parent-teacher meeting with each of my students' parents at least once a year".

12, "Contact parents about their children's problems or troubles".

13, "Inform parents when their children do something well or improve".

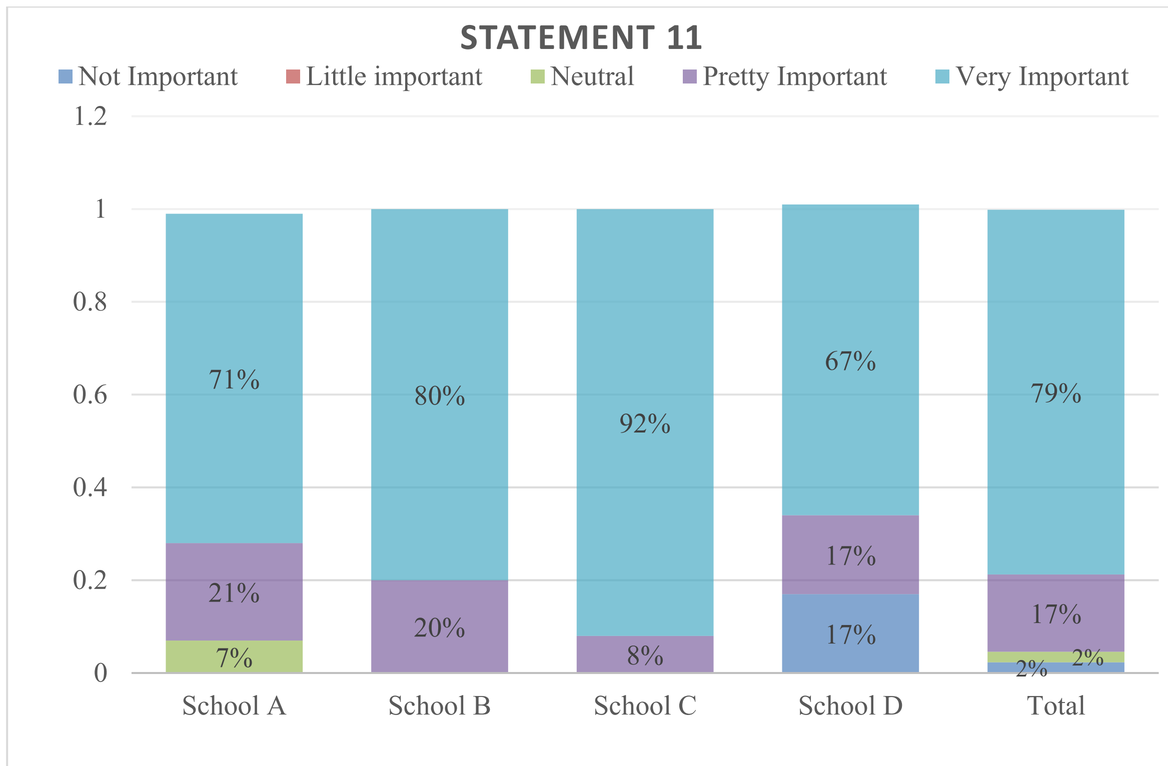
14, "Inform parents of the skills their children must develop in each subject I teach".

To all statements in section 2, the answer categories were "Not important", "A little important", "Neutral", "Pretty important" and "Very important". The response rate for all items in section 2 was (93 %, N=42) of teachers who participated in the survey (N=45). Responses were distributed across the four participating schools as (33%, N= 14) school A, (24%, N= 10) School B, (28 %, N= 12) School C, and (14%, N= 6) School D. Teachers' responses for each item in section 2 and section 3 of survey are reported separately across the four participating schools to facilitate understanding each school's strategies in involving parents. Also, to facilitate comparison between the four participating schools, charts are used for reporting data to make each school's strategy in involving parents much more understandable.

5.3.1 Statement 11: Frequency of Parent-Teacher Meetings

Overall, 79% of teachers (N=42) who responded to the statement "Have a parent-teacher meeting with each of my students' parents at least once a year" indicated that it is "very important" to meet pupils' parents at least once a year (71% School A, 80 % School B, 92% school C, 67% school D). Furthermore, 17% of teachers surveyed (21% School A, 20% school B, 8 % school C and 17% School D) reported it is "pretty important" to have an annual parent-teacher meeting with pupils' parents (See Figure 5). In total 96 % of teachers surveyed indicated that it is either (very or pretty important) to invite parents to the school once a year for a parent-teacher meeting (PTM). The mean rating of 4.6 (SD=0.74) and the median rating of (5), further, indicate that having an annual PTMs with all pupils' parents in the school is very important for the majority of teachers who participated in the survey.

Figure 5: Have a parent-teacher meeting with each of my students' parents at least once a year.

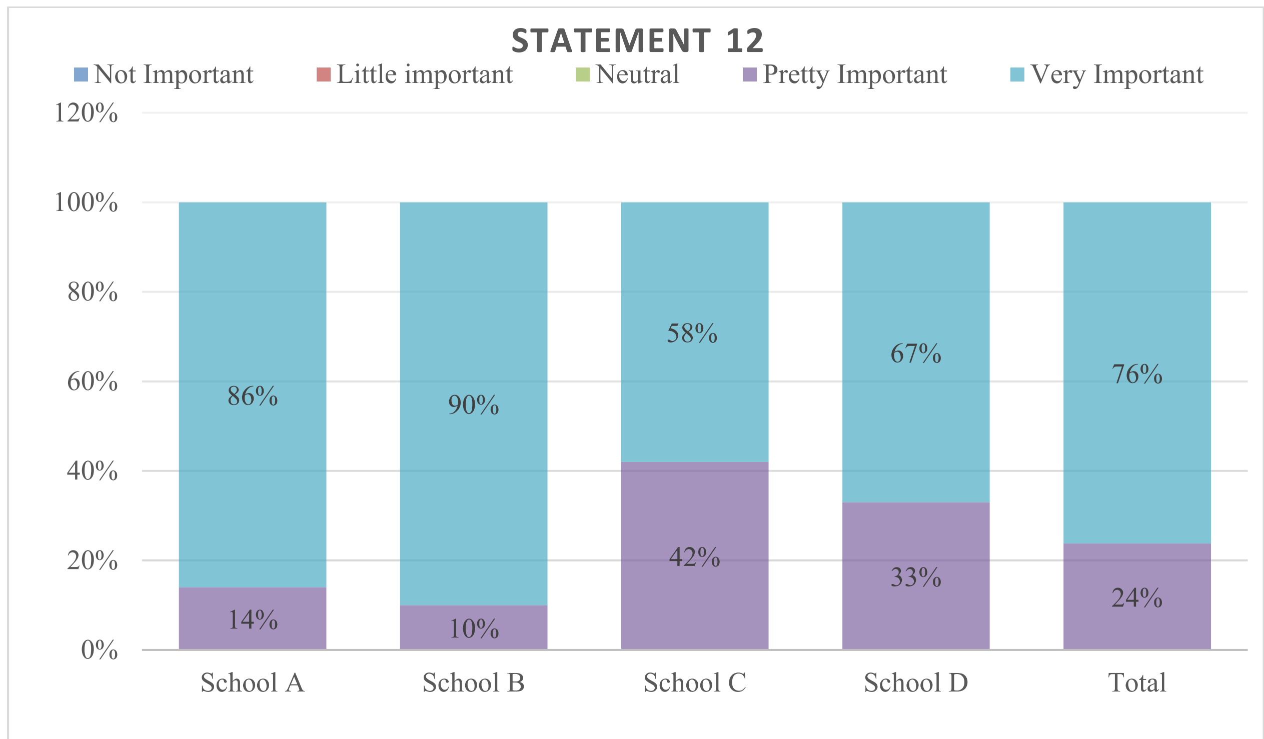


Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 10, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total = 42

5.3.2 Statement 12: Contact Parents about Children’s Problems

About seventy-six percent (86% School A, 90 % school B, 58 % school C and 67% School D) of teachers (N=42) who responded to the statement “contact parents about their children’s problems or troubles” indicated that it is “very important” to contact parents about their children's problems or troubles. The next highest category was “pretty important" at 24% (14 % School A, 10% School B, 42% School C, and 33% School D). Thus, 99.99 % of teachers surveyed indicated that it is very and pretty important to have communication with parents about their children's problems (See Figure 6). In addition, the mean rating of 4.7 (SD=0.43) and the median rating of (5), further, indicate that contacting parents about their children's problems is very important for most of the teachers who participated in the survey.

Figure 6: Contact parents about their children's problems or troubles.

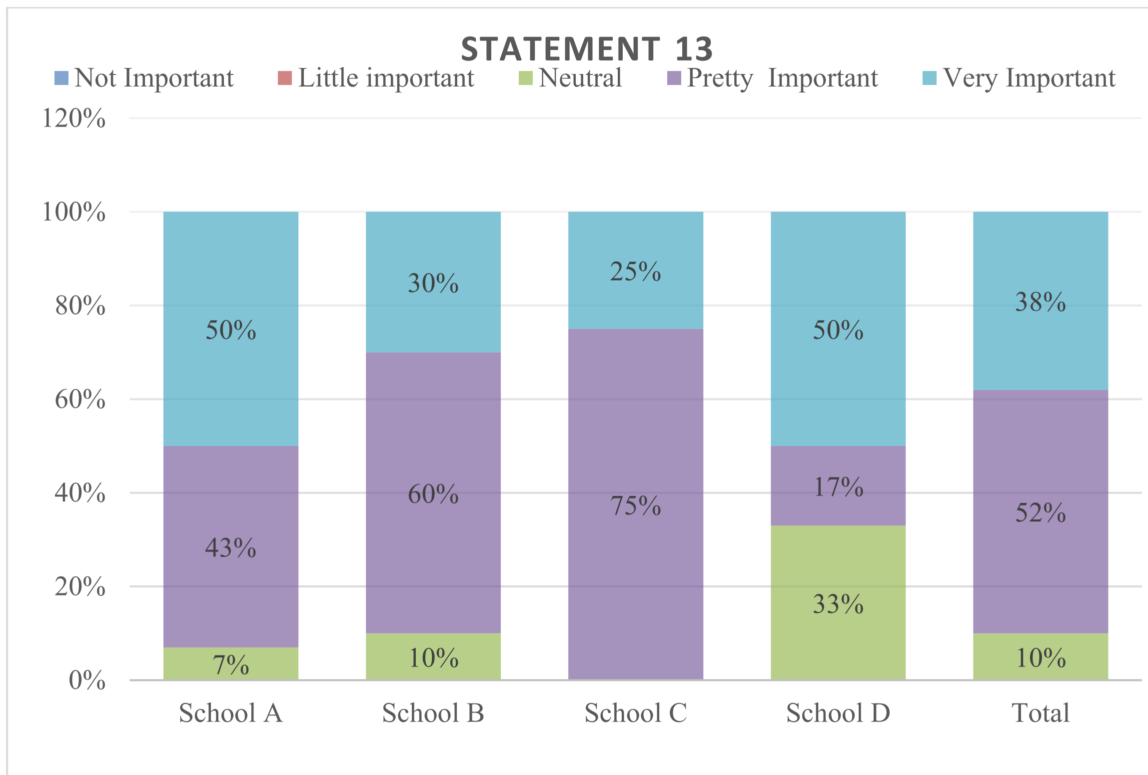


Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 10, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total =42

5.3.3 Statement 13: Inform Parents About Children's Improvements

Overall, 52 % of teachers (N =42) indicated that it is "pretty important" to "Inform parents when their children do something well or improve", both teachers in schools B and C had rates above 50% (60 % school B, 75 % school C) in response to "pretty important" (See Figure 7). Of the remaining responses, 43% and 17% of the teachers in school A and D respectively indicated it is "pretty important" to inform parents when their children do something well. Results, further, shows that 50% of teachers in school A indicated that it is "very important" to "inform parents when their children do something well or improve" and 50% of the teachers in school D also selected the category "very important". While 30% of teachers in schools B and 25% of teachers in school C selected the category "very important". In total, 90% of teachers who responded to this statement (N=42) indicated that it is pretty and very important to inform parents when their children do something well or improve. In addition, the mean rating of 4.28 (SD=0.63) and the median rating of 4 indicate that contacting parents to report their children's improvement and achievements is pretty important for many teachers surveyed.

Figure 7: Inform parents when their children do something well or improve.

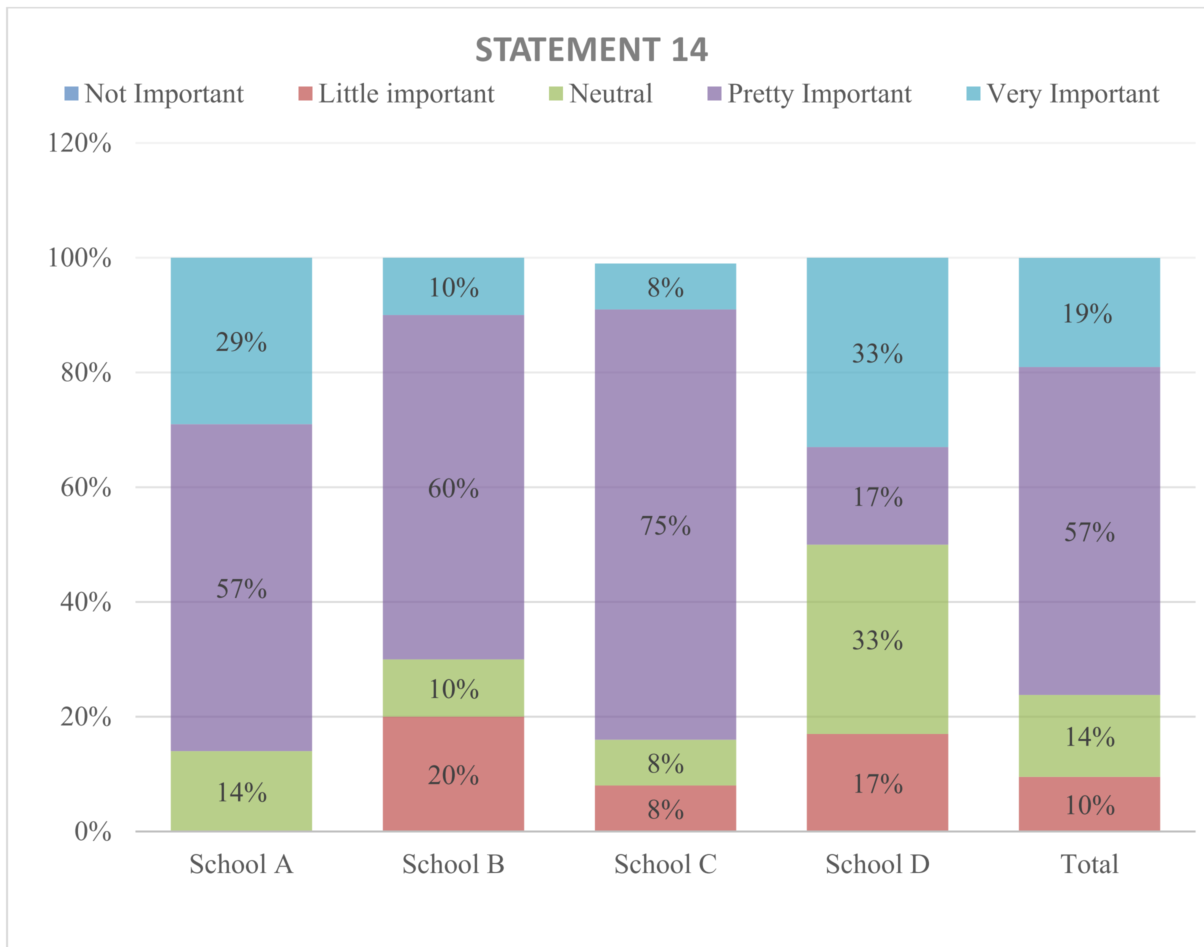


Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 10, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total= 42.

5.3.4 Statement 14: Inform Parents of Skills Needed in Each Subject

Overall, 57 % of teachers (N =42) who responded to the statement “Inform parents of the skills their children must develop in each subject I teach” indicated that it is “pretty important” to inform parents of the skills their children must develop in each subject (57 % school A, 60 % school B, 75 % school C, 17% school D). Results, further, shows that 19% of overall teachers (29 % school A, 10 % school B, 8% school C, 33% school D) indicated that it is “very important” to inform parents of the skills needed in each subject. Whereas 14 % of all teachers (14 % school A, 10 % school B, 8% school C, 33% school D) indicated neutrality to the statement. In total 76 % of teachers (N=42) indicated that it is pretty and very important to inform parents of the skills their children must develop in each subject they teach. (See Figure 8). In addition, the mean rating of 3. 85 (SD=0.84) and the median rating of 4 indicate that informing parents of the skills that their children must develop in each subject is pretty important for many teachers surveyed.

Figure 8: Inform parents of the skills their children must develop in each subject I teach.



Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 10, School C = 12, School D=6, Total=42

The following three items from Section 3 of teachers' questionnaire specifically investigated teachers' perceptions on how well the schools they work at communicate with culturally and linguistically diverse populations of families who have different needs and skills to keep them informed about school activities as well as the academic progress of their children (See Appendix C, for Teachers' Questionnaire). These statements were:

23, "Communications from the school to the home that all families can understand and use".

24, "Communications about report cards so that parents understand students' progress and needs."

25, "Parent-teacher meetings with all diverse families."

To these three statements, four responses were possible to tell whether teachers think this type of school to home communication at their school is:

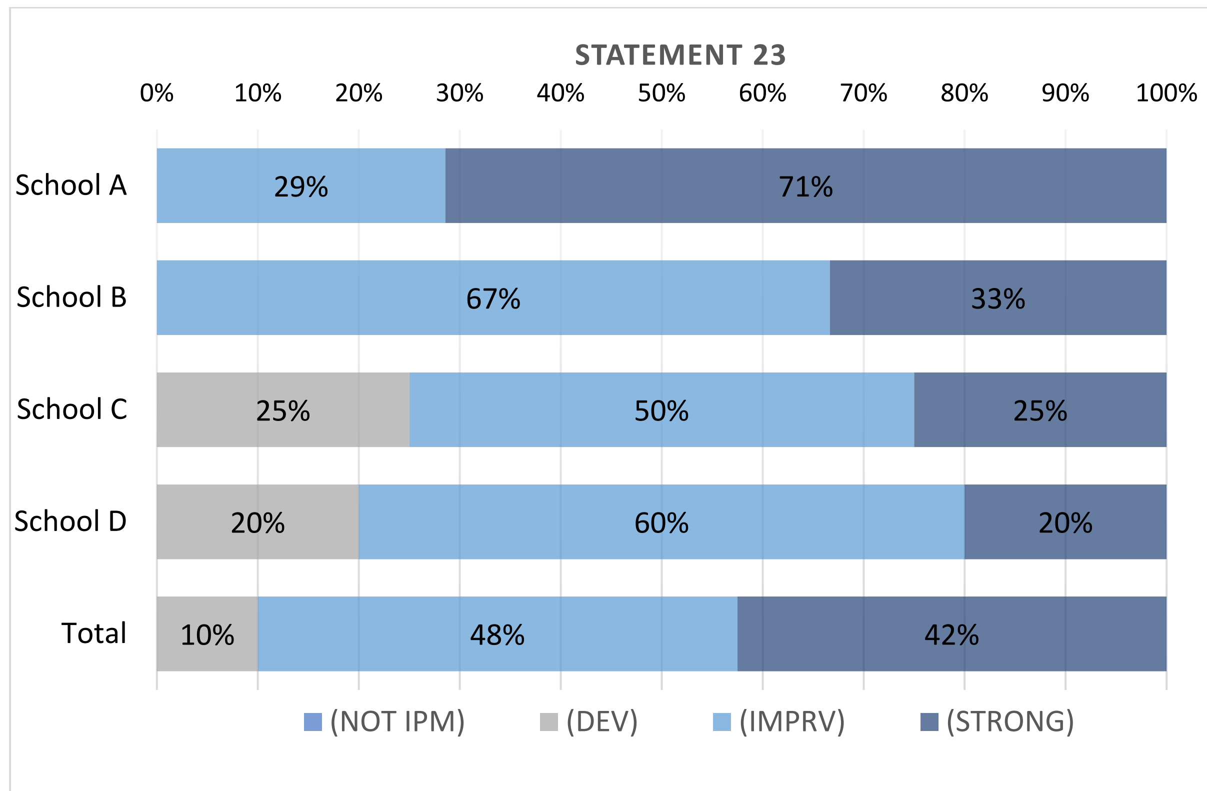
- Not important “NOT IMP”, which means this type of communication is not part of their school now and should not be.
- Needs to be developed “DEV”, which means that this type of communication is not part of their school now but should be.
- Needs to be improved “IMPRV”, which means that this type of communication is already a part of their school but needs to be strengthened.
- A Strong programme now “STRONG” which means this type of communication is strong for most parents at their schools now.

The response rate for each of Section 3 items was (89%, N=40) of overall teachers who participated in the survey (N=45). Responses were distributed across the four participating schools as (14) teachers school A, (9) teachers School B, (12) teachers School C and (5) teachers School D.

5.3.5 Statement 23: Understandable School-Home Communication

Teachers (N=40) responded more frequently to the statement “Needs to be improved, IMPRV” by 48% (29% School A, 67 % School B, 50 % School C and 60% School D) which indicate that “Communications from the school to the home that all families can understand and use” is already a part of their schools, however, needs to be more strengthened. The second highest response rate was “Strong” school to home communication category by 42 % (33 % School B, 25 % School C and 20 % School D); teachers in school A indicated the highest response rate under the category “STRONG” by 71 % (See Figure 9 The category “DEV, needs to be developed” received an overall response rate by 10% (25 % school C, 20% school D) indicating that this type of communication is not part of their school now, and that their schools need to develop such communication programmes that all families can understand. Overall, over half of surveyed teachers showed dissatisfaction with communication from school to home that all diverse families who have different needs and skills can understand by response rate 58% under the categories of “Needs to be developed” by (10%) and “Needs to be improved” by (48%). The mean rating of 3.32 (SD=0.65) and the median rating of 3, further, indicate that school to home communication that all diverse families can understand needs to be improved in most of the participating schools.

Figure 9 Communications from school to home that all families can understand and use.



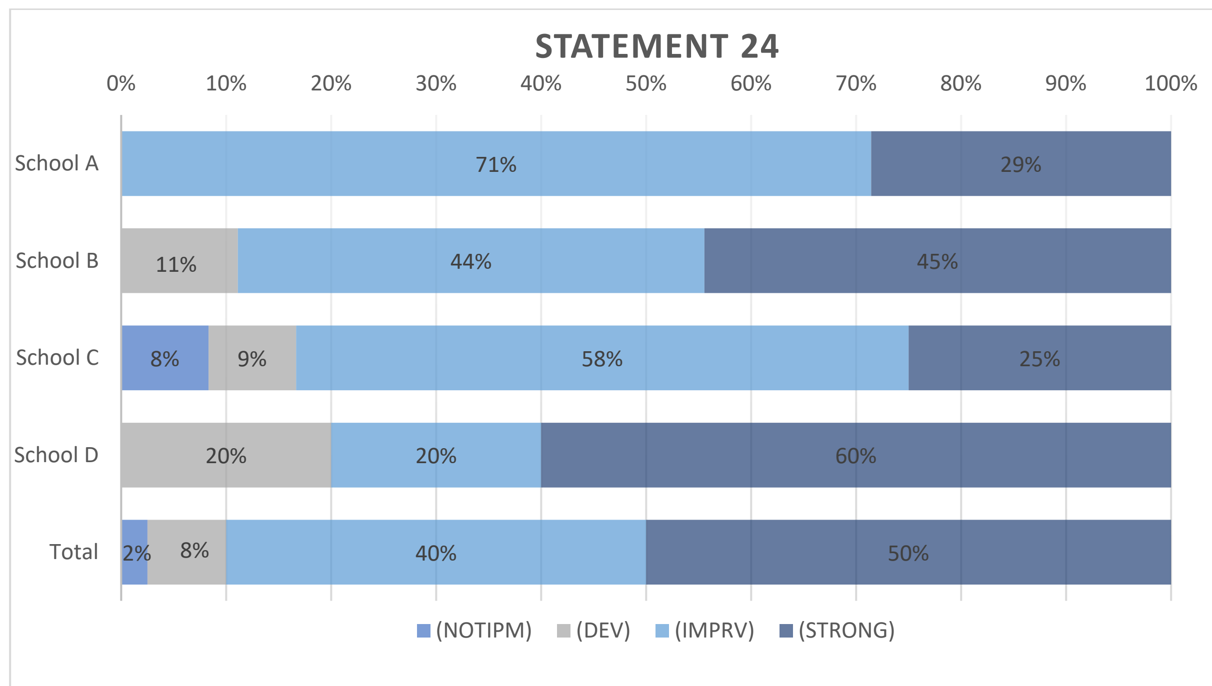
Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 9, School C = 12, School D = 5, Total = 40

5.3.6 Statement 24: Understandable Report Cards

Overall, fifty percent of teachers (N= 40) who responded to the statement "Communications about report cards so that parents understand students' progress and needs" indicated that they have "Strong" type of school to home communication regarding report cards in the schools they work at (29% School A, 45% School B, 25 % School C and 60% School D). The second highest response rate was under the category "IMPRV, needs to be improved" by 40% (71 % school A, 44 % school B, 58 % school C, and 20%school D) which indicate that communication about report cards so that parents of ELLs understand their children's progress and needs is already a part of their schools but needs to be strengthened (SeeFigure 10). The category "DEV, needs to be developed" received a response rate by 8% (11 % school B, 9% school C, 20% school D) indicating that communications about report cards so that parents understand students' progress and needs is not part of their schools now, and that their schools need to develop such communication programmes so that all families can understand their children's progress and needs. Overall, teachers' responses showed that

participating schools' communications about report cards are "Strong" in schools (B and D) while schools (A and C) need to improve report card communication with diverse families. The mean rating of 3.37 (SD=0.74) and the median rating of 3.4, further, indicate that teachers who responded to this statement had differing views regarding the effectiveness of report cards sent from school to culturally and linguistically diverse homes. While half of the teachers were satisfied about this type of school to home communication, the other half, however, indicated that their schools need to improve report card sent to culturally and linguistically diverse families so that they can understand their children's development and needs.

Figure 10: Communications about report cards so that parents understand students' progress and needs.



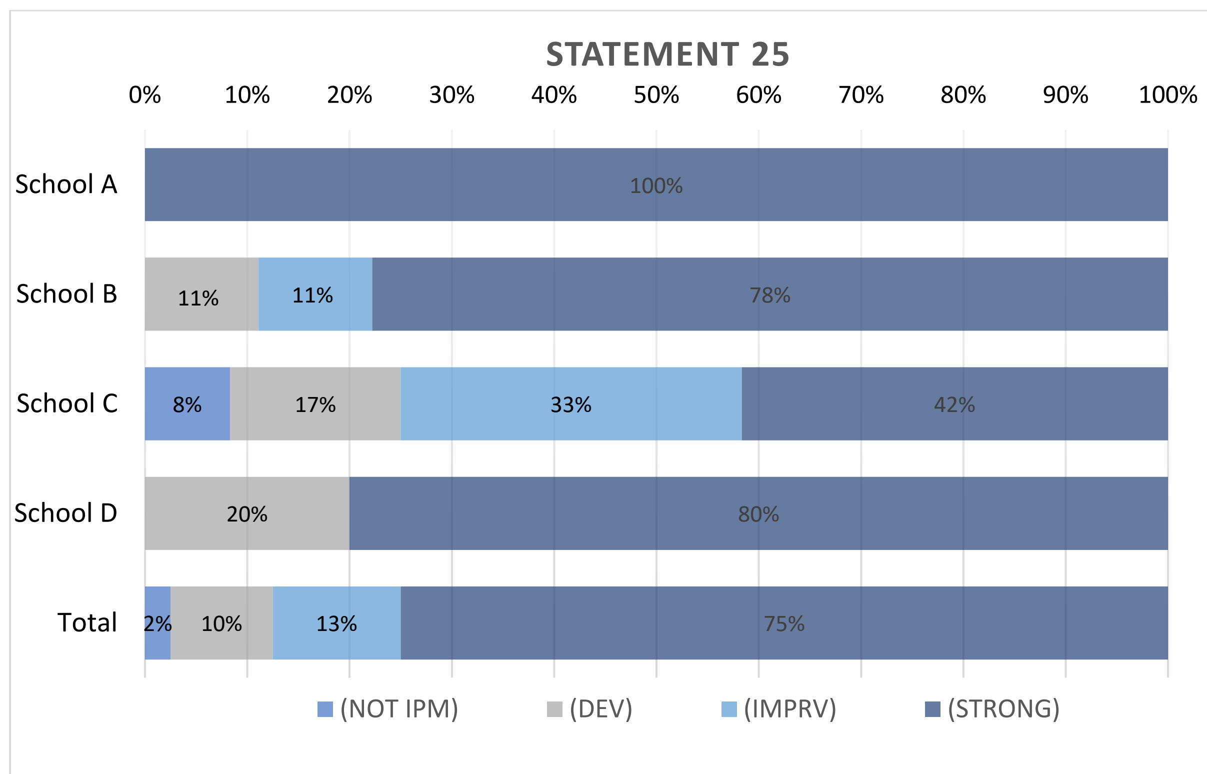
Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 9, School C = 12, School D = 5, Total = 40.

5.3.7 Statement 25: PTMs with all Diverse Families

The majority of teachers (N=40) who responded to the statement "Parent-teacher meetings with all families" selected "Strong programme now" by 75% (100% School A, 78% school B, 42% School C and 80% School D). Teachers in school C indicated the lowest response rate, among other schools, under the category "Strong programme now" by 42%. The response rates from schools B, C and D teachers were spread across all categories (See

Figure 11). The other two frequently selected responses were “Needs to be developed” and “Needs to be improved”. “Needs to be improved” was selected most by teachers from schools (B and C) by 13% (11 % school B, 33 % school C) “Needs to be improved” was selected by teachers from schools (B, C and D) by 10% (11% school B, 17% school C and 20% school D). Overall, surveyed teachers, agreed that their schools have strong programmes of parent-teacher meetings with all diverse families. In addition, the mean rating of 3.6 (SD=0.77) and the median rating of 4 indicate that teachers tended to show agreement regarding their schools’ strategies of having STRONG parent-teacher meetings programmes with all diverse families that have different skills and needs.

Figure 11: Parent-teacher meetings with all families.



Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 9, School C = 12, School D = 5, Total = 40.

To sum up, in response to four statements in section two (11, 12, 13 and 14) of teachers’ questionnaire examining teachers’ perceptions regarding the importance of some communication practices, findings indicate that more that 70% of surveyed teachers (N=42) perceived these communication practices as “pretty important” and “very important” to assist the families of their pupils to be more involved in the education of their children. This finding demonstrates the value and importance of school to home communication for

teachers surveyed for pupils' development and success at school. Moreover, data from three statements in section three of questionnaire showed that the participating schools have "Strong" understandable report cards and parent-teacher meeting schedules that target culturally and linguistically diverse families with different skills and needs so that they understand their children's progress and needs (N=40, 50%, 75% respectively). However, surveyed teachers indicated that delivering understandable communication from school to home that diverse families can understand, and use needed to be improved (N=40, 48%).

These findings regarding teachers' perceptions about school to home communication largely align with expectations in the literature (Soutullo et al., 2016; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wilder, 2014). The high value placed (70%) on practices like PTMs and clear reporting was expected, given their established role in engagement frameworks (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011). However, the finding that nearly half of teachers identified communication comprehensibility for diverse families as needing improvement was more pronounced than anticipated. This challenge may reflect research involving teachers within the Irish context. McGorman and Sugrue (2007) found lower proficiency in the school language among parents of ELLs in Dublin primary schools limits school-parent communication. Similarly, Soutullo et al. (2016) explained that linguistic and cultural differences between families with lower English proficiency and school personnel, coupled with a lack of bilingual skills among teachers and staff, constrain schools' ability to develop effective communication and engagement programmes that foster partnerships with immigrant families.

5.4 Learning at Home

Several items from section 2 and section 3 of the teachers' survey were used to gather data about how teachers encourage learning at home activities. Some statements focused on teachers' perceptions about how important for them to generally help parents' support their children learning at home so that their children develop properly in Irish school. Other statements focused on the importance of assigning interactive homework. Some statements focused on how the schools that teachers work at support culturally and linguistically diverse families to advance the learning of their children at home. To understand primary school teachers' perceptions about learning at home, responses to statements 15, 16, 17 and 18 from section 2 of the survey were examined to measure how important or not important for teachers to involve parents of their pupils in various learning at home activities to support their children with their education in Irish schools. In addition, statement 27 in section 3 of

the teachers' survey was also examined to investigate teachers' perspectives about what their schools usually do to advance opportunities for diverse parents so that they become involved with their children's learning at home.

Items on learning at home from Section 2 of the survey were:

15, "Provide specific activities for children and parents to do to improve the children's learning".

16, "Assign homework that requires children to interact with parents".

17, "Suggest ways to practice spelling or skills at home before a test or other".

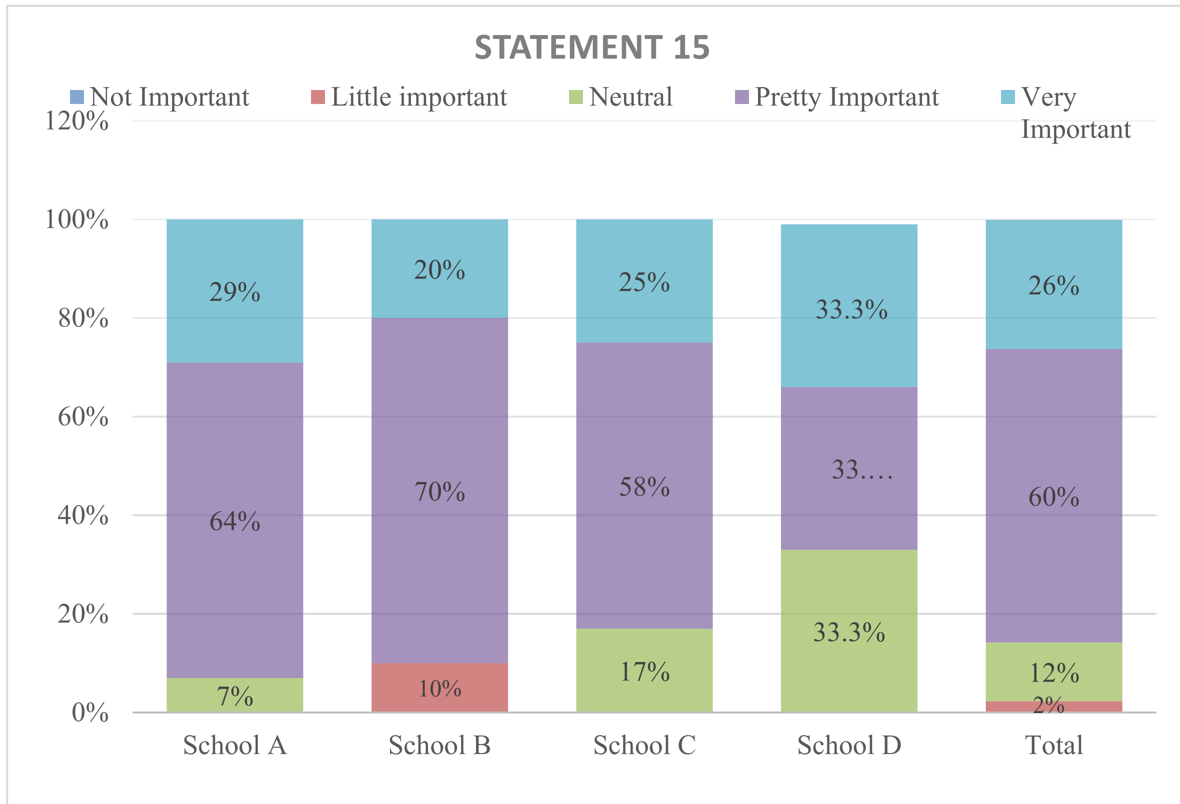
18, "Ask parents to listen to their children read".

The answer categories for these items were "Not important", "A little important", "Neutral", "Pretty important" and "Very important". Ninety three percent (N=42) of overall teachers surveyed (N=45) responded to these four items on section two of the teacher survey. Responses were distributed by the four participating schools 14 teachers (33%) school A, 10 teachers (24 %) School B, 12 teachers (28 %) School C and 6 teachers (14 %) School D.

5.4.1 Statement 15: Encourage Learning at Home

Overall, 60 % of teachers (N=42) who responded to the statement "Provide specific activities for children and parents to do to improve the children's learning" indicated that it is "pretty important" to provide specific activities for children and parents to do at home to improve the children's' learning of the Irish school curriculum (64 % school A, 70 % school B and 58 % school C). Whereas teachers in school D were equally divided between three answer choices when responding to the statement, (33.3%) selected "neutral", and same number of teachers selected "pretty important" and "very important" at a rate of 33.3% (See Figure 12). Overall, 86 % of teachers surveyed indicated it is pretty and very important to provide specific activities for children and parents to do at home to improve the children's learning. The mean rating of 4.09 (SD=0.69) and the median rating of 4, further, indicate that teachers who completed the questionnaire tended to agree about the importance of providing parents with specific activities to do with their children at home.

Figure 12: Provide specific activities for children and parents to do to improve the children's' learning.



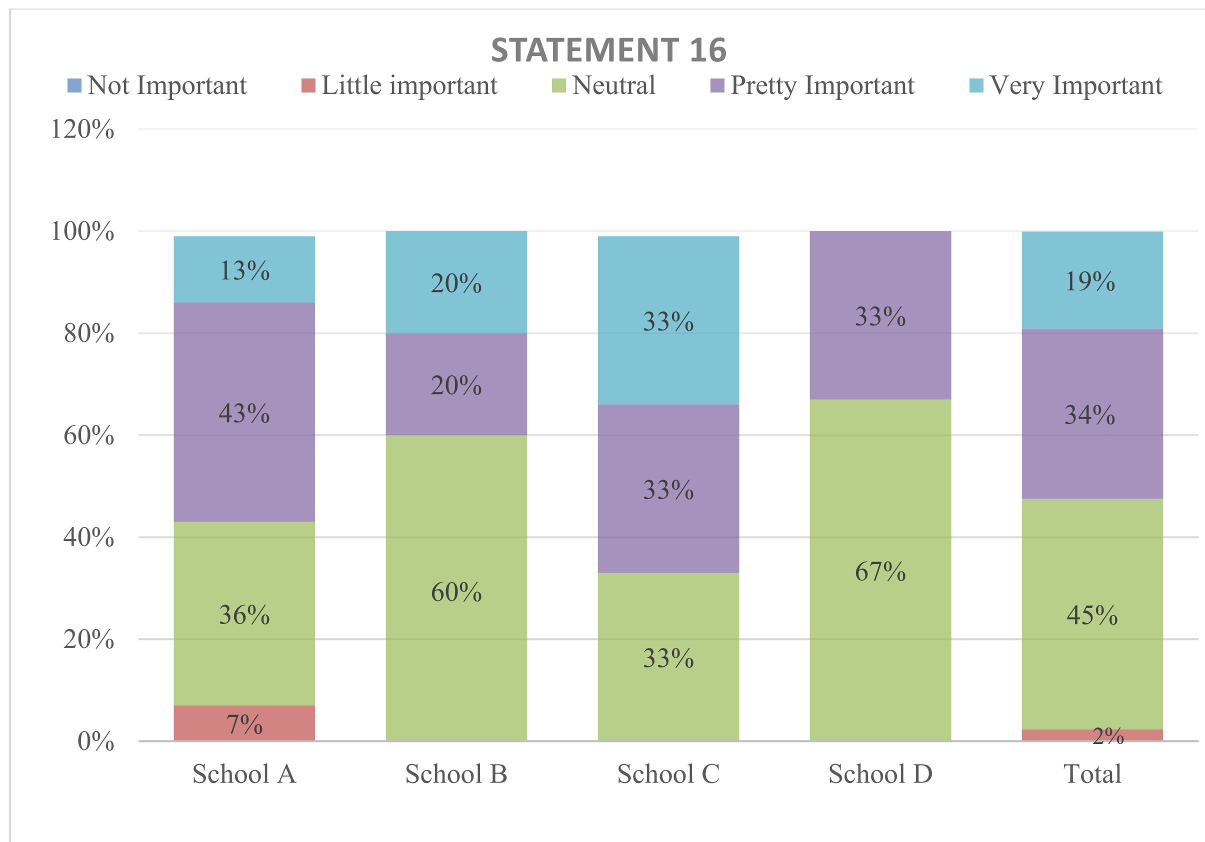
Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 10, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total = 42.

5.4.2 Statement 16: Assign Interactive Homework

Surveyed teachers (N=42) most frequently (45%) felt neutral about importance of the item stating "Assign homework that requires children to interact with parents" at the following rates (60 % school B, 33% school C, and 67 % school D), even though many teachers in school A (43 %) indicated it is "pretty important" to assign homework that requires children to interact with their parents at home. The remainder of overall responses indicated "pretty important" at a rate of (34%) whereas (19%) of surveyed teachers indicated it is "very important" for teachers to assign interactive homework (See Figure 13). Generally, over half of teachers (53%) indicated that it is pretty and very important for them to assign interactive homework that requires parents get involved with their children's homework at home. The mean rating of 3.69 (SD = 0. 81) and the median rating of 4, further, indicate that teachers in this study agreed the importance of assigning interactive homework for families so that

parents engage with their children while doing their homework at home.

Figure 13 Assign homework that requires children to interact with parents.



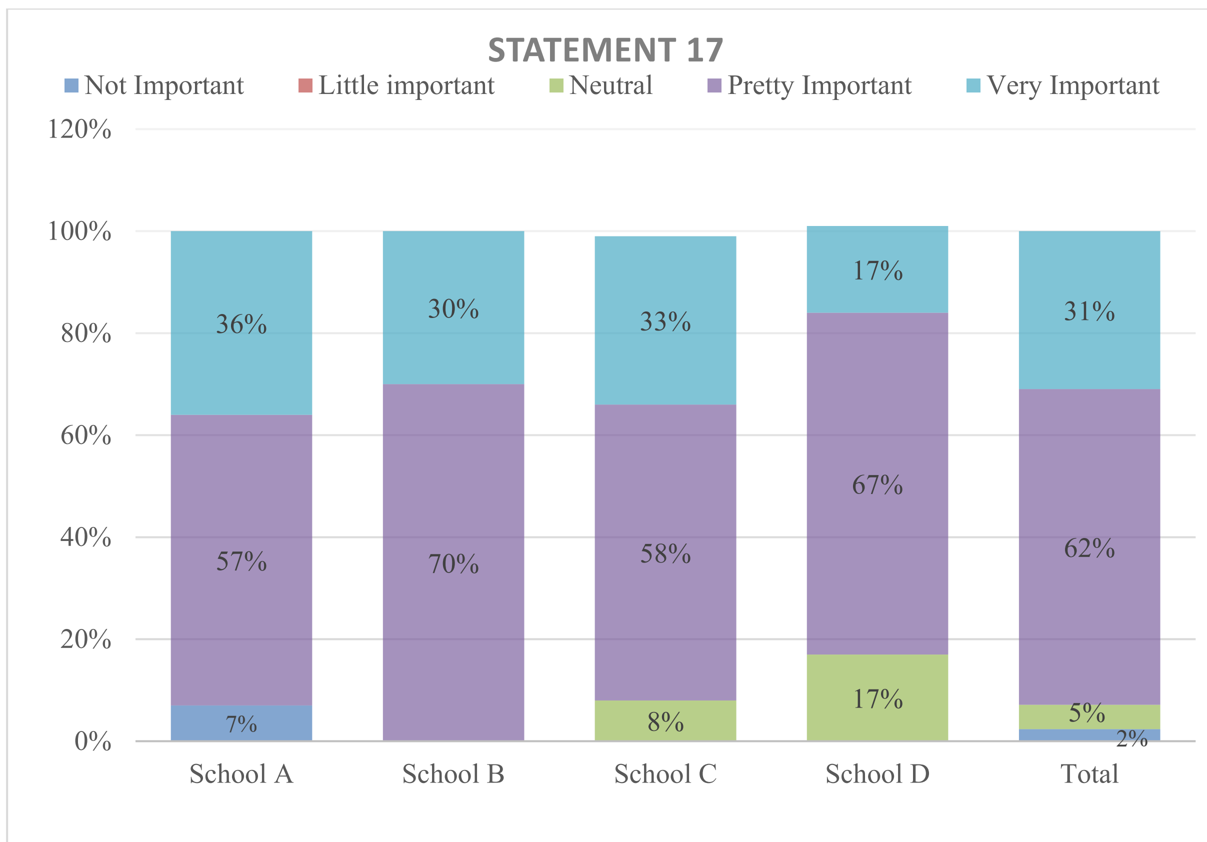
Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 10, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total = 42.

5.4.3 Statement 17: Encourage Spellings/ Skills Practice

Surveyed teachers (N=42) who responded to the item stating "Suggest ways to practice spellings or skills at home before a test or other" selected "pretty important" at a rate that exceeded 60% (57 % school A, 70% school B, 58.3% schools C, and 67 % school D). The next highest percentage of teachers (31%) from four participating schools selected "very important". Reportedly, 36 % of the responding teachers in school A selected "very important" 30 %, 33.3% and 17% of the teachers in school B, C and D respectively responded in the same manner (See Figure 14). Results indicated that (93%) of teachers agreed that it is pretty and very important to suggest ways to practice English spellings and other skills before a test at home to support their children with the needs of Irish schools' learning and assessments. In addition, the mean rating of 4.1 (SD=0.74) and the median rating of 4 indicate that teachers tended to show positive agreement regarding suggesting

ways for families to encourage their children practice spelling or skills at home.

Figure 14: Suggest ways to practice spellings or skills at home before a test or other.



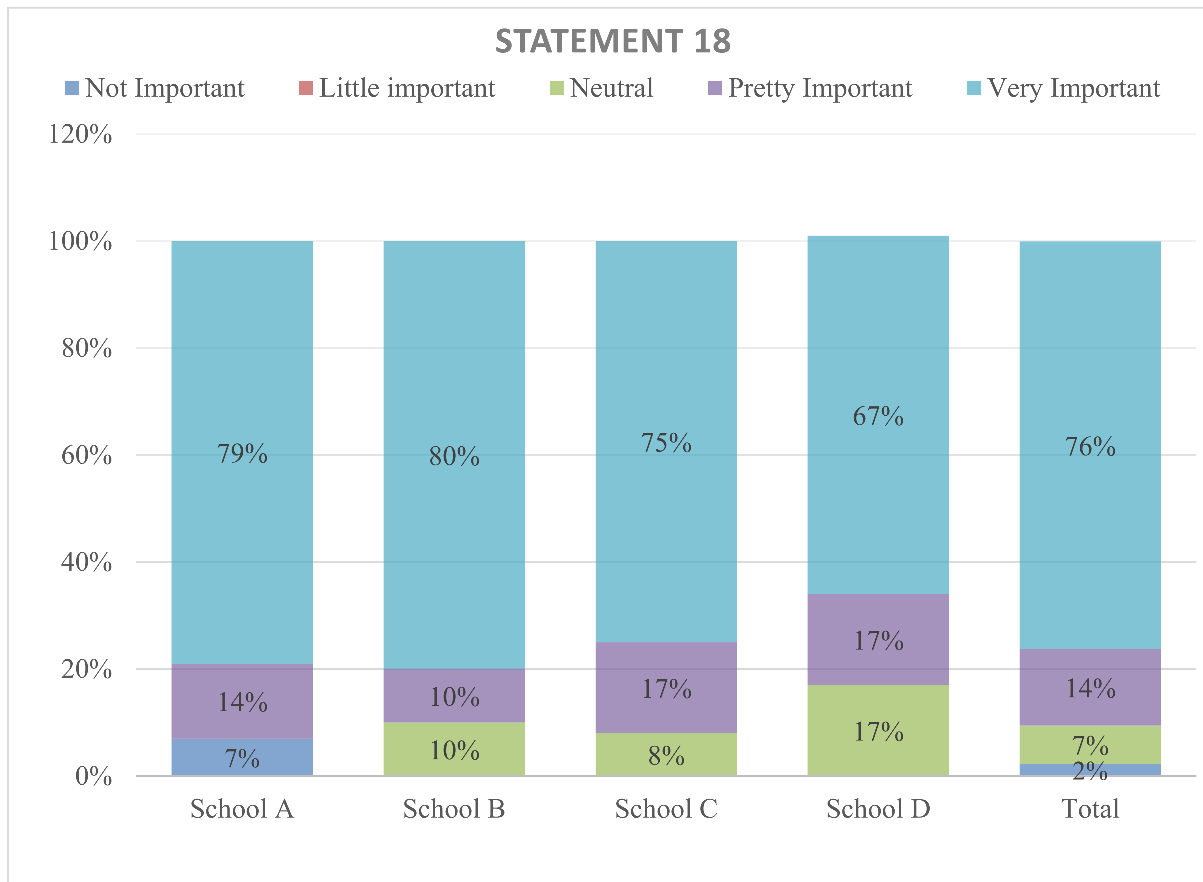
Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 10, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total = 42.

5.4.4 Statement 18: Engage Parents with Reading at Home

Surveyed teachers (N=42) who responded to the statement "Ask parents to listen to their children read" selected "very important" at a rate that exceeded 76% (79 % School A, 80% School B). Similarly, 75% and 67% of teachers in schools C and D responded, respectively, in the same manner. The second selected response of teachers surveyed was "pretty important" at a rate 14%. Thus, overall result indicates that 90 % of teachers surveyed reported it is pretty and very important to ask parents to listen to their children read in English (See Figure 15). The mean rating of 4.61 (SD=0.82) and the median rating of 5 confirm that engaging parents in reading activities with their children at home is very important for teachers surveyed to enhance parental engagement with learning at home. Of all the statements that focused on teachers' perceptions about how important some learning at home activities for them, the statement "Ask parents to listen to their children read"

received the highest percentages of teachers selecting the category “very important” by (76%) followed by (14 %) for “pretty important”.

Figure 15 Ask parents to listen to their children read.



Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 10, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total = 42.

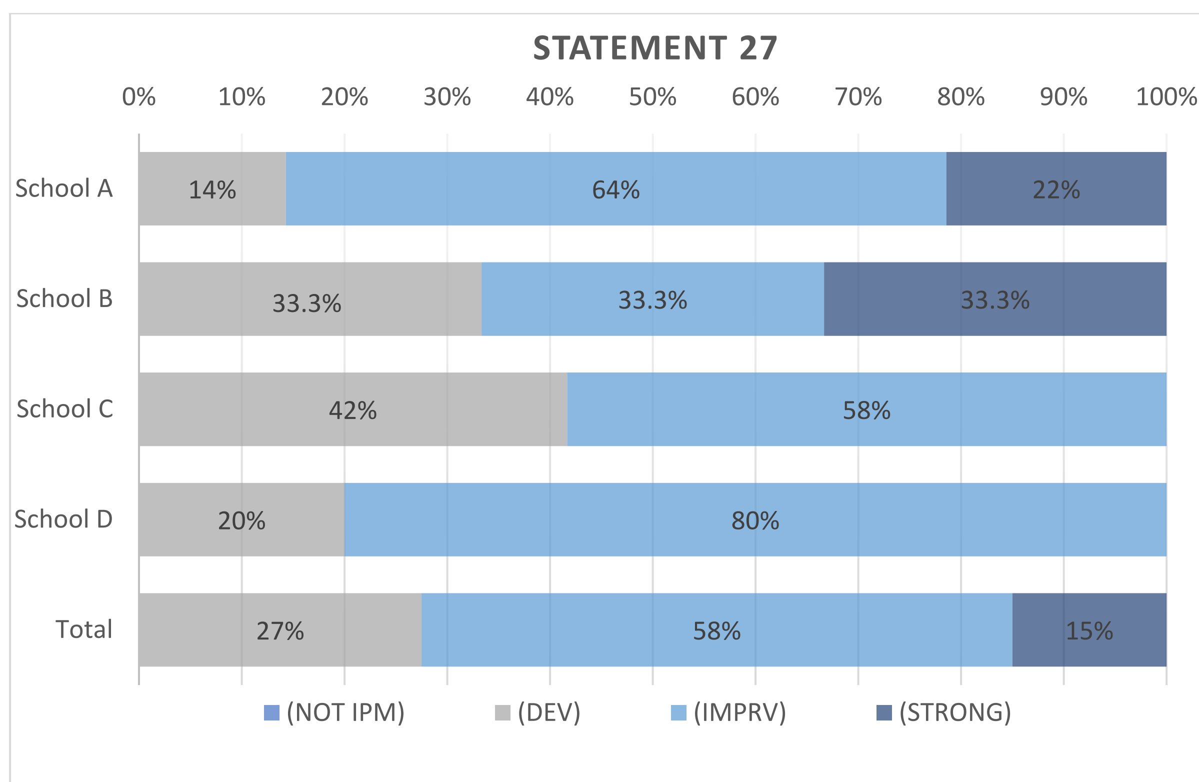
5.4.5 : Statement 27: Support Diverse Families with Homework

The statement "information on how to monitor homework" focuses on how the participating schools support culturally and linguistically diverse parents to make them able to help their children with homework. Four responses were possible to tell whether teachers think this type of school support to enhance parental learning at home support is: Not important "NOT IMP", Needs to be developed "DEV", Needs to be improved "IMPRV", and a Strong programme now "STRONG". This statement received a response rate of 88% (N=40) of overall teachers who participated in the survey (N=45). Responses were distributed by the four participating schools 14 teachers (35%) school A, 9 teachers (22%) School B, 12 teachers (30%) School C and 5 teachers (12%) School D.

Teachers (N=40, 58%) responded more frequently to the statement "IMPRV, needs to be improved" which means that providing diverse families with information on how to monitor their children's homework is already a part of their school but needs to be strengthened. The response rate to the statement "IMPRV, needs to be improved" for teachers in schools A, B and C was 64%, 33.3%, and 58% respectively and teachers in school D indicated the highest response rate under the category "IMPRV, needs to be improved" by 80 %. Teachers from school A and school B selected "Strong programme now" at a rate of (22%) and (33.3%) respectively. The category "DEV, needs to be developed" was selected by 14% of teachers in school A, 33.3% of teachers in school B, 42% of teachers in school C, and 20% of school D teachers (See

Figure 16). Overall, a vast majority, 85% of teachers who responded to this statement were not satisfied with their school's strategy in providing diverse families with information needed to help their children with homework. Accordingly, about 27% of all teachers in four schools A, B, C and D indicated that schools they work at need to develop programmes regarding providing diverse families with all information on how to monitor their children's homework. While about (58%) of teachers indicated that the school they work at needs to improve strategies regarding providing diverse families enough information about how to help their children with homework. The mean rating of 2.8 (SD = 0. 64) and the median rating of 3, further, indicate that teachers surveyed tended to perceive the school they work at needs to improve providing culturally and linguistically diverse families with information on how to monitor their children's homework.

Figure 16: information on how to monitor homework.



Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 9, School C = 12, School D = 5, Total = 40.

To sum up, in response to five statements regarding teachers' perspective about the importance of learning at home as a type of parental engagement, overall results indicated that teachers, at the four participating schools, agreed about the importance of engaging parents in different learning at home activities that support their children's development in Irish schools. These activities included providing activities for children and parents to do at home, assigning interactive homework, suggesting ways to practice spelling /skills needed in the Irish schooling before a test and engage parents with reading, in the language of school, at home. However, most teachers reported a lack of strong programmes in the schools they work at with regard to their school's strategy in providing diverse parents of ELLs with information needed to help their children in homework.

5.5 Parenting

Two items from section 3 of the teachers' survey were used to gather data about how schools that teachers work at support parenting skills of diverse families who have different needs

and different abilities. The two items that asked teachers about their judgments about specific ways of engaging families at their schools were:

21, “Workshops for parents to build skills in parenting and understanding their children at each grade level”.

22, “Workshops for parents on creating home conditions for learning”.

Four responses were possible to tell whether teachers think this type of parenting programmes at their school is: Not important “NOT IMP”, Needs to be developed “DEV”, Needs to be improved “IMPRV”, and a Strong programme now “STRONG”.

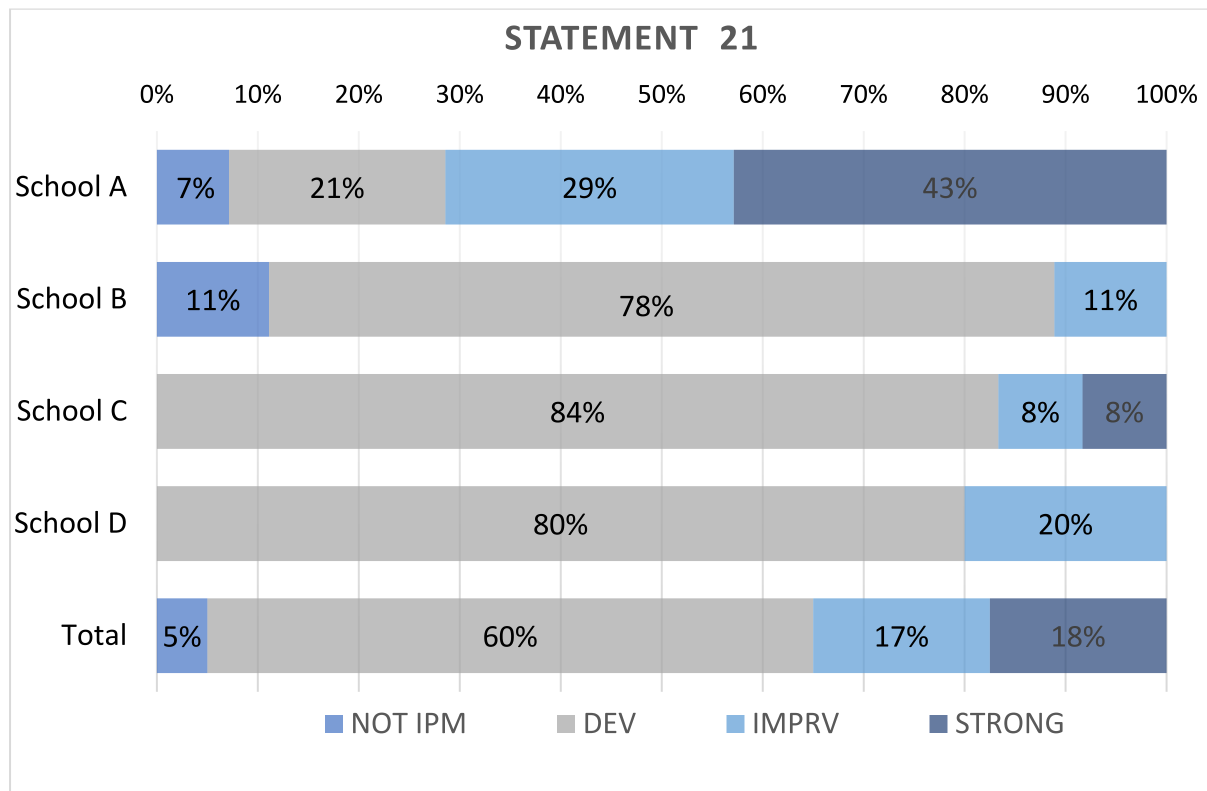
Eighty eight percent (N=40) of all teachers who participated in the survey (N=45) responded to these two statements on survey. Responses were distributed by the four participating schools 14 teachers (35%) school A, 9 teachers (22.5%) School B, 12 teachers (30%) School C and 5 teachers (12.5%) School D.

5.5.1 Statement 21: Organising Parenting Workshops

Results indicate that (77%) of teachers (N=40) who responded to the statement “Workshops for parents to build skills in parenting and understanding their children at each grade level” believed their schools do not have strong parenting programmes and such programmes and workshops for parenting skills “Need to be developed, DEV” by 60% and “Needs to be improved, IMPRV” by 17% so that diverse parents of ELLs understand the developmental stages of their children at each grade level (See Figure 17). The category “Needs to be developed”, indicating that programmes and workshops for parenting skills is not part of their schools now, and that their schools need to develop such programmes, was selected most by the teachers from schools B (78%), C (83%), and D (80%). However, the teachers in school A were the only group who selected the category “STRONG programme now” at a rating of 43% indicating that the school they work at already has programmes and workshops that support parenting skills of diverse parents of ELLs. Results also indicates that 17% of all teachers in four schools selected the category “Needs to be improved” which indicate that parenting programmes that support skills of parents of ELLs to understand their children at each level is already a part of their schools but needs to be strengthened. Response rates under the category “Needs to be improved” were similar for three schools A, B and D, as 29% of teachers in school A and 11% of teachers in school B and 20 % of teachers in school D, selected this category. The mean rating of 2.47 (SD 0. 84) and the median rating of 2, further, indicate that teachers surveyed perceived the schools they work at as not having

effective parenting programmes that support diverse families, therefore, they indicated that their schools need to develop workshops for diverse parents of ELLs to build skills in parenting and to understand their children's development and needs at each grade level

Figure 17: Workshops for parents to build skills in parenting and understanding their children at each grade level.



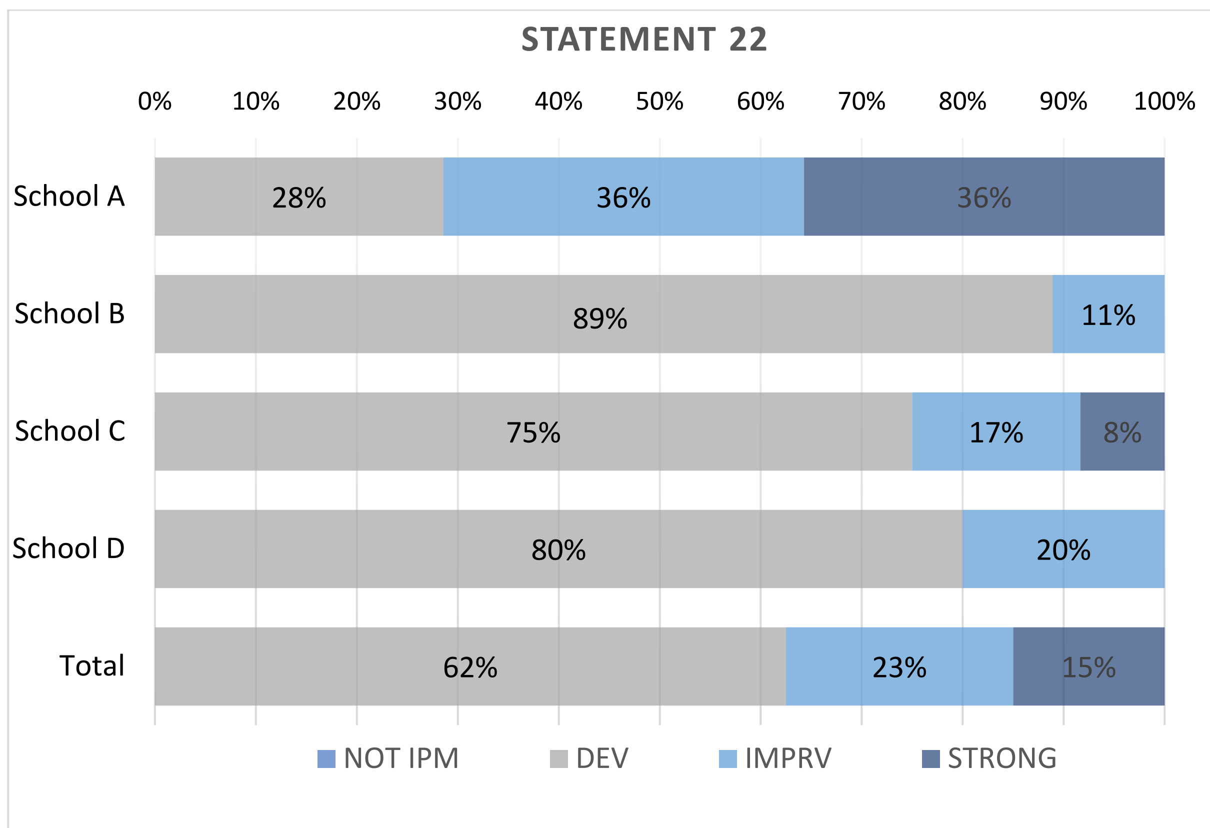
Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 9, School C = 12, School D = 5, Total = 40.

5.5.2 Statement 22: Workshops on Home-Learning Environment

Results indicate that teachers (N=40) who responded to the statement "Workshops for parents on creating home conditions for learning" responded more frequently to the category "DEV, Needs to be developed", indicating that workshops to support parents to be able to create home conditions for learning is not part of their schools now, and that their schools need to develop such programmes by 62% (28% school A, 89% school B, 75 % school C, and 80 % for school D). In addition, 23% of all teachers from four participating schools selected the category "Needs to be improved" (36 % school A, 11% schools B, 17% schools C and 20 % schools D) indicating that workshops for parents on creating home conditions for learning is already a part of their schools but needs to be strengthened. Only 36% of

teachers in school A perceived their school as having “STRONG programme now” indicating that their school has already organised parenting workshops for parents to create learning conditions at home (See Figure 18). The mean rating of 2.52 (SD 0. 75) and the median rating of 2, further, indicate that teachers surveyed were not satisfied about their schools parenting programmes. Accordingly, they indicated that the school they work at needs to develop workshops for parents to support them create home conditions for learning at home.

Figure 18: Workshops for parents on creating home conditions for learning.



Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 9, School C = 12, School D = 5, Total = 40.

Overall, in response to these two statements about parenting, results appear to indicate a lack of strong parenting programmes at three schools B, C and D. Teachers in school A were the most satisfied group with the parenting workshops provided at their school. Additionally, over half of teachers surveyed indicated that parenting workshops need to be developed at their schools to provide diverse families who have different needs and skills with support needed in their parenting practices.

5.6 Decision Making

Several statements from section (1) and (3) of teachers' survey were used to gather data about involving families in decision making.

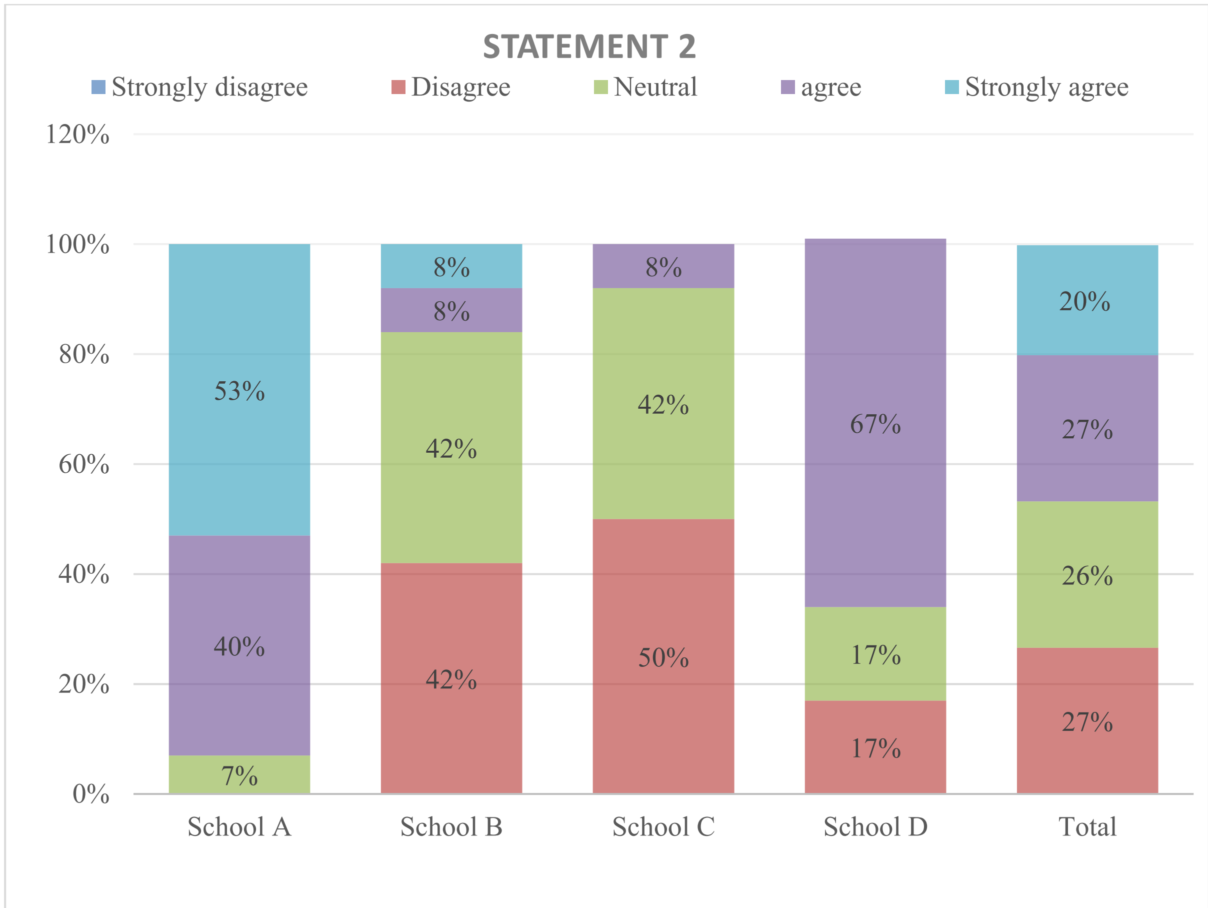
One statement from section (1) of the survey was used to investigate teachers' attitudes about how the school they work at involve parents in decision making. They responded on a 5-point Likert Scale where a response of 1 indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement and a response of 5 indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement.

5.6.1 Statement 2: Effectiveness of Parent Association

Overall, 45 teachers responded to the statement "This school has an active and effective Parent Association", responses were distributed across schools as (15 teachers school A, 12 teachers School B, 12 teachers School C and 6 teachers School D). Teachers responded on a 5-point Likert Scale for the statement where a response of 1 indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement and a response of 5 indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement. The results indicate that 27% of teachers (N=45) who responded to this statement agreed that their school has an active and effective Parent Association (40% school A, 8 % school B, 8% school C, and 67% school D). While only 20% of teachers surveyed (53% School A and 8 % School B) strongly agreed that their school has an active and effective Parent Association. However, 27% of teachers (17% school D, 42 % School B and 50% School C) disagreed the statement regarding having active and effective Parent Association in their schools. The teachers in school A were the only group who agreed and strongly agreed that their school has an active and effective Parent Association at a rating of 93%, however, teachers in School B (42%), school C (42%) and school D (17%) indicated neutrality to the statement (See

Figure 19). In addition, the mean rating of 3.4 (SD 1.09) and the median rating of 3 indicate that overall teachers surveyed tended to neither agree nor disagree to whether their schools have an active and effective Parent Association or not.

Figure 19: This school has an active and effective Parent Association.



Note. The number of participants for School A = 15, School B = 12, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total = 45.

To further evaluate how participating schools involve culturally and linguistically diverse families in making decisions at school, the following two items from Section 3 of teachers' questionnaire investigated teachers' perceptions on how well the schools they work at engage culturally and linguistically diverse families in making decisions at school. These items were:

Statement 26, "surveying parents each year for their ideas about the school".

Statement 28, "Involvement by families in parents' association leadership, or other decision-making roles".

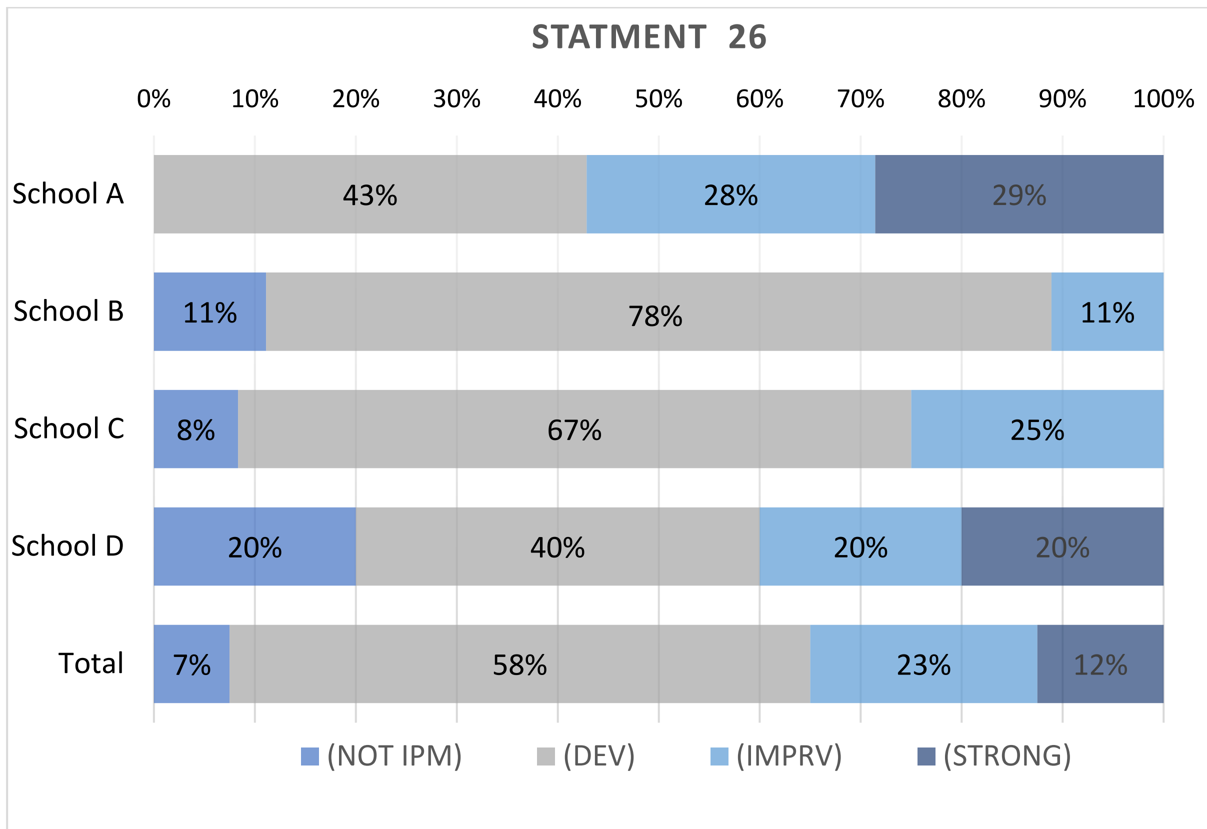
To each of these items, response choices were "Not important, NOT IMP", "Needs to be developed, DEV", "Needs to be improved, IMPRV", and a Strong programme now

"STRONG". The response rate to these two statements of section (3) on survey was (N=40, 88%) of overall teachers surveyed (N=45). Responses were distributed by the four participating schools 14 teachers (35%) school A, 9 teachers (22.5%) School B, 12 teachers (30%) School C and 5 teachers (12.5%) School D.

5.6.2 Statement 26: Survey Parents for their Ideas

About 58% of teachers (N=40) who responded to the statement "Surveying parents each year for their ideas about the school" indicated that this type of parental engagement is not part of their school now, but "needs to be developed, DEV", responses were distributed across schools as (43% School A, 78% School B, 67% School C, and 40% School D). Other findings in relation to surveying parents each year for their ideas about the school showed that 23% of teachers (28% School A, 11% School B, 25% School C, and 20% School D) selected "needs to be improved, IMPRV" indicating that this type of decision making is already a part of their school but needs to be strengthened. Whereas 7% of teachers (11% School B, 8% School C, 20% School D) indicated that engaging parents in this type of decisions is "NOT IMP, not important". Only teachers in Catholic school A (29 %) and teachers in Catholic school D (20%) selected "Strong programme now". indicating that their schools successfully survey parents for their ideas each year (SeeFigure 20). In addition, the mean rating of 2.4 (SD = 0.81) and the median rating of 2 indicate that teachers acknowledge that this type of decision making do not exist in the schools they work at and that surveying parents each year for their ideas about the school need to be developed so that diverse parents will have opportunities to be included in making decisions at school.

Figure 20: Surveying parents each year for their ideas about the school.



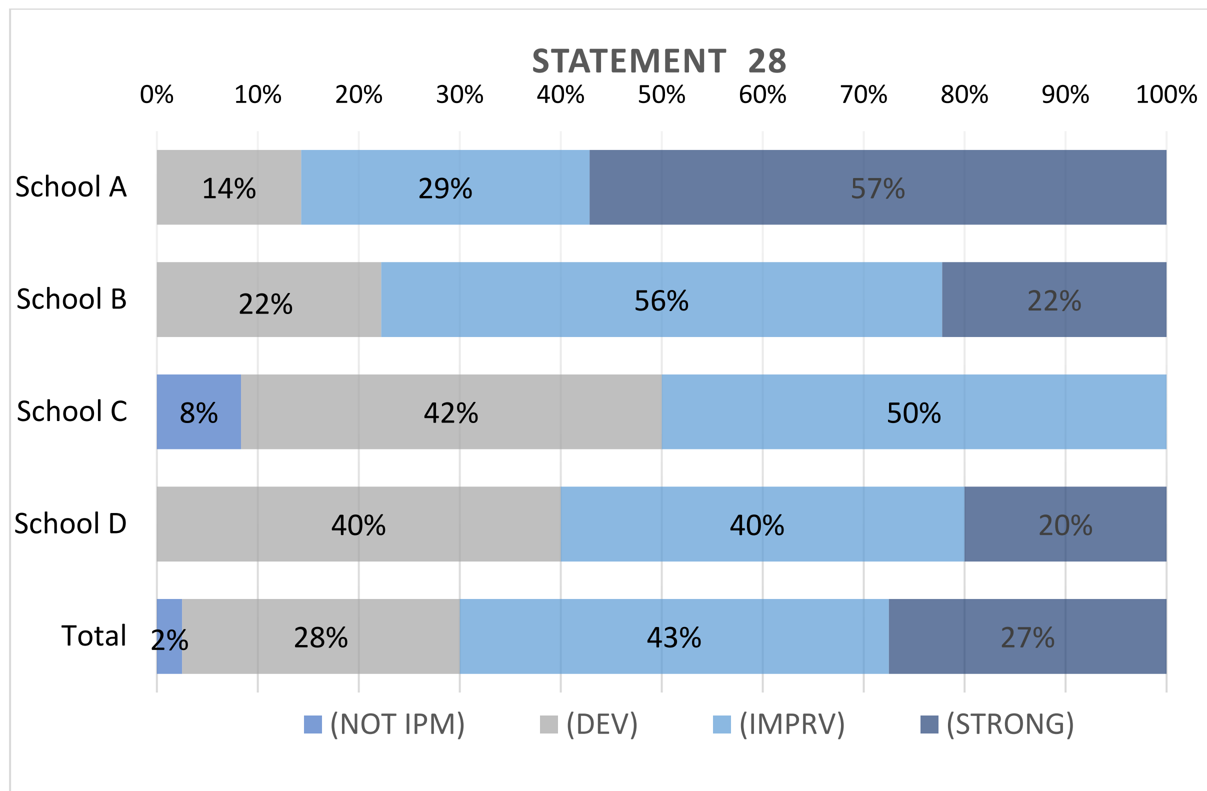
Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 9, School C = 12, School D = 5, Total = 40.

5.6.3 Statement 28: Engaging Parents in Decision-Making Roles

Overall, 43% of teachers (N = 40) who responded to the statement "Involvement by families in parents' association leadership, or other decision- making roles" indicated that engaging parents in decision making roles is already a part of their school but "needs to be improved, IMPRV" by (29% School A, 56% School B, 50% School C, and 40% School D). Other findings showed that 28% of teachers (14% School A, 22% School B, 42 %School C, and 40 % School D) selected "DEV, needs to be developed" which indicate that involving culturally and linguistically diverse families in parents' association leadership, or other decision- making roles is not part of their schools at the present time, therefore, needs to be developed. Over half of teachers from School A (57%) selected "Strong programme now" indicating that their school is involving parents in decision making roles which is a higher percentage of other teachers in School B (22%) and school D (20%) who also selected "STRONG" programme now (See Figure 21). In addition, the mean rating of 2.95 (SD= 0.81) and the median rating of 3 indicate that teachers tended to show agreement that the

school they work at need to improve decision making opportunities for diverse families such as Parent Association committee (PAC) to make them get involved in decision making roles related to their children at school.

Figure 21: Engagement by families in parents' association leadership, or other decision-making roles.



Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 9, School C = 12, School D = 5, Total = 40.

Overall, in response to three statements about teachers' perspectives regarding parental decision-making opportunities at the participating schools, findings appear to indicate that around 70 % of teachers in Catholic schools A and D indicated that their schools have an active and effective Parent Association while the majority teachers in Islamic schools B and C did not report having active and effective Parent Association showing disagreement and neutrality regarding having effective Parent Association at their schools. Data also revealed that 58% of teachers, from the four participating schools, indicated that surveying diverse parents each year for their ideas about the school needs to be developed at the schools they work at. At the same time, 43% of teachers indicated that involving diverse families in other decision-making roles needs to be improved at the participating schools.

5.7 Community Collaboration

To investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the schools' efforts to collaborate with the community, three items from the survey (one item from section 1 and two items from section 2) were examined through responses to the following statements:

Statement 9, "The community supports this school".

Statement 19, "Work with other teachers to develop parent engagement activities and materials".

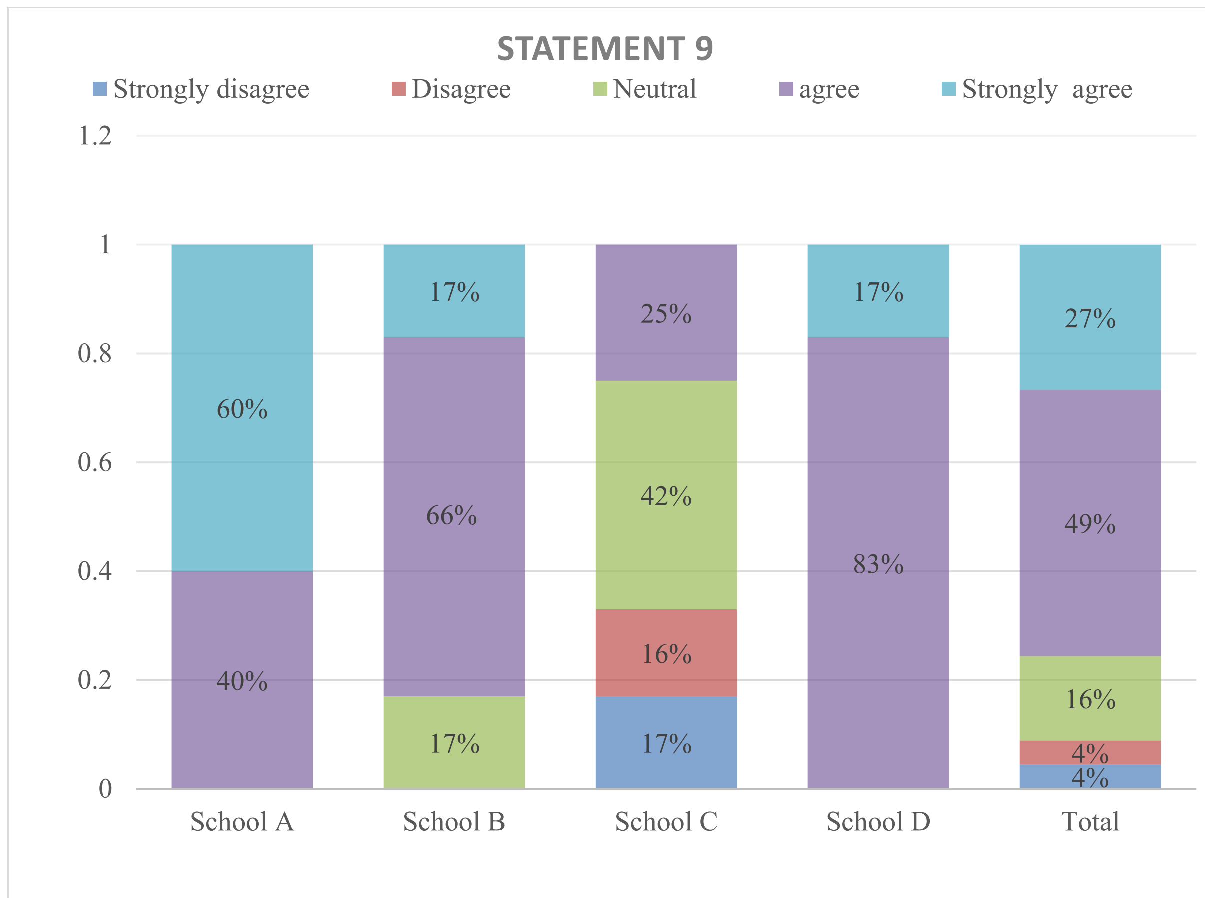
Statement 20, "Work with community members, such as cultural groups and social organisations, to arrange learning opportunities in my class".

5.7.1 Statement 9: Support from Community

Teachers responded on a 5-point Likert Scale for the statement "The community supports this school" where a response of 1 indicated that they strongly disagreed with the statement and a response of 5 indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement. Overall, teachers who responded to this statement (N=45) and responses were distributed by the four participating schools (15) teachers school A, (12) teachers School B, (12) teachers School C and (6) teachers School D.

Teachers' responses to this statement indicate that 49% of teachers surveyed from the four participating schools agreed that the school receives support from the community (40% School A, 66% School B, 25% School C, 83% School D). the second chosen category was "strongly agree" by 27 % (60% School A, 17% School B, and 17%School D) indicating that teachers "Strongly agreed" that the community supports the school they work at (See Figure 22). Even though, a minority 16% of all teachers (17% School B, 42% School C) indicated neutrality to the statement, overall findings shows that the majority (76 %) of teachers agreed and strongly agreed that the community supports their schools. The mean rating of 3.88 (SD= 1.00) and the median rating of 4 also indicates that teachers surveyed agreed that the community supports the school they work at.

Figure 22 : The community supports this school.



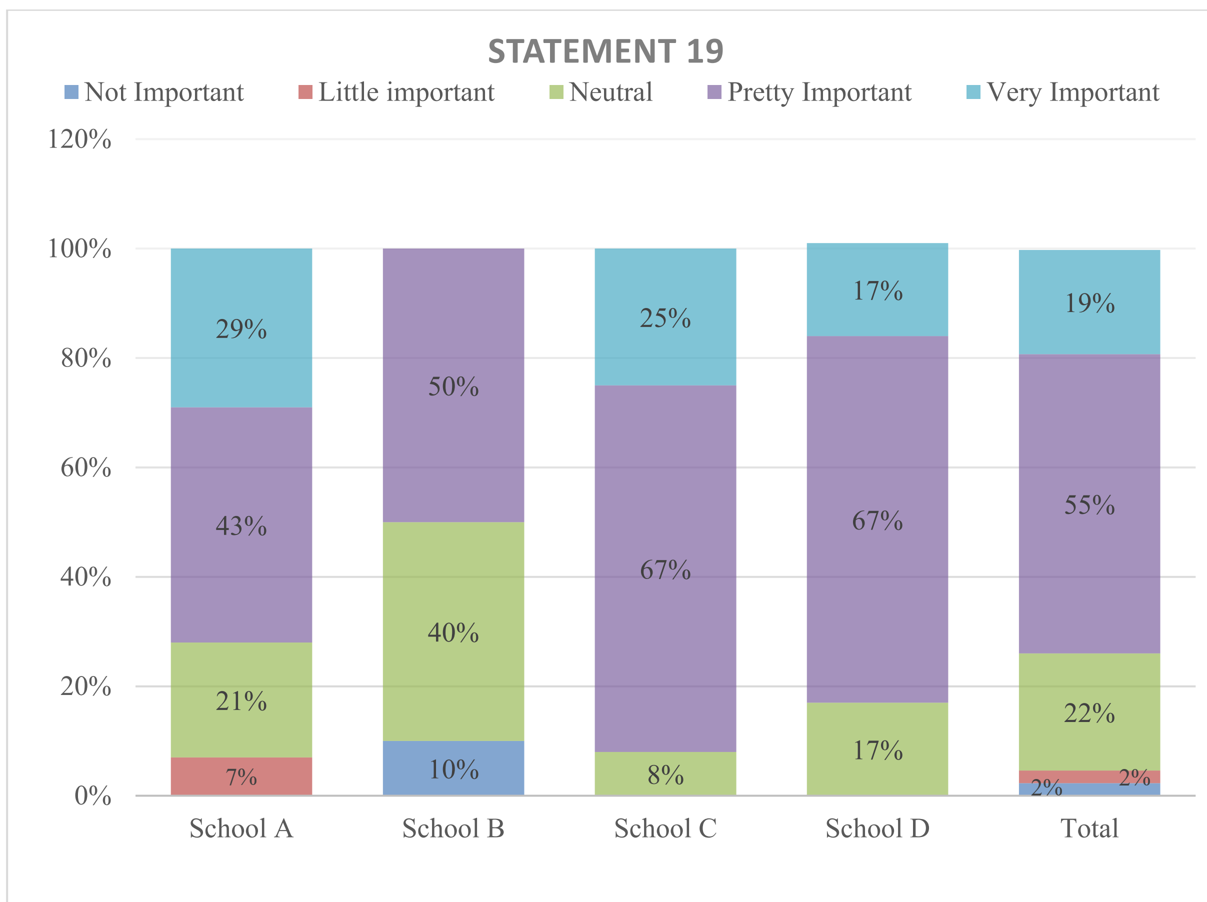
Note. The number of participants for School A = 15, School B = 12, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total = 45.

5.7.2 Statement 19: Develop Activities with Other Teachers

Overall, 55% (43 % school A, 50 % School B, 67 % School C, and 67 % School D) of teachers (N = 42) who responded to the statement "Work with other teachers to develop parent engagement activities and materials" indicated that working with each other to enhance parent engagement is "pretty important". Other 19% of teachers surveyed (29% school A, 25% School C, and 17% School D) agreed that preparing engagement activities with other teachers is "very important". However, a total of 22% (21% School A, 40 % School B, 8% School C, 17% School D) of teachers indicated neutrality to the statement which means they neither agreed nor disagreed regarding the importance of working as a team with other teachers to enhance parental engagement at their schools. In addition, 7% of teachers in School A and 10% of teachers in School B indicated that working with each

other to develop parent engagement activities is “A little important” and “not important”, respectively (See Figure 23). Overall, results for this statement indicated that 74% of teachers surveyed reported that it is pretty and very important for teacher to work with each other to support parental engagement at school. This result was further illustrated by the mean rating of 3.85 (SD= 0.84) and the median rating of 4 that teachers surveyed agreed the importance of working with other teachers to develop activities and materials for engaging parents at school.

Figure 23: Work with other teachers to develop parent involvement activities and materials.

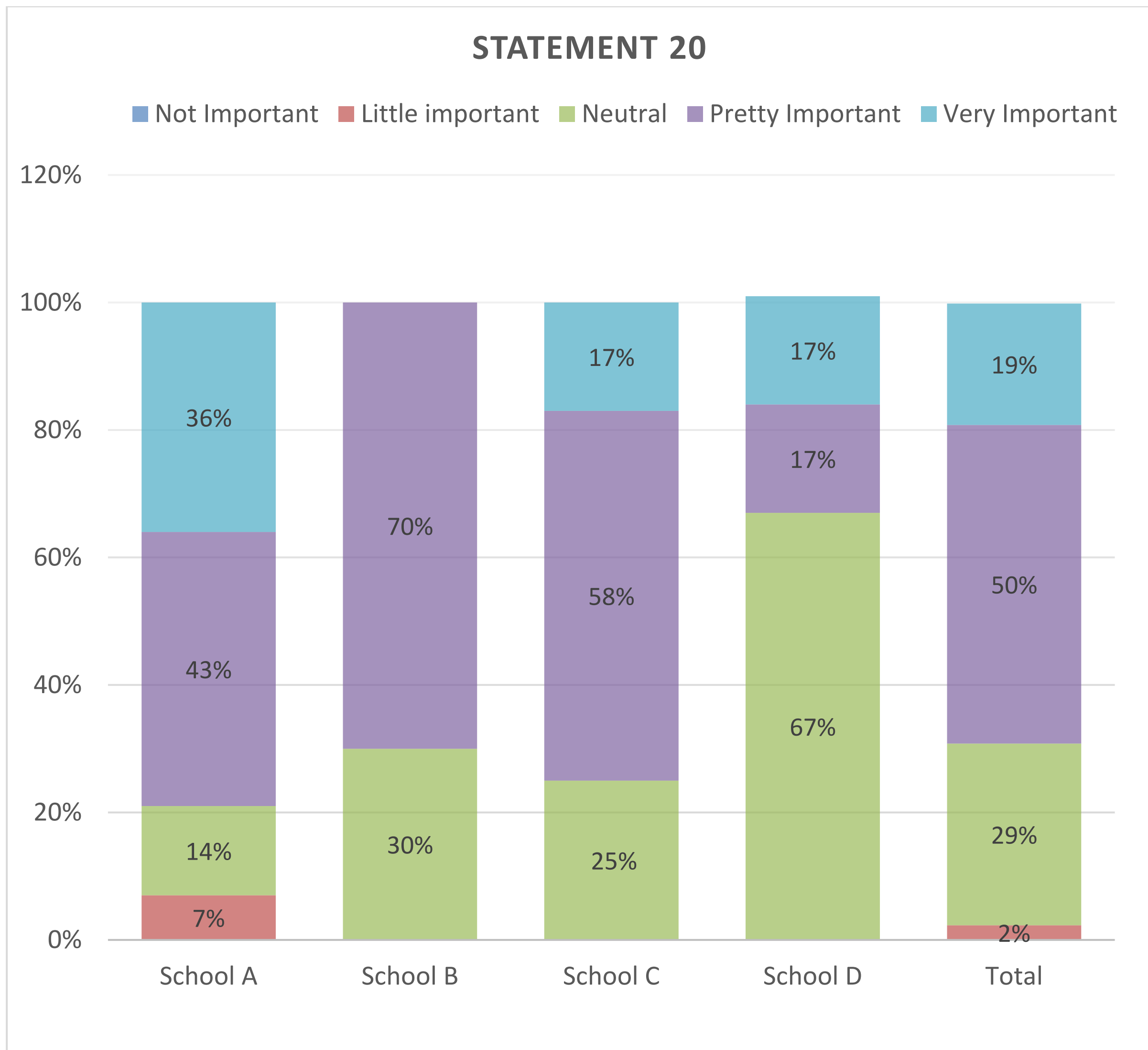


Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 10, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total = 42.

5.7.3 Statement 20: Collaboration with Community Members

Responses to the statement “Work with community members, such as cultural groups and social organisations, to arrange learning opportunities in my class” showed that 50% of teachers (N=42) who responded to this statement (43% School A, 70% School B, 58% School C, and 17% School D) found that working with community members to enhance learning at school is “pretty important” and 19% of them (36% School A, 17% School C, and 17% School D) indicated it is “very” important. A total of 29% (14% School A, 30% School B, 25% school C, and 67% School D) of teachers in four schools showing a large representation in the “neutral” category indicating that working with community members is neither important nor unimportant, while 7 % of teachers in School A indicated that collaboration with community members is “A little important”. Thus, A majority 69 % of teachers surveyed indicated that working with community members is “pretty and very important” to support children's learning at school (SeeFigure 24). Additionally, the mean rating of 3.85 (SD= 0.75) and the median rating of 4 indicate that teachers surveyed agreed the importance of working with community members, such as cultural groups and social organisations, to arrange learning opportunities in classrooms.

Figure 24: Work with community members, such as cultural groups and social organisations, to arrange learning opportunities in my class.



Note. The number of participants for School A = 14, School B = 10, School C = 12, School D = 6, Total = 42.

5.8 Analysis of Teacher Qualitative Questions

In addition to gathering quantitative data in the teacher's survey, qualitative data were also gathered through six qualitative questions. The purpose of those questions was first to have an in-depth response about teacher views on ELL parental engagement in the participating schools and second, to consider any similarities and differences in teacher perceptions and immigrant parents of ELLs about patterns of engagement as well as challenges that face both groups. Only questions 29 -to- 34 were open-ended and was presented at the end of the survey as follows:

Q29- How does your school involve ELL parents, who came from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds, into helping pupils with reading /writing, volunteer in school activities and programmes, tutor, or anything such as that?

30- Does your school face any challenges with involving parents of ELLs? If so, how has your school responded to these challenges?

31- How could your school increase or promote ELL parental engagement?

32 From your own perspective as a teacher, are there any challenges that hinder you from involving the parents of ELLs in your class? If so, how have you responded to these challenges?

33- In your opinion, what is the most successful practice that you or your colleagues have used/ heard of to involve ELL parents?

Thematic analysis was selected as the method of analysis for qualitative data collected in this part of the research project. The same procedures for analysing the qualitative data collected from the parent's group, they have been used for analysing those qualitative questions too. Through using NVivo 12, teachers' responses were organised into codes, subcodes and then patterns and themes. A total of four themes were generated:

1. Volunteering at school
2. Schools and teachers' effective strategies to involve ELL parents.
3. Challenges of family-school engagement
4. Suggestions for support.

Response rate to open-ended questions

Sixty percent (N=27) of teachers surveyed (N=45) responded to each open-ended questions on the teacher survey. Responses were distributed across the four participating schools 10 teachers (66%) school A, 6 teachers (50%) School B, 8 teachers (66%) School C and 4 teachers (66%) School D. The last question (34- Do you have any other ideas or comments that you would like to add?) got only 2 responses from each participating school.

5.8.1 Volunteering at School

Teachers surveyed, throughout the analysis of data collected, indicated a variety of ways in

which the schools they work at try to engage ELL parents in school context. However, school A appeared to be most proactive in doing several things to enhance parental volunteering at school. Teachers in school A reported a variety of curricular and extracurricular volunteering opportunities that they and their school organise. However, all volunteering opportunities provided by school were before Covid-19 outbreak because at the time of data collection, schools were still under Covid restrictions.

Primarily, Teachers in school (A) acknowledged the valuable work undertaken by the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) programme in their school. They also indicated that HSCL officer are the one responsible for engaging ELL parents and connecting them with different school and community resources: "She targets ELL parents to join the Library Committee, she would also encourage them to join classes that she runs for parents and attend coffee mornings".

Another teacher in School A also stated that they "have a lovely parent's room" where they hold meetings with HSCL officer to plan different school activities including volunteering. So that parents know exactly where their activities take place and therefore raise their confidence to engage in different school activities. This reflects the school-like-home environment that School A provides for all parents. Within this context, they also described the level of their HSCL programme in engaging ELL families that was not only based at school context but also made home visits to encourage engagement in one hand and to establish a level of credibility and trust in their relationships with ELL families served. One teacher in school A commented:

"Home School Liaison teacher visited homes and encouraged volunteering/joining parents' classes. Recruited parents for Maths trails, maths games, arts week activities etc."

Other teachers in school (A) also mentioned very effective volunteering activities such as "Volunteer in the school library". They also reported inviting ELL parents to volunteer in curricular activities to support their children's learning inside the classroom: "parents came in to help supervise maths games" and to share experiences and knowledge and to strengthen interactions between teachers, parents and their children:

"a parent would be welcome in a class to chat about their experience and knowledge on a topic the children were learning about".

School A teachers also described their school as a diversity welcoming school: "we celebrate diversity in our school" that have positive attitudes towards the community and

reaching out diverse parents of ELLs in culturally responsive activities such as: “The World Cafe during Arts week” explaining that such activities used to be a great way of seeing all the cultures they have in the school and that such activities “worked very well” to help ELL parents indulge in the school community.

Even with sufficient invitations to volunteer reported by teachers in school A, they recognized that ELL parents are the most reluctant to volunteer at school and seen as uninterested to participate in school-based activities: “Other parents tend to volunteer more”.

Even though some teachers in both Islamic schools (B and C) reported having “some extracurricular activities, rarely curricular lessons during the everyday class”. Such as “having coffee with the principal, school staff and teachers”; they, further, regarded this activity as being welcoming in nature that facilitates having two-way informal discussions with parents at school. However, teachers in one of these Islamic schools mentioned that Muslim families are generally more engaged with each other in the mosque rather than being present at school: “I don't see this happening at school. With the Mosque nearby, new families gather and integrate more there”.

5.8.2 Teachers’ Effective Strategies to Involve Immigrant Parents of ELLs

The most common responses from teachers surveyed for their best way to involve ELL parents were through communication, assigning interactive homework to support learning at home and link ELL parents into community members and resources.

5.8.2.1 Strategies for Better Communication

Teachers in four schools, generally, considered communication with ELL parents as important factor to enhance parental engagement. They reported different effective methods of communication to reach out ELL parents such as informal face-to face meetings and annual PTMs, using English written notes and visual aids to facilitate communication with ELL parents. The most prominent types of communication articulated by teachers, is through having a direct contact with parents without any boundaries or gatekeepers to draw their attention towards their fundamental role in their children's education: “Simply talking to parents and demonstrating how they can support their child is very effective”. (School A)

Similarly, another teacher in school A established the importance of being careful regarding language barriers while talking to ELL parents “Speaking slowly and being conscious of

language barriers."

While another teacher in school D stated that "Being friendly" while working with ELL parents was her best strategy that helps removing any barriers to communication. Accordingly, parent-teacher meetings were seen as very useful means of communication and the main link with ELL parents that: "break down barriers in an environment where both parties are comfortable, all items of interest or concern can be discussed in a respectful manner" (School D)

Additionally, communication through sending out "Clear and concise emails" and "Information evenings" were frequently mentioned as a viable way to keep in contact with ELL parents by most teachers surveyed. Some teachers also described their attempts to connect with ELL parents and achieve meaningful two-way communication "through texts/emails/calls".

Other teachers, additionally, reported their best strategies to enhance communication through "Using videos and visual clues" and "Notes home using imagery" to assist ELL parents, who are usually not fully fluent or lack literacy skills in English and perhaps in their primary language, to understand their message and achieve two-way meaningful communication. In addition to using different sources of communication, one teacher in school C reported using "a handwritten note" in PTM in replacement of interactive face-to-face communication with ELL parents, who have low levels of English, so that "they can bring it and translate it" to help them understand the academic progress of their children.

School D teachers also mentioned having a good school to home communication programmes that build understanding and trust with families about their children's education and progress. One parent in school D reported that parents "will fill out a Student Portfolio, building a profile of their child's prior learning, identifying their child's strengths and hobbies and any difficulties they may be experiencing". Such programmes enhance the understanding of pupil's backgrounds and learning their needs, ELL parents could keep track of their child's academic development.

Teachers surveyed also recognised the importance of using school websites and different school apps, such as "Aladdin", "Google classroom" and "communication through homework journal" to enhance meaningful two-way communication with ELL parents. One teacher in school B indicated her convenient and effective way to encourage ELL parents

get involved through:

"Using a class blog to show the children at work, including videos of the children at work with simple explanations of what we are doing so it can be replicated at home".

5.8.2.2 Assigning Interactive Homework

Various learning at home activities were reported by teachers to support ELL parents and help them get engaged with their children's education outside of school. For example, one teacher from school D reported making use of ELL parents "home language" such as "bilingual story books sent home for parent-child reading". Many teachers in Islamic school C reported making use of many effective strategies to best involve ELL parents at home through: "Sending a game home that children have already played in school, and they know how to play" to encourage their parents play with them at home. Moreover, assigning interactive homework that involves a comparison between the children's lives in Ireland and the school lives of their parents when they were in their home countries to create a connection between the parents' experiences with their schools and the child's school.

Teachers also stated that providing information and resources to parents of ELLs who might face language barriers is crucial to help them understand how they can help and play an active role in the learning of their children, for example "Inviting parents in for an information morning/ evening on the curriculum for the year group I'm teaching" (School C) and "Teaching parents activities to help their child with their homework" as their best practice to engage parents of ELLs" (School B).

5.8.2.3 Link Parents of ELL to Community Resources

Some teachers surveyed expressed the necessity for indulging ELL parents into the school community and to open the doors to different community resources available to them to help them settle in the school and to link them to the broader community at the same time. Some teachers referenced their attempts to make connections between ELL parents with community member, such as organising "Buddy up with families who speak same language". They added that such attempts are in the hope for "arranging playdates for their children" as well as to "help the child's English language develop".

Other activities for engaging ELL parents in the community of school was through sharing ELL family's culture and language with school community. One teacher in school A

reported her best way to engage ELL parents is through:

“Having initiatives that celebrate other cultures particularly activities involving food/cooking”

5.8.3 Barriers to Engagement

Teachers who participated in the survey in the responses to open-ended questions, described many challenges to ELL parental engagement. They referred to various obstacles that, sometimes, face themselves, and others face the schools they work at in establishing effective ELL family collaboration. Some of those challenges reported were at the sphere of home, mostly, linked to ELL parents. Other challenges were found at school as well as other obstacles limited school-family two-way communication. The most common challenges to engagement categorised under two major headings: institutional barriers and parent identified barriers. The former related to schools and teachers from involving ELL parents. Parent-identified barriers, on the other hand, were related to ELL parents to be involved in their children's education.

5.8.3.1Institutional Barriers

Challenges related to lack of school facilities and resources were frequently mentioned by teachers surveyed in schools A, C and D. As responses for (Q-30) that asked, “Does your school face any challenges with involving parents of ELLs?”. Teachers in schools A and D indicated that “Financial barriers”, lack of funding “Money”, as well as “Lack of planning” as main reasons to less engagement and limited the school's ability to engage parents more effectively.

Other two teachers in school D also mentioned: “The school campus is limited in space, so this hinders many events taking place” And “lack of Facilities” as a huge barrier to organise school-based activities that mostly needs enough room to organise events and invite parents get involved.

The Covid-19 pandemic and how it affected schools was also consistently mentioned by almost all teachers as a common barrier to parental engagement. One teacher in school (A) stated that most barriers to engaging parents at the time of survey related mainly to “Covid rather than ELLs” Teachers in schools B, C and D explained that their limited volunteering opportunities, other kinds of school-based activities as well as the absence of Parent Association Committee (PAC), that plays a big role in enhancing parental engagement at

school, are mostly associated to school restrictions due to the outbreak of Covid: “Not happening at the moment as a whole school approach”.

Lack of Teachers’ Time

Surveyed teachers also noted that time constraints are a major barrier to parent engagement at school. One teacher in school (B) described “School life is incredibly busy”. Another teacher in school (A) explained that their large amount of workload during the school day made it difficult to engage parents with any curricular activities at the classroom: “it might not suit the teacher to add a visitor to the busy day”.

In addition, due to reported “time restrictions” during the school hours, some teachers expressed less importance to parental engagement especially with regard to inviting parents to volunteer in curricular activities at classroom. One teacher in school C stated that investing all the time for teaching children the curriculum is more important than engaging their parents:

“I'm so busy trying to get through the curriculum as well as other duties expected of me, that additional things such as involving parents are the last on my list and often are pushed to the back because of the level of work involved.”

In addition to the barrier of time, some teachers reported that lack of school support due to schools’ shortage of staff, made it difficult for them to regularly communicate with ELL parents during the busy school day: “No one to supervise/teach class during teaching day to allow teacher to meet parents on a regular basis” (School D)

5.8.3.2 Parent-Identified Barriers

Teachers who responded to qualitative questions also emphasised that some barriers were related to ELL parents themselves, either due to their literacy and linguistic abilities, cultural differences, or due to other practical factors. Teachers also mentioned that other reasons such as differing views regarding importance of education, lack of confidence, lack of interest and lack of familiarity with the Irish education system may act as barriers to parents of ELLs engagement.

The language barriers cited repeatedly as a key challenge to establishing meaningful contact with parents of ELLs. One teacher in school (A), for example, reported that “Communicating effectively with parents that may not speak English fluently.” as their biggest challenge to engage ELL parents. Another similar comment from teacher in school C: “Them not

understanding me or me not understanding them" acted as a huge barrier to communicate with parents of ELLs.

Some teachers also stated that parents of ELLs avoid communicating with their children's teachers because their lack of confidence and lack of comfortability while speaking English: "Parents are embarrassed as they can't communicate proficiently in English, so they avoid unnecessary contact". (School B).

A lack of parental confidence in understanding and speaking the language of school, as mentioned by teachers, plays as a barrier to be present at school for meetings or attending activities when invited to school. One teacher in school (B) expressed concerns regarding the passive roles that some parents play in their children's schooling due to their lack of English skills:

"It's difficult to communicate with one or both parents. This means that one or both parents do not fully understand what is going on with their child in school"

Some teachers in Islamic schools B and C mentioned that due to having Arabic/ English bilingual teachers who teach Arabic as a second language at school, sometimes volunteer as translators to Arabic-speaking parents, who represent the majority of ELL parents at their schools: "we are lucky as we have staff members who are Arabic speakers so that helps for translation purposes" (school B). While other teachers mentioned that ELL parents mostly cannot communicate directly with teachers in PTMs, therefore, "parent teacher meetings will be with a friend of theirs who has English." (School C)

School D teachers also mentioned, in references to lack of interpretation services at their school, that ELL pupils are sometimes called to perform as language brokers and translate for their parents during parent-teacher meetings: "children of ELL parents attend parent teacher meetings to facilitate understanding if parent does not understand the language". Some teachers, however, perceived involving pupils in PTM as translators as problematic, as it puts children under pressure on the one hand, and the information intended for ELL parents might be amended too. One teacher in school B shared her experiences in parent–teacher meeting with ELL parents with different intermediaries: "I feel this is a lot of pressure for the child, and it also worries me that the importance of what I am saying is not fully understood".

Adding to the frustration to effective communication with ELL parents and their engagement in school activities due to their low proficiency in English, a further challenge to ELL

parental engagement was reported by teachers due to the hesitancy of some ELL parents to support learning at home and assist their children in homework: “Parents are reluctant to take measures at home to help with their children's work because of the language barrier.” (School C)

At the same time, teachers also expressed worries about the general ability of ELL parents to help their children with homework due to lack of skills necessary to understand the curriculum content: “I worry that the parent will not be able to assist the child easily if they do not understand the content.” (School B)

Another teacher in school A reported her difficulty while assigning homework due to parental lack of linguistic and literacy skills:

“It can be difficult to explain how to complete homework or if their child is struggling in any areas. It can be particularly difficult to explain the phonics programme.”

Due to reported challenges to involve parents of ELLs in homework, some teachers still perceive parental role in homework as traditional passive status and as, likely, hard to achieve. This led to their decision to eliminate the role of those parents in homework stating, “provide work that the children can complete independently” (School A)

In the same context, other teachers acknowledged the limited and insufficient support for parents of ELLs “there is a disconnect” regarding homework assistance at their schools. Accordingly, they indicated that it is the school's responsibility to “support ELL parents to monitor children's homework effectively”. (School A) and accommodate their linguistic and cultural differences especially on how ELL parents could do to help their children’s learning at home.

Lack of Parents Time

Teachers also mentioned that parents’ lack of time limited their engagement at volunteering and in other school activities. Some teachers indicated that due to “having large families” and “work commitments”, sometimes, parents do not have time to be present at school or be involved in their children's education. Mothers were, specifically, mentioned by teachers in school A as absent due to family commitments as they are usually in charge of taking care of their younger children which led to limited time to be simply present at school for any reason:

“Sometimes only a father may come up to collect a child. You don't get to develop a rapport

with mammy who is often the primary care giver at home."

Cultural Barriers

Apart from reported linguistic and literacy challenges to engagement, there were also several mentions of "cultural barriers" (school A). Teachers remarked that some ELL parents are, sometimes, hesitant to take part and being present at school activities because of "Lack of interest from parents." (School B) due to "Cultural differences that can be challenging" as stated by many teachers. They also added that ELL parents' perceptions regarding parental engagement might be different due to the different cultures between home and school: "Often the parents themselves are reluctant to engage for cultural and other practical reasons" (School B)

Teachers, in their opinions, also stated that ELL parents generally lack the desire to be engaged with their children's education because of having "differing views of the importance of Education" (school B) as well as "not having a positive attitude towards education" (School C).

A further source of teachers worries was the lack of ELL parents understanding of the education system in Ireland "a lot of parents don't really know how things work in primary school in Ireland" (School B) especially when it comes to the modern way of learning techniques that Irish school's approach. Teachers explicitly indicated that ELL parents sometimes cannot help enough at home because of the different schooling experiences that ELL parents and their children had "Lack of experience of the Irish school system e.g., how we teach subtraction in maths etc." (school A).

Lack of Transportation

The absence of "face-to-face interaction" between ELL parents and teachers, in school B and school C, was mentioned by nine teachers surveyed as a common challenge of engagement. The strong desire of Muslim parents to enrol their children in Islamic schools made so many pupils in these two schools live in different areas in Dublin and sometimes different cities which led to: "Over half of school children attend by bus" (School B) and parents often live quite far away from the school "they do not have easy access" and they rarely go to school due to long distances "We rarely see them unless it's prearranged as they don't drop or collect their children". (School B).

Another teacher from School B was more specific regarding how transportations limited the amount of communication and ELL parent engagement: "lack of informal opportunities to

involve parents and often only contact is at PTM once a year." (School B)

5.8.4 Suggestions for Support

Teachers perceive parental engagement as an important factor in the education process. "Both parents and teachers should work together in order to best serve the children and their education" (school D). Thus, to achieve this, there are many steps that schools can take to address the barriers that limit parents of ELLs engagement and to thereby increase family-school engagement.

5.8.4.1 Communication for Better Teamwork

The majority of teachers recommended building relationships with families through strong, clear and regular communication. This can be promoted through the use of multiple methods either written or oral: "via Aladdin, email, homework diary. Maybe make phone call [….] and report writing" (School B)

Other teachers also suggested having "Information evenings", "Class Page on school website" and "home visits to explain face to face" so ELL parents feel they are important in the schooling and education of their children and to achieve better learning opportunities for them. Others suggested creating opportunities to listen to ELL parents and try to know the problems that they usually face in their children's education to support them "Elicit parent concerns via questionnaire or meeting".

To overcome reported language barriers as well as to generally increase immigrant family school engagement, many teachers suggested organising "Evening English EFL classes" (School A) in the school grounds for parents of ELLs. At the same time, to increase parents of ELLs attendance to PTMs and increasing their understanding of their children's development, some teachers recommended that it is important for them to have "a competent translator/ interpreter" (School B) available during meetings with ELL parents to enhance communication and, any information the school provides to ELL parents, whether verbal or written, should be comprehensible. Teachers also suggested that, whenever possible, school to home communication should be conveyed in the parents' primary language, or in a language the parents can easily understand: "Any communications to parents could have translations in their own language to ensure there is adequate understanding." (School B)

5.8.4.2 Provide ELL Parents with Guidance and Support

Due to ELL parents lack of familiarity of the Irish education system, teachers suggested

educating ELL parents to support them understand the culture of school and to help them get prepared to support their children in their education since the start of the academic year through "welcome meeting each August" (School C) and "Info/welcome packages to the school each year in a range of different languages is essential to be sent to each home."(School C).

Additionally, teachers suggested that schools need to get ELL parents equipped and trained to use various school online platforms and different apps used such as Aladdin and Google classroom to get connected to school and be able to contact teachers whenever needed. At the same time, teachers also recommended educating ELL parents about Irish primary school curriculum and about the general expectations for learners at each level through seminars and sessions to guide them through the way they should support their children at home: "Introduction meeting at the beginning of year to explain the curriculum for the year and how parents can help." (School A)

Due to the frequently mentioned disconnections between home and school regarding homework, teachers highly recommended the importance of guiding and assisting ELL parents through regular communication and through teaching them the ways into how to help their children in their learning at home and how to be better homework helpers: "Discuss homework with parents monthly/bi-monthly", and another teacher in school B recommended having: "Regular open nights or classroom open days, at times with guest speakers to discuss ways to help children with schoolwork at home" (School B)

Other teachers, specifically, suggested training ELL parents and provide them with relevant information so they will be able to support their children's literacy and numeracy development: "Reading partnerships and Phonics and math game programmes in school for home" (School C)

5.8.4.3 Cultural Inclusion

Incorporation of the cultural strengths of ELL families into the school curriculum and activities was also highly recommended by teachers surveyed. They suggested that to increase ELL parental participation, schools need to acknowledge those parents' linguistic and cultural values and view them as advantages instead of problems through validating their "funds of knowledge" that they possess. Some teachers suggested that parents could get engaged if provided with culturally and linguistically appropriate volunteering opportunities at school such as "provide some classes in Arabic" (School B). Also, inviting

parents of ELLs for “sharing skills in the classroom” such as “Give talk to class about their country of origin, culture, food etc” (School A)

5.8.4.4 Utilising Parent Association Committee and Community Resources

Teachers also mentioned that schools need to ensure “having strong and working Parent Association Committee” (School C) to include ELL parents as participants in school decisions and to increase school-based activities such as “workshops and social events”. Strengthening ELL parents’ awareness of resources available in the community and how to access them to support their children development as well as their own personal development were also recommended: “Introduce parents to free resources on the community, especially library-based activities.” (School B)

To increase parents’ attendance to school activities, teachers also recommended presenting all school schedules in advance: “Draw out a school calendar in more detail, holding various events throughout the year” (School B), so that ELL parents get notices for school activities in early stages and so they attend more events. Furthermore, to greatly engage immigrant parents of ELLs engagement at school, one teacher in school A recommended that schools should have initiatives that do not rely too much on English and that schools may encourage “Skills bases engagement using for example IT, music, art, craft, cooking”.

5.9 Summary of Chapter

The aim of the teacher's survey was to explore patterns of ELL parental engagement at four Irish primary schools in Dublin. Teachers through quantitative questions reported their perceptions, attitudes regarding family-school engagement. Teachers also through qualitative questions in the survey, reported a range of successful strategies they used to engage ELL parents at home, at school and through creating two-way effective communication. Teachers also reported various challenges to successful engagement at school, at home and in communication. Additionally, teachers provided suggestions about how to effectively develop ELL parental engagement at school.

This chapter has presented the findings emerging from teachers quantitative and qualitative data about their experiences of ELL parental engagement at school. The next chapter will discuss the findings of this study regarding the perspectives of Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs in relation to parental engagement.

Chapter 6: Research Findings (Parents)

6.1 Introduction

The focus of this qualitative phase of study was to examine parental engagement from the perspectives of Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs in the context of four Irish primary schools. Both the individual semi-structured interviews and focus groups interview discussions provided parents with the opportunity to identify types of engagement and existing challenges, also to make suggestions for support regarding parental engagement in the context of Irish primary schools. Thus, qualitative data gathered from both data sources (individual interviews and focus group discussions) were analysed using thematic analysis to generate themes that conveyed meaning in relation to the research question of this part of research study underlining:

(1) How is parental engagement perceived and enacted by Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs?

(2) What is Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' perspectives of challenges to family school engagement? What practices promote effective parental engagement?

This chapter outlines participant parents' demographic data and captures the voices of immigrant Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs in relation to the patterns of their engagement in their children's education. This chapter also reports various barriers that limited these parents' engagement in the education of their children and provides parents suggestions with regard to how to enhance effective family school engagement.

6.2 Parent Demographics

A total of 25 immigrant parents (all female) from the following Arabic speaking countries were interviewed: Algeria (5), Morocco (3), Saudi Arabia (2), Libya (5), Yemen (2), Egypt (5), and Iraq (3). The participants had resided in Ireland between 4 and 27 years (M = 15.4) and number of years with children at the participating schools were between 2 and 18 years (M = 8.8). All parents were born and attended primary and post primary schools abroad, mostly in their countries of origin.

The parents' level of education was various including (1) doctoral degree, (3) medical master's degrees, (2) medical degrees, (9) bachelor's degrees. (7) Secondary school

certificates, and (3) preparatory school certificates. Occupational status of parents included the following: Medical Doctors (2), Medical lab scientist (1), PhD researchers (2), Arabic-teachers in complementary Arabic schools (6), Home Carer (1) and the rest were stay-at-home mothers (13).

All the parents were married and living with their spouses at the same house, except two (one divorced, and one described herself as Widow). The parent's average number of children was 4.3 children (SD = 1.95; from 2 to 10 children); 12% (3 parents) had 2 children. 32% (8 parents) had 3 children; 16% (4 parents) had 4 children, 20% (5 parents) had 5 children and 20% (5 parents) had 6 & more children. All parents had at least one school aged child, while many had multiple children attending the school included in the study. Finally, all parents in this study were of the Muslim faith and Arabic is their first language.

6.3 Themes For Parents' Individual and Focus Group Interviews

Five themes were generated from parents' qualitative data Both "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches to data analysis were used for interpreting Arabic-speaking parents' perceptions and experiences with regard to ELL parental engagement. Therefore, the first major theme shed light on parents' general attitudes about parental engagement. In this theme, parents defined parental engagement in their own words perceiving their roles as primary educators for their children associated with extra responsibilities being immigrant parents, provided their perceptions of the roles of engaged parents. Parents also expressed how their educational experiences in their home countries defined the way they are engaged with their children's education in Ireland in theme one. The second theme presented parents' patterns of engagement at home reporting many positive children rearing and learning at home engagement practices. In relation to theme two, parents' home-schooling experiences during school closure during the Covid-19 pandemic are outlined. Parents also reported challenges that limited their engagement at home, showing strategies they adopted and suggestions to overcome learning challenges at home. The third theme shed light on parents' perspectives of school to home communication. In relation to theme three, parents reported many positive communication experiences with their schools, however, some gaps of school to home communication regarding many important aspects of education/ schooling and child's social life at school are presented in this theme. Challenges that hindered two-way communication between home and school and suggestions to overcome them are outlined.

The fourth theme presented the patterns of parents' engagement at school including volunteering and decision-making experiences. Many challenges that face Arabic-speaking immigrant parents to be actively engaged at the school context as well as suggestions to enhance parental engagement at school have been reported in fourth theme. The fifth theme outlined parents' patterns of engagement at the community and challenges that face them to be more engaged with community, also multiple suggestions to enhance immigrant parent engagement with community resources have been presented. These themes were generated from individual interviews and focus group discussions; excerpts from both data sources will be included as evidence in relation to each theme identified. In each excerpt included, the letter corresponds to a code for the school, and the number refers to the parent. Focus group quotes will have (FG) along with the parents' pseudonyms. (See Figure 25) for themes and sub themes). Home

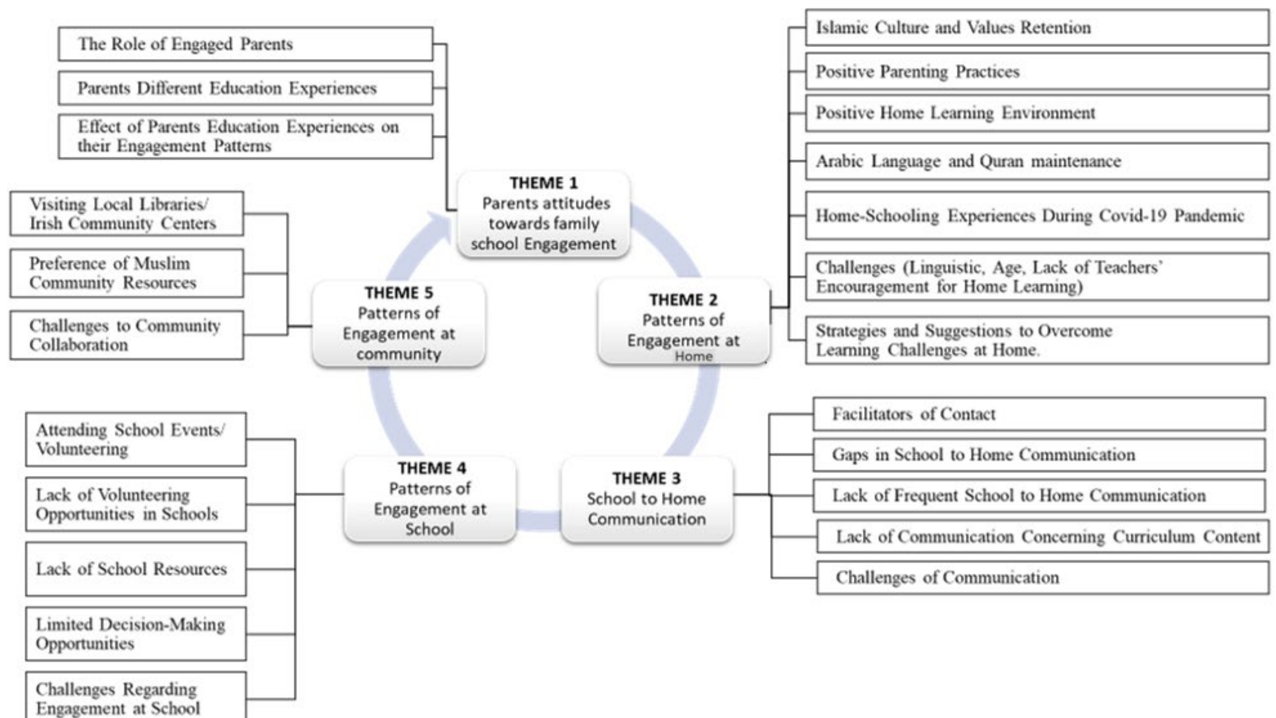


Figure 25: Themes and Sub Themes for Parents' Individual and Focus Group Interviews

6.4 Parents Attitudes towards Family School Engagement

In the individual interviews, parents provided different insights about how they define parental engagement. They generally defined parental engagement as a "responsibility" considering home as the first place for their children's development: "schools alone can't raise our children" (Parent B6). Many parents also mentioned that "family is the basis" (Parent B5) for children's learning and "parents have a big role"(Parent B6) in their children's education. In addition, most of the parents who were interviewed showed awareness of their roles as partners of the education of their children "I believe that school encourage children for education, it doesn't give them all education" (Parent A6). Many of parents, additionally, perceived their roles at home as parallel to the teacher's role at school, Parent B5, for example, stated that: "I don't want to place the whole responsibility on school claiming that it's the teacher's job in the class, we need to question the mother's role at home as well".

A few parents defined the term "parental engagement" as being physically present in the school and to, directly, collaborate with different school community members:

"It means being in contact with school community and other parents inside the school [….] I really feel it as my community, so I like to indulge in my community" (Parent A4).

Accommodating children's needs as well as supporting them in the challenges they face related to their education was also mentioned as an important part of the definition of parental engagement "it means whenever me or my child face any difficulty, we go to school and ask their help" (Parent A2).

Parents in their definitions of parental engagement, also recognized the positive effects that parental engagement entails, stating that their active participation with their children's education boosted their self-confidence. Others mentioned that parental engagement motivates not only children and their parents, but also teachers, particularly, when they realize how the pupils are academically progressing along with their parent's encouragement and support:

"it's not only motivating the child to do better at school, but also motivates the teacher to do more in classroom, especially when pupils do homework properly and get high scores in tests" (Parent B6).

6.4.1 The Role of Engaged Parents

Parents also reflected on their own role during all levels of their children's schooling describing their engagement in various terms, some perceived their role as a lifelong resource of motivation for their children and setting expectations for their future: "They can't determine their way and proceed in life without parent's support and encouragement, no matter how old they are" (Parent A5).

While defining their roles, many parents also indicated that they have additional responsibilities, being immigrant parents, regarding their engagement in their children's education in comparison to indigenous Irish parents for many reasons. Primarily, many participating parents expressed the belief that due to their linguistically and culturally different background, they need to ensure that they choose the school that has the necessary means to recognize them as partners of education and involve them with the education of their children:

"My first role is to look for school that I can participate in it, that doesn't make me stay away or isolate me, just because I'm from a different background or a different religion". (Parent A6)

Within this context, some parents in Catholic schools A and D reported their rational behind their choice of these schools that was basically due to their diversity welcoming reputation. One parent in School A described how their school has been accommodating so many Muslim Arab pupils for so long time: "My younger siblings went to this primary school years ago, so we have a good connection with the people there". (Parent A4). Another parent described the school as an equitable place that is free of differentiation: "there is not any kind of racism there, they also have a good board of management" (Parent A7). Other parents in school A praised how the school is responsive to their religious and cultural needs such as facilitating Quran instruction within the school in the early mornings before the school day starts and providing halal hot meals for Muslim children, even though it is a Catholic school.

Another area of interest in choosing the Catholic schools (A) was the principals' reputation of being culturally understanding and someone who accommodates their cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. Parent (A2) explained how the former school principal, who worked at the school for so many years before his recent retirement, was well familiarised with many facts about Islam and Muslims' culture, which in turn facilitated communication with each

other with regard to many cultural and religious issues:

“This eased explaining the differences between the two cultures, for example, whenever the school had any religious occasions, we didn't have any difficulties explaining the things that our children are allowed to do or not” (Parent A2).

Another parent from school A also overwhelmingly talked about how exceptional the former principal at the school was in creating a welcoming school climate for newcomer families and mixing different cultures and religions together in same school without discriminating any of them:

“I haven't met a principal like him before [….] He was very understanding about how different people can come together, he was also helping people that just came in to really settle in the school and make the children’s education go smoothly”. (Parent A6).

School D was also praised by parents for having a welcoming environment for all children regardless of their origin and their cultural backgrounds: “The school has pupils from different backgrounds, such as Indians, Muslims, Jewish and others who have no religion” (FG Parent D2). They, additionally, described how it has culturally responsive policy especially regarding celebrating religious and cultural events of minority groups: “whenever we have any religious event such as Ramadan, they celebrate it with us”. (Parent D4). Another parent described the school as home as she was updated about everything that happens to her children there: “We are like a family in the school and the teacher is like the second mother of our children” (FG Parent D2).

At the same time, there was a consistent view among parents in both Islamic schools (B & C) that their rationale of choosing these schools was, primarily, based on the Islamic school ethos and teaching of the Arabic language. They reported that this might preserve their Islamic identity and Arabic language. In addition, the religious and cultural sentiments between home and school was also seen by parents in both Islamic schools B and C as a valuable aspect when making an enrolment decision:

“The school’s culture resembles our Arabic customs and traditions which is way different from the country’s culture where we live, they also accept the idea of hijab and the girl's modest way of dressing, that’s why I think it's different than the rest of the Irish schools.” (Parent B4).

Other parents, on the other hand, expressed some concerns about exposing their children to

non-Muslim environments that might negatively influence their Islamic culture and values: "In other schools, I can't control everything, I can't be there all the time to see and listen to everything, I can take celebrating Halloween as an example. It's a completely different culture." (Parent C1).

In addition to parental responsibilities towards schools' choice, many parents stated that they have "responsibilities to learn the language of school" as they are willing to become more engaged in the learning of their children at home as well as to be able to communicate with the school through learning English. Others mentioned that they have a responsibility to introduce and represent their "cultural background" and "religion" to the school community. One parent in Catholic school (A) stated that they have responsibility to make school community understand them instead of staying at home "waiting the school to come and understand us". For example, she stated how she feels responsible to inform her children's school regarding Muslim occasions such as Eid dates because most of the times the school forget such important occasions: "When Eid comes, I don't wait for the school to know themselves, [….] I go and remind them, sometimes they remember that, and they usually say oh we totally forgot" (Parent A6).

6.4.2 Different Education Experience

Many parents in the individual interviews reported being unfamiliar with many things in Irish schools because they came from different background. Parent (A1), for example, shared her experience with her unfamiliarity with "the pen license" that is usually given to the child in fourth class so he can start writing with pen instead of pencil. She narrated a story when her son who is in fourth class was "anxious and worried" and impatiently waiting to start writing with a pen and kept asking her about the time that he will get the license. She also stated that: "I, personally, have never had anything like this before, the school thinks that all parents are familiar with this license [….] When I was at school, we used to write with a pen in the fourth class without any licenses". Therefore, this parent suggested that schools need to share parents with the things that "we do not know" about Irish schools and not to presume that "parents know everything about schools here" (Parent A1).

During the focus group discussions, parents were also asked to discuss differences in education systems between their home countries and Ireland and how their experiences with education in their home countries influenced their engagement patterns. Initially, almost all parents commented about how different, "There is a huge difference" (FG Parent D3), their

education experience in their home country comparing to their children's education in Ireland. Almost all parents had quite positive opinions regarding Irish schools and teachers expressing gratitude of having their children educated in Ireland: “I consider myself very lucky to have my children attend this school” (Parent A1).

One parent in focus group (D) described her education experience in her home country as “traditional, teacher-centered where pupils only receive sets of rules and information without taking part in the learning process [….] there was only a bench and a blackboard, pupils are only allowed to look at the teacher while explaining the lesson” (FG Parent D3). At the same time, she expressed overall satisfaction with education in Ireland recognising benefits in child-centred pedagogy and emphasis on applied knowledge where pupils sit in groups learning together through different activities describing pupils in Irish schools as “active learners”. (FG Parent D3).

Many parents also showed gratitude of the English language support that their children received when they started school in Ireland stating that this kind of support helped their children integrate quickly to the school life and successfully proceed into their education. With this perspective, parent’s comments also reflect the opinion that their children are feeling more comfortable with regard to the intensity of the curriculum compared to their own experiences in their home countries:

“In Egypt, curriculum is difficult, it is, also, taught intensively. While here, the educational process is simple, easy and smooth; pupils do not feel pressure at all” (FG Parent B5).

Parent B3 elaborated, in the same group discussion, that “neither pupils nor their parents feel pressure here”. Another parent in the same focus group reflected on her experience with school assessment in her home country Algeria compared with the way her children get assessed in Ireland “I used to do my exams under pressure and my parents were stressed too during my exams. While here, my children sometimes come back home telling me that they had an exam today, they didn’t even prepare to do it. They take things easily here, no stress, no pressure" (FG Parent B2).

Parents in focus groups, while reflecting on their experiences with education, reported also how they realised new concept of welcoming and supportive education that are open to diversity and offer equal opportunities that are sensitive to families’ ethnocultural identities: “When I first came here, I found myself in a different world open to everyone and accepts all diversities and understand differences in religions and cultures” (FG Parent A2). This

parent, additionally, realised how engaging parents in their children's education is important for the schools in Ireland: "They also have transparency and honesty in the way they deal with parents" (FG Parent A2).

In the same context, many parents compared how the concept of school-family communication is differing in Irish schools than with schools in their countries. One parent shared her experience as a social worker in a primary school in Libya before her immigration to Ireland claiming that there are negative associations to parents' presence in schools there. She also added that school to home communication was only necessary if pupils performed poorly or when their children have gotten into trouble. Conversely: "In Ireland, when teachers communicate with parents, mostly, to report child's progress, they share the positive points first, even if they mention any negatives, they mention them quickly at the end of meeting, to encourage parents and don't make them feel frustrated". (FG Parent A7)

6.4.3 Effect of Education Experience on Engagement Patterns

Besides their different experiences with education, parents also commented about how their experience defined the way they are engaged with their children's education showing two positions. The first position is shared by parents whose experiences were positive and positively influenced the way they are engaged with their children's education. Some parents, for example, reported that they attended English medium medical schools in their countries before coming to Ireland which helped them in acquiring English language in young ages and, thus, "supported me when my children started school here". (FG Parent D3).

Others described how their experiences with having a lot of homework when they were at primary school, made them encourage their children to do more learning at home when they have time rather the daily assigned homework. However: "Sometimes, they refuse doing it, claiming that their teachers didn't ask them to do that much homework, I keep telling them that if you were in Egypt, you would do twice the homework you do here". (FG Parent B5)

On the other hand, others expressed significant criticism of their education experiences which negatively influenced the way they are involved: "I, unfortunately, carried all my bad experiences with me while I am trying to be involved" (FG Parent A7). She further reflected on how she is usually firm and strict with her children's learning at home and while they do their homework at home. Another parent, in the same group discussion (A) also stated that due to her mother's overinvolvement when she was at school, this led her to do the same

thing with her son when he started schooling. She added that she found herself not only helping her son to do the homework, but also, she was doing it for him until he became fully dependent on her all the time: “I ended up doing the same thing with my eldest son when I first came here. I used to write even the new English words and sentences in his copy”. (FG Parent A1)

6.5 Patterns of Engagement at Home

6.5.1 Islamic Culture and Values Retention

Parenting practices include several aspects for parents, however, most of them reflected the importance of both cultural and religious values of raising children. They reported that they have great responsibilities in passing on their own Islamic morals and values to their children teaching them respect and acceptance as well as teaching them “honesty and how to help and be kind with others” (Parent B3). Accordingly, children can be good role models at school and never to hurt anyone regardless of his ethnicity, religion or gender, at the same time to establish positive interactions with the school community:

"I always say to my children don’t judge people for their religion, their language or their background, I just tell them to take the good thing and leave the bad thing from anyone even if they are a Muslim or anyone”. (Parent A6).

Parents, further, indicated that home culture is very different than it is in the school and due to this conflict, some reported a greater need to strengthen their children’s culture of origin and identity at home, at the same time, they need to adapt to the Irish school’s culture and to create a middle ground environment for their children at home: “I try to make them feel in the middle area where the school and the house understand and go with each other” (Parent A6). Such a mix of cultures, according to parents, is to make their children do not feel confused or not to make “two separate worlds” (Parent A6). At the same time, children do not feel different from the rest of their classmates. Another parent in school A, for example, reflected into how she makes her daughters maintain some school cultural habits so that they do not feel different from the rest of the pupils at school:

“On Halloween, all pupils usually wear Halloween costumes, here, I don’t want my daughters to feel different from the rest of their classmates by wearing the school uniform. So, I keep telling them, it's okay to wear costumes today, but remember it’s just for fun, this

doesn't go with our culture, and you must stop wearing it when you grow up". (Parent A2)

Parents in Islamic schools also reported some cultural differences between home and school that led to "some cultural problems when it comes to some topics" (Parent C5). Parents criticised the racial and ethnic makeup of school staff as not representative of the pupils and their families in diversity: "Even though the school is Islamic [….] but the rest of school staff and teachers are all Irish" (Parent B1). They also explained how some cultural misconceptions occur when teachers, who mostly do not understand the religion and culture of their students or when they "tell stories that are not related to our culture" or sometimes teachers discuss some religious/cultural topics for their children in the class. Therefore, many parents reported that they try to further adjust or clarify to their children at home "what is related and what is not related to our religion and culture" (parent C5). So that their children do not pick up wrong information or habits that do not go with their Islamic religion/culture from the school.

6.5.2 Positive Parenting Practices

In the course of individual interviews, parents talked about the importance of establishing routines at home, which do not necessarily relate directly to school, but instead makes children manage their time in a better way, for example, restricting access to TV and social media consumption: "I encourage learning instead of just lying down and wasting time between watching TV and playing electronic games" (Parent C4). Instead, some parents reported they "encourage physical workout" (Parent A1). Others perceived teaching their children's protective skills to build responsibility and to protect themselves as one of their responsibilities at home:

"We use that kind of YouTube videos in our native Arabic language and in English language sometimes to support their learning. They learn things such as how they behave when they meet a stranger and other safety issues". (Parent D3)

Parenting also means to many parents caring about their children's little details such as "checking their backpacks" (Parent B2), so they become aware of what children are bringing home and what homework assignments they have. Others perceived parenting as allowing their children to struggle whenever they face difficulties in anything "I don't get involved directly" to increase their critical thinking while helping them through the challenges and continuing to guide them: "I encourage them to find their own solutions, even if it was not the right one, that's fine" (Parent B5).

Engaging in regular discussions that demonstrates an interest in children's development and their education was also mentioned by parents such as simply talking about the school day: "I do like every single day to the stage that my children are sick of it" (Parent A3). She also reported that such discussions are important for parents to show an interest in their lives and to stay informed about what is happening at their schools: "it's very important for the child to have this connection with the parents to make them feel like they're always there for them". (Parent A3).

Having high levels of parental expectations such as discussions about importance of education for children's future was also mentioned by many parents as their best discussions with their children as it has lifelong effects on children's academic achievement and their future careers:

"My husband and I are both doctors [….] We always have discussions about the importance of education and how to be good members in the community. I keep telling them, you should have a good quality of education to help yourself and to help your community too" (Parent C1).

Another parent stated that she always discusses with her children about the importance of going to college and graduation because "having a degree is the first key success for their future" (Parent B4). Also, because a lot of children think they will not get any benefit from going to school or college and "they only want easy jobs that bring them money" (Parent B4), therefore, many parents stated that having regular discussions about these things make children have big dreams and ambitions for their futures.

Parenting was also perceived as creating a caring home environment such as supporting children's emotional/psychological well-being and development: "I use homework time to ask about their psychological state". (Parent D4). One parent in school A shared her experience when she found out some issues with her child's emotional well-being because he was bullied at school:

"I noticed how nervous and anxious he became at home, even though he was a calm and happy child before. I kept asking him what's going on with you. Even though he refused to talk in the beginning, when I promised to help him, he told me that he's suffering from a lot of bullying in his class, he was even beaten by one of his classmates until he, literally, hated going to school". (Parent A7).

The parent was asked to elaborate more on how she reacted about the problem, she

mentioned that she would have preferred for his teacher to recognise such problems in the classrooms and to respond quickly and consistently to bullying behaviours. However, she stated that "We asked him to report to the teacher, then, my husband visited the school and talked to the teacher to sort out this problem". (Parent A7).

Within this context, many other parents also mentioned that many social problems experienced by their children at school such as isolation and discrimination, however, they are mostly noticed by parents at home rather than by teachers who spend more time with the children at school. Therefore, some suggested: "Having a social worker who talks with the pupils about social things, such as their teachers and peer's relationship in the classroom [....] because they need to express their feelings to someone at school" (Parent A1).

When parents were asked, in focus group discussions, if their schools supported them in their parenting skills. Only parents in school A mentioned school support by attending informative evening parenting sessions hosted by professionals at their school over the years: "I attended a parenting session at school that was about time management and how mothers could maximise quality time with their children" (FG Parent A1). They added that their school was hosting online parenting sessions even during Covid-19 that supported them into how to use technology during remote learning to support children learning and how to control their social media consumption too.

Due to contrast in cultures with regard to parenting practices, parents from both Islamic schools group discussions (B & C) noted how helpful it would be if their schools, support them while rearing their children in the Irish society through raising their awareness in areas such as, psychology of children, how to deal with bullying, problems of adolescents and development of puberty in girls and boys: "because we live in a country that is open into so many cultures, and we, as Muslims, have many reservations in a lot of things, so the school may provide some support through educating parents on how to overcome those reservations from an Islamic perspective". (FG Parent C1). They further discussed that such workshops are needed to support their knowledge about general parenting and learning at home practices in professional ways. Parent B5 in the focus group discussion mentioned that she needs to learn how to be more flexible with her children especially with regard to learning at home, therefore, expressed her desire to be invited to attend parenting workshops at school to support her in this area:

"I like the way Irish teachers use while teaching children in classrooms, they are slow but

steady, if pupils can't learn something today, they'll learn it later. So, I wish school would invite us to attend courses on how to best deal with children especially in learning" (FG Parent B5).

6.5.3 Positive Home Learning Environment

Several key themes consistently emerged throughout interviews and focus groups on relation to how parents positioned themselves with respect to the education of their children. Most of them viewed their role at home by creating caring home environment that encourages learning and supports their children's academic achievement than being involved in any other kind of activities related to school: "even though I'm not that involved at school because I don't speak English, but I'm too involved with their education at home" (FG Parent A5)

Being involved with learning at home was obvious when parents were asked about their role in their children's education, almost all of them mentioned learning at home activities. One parent, for example, described how she has made her home looks like a small school that have enough school supplies and school like activities to create a good learning environment for her children even before they started attending schools:

"We have a small library; we have crayons and play doughs. We have a lot of similar activities at home since my children were little" (Parent D3).

The importance of homework supervision at home was also prevalent for almost all parents even the ones who did not speak English and could not provide direct assistance. They reported that their support can come in the form of providing a regular quiet place and time for their children to complete homework: "We sit together at the same table, even though I don't understand most of the things" (Parent A7). However, it is important for those parents to make sure that their children have done their homework. It was also notable that many parents regularly encourage reading at home, both in English and Arabic, and that the Irish school has a big role in enhancing the reading activity at home: "Children here like reading because the school encourages them to read" (Parent B1). An important element of those parents supporting their children's learning at home, co-learning occurred, whereby they learn and develop too as their children learned English and became teachers and cultural navigators for their parents: "Whenever I read to my son in English, he always corrects my pronunciation". (Parent B5). Another parent mentioned learning some Irish and English while homework monitoring and learning about different social and religious occasions that

Irish people celebrate through having discussions with her children at home:

“I intend asking them about things related to the Irish culture such as the stories behind national and religious days that the school celebrates, because I’m an immigrant parent and I’ve no idea about most of the events here but through my children, I constantly learn new things about Ireland” (Parent A7)

Considering the children's weak points and learning problems, while supporting learning at home, was mentioned by many parents as one of their responsibilities so that they can draw their teacher's attention about them: “I try to recognise their weak points; then, I discuss these points with their teachers to focus on them and I try to do my part as a parent as well”. (Parent D3).

6.5.4 Arabic Language and Quran maintenance

While parents were defining their roles at home, almost all of them mentioned that they focused on guiding their children’s education in ways that were not entirely connected to formal Irish schooling such as having great values and responsibilities for learning Arabic language at home because it is “the language of Quran” (Parent B2), therefore, all parents showed great commitment to make their children speak and learn Arabic language from young ages: “it is necessary to intensify the learning of Arabic at home more than anything else” (Parent D4). Another parent provided several reasons for passing on Arabic language and culture to her children:

“The best way to learn my religion is to learn it through Arabic. Also, to communicate with my relatives in Egypt” (Parent A6).

At the same time, many parents also showed great commitment and investment in supporting their children learning about Islam and memorising Quran:

“Even though it's very difficult for her to memorise Quran. I always encourage her to watch surahs recited by children on YouTube, this raised her level in Arabic and Quran”. (Parent B4).

Along with the importance of Arabic language and Quran learning at home, almost all the parents interviewed reported additional responsibilities they have related to the formal instruction of Arabic language and Islamic studies in the complementary weekend schools: “I want them to learn equally in both schools” (Parent A3). Even though many of them

reported that the schoolwork related to those weekend complementary schools are demanding much more effort from them as parents at home besides the mainstream Irish schoolwork: “it's more pressure for me because at the same time while they are learning English, I try to teach them Arabic and Quran [….] but I try to divide the homework during the week.” (Parent A6).

6.5.5 Home-Schooling Experiences During School Closure During the Covid-19 Pandemic

When parents were asked about their experiences with home schooling during school closure in the Covid-19 pandemic, most of them reported the main challenge being keeping their children focused on schoolwork: “I literally failed to control them [....] the teacher also couldn't control them” (FG Parent B3). Feelings of pressure have been, repeatedly, mentioned by parents as main challenges during Covid too: “They wanted to play outside all time, and I was under pressure as I was the responsible for their schooling” (FG Parent A1). On the other hand, other parents realised how their engagement with their children at home benefited them academically even though it was a stressful experience. Parent B4, for example, stated that even though “All the workload was on me”, however, she realised that via her support, her daughter's academic level has dramatically improved, however, “it wasn’t easy”. (Parent B4).

Considering support provided by schools to families at the time of remote learning, parents in both Catholic schools (A & D) reported in their focus group discussions that additional learning resources including work materials, apps, and online teaching services that were provided by their school for free: “They provided us with so many resources such as, whiteboards, whiteboard pens, books and other teaching aids [….] they also sent us another iPad for online classes”(FG Parent D3). Another parent reflected how happy they were when her child's teacher visited their house to give him a new computer because “my son's computer stopped working” (FG Parent D2).

Parents from school A, in the focus group discussion, praised how their school supported their children during that “difficult period” through giving them “additional lessons about online remote learning, they also gave English-language learners extra online support lessons in English” (FG Parent A2). Moreover, they reported that their school supported them and their children during Covid through: “web sites that explained the curriculum in detail” (FG Parent A7) to support parents while teaching their children at home. Such

websites were useful to parents as well as they reported: “I used to login into those websites and learn myself” (FG Parent A7). Parents in schools (B & C), on the other hand did not report any school support during Covid, however, they reported a general lack of school support due to lack of school resources.

6.5.6 Challenges of Parents Engagement at Home

6.5.6.1 Linguistic Challenges

Some parents highlighted experiencing difficulties in monitoring their children’s homework due to the language barrier “my biggest challenge is the language” (Parent B4). This was mainly due to their own limited literacy in English that made them unable to provide full support: “I can only help my youngest in tracing dots to write English letters, or in mathematics and Arabic” (Parent B3). While other parents, who have some English competence, also reported difficulties in understanding English grammar: “I can't support them in putting words into context, when I try to build sentences, they are mostly full of grammatical mistakes” (Parent B4). Such reasons made some parents reluctant to directly help their children with homework and had concerns of negative help: “I always worry if I teach them incorrectly”. (Parent D2). Several challenges were also mentioned by parents due to their inability to understand Irish language:

“One of the negative things that faces me is the Irish language. My children and I find it hard, my eldest daughter, is in secondary school now and she's still finds it very difficult”. (Parent C2).

6.5.6.2Age of the Child

Many parents stated that parental engagement fluctuates and described how the nature of their engagement has changed over time. They acknowledged that the highest levels of engagement are in the first years of schooling when children need more attention and care, afterwards, their engagement gradually declines. For example, many parents reported that children’s time management gets harder once children get older. In addition, parental homework support also decreases overtime due to different reasons, some indicated that as children proceed in school and become more confident and self-reliant, they can do it themselves: “they can do homework on their own without help, they know well what to do and how to do it”. (FG Parent B2). While others reported that helping with homework gets harder when the pupil gets older, and the academic material becomes even more

complicated: “I can help to a certain extent; In the first years of school, I can manage, but when they go further especially in fifth and sixth classes, I find it difficult then”. (FG Parent C2). Another similar comment: “After third class, I can't help anymore because of English”. (Parent C4).

6.5.6.3 Lack of Teachers’ Encouragement for Home Learning

Parents, in focus groups, expressed feeling disconnected from their children’s schoolwork as some parents mentioned: “no extra efforts that parents are required to do at home with Irish school [...] my role, here, just to connect the dots” (FG Parent B2). Similarly, with parents whose children attended School A, in their focus group discussion, stated that learning in Irish schools is mostly done at classroom, thus, limiting their roles as to how to participate in their children’s education:

“90% of learning is done by the teacher at school, children come back home ready to just do their homework with little parental follow up" (FG Parent A5).

The lack of a school invitation to support parental engagement at home was, essentially, expressed through their concerns over the lack of homework being assigned to their children “it's not that major” (Parent A2). Such concerns over the lack of homework were raised alongside an assertion that having large amount of homework was common in their home country’s education systems. In this regard, parents in focus group C also had similar discussion perceiving Irish schooling as not inviting them to support their children's learning at home and that the way of doing homework was so different from what they had experienced in their home countries. It should be also noted here that those parents who considered homework as insufficient, added extra work for their children to do in addition to what was assigned by the school: “I give him a book reader to extract five new words everyday” (FG Parent B5). The same parent explained how she encouraged her children to learn the school curriculum of her home country to invest their time in good things in one hand as well as to expose them to different types of curriculums on the other hand: “I brought Egyptian primary school books from Egypt, and I do teach them Egyptian curriculum from time to time at home” (Parent B5). This mother further mentioned that her children when they first came to Ireland were over six years old and they were already speaking Arabic fluently and because “Arabic school’s curriculum here is designed for foreigners or non-native speakers of Arabic”, that is why she believes that learning from various curriculums lead to deeper understanding especially with Arabic subjects.

At the same time, some parents criticised the curriculum taught in Irish primary schools as being easy and taught in a slow pace, therefore, limits their engagement at home: "whenever I ask her what you did at school today, she replies we did drawing, colouring activities and other fun things" (Parent A2). Curriculum in Irish schools was also described by some parents as "not enough" (Parent B5) and less than expected for the age of the child, especially compared with what they had experienced in their country of origin.

Some parents also criticised how most Irish teachers do not usually share parents with their children's difficulties in some areas of learning which leads to discouraging them to boost the academic performance of their children and overcome these difficulties through more support and engagement at home:

"Teachers accept differences in academic levels between pupils which is normal, but teachers want parents to accept this difference too [….] If my child's academic level is average, but if me, as a parent, with the help of school would make more effort, we'll raise his level from average to advanced [....] but, here, the average pupil stays in the average level" (FG Parent C1)

6.5.7 Parents Strategies and Suggestions to Overcome Learning Challenges at Home.

Considering the difficulties some parents mentioned regarding helping their children with homework. Some, optimistically, reported using their own resourcefulness to support their children's learning of academic language and content at home. Some strategies reported including the use of Arabic/English dictionaries and other online resources such as Google translator and Google, as a search engine, to consult when they encounter something they do not understand: "When my daughter needs my help in homework, I always go to Google to find the correct answer" (Parent B4). Others reported using any resources available to them to support their children:

"I used to guess meanings of difficult words through pictures attached to them or through their context, I did my best to understand the things that my child needs to understand so I can help him" (Parent C3).

Other parents reported that, due to their difficulties and frustration in monitoring their children's homework, the father, who mostly has better English skills, gets involved instead.

This is even more popular for parents with limited English skills with their children in advanced classes. For example, parent A7 stated that when her son has an assignment that needs help, his father is involved, because he is in the sixth class and the language there is too complicated. Some parents who do not have enough English skills also reported they had to rely on their older children to help with homework, which greatly constrained their engagement with homework. One parent expressed feelings of deficiency when her younger children ask her to help with homework: “Sometimes, I feel helpless, especially when my older children are still at school, so we wait until they come home” (Parent B1).

When parents were asked how parental engagement at home can be improved, many parents felt that teachers have the responsibility to serve as resources to help them support children's learning and development at home because: “they have professional knowledge in teaching methods” (FG Parent A2). Parents added that such schools/teachers support can also be achieved through: “attending the same teaching training courses that teaching staff attend at school, this will positively be reflected on the child” (FG Parent B5). Parents, further, claimed that if home and school share the same leaning activities, there will be a consistency between both parties that would lead to greater academic development for children.

6.6 School to Home Communication

6.6.1 Facilitators of Contact

Parents conveyed their ideas of school to home communications in a variety of ways. Most of them reported good experiences with various means of communication that were always available for them: “they send us written messages, they have a website and there is the secretary office that we can contact at any time [....] I’ve never had any communication problem with this school” (Parent A2). Face to face communication was the desirable option by most parents who often use school visits when they pick their children up as an opportunity to talk with teachers: “I always talk with the teacher at the end of the school day” (FG Parent D2). More importantly, communication after Covid-19, according to parents, “became very effective” (FG Parent A7) and even much easier due to technology than it was before “we used to call the secretary to book an appointment, but now […] we log in onto the platform and write anything we want to the teacher” (FG Parent A7). Parents also stated that they can receive notifications about school activities, homework and any information through different school apps. This also facilitated parents ask more questions online and arrange for face-to-face appointments with teachers: “Everything is on Google

classroom, every child has a Google Mail [....] basically it's Google classroom for the homework and Aladdin is some sort of app, where the secretary or the head office in the school can also be connected" (Parent A4).

Another aspect of communication that was also highly appreciated by some parents in school A is the translation of most leaflets sent home in their home language: "they make the people feel closer to them, so, even if parents can't read English, they will read the leaflet in Arabic" (Parent A6). Parents in school (A) also appreciate how their school constantly communicate with them to share them with many details about the future plans in advance:

"When they decided to serve hot Halal meals, they notified us a year before, they also share us the names of the next year teachers in advance" (parent A2).

6.6.2 Gaps in School to Home Communication

6.6.2.1 Lack of Frequent School to Home Communication

Parent-teacher meetings (PTM) were consistently mentioned as a common theme for communication and frequently attended by most parents throughout the individual interviews and the focus group interview. However, most parents criticised the frequency of this kind of communication that reports their children's academic progress, claiming that this was limited to one annual parent-teacher meeting and a single end of year report. Therefore, some expressed the critical need for more detailed, regular feedback "weekly or monthly reports" (FG Parent C1) and timely information about their children's academic progress focusing on the points where he needs parental support. In addition, they stated that teachers, in (PTM) and school reports, must clearly address all challenges that their children encounter at school claiming that education requires constant follow up from parents to be able to overcome any challenges faces their children: "Informing parents about their children's weak points will help them academically develop; reports shouldn't be left until df rthe end of the year because it is too late then" (FG Parent C1). The same parent elaborated more in the focus group discussion claiming that "education is an accumulative process" in a reference that having one single academic report at the end of the school year cannot help parents and their children overcome any challenges or shortcomings they encounter in their education careers:

"let's say, my child is weak in mathematics, If I have been repeatedly receiving such feedback from his teacher since the start of the school year, it will be easier for me and for my child to overcome that weakness, but once the school reports such problem only at the

end of the year, what can I do then" (FG Parent C1).

Parents, in school B focus group, criticised how PTMs are sometimes short and uninformative claiming that teachers in these meetings, sometimes, do not give parents enough space to ask many questions about their children's development: "he literally said that he has only two minutes to give me the main points […..] then he ended the meeting saying that he doesn't have any other comments about my son" (FG Parent B3). They also discussed their dissatisfaction about the content of end of school reports "I have never received enough information in the report" (FG Parent B5) describing it as repetitive, limited and lacking directions on how parents might support their children and improve their learning: "they kept reporting that the English score is good, but they don't give information on how to make a child develop" (FG Parent B5).

In the same context, parents, in school A focus group, discussed the mismatch of feedback received in (PTM) and end of school reports. One parent mentioned that her child was exaggeratedly praised by his teacher in PTM, however, in his annual academic report: "We found a lot of weak points that my child needs to work on, I wonder why she didn't tell me such details in the meeting, even though I kept asking her about my child's weak points and how I can help him". (FG Parent A7). Therefore, many parents expressed their need for timely information about their children's academic progress in school focusing on the points where they need parental support.

Beyond the academic aspects, several of the interviewed parents recounted narratives when they had not been informed about some incidents at school. Many of them criticised teachers for their neglect of sharing parents the social life of their children at school such as peer relationships, social and behavioural habits: "My daughter has been through different troubles with her classmates, but her teacher never mentioned anything, whenever I meet her in PTM, she describes my daughter as sociable and likes to help her colleagues" (Parent A1).

Other parents in school C reported that "this school does not communicate well with us even in the case of emergencies" (Parent C1). Another parent in school C shared her negative experience with her daughter's teacher, in a reference to lack of detailed communication, when her daughter had a serious incident at school that required a surgery followed by two full years of physical therapy due to serious fractures in her hand, she stated that:

"She needed an immediate first aid as soon as she fell down at school, however, the teacher

didn’t know how to deal with the accident, even though she contacted me saying that my daughter had a simple incident, but she let my daughter go to the bathroom in her own with her broken hand, then, she was sent home by the school bus which made the fractures even worse”.

Parent (C3), further, complained about how some teachers sometimes do not know how to deal with some serious incidents that need immediate communication with parents as well as immediate reaction to avoid other serious consequences. She, additionally, indicated that school staff and teachers should not underestimate the daily incidents that children usually encounter at school and not to diagnose them and assume they are fine when they are exposed to accidents: “all they should do is to get an ambulance to avoid serious consequences”. (Parent C3)

By contrast, other parents reported that they also have responsibility to initiate communication with teachers, instead of waiting the annual PTM and ask their help to give recommendations on how they can support their child at home, especially when they know that their children are not progressing well. One parent in School B, for example, reported having multiple types of interactions with different teachers in school who, in turn, provided parents with full support they need.

“I always approach his teacher to be updated about his progress every three to four months. I ask about everything, his academic, social and mental aspects and the way he deals with his friends too [….] I do approach even his English and maths support teachers who, in turn, never hesitate to meet and help me, even though, support teachers are not required to meet parents as the main class teacher should do” (Parent B5)

Some other parents from schools (A and D) also reported receiving enough support from school/teachers when they approached them for their help when their children encountered difficulties in learning or in any other skills. Parent D3, for example, praised the special education teacher who supported her son to develop some social skills that he needed especially because of the Covid-19 pandemic and because she had a twins after having him: “he wasn’t socialising well and he didn’t have any emotional control […] he supported my son so much and we noticed a huge difference since the start of school, he’s getting more independent, happier and more confident as well” (Parent D3). Conversely, many parents in school C complained about lack of school support for parents when needed: “the school doesn’t have any programmes for supporting parents” (Parent C4). Another parent stated:

"sometimes it's not easy to reach out the teacher, because not all the teachers reply or interact with parents".(Parent C2). This parent also mentioned that she tried to approach the school to help her logging into Aladdin app, however, they did not show much interest in helping her, accordingly: "I ended up trying on my own until I sorted it out". (Parent C2).

6.6.2.2 Lack of Communication Regarding Curriculum Content

Parents in the four participating schools indicated gaps in communication regarding curriculum content and that there is lack of communication regarding many areas of curriculum content and that they left uninformed about what exactly their children are learning at school: "I don't know what curriculum they teach [....] they don't share such information that parents really need to know" (Parent C2).

Some indicated that the content of Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in Irish schools as problematic in a reference that their Muslim Arab culture have many reservations regarding most of the content being taught to children in primary school level: "Some topics may clash with some cultures" (Parent A1). Therefore, parents expressed their desire to have regular update about main points as well as the timing of such sensitive lessons so that they could make comments to their children on the curriculum from their own cultural perspectives: "when the school inform us in advance, we will be able to explain the content to the child in our own words, so my child will be more prepared" (Parent A1).

Another area of curriculum content that needs communication and approval from parents is the religious books that taught about Islam to students at Irish schools:

"I just saw a book about Islam and Muslims in the education system here. I think that should be presented to Muslim parents first because a lot of the information in the book is wrong but when the children go and study this book in the secondary school, they found that oh this is wrong information mum, you told me the wrong information, but the truth is that the information in the book is wrong" (Parent A6)

Parent A6 further indicated that "understanding the Muslims" is very important in the school context, either regarding planning curriculum content or regarding the types of events/activities that suit Muslim pupils and their families in the school. For example, she stated that attending school events/parties that sometimes take place in the church might be acceptable for some Muslim parents who might say "if it is not a religious thing and you are

just using it as a hall, it's OK", however, this might be problematic for other Muslim parents who might say, "NO, my children is not allowed to go to church". She further explained that the reasons behind those different opinions are because "in Islam, there is different opinions, I could take this opinion, and you could take that opinion" which sometimes cause confusion to the school personnel who are not familiar with Islam and do not know "what's going on with this religion". Therefore, she suggested that school principals and teachers need to come closer to Muslim parents through communication and collaboration such as having "Islam introduce group" in the school to be able to understand "what type of children they are teaching and what type of culture they are dealing with" (Parent A6)

6.6.3 Challenges of Communication

Many parents interviewed reported problems with communication related mainly to their low proficiency in English language. This potentially impacted their ability to communicate effectively with their children's teachers in different situations. One parent expressed her feelings to be excluded by teachers because of her inability to communicate effectively in English while attending PTMs: "I see them talking to each other and I just stay silent [....] teachers only communicate with the ones who can speak English. I stand like a spectator and, sometimes, I feel my attendance as undesirable even though everyone smiles at me" (Parent A7).

Another parent in school C expressed her frustration regarding teachers' unwillingness to open dialogue with her while she was at school to have a morning coffee with a group of other parents, in a reference that teachers do not listen patiently and respectfully with parents who have difficulties in speaking English fluently: "when I started talking [...] she realised that I don't speak English well, she didn't give me attention, then she asked permission to leave". (Parent C6). Therefore, some parents suggested that teachers need professional development and training in communication skills necessary to work with culturally and linguistically diverse families so that teachers will be able to "create a good communication with parents" (FG Parent B5).

Due to above mentioned barriers, many parents reported they "avoid talking to the teacher directly", but instead rely on other family members such as husbands or older children for communication with teachers. For example, parent C4 explained that "when the teacher sends an email explaining my daughter's development and what is happening to her at school, I ask my son to interpret her email for me and then reply to her on my behalf" (Parent

C4).

Parents identified other communication challenges beyond language differences as some mentioned that school community in general and teacher's attitude towards parents' cultural differences can also be a barrier. For example, one parent reported her experience with cultural discrimination with teachers due to her way of dressing: "sometimes you face people that judge you because of your skin colour or your scarf. So, you could sometimes face teachers who hardly smile to your face or parents who don't want to see your face" (Parent A6).

Having a good knowledge of English was perceived by almost all parents as key factor in their engagement with the education of their children, whether in personal communication with the school, or to support their children's learning at home. Therefore, lack of support to parents of ELLs as to how they might be more connected to the school as well as more involved in their children's learning at home through teaching them the language of school was mentioned by many parents in schools A, B and C. Only a few parents from school D reported that "A long time ago, the school used to invite parents for English classes in the school" (Parent D2). One parent from school A, on the other hand, narrated her experience with her children's school when she asked their help to guide her learn some English skills because she had a problem with writing in English: "they were like we will search about it but we don't really know too much about it, they didn't say they wouldn't help me but they didn't have that much information about it" (Parent A6). Therefore, parent A6 criticised the school staff into how they reacted to her when she asked their support stating that "this is a weakness point that should be considered by the school, they should have at least some information to direct people".

In the same context one parent from school (C) stated that Islamic school neglected the needs of supporting parents who are almost all immigrants coming from linguistically and culturally different backgrounds. She, specifically, reported lack of support in terms of language and regarding adjusting them to the school culture to help them become valued partners with the school.

"They know that almost 99% of parents in this school are not Irish, but they neglected us, they should've taught parents English, since the first beginning of the school. They shouldn't rely on parents to learn English by themselves, we came from different countries under different circumstances, some work, some didn't even finish education, and most of the

mothers are housewives" (Parent C3).

In this perspective, many parents reported their desire to open their ability to learn English more formally at school because English classes provided in community centres are not effective enough. Some parents also expressed disappointment with English classes previously attended at their local community centre: "I've been living here for 21 years, and I did not learn English yet […....] I hope the school could support us learn English because classes offered in community and Islamic centres are not constant, and the content is so simple" (Parent B1).

While other parents suggested that school may accommodate their linguistic needs and make communication easier through having some school staff/administrator who could speak their native language at school. This has been mentioned by almost all parents who have problems with English including parents in both Islamic schools: "We need to speak Arabic to someone in the school" (Parent B1). Even though in these schools they have Arabic teachers who might support parents with translation, nevertheless, this has been considered by some parents as a problematic. For example, parent B3 shared her negative experience with Arabic teacher who was interpreting to her while she was at school to meet the principal following up an issue with her son: "As soon as we started discussing the matter, the teacher who was supposed to translate to me started talking with the principal about other things related to my other children at school" (Parent B3). This parent continued talking about how she was left behind in their discussion in English without giving her the opportunity to talk about the main reason she came for: "I was helplessly sitting and looking at them, I couldn't talk to clarify things". (Parent B3). Therefore, this parent expressed her desire to have culturally sensitive interpreters to convey parents' messages as they are and not to mix things up as what happened with her: "I hope they provide us with a competent interpreter, someone outside the school, someone whose original job is interpretation to convey our messages". (Parent B3). Similarly, due to religious and cultural barriers, some mothers, who wore niqab (face cover), stated that they prefer segregation of sexes because they avoid communicating with male teachers at school due to cultural reasons. Parent C6 stated clearly that if one of her children's teachers is a "male", she avoids having any discussions with him because: "my religion prevents intermingling men and women" (Parent C6). Another parent from school B, who wears niqab, stated that she prefers gender segregation and showed hesitation to attend school activities or volunteer in mixed-gender settings: "I feel shy about participating. I'm naturally very shy, and this affects me a lot. I don't like talking to men, and

this is the reason I don't participate in my children's activities outside the home or school specifically."(Parent B1)

6.7 Patterns of Engagement at School

6.7.1 Attending School Events/ Volunteering

When parents were asked how often they used to attend school-based activities, most of them, clearly acknowledged that “I don’t attend school activities because I'm not interested in such things”. (Parent D5). Even though many parents interviewed showed great interest in taking part in fundraising events such as cake sale days and preparing donation boxes. However, such school-based volunteering activities have also been perceived by most parents as activities that can be done at home than being physically present at school. This is another reference that parents are not familiar with such school-based activities. Furthermore, parents interviewed construct their roles at home rather than being present at school, even though schools usually invite them to attend such activities and spend some time with their children at school: “I only send, with my children, what the school asks for, but I'm not personally involved in any volunteering work inside the school” (Parent B2). Another parent from school D commented: “When they invite us to any event at school, I only donate money or bake cakes to be sold in cake sale day at school”. (Parent D6). These perspectives are very important for understanding Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' engagement preferences and patterns.

However, some extracurricular activities that are generally connected to showing heritage and culture of diverse families such as multicultural days have been attended by almost all interviewed parents. They stated that they prefer to take part in such events to highlight and stress the Arab, Islamic culture: “I like making Algerian traditional sweets in intercultural day so other nationalities taste our food [...] I was also keen in explaining some facts about Islam, such as why Muslims don’t eat or drink certain foods or drinks” (Parent D1). Another parent from school A showed her pride in taking part in intercultural day stating: “I prepared a table full of traditional dishes to show them to other cultures. I made couscous and rice; and traditional Libyan cookies with green tea [….] my son also wore the traditional Libyan outfit that called Zeboun”. (Parent A7). As most parents reported feeling comfortable while participating in school events and activities that shows appreciation for cultural diversity, many parents further stated that understanding the Islamic Culture by schools may facilitate their engagement: “this will help them improve the school and improve the thinking of the

school and improve the rules of the school as well" (Parent A4).

Accordingly, many parents expressed their desire of having more culturally responsive and sustaining family engagement activities at school as they perceived having such activities as a way for their children to see that their culture is legitimized in their school and considered important: As a parent (A7) expressed:

"If school organises activities that suit our culture and suit the school's culture too. So, then, both parties can participate without discrimination of any. Our children will also feel proud and self-confident in their school, they won't feel different anymore".

6.7.2 Lack of Volunteering Opportunities in Schools

When parents were asked about their volunteering experiences, most of them reported that they are not involved in any volunteering work at the school. They, further, justified some reasons that limited their volunteering such as perceiving their schools as not inviting them for volunteering. However, it is important to notify here that at the time of interviews, schools had strict health and safety rules due to Covid restrictions, thus, this was also a major barrier to inviting parents for engagement at school.

At the same time, reflecting to the time before Covid, it was clear that the four participating schools had different policies with regard to volunteering. For example, only parents in school A reported being invited to volunteer, before Covid, in different curricular/extracurricular activities such as: "clothes picking up, for food sale, for Christmas market [....] we did one day a barbeque, we did a sport day, a reading day, …etc" (Parent A6). However, only two parents in school A reported being involved in volunteering activities. Parents in focus group A also mentioned a volunteering opportunity "in the school library" (FG Parent A1). They also mentioned other courses provided to train parents in many skills at school such as: "a sewing course [….] I have learnt wool knitting at school years before Covid" (FG Parent A1).

Parents in schools (B, C and D) generally, reported limited volunteering opportunities, expressing disappointment that there were not many invitations to volunteer or that they were not aware of how to volunteer at events or did not feel encouraged to do so. Parents who's their children attend school C in their focus group discussions stated: "Even before Covid, they had never invited me to volunteer, they don't even organise that many activities at school" (FG Parent C2). At the same time, parent (C2) reflected about her positive

experience with volunteering in her older children's school stating, “Educate Together school is a good model for engaging parents” (FG Parent C2). She further clarified that they help parents, even non-English speakers, to volunteer at school. She continued talking how she used to volunteer in the kids' club at school even though she was not speaking English describing the principal as “very welcoming and encouraged me to volunteer teaching Arabic at school because I am an Arabic teacher” (FG Parent C2).

Even though volunteering was not that popular among most the participating schools, however, some parents reported interest in volunteering. In this context, some shared their experiences while seeking out opportunities to volunteer at school. They also justified different reasons for their interest such as learning English from the native school community and to be beside their children during school hours. One parent in school B, for example, explained her attempts to volunteer at school to teach Arabic and Quran as she thinks she has the time and the ability to support school community in this area, however she found out that “There was no room to volunteer, it's very restricted [....] the principal kept asking me to bring so many documents, one week later, she told me that I can't volunteer because I don’t have the qualification of six-month training course on how to treat children and Garda vetting [....] I gave up then.” (FG Parent B5). Accordingly, some Irish school policies such as police vetting and Child Safeguarding requirement that is used for ensuring safe practice and appropriate responses by workers and volunteers to concerns about the safety of children were perceived by parent B5 as a challenge to volunteer in Irish schools.

Due to school restrictions reported on volunteering at schools, some parents in focus group C suggested that if schools open the door of volunteering “will help break down the cultural and language barriers” (FG Parent C1) so that parents may support each other. According to parent C1, if one parent does not speak English and other parent is fluent, here, they can support each other at different school events or meetings, she added:

“Arab mothers are mostly, highly educated, we also have a lot of time to volunteer while men are busy at work. So, if we get invitations to volunteer, this will make us integrate with the school community in one hand and our language will be improved on the other hand.” (FG Parent C1).

Other suggestions, in focus group A, included making use of some parents' experiences or education in any major of study to volunteering at school. One parent expanded on this idea when she wished to get the chance to volunteer as a social worker in the school as she has

enough background and experience in the field. "Such volunteering will make me professionally develop and my English will improve, and others will benefit as well.” (FG Parent A7)

6.7.3 Lack of School Resources

Lack of school space, resources and facilities in both Islamic schools (B & C) have been mentioned by many parents. Parents in school B, for example, stated that their school lacks space in terms of school size, class size, and having a single small yard with concrete flooring as challenging for their children’s learning and development. For example, Parent B5, specifically, criticised how pupils at school have no place to do any kind of sports due to lack of space while they also are exposed to incidents and getting injured in the concrete flooring. She further criticised the absence of traffic warden service, even though the school is located beside a main road which expose children to car accidents: “I personally had negative experience with this as my son was almost hit by a car on the road, it’s really risky”. (Parent B5). This parent elaborated further in how she and a group of other parents from the school attempted to fix the situation stating that they talked to the school management to have a warden service but “they refused claiming that there are two traffic lights, one at the beginning of the road and the other at the end [….] even though there is a Catholic school next to ours, but they do have a warden crossing service” (Parent B5). Therefore, this parent thinks that Catholic schools have more financial support than other schools, either Islamic or any other school.

Parents in Islamic school (C) also mentioned lack of school resources, parent (C2), for example, reported that “when I first visited the school, I found it small and narrow and they don’t have enough facilities and I also used to hear many negative things about this school such as, the educational level there is not that good”. Many other parents in school C complained that their school does not have separate bathrooms for both genders (boys and girls) using the same bathrooms and toilets, which these parents found culturally unacceptable.

Such lack of space and facilities made the schools not only unable to accommodate the needs of pupils and their families but also unable to accommodate the high demands of Muslim families who desire to enrol their children in Islamic schools: “there is a long waiting list because of the high number of pupils that increases every year, however, the classes are still small and narrow”. (Parent B5)

6.7.4 Limited Decision-Making Opportunities

Taking part in the decision-making was found to be the least popular type of engagement among the participants in this study. Only two parents, out of the twenty-five interviewed, have been members in the parents' association committee (PAC). Both parents are from school A, and both had a relatively high level of English proficiency and a bachelor's degrees. They described their roles in decision making in the school as positive and that led them to have stronger feeling of engagement with the school. They, further, explained how being a member in PAC increased their awareness about culture differences, besides, made them closely understand the school environment and what issues against their culture that might face their children inside the school. They, additionally, had the opportunity to decide things for the children and share different ideas with different cultures in the school.

Parent A6 shared her positive experience with PAC: "one day they're going to do a barbecue in the school, and I was like why we don't do a halal barbecue so Muslims and Christians can eat from it, and they were like, oh, that's a good idea". She elaborated more about this point highlighting how a parent outside the PAC would think if the barbecue was not halal:

"Why they didn't think about Muslims [….] why they did things only for Christians, why they didn't think of us, although there are a very big number of Muslims in the school" (Parent A6).

However, being in the parents' association, she realised that such cultural issues do not occur by purpose, however, it was something they did not think about it. She added that being involved in decision making helped her "putting the bullying rules of the school" (Parent A6) representing the issues that the Muslim Arab pupils face in schools such as bullying against girl's wearing hijab or racialised bullying based on skin colour.

Most interviewed parents generally showed a lack of awareness about the concept of decision making at school. There was also a gap in perception of what the PAC does and how parents are supposed to become involved. Such lack of perception can be attributed to two main reasons, the first is due to lack of school invitation to those immigrant parents of ELLs to take part in PAC and in other school governor roles: "I don't know how I can join it [....] no one has ever asked me to join". (Parent B4). Another parent from school D also cited the lack of knowledge about how to get involved in PAC due to lack of school communication: "I don't know how it works or how to join it, I don't even know if I am allowed to join, I need to investigate this further" (Parent D3).

The second reason is due to cultural and education experience differences of parents as in Arab countries parents are not normally engaged in making decisions in school and PAC mostly do not exist in schools there, so this practice might not be very familiar or meaningful to them: “I don’t know if our school has this committee or not, actually this is the first time I hear about it.” (Parent B3).

While other parents perceived themselves as they do not have the capital to take part in decision making or to be a member in the Parent Association committee considering native parents as more eligible for this role. Parent C3, further, clarified that membership in PAC is a responsibility that needs someone who have a good background about the school system and “should be well educated and quite familiar with school policies and most importantly to speak English better than me”.

Conversely, other parents expressed concerns to be too involved if they initiate communication with school officials to ask for any clarifications or to suggest any ideas: “l don't want them to say that I'm involved in things don't concern me”. (Parent A1). A similar comment from parent (A2) stating that schools have their own systems and therefore she thinks that it is not a good idea to suggest any thing that is not in their plan: “they know what they are doing, all I can do is to draw their attention about specific things that are related to my daughters at school”. (Parent A2)

Many parents with children in the two participating Islamic schools expressed their disappointment as their schools are not involving them in many culturally sensitive decisions. For example, many parents in school C reported that some teachers were not sensitive to their religious needs when they contacted the school management to make teachers stop showing their children cartoons/movies at school that “contain kisses and other things that are not in line with our Islamic culture” (Parent C1). Parents, further, reported that even though some teachers respected their desire and replaced those cartoon/movies with others that suited their culture. However, other teachers did not pay attention to the parents’ desire and kept showing same content to their children. In addition, parents in schools (B & C) further complained about how their school’s management neglected the desire of so many parents to have a separate bathrooms/toilet for boys and girls arguing that the school “do not have enough resources” (Parent C2). While other parents mentioned that their school stopped taking their permission to give their children RSE classes: “Over time, they started teaching RSE classes to our children without referring to us” (Parent C3). Another parent from school C also felt powerless to remove her daughter from sitting beside

only boys at the same table even though mixing boys and girls contradicts with Islamic culture, at the same time, her daughter was unhappy and annoyed of being the only girl in the table: “I contacted her teacher more than one time to change her with other girls, but she refused claiming that’s the school's policy” (Parent C4).

Conversely, many parents in both Catholic schools (A & D) appreciated how their schools involve them in many culturally sensitive decisions that are related to their children at school such as not having to attend Christian religion classes. Parents in school (D) also appreciated being able to choose plain school uniforms without Christian religious symbols that would be against their culture. Parents in school A further shared many positive experiences being involved in decisions that are sensitive to their culture. Parent A2, for example, explained how their school was culturally responsive to the Islamic culture regarding dietary restrictions and offered them with Halal options since the school decided to serve pupils with hot meals for lunch: “The principal organised a meeting with all parents and offered providing our children with Halal food, he also showed us the name of the Halal food manufacturer company”.

Another parent who has been in school A for a long time, shared her positive experience in the focus group with decision making that has been available to them since 2006. She reported that the Muslim parents at that time asked the school management to teach Islamic religion at the time of Christian religion class: “They welcomed our suggestion, then the principal asked us to sign a consent [….] since then, teaching Islamic religion at school became available to all Muslim pupils just as others can learn Christianity” (FG Parent A5). The other participants in this focus group discussed further how such advantage is not available in most of the Irish schools. For example, parent A7 narrated her experience with her children's former Catholic school criticizing how the school used to make Muslim pupils “sit in the same class during the Christian religion lesson and they used to listen and see everything in the class. Consequently, my son came back from school in one day performing the Christian prayer” (FG Parent A7). This parent also stated that when she and other Muslim parents contacted the school telling them that they do not want their children to attend the Christian religion class. They stated that “school immediately replied that pupils couldn't go out during religion class, but they are allowed to draw and color while the teacher explains the lesson” (FG Parent A7)

Almost all parents from school D, also appreciated how their school respected their desire

for not letting their children attend Christian religion classes "the teachers work on engaging our children during these times through either drawing or taking them to the library to read a book. Sometimes, they take advantage of such times to give our children support lessons in English" (Parent D6).

6.7.5 Challenges Regarding Engagement at School

The parents who participated in this study repeatedly mentioned a wide variety of barriers that limited their engagement with school-based activities. Those barriers can be grouped into different categories including language barriers, lack of time, logistical barriers, and cultural discrimination issues.

6.7.6 Lack of English Skills

Most parents mentioned lack of English proficiency as a main barrier to be present at school. This barrier was the most frequently cited problem irrespective of the parents' length of residency in Ireland. One parent in school A stated shying away from volunteering in curricular activities in the classroom claiming that pupils may not, easily, understand her also "to avoid embarrassing my children in front of their classmates while I speak English" (Parent A1).

While communications in PAC are all done in English, this provides a barrier for parents who don't speak English to be part of the committee: "how would I communicate with the other members if I join the committee [...] the whole story is in English" (Parent A7).

6.7.7 Logistical Challenges

Time was also a major challenge for most interviewed parents who talked about time being a huge challenge to be present during the school day and be involved in any school-based activities. Some indicated their schedules, and work hindered their opportunities to visit the school. Others, primarily, came to Ireland "to study" and do higher studies such as master's degrees and PhD, thus, they are busy with their studies most of the time and "don't have time to volunteer or to do any extra work" (Parent C5). Additionally, parents with larger families reported "having so many responsibilities" (Parent D6) that make them in charge of running the house and taking care for the younger kids which, in turn, limit their school visits and to be involved in different school-based activities. "I am a full-time mama [....] I have no time to participate in any school activities" (Parent B3)

Parents, therefore, expressed a desire for more time flexibility to get greater opportunities to be involved, during weekends or after school hours, in many suggested curricular and extracurricular school-based activities such as sports events, cooking activities, swimming, sewing, handicrafts and curricular competitions among pupils. They added that such activities make children like school and make parents involved as well. Parents in focus group (A) further discussed their wishes to empower them through involving them in deciding the time of some school-based events: "Schools need to survey parents about timing of school activities and schedule events and activities whenever suits the majority because we are busy all the time" (FG Parent A1).

Parents also reported some logistical barriers that made them unable to participate in school activities. These challenges ranged from lack of transportation, lack of social networks and childcare services at school, and Covid school restrictions. Most parents in Islamic schools mentioned that the long distances between the school and the families' homes as well as the unavailability of transportation, makes it difficult for them to be present in any school activities or to be more connected with school:

"My daughter goes there by school bus; I don't visit the school; I have never talked to her teacher face to face [....] I've no idea what's going on there, I don't know too much about the school". (FG Parent C2)".

Parents who have young children explained that due to their limited social networks in Ireland as most of them do not have families or relatives living nearby leading to diminished social support. One parent in school A reported her desire to attend a parenting lecture at school, however, due to lack of social networking and childcare services at school she could not attend that activity: "I had a baby at that time and my husband was at work, the school didn't have a nursery too [....] We are immigrants here, no families can help us, unlike Irish parents who can rely on grannies to take care of children whenever they need." (FG Parent A7).

As lack of childcare services at school is cited as a barrier for attending school activities, parents suggested that schools should support them by providing "childcare inside the school, so we can volunteer" (FG Parent A1) and become more engaged at school.

6.7.8 Discrimination Issues

Another huge barrier to parents' engagement at schools was perceived cultural discrimination. Even though many parents in Catholic school (A) praised their school being culturally responsive to many aspects of their religious and cultural needs including recognising their religious occasions such as “in last Eid al-Fitr, they gave the pupils sweets and chocolates that had Eid wishes written in Arabic language”(Parent A7). However, other parents, such as parent (A6) had different opinion stating that when Eid time comes, she asks her children’s teachers if she can prepare “some sweet goodie bags” and then she asks her children to give them to their friends in the class, however, she stated that “sometimes teachers allow me and sometimes they don’t allow” and when they do not allow her, she cannot do that. In addition, she criticised how Irish schools in general do not give Muslim children days off in Eid which make them take their children out of the school in the Eid day suggesting that “Other religions should take more space in the school” which can be achieved through empowering pupils and their families by acknowledging their heritage and culture such as introducing a formal Eid Day celebration and let pupils and their families celebrate such events, so their children feel that they are also being represented and recognized in their school.

“In Christmas or Halloween, they take a lot of time preparing school cards, costumes, decorations ...etc. I think they should give the Muslim children at least two or three days to do Eid cards, decorate the class if they want, give the children sweets, that will help them engage better in the community.” (Parent A6)

Parent A7 also showed her desire to have more space/time at school to celebrate religious occasions stating that her son likes to attract his classmates’ attentions about how different we are in religion and culture through “talking about things that represent our culture” stating: “Last Ramadan, he was fasting, so he wanted to show his classmates that he is a Muslim [….] but the children didn’t understand him and did not give him that much attention”. Therefore, Parent A7 suggested that the school should recognise such important occasions and encourage children to represent and show their culture more in the school: “ as they show us how Christmas and Halloween are recognised and celebrated at the school”.

6.8 Patterns of Engagement at the Community

6.8.1 Visiting Local Libraries/ Irish Community Centres

When parents were asked if they, as a family, participate in any kind of community programmes, parents reported different patterns of how they participate in community resources. Some parents reported visiting local libraries as well as attending many activities offered in their local community centres that are "some sort of way connected to school" (Parent A3) indicating that being there give them the chance to "connect with other parents in the school" (Parent A3). In addition, many other parents mentioned many advantages being engaged in community centres located in the neighbourhood where they live as they provide many activities such as self-defence training, teaching English and parenting training courses. At the same time, parents in their discussions also demonstrated how Irish people are generally kind and accepting "they are friendly and always smiling" (FG Parent D2), at the same time, they support people who are not proficient in English and do not make someone feel "shy if make any mistakes while speaking English" (Parent A6).

6.8.2 Preference of Muslim Community Resources

Some parents, on the other hand, reported hesitancy to permit their children to participate in Irish community programming that occurs in public places if they do not know the purpose or the content of these events/programmes referring that such events are mostly not related to their culture. Almost all of the parents in this study indicated that they are collaborating more with Muslim community members and more connected to their ethnic community organisations that offer them various programmes and initiatives. Parent B3 in the focus group discussion, for example, stated that: "I don't have anywhere else that I can be associated with in Ireland, I don't even know if there are any social services or community centres in the area where I live". (FG Parent B3). Parents, additionally, stated that their preference of Muslim community resources because of language, religion and traditions similarities rather than the local Irish community: "the mosque's environment suits me more, we are all same there and most people speak my language [….]there is also a gender segregation in the mosque, so it's more comfortable for me to be there" (Parent A5). In this perspective, parent B5 stated that even though she was aware that rent beside the mosque was expensive, but she moved houses to live beside Muslim community resources that the mosque provides to ensure that her children could benefit from these resources as well as to preserve their cultural identities:

“We don’t miss any activity there [....] this helps my children preserve their identity, they shouldn’t be away from anything related to Islamic community”.

In addition to preferring integration within the Muslim community, the parents also expressed gratitude for the many educational services provided by Islamic community centres for their children. These include weekend Arabic and Quranic schools, which not only develop advanced Arabic literacy skills but also foster cultural identity: “It's a priority; all my children attend weekend Arabic schools, such as the Libyan School Dublin, and Quranic schools too” (Parent A5).

One parent in school B, who is a member in charitable organisation called the Happy Muslim Family Association shared her experience with volunteering in many community-based activities, some for Muslim children such as summer camps and barbecues parties. While some other activities are provided to the Irish community: “we have served a hot (rice and chicken) meal for homeless people in Dublin, we made some Arabic sweets as well. It was a very nice experience, and the homeless were very happy and they tasted our Arabic food”. (Parent B6)

6.8.3 Challenges to Community Collaboration

As commitment to Islamic religion has been clearly seen in all interviewed parents in this study who dressed in the Islamic conservative way. Therefore, some of them reported that some personal characteristics such as wearing hijab or niqab (face veil) can also discourage their engagement with community. One parent in school B who wears niqab reported “Irish people don't like who wear niqab, I can see that in their eyes” (Parent B1). This parent further explained that due to these negative stereotypical attitudes at the community including the attitudes of some teachers in their school and other community members, makes her feel very uncomfortable being in school or any other public places, therefore, she prefers to remain invisible and thus discouraged her engagement at school and at the community.

Another parent from school (B) shared details of a negative experience she and her daughters encountered when they were collecting donations from their neighbours for the school fundraising. She indicated that they exposed to ethnic discrimination and marginalization as they experienced racist incident due to their religious and ethnic identities in the way of their dressing:

“We were knocking on the doors of our neighbours asking for donations, but what happened is, when they saw me wearing hijab, they seemed uncomfortable […...] since then, I didn’t

get involved in such community fundraising activities". (Parent B4).

In the same context, many parents, based on their experiences with their older children in secondary schools, reported significant prejudice towards their children in secondary schools facing many ethnic discrimination and racism against their skin colour and hijab that girls wear from their teachers, school staff and other community members in the society. For example, parent B6 stated that: "My daughters' secondary school kept calling me complaining about how the scarf she wears over her head hides the school logo printed in the cardigan, even though whenever I visit her school, I notice how the school logo is hidden by the long hair of the other girls who don't wear hijab". At the same time, some other parents, from school A, also based on their experience with their older children in secondary schools reported that their children were treated unfairly with regard to some module marks by their teachers because of their background and their skin colour. Parents, additionally, indicated that such discrimination issues occur more in the secondary school context rather than in primary school.

Other barriers to community participation as reported by most parents is the cultural differences between home and society and how this difference, according to parent A7 impacts children's lives as they grow and proceed in life stating that "It's a clash of cultures, it's not clearly seen in primary school as they're still young, but when they grow, they realize the difference". She, further, stated that when the school community make immigrant pupils feel different in primary school, this will have negative consequences when they become teenagers "they start behaving in a strange way, they may become violent, or they do anything wrong just to attract attention and prove the difference they feel".

In this perspective, many parents mentioned that they raise Irish children and view Ireland as a home for their children, therefore, they wanted the school community to help consider their children not as foreigners or outsiders but rather key members of the Irish society that set the vision and participate:

"Our children consider themselves as Irish, I am Iraqi, but my daughters love Ireland so much, they love it more than they love Iraq because they were born and raised here and speak English fluently, they consider themselves as Irish [....] Irish schools, in return, are supposed to make our children feel this way and not to make them feel they are strangers". (Parent B6).

Parents also reported some concerns that social media are, sometimes, negatively

influencing the Arab Muslim community members. They stated that due to some labelling and stereotypes that are given to Muslim parents and their children may also limit their engagement in different community activities. For example, parent A6 reported that her son was labelled "as a terrorist" by one of his classmates when some terror attack occurred in France, thus, she expressed levels of disapproval with how media handled these incidents. She concluded her point that these stereotypes create troubles among children and their parents limiting their engagement at school as well as their integration with the society they live in:

"Media shouldn't say that they should say a person did that and that was wrong, if we want to live in a good community, we shouldn't raise everything as religious, there are billions of Muslims, not only that person" (Parent A6)

For greater community collaboration, parents showed interest in having supportive networks at school/ community to help them be more connected to each other, thus, they recommended schools organise more PTMs and other social activities such as morning coffees, that invite parents from different backgrounds and teachers to meet at one time. Such events introduce the cultures represented in the same school, thus, increase parents' interaction with diverse people and have different points of views to increase their motivation and exchange ideas on how they can support their children:

"It's a good idea to hear other parents' experiences and obstacles that face them in their children's education and how they overcame them, this will help and give me a kind of relief and feeling that I am not alone." (FG Parent D3).

6.9 Summary of Chapter

The aim of phase 2 of this research was to explore patterns of Arabic-speaking parents' engagement at home, school, at the community, and communication patterns with school. Parents, in individual and focus group discussions, reported a range of challenges to successful engagement at each sphere and how to effectively develop engagement with their children's school. This chapter has presented the findings emerging from parents' qualitative data about their experiences of engagement in their children's education. The next chapter discusses the key findings from the phase 1 and phase 2 of the present research in the context of the theoretical framework and previous empirical research conducted on the context of ELL parental engagement.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the key findings from the research conducted. First, the research objectives are reiterated. Afterwards, a summary of research findings of phase 1 and phase 2 of the study are briefly outlined. Following this, the findings of the teacher questionnaires and parents' individual and focus group interviews are interpreted collectively in light of the theoretical frameworks used in this research study (See Chapter 2, Section 2.8, for parent engagement models) and previous empirical research conducted on the context of ELL parental engagement, outlined in the Chapter 3.

7.2 Research Objectives

The overall aim of this research was to provide a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the perceptions, experiences and challenges in relation to ELL parental engagement expressed by primary school teachers and Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs, in the context of four Irish primary schools in Dublin. Through the investigation of lived experiences of research participants, this research also aimed to suggest recommendations for the development and implementation of practices in relation to ELL parental engagement in Irish primary schools. Accordingly, these objectives were addressed through administering two phases of research with two different group participants, the overall key findings of each phase of the research will be highlighted successively. Consideration of how these findings relate to existing research is incorporated in each section.

7.3 Summary of Findings of Phase 1 of the Study

Research phase 1 of the study consisted of a mixed method investigation of the teachers' perspectives and experiences on engaging parents of ELLs in their children's education in the context of four Irish primary schools. This phase had a concurrent triangulation design as both quantitative and qualitative methods were implemented simultaneously. It employed an online survey (comprising of quantitative Likert scale questions and open-ended qualitative questions) to investigate the nature and extent of parental engagement with a larger sample of Irish primary school teachers. Teachers in four schools were given a

separate survey link adapted from the School and Family Partnerships: Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in Elementary and Middle School created by Epstein and Salinas (1993). Descriptive statistics were used for quantitative responses. Thematic analysis was also used for open-ended questions. Both quantitative and qualitative questions of the survey provided significant findings regarding teachers' perceptions, experiences, and challenges regarding ELL parental engagement.

Reflecting on the quantitative data, results showed that the majority of teachers surveyed indicated that parent engagement is an important factor in a successful school, and a similar majority indicated that engaging parents in education could help them be more effective with pupils and, similarly, help pupils succeed more in their schools. These figures demonstrate that teachers have positive attitudes towards the importance of family engagement at school. Accordingly, many of the teachers surveyed viewed parents as important partners and over half of them believed that their school had a climate conducive for successive learning, and parental engagement. However, only a minority of teachers who indicated that they felt that parents at their school want to be more involved than they are now.

Over half of teachers disagreed that they do not have enough time at school to effectively engage parents, even though over a third reported lack of time required to engage parents. While sixty percent of teachers indicated that they need in-service education to implement effective parent engagement practices. Teachers also valued the importance of actions indicative of each type of engagement suggested by Epstein (1995, 2009, 2011) in the model of six types of engagement namely (parenting, learning at home, communication, volunteering, decision making and collaborating with the community) in the following manner.

Communication (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011) was the most important practice for teachers who participated in the survey, where more than 70% believed that four practices of communication including: having annual PTMs, contact parents about pupils' problems, achievements and informing parents of the skills their children must develop in each subject were important for them. While over half of them believed that their schools have good annual PTMs and report cards that report diverse parents of ELLs with their children's progress and needs, however, almost half of teachers indicated that their schools need to improve understandable communication with diverse families.

These findings regarding school to home communication largely align with expectations in

the literature (Soutullo et al., 2016; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wilder, 2014). The high value placed (70%) on practices like PTMs and clear reporting was expected, given their established role in engagement frameworks (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011). However, the finding that nearly half of teachers identified communication comprehensibility for diverse families as needing improvement was more pronounced than anticipated. This challenge may reflect research involving teachers within the Irish context. McGorman and Sugrue (2007) found lower proficiency in the school language among parents of ELLs in Dublin primary schools limits school-parent communication. Similarly, Soutullo et al. (2016) explained that linguistic and cultural differences between families with lower English proficiency and school personnel, coupled with a lack of bilingual skills among teachers and staff, constrain schools' ability to develop effective communication and engagement programmes that foster partnerships with immigrant families.

Learning at home (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011) was also an important engagement practice for teachers surveyed where more than half of them indicated that engaging parents in five learning activities at home including: providing parents with activities to do at home, assigning interactive homework, practice spelling, reading and listen to children read are important activities to involve parents with their children’s education. However, over half of the teachers reported that their schools need to improve their strategies and programmes to guide and support diverse parents of ELLs in how to enhance learning at home so that they can help their children with their homework.

The findings on teachers' perspectives regarding engaging parents of ELL with learning at home reveal a significant tension. While teachers overwhelmingly acknowledged the importance of parental engagement in home learning, they also expressed concerns about parents' capacity to provide such support due to language barriers, unfamiliarity with the curriculum, and differing educational backgrounds (see Chapter 5, Section 5.8.3). These findings align with research involving teachers in the Irish context (Darmody & McCoy, 2011), which found that limited parental language proficiency may hinder children’s academic progress by restricting parents' ability to support homework or seek school assistance. The lack of programmes to equip diverse parents with necessary information, as reported by many teachers in this study, further widens this gap. These findings echo critiques by Beauregard et al. (2014), who argue that traditional parental engagement models may impose unrealistic expectations on marginalized families without sufficient institutional support (see Section 7.5.2.1 for more discussion about learning at home)

Parenting support for parents of ELLs (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011) was not a common practice at participating schools where a considerable proportion (60%) of teachers believed that their schools do not have strong parenting programmes and thus they indicated the need to develop workshops for ELL parents on parenting skills, child development and creating home learning conditions. Only teachers in one of the Catholic schools indicated that their school have effective parenting workshops for all diverse families in their school. A surprising finding was the stark contrast in satisfaction with parenting programmes between Catholic School A and Schools B, C, and D, particularly given the importance of positive parenting practices in children's academic lives. Such practices may improve school attendance, raise awareness of the importance of schooling, and foster respect for parents (Epstein et al., 2002). Possible explanations for this discrepancy include School A's established Home-School-Community Liaison (HSCL) programme or variations in school funding (see Section 7.5.2.2). These findings also contrast with reported positive parenting practices, which were identified as the most important engagement strategies for Arabic-speaking immigrant parents who participated in this study (see Section 7.5.2.1 for further discussion).

Decision making (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011) was not a common engagement practice at most participating schools, as around half of teachers indicated that involving diverse parents of ELLs in Parent Association Committee (PAC) and other decision-making roles at the participating schools needs to be developed and improved respectively. Only teachers in both Catholic schools (A & D) indicated that their schools have an active and effective Parent Association Committees. A notable contrast emerged in decision-making opportunities between Catholic Schools (A, D) and Islamic Schools (B, C), particularly significant given that inclusive decision-making fosters student awareness of family representation and ensures protection of student rights (Epstein et al., 2002). This aligns with Foley, Faas & Darmody's (2024) research involving teachers in Ireland, which identified a policy-practice gap stemming from demographic misalignment between school staff and the community. As in the Irish context, immigrant parents from minority groups were marginalized in decision-making processes due to inconsistent implementation of inclusive structures.

Collaboration with community (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011) was also an important practice for many teachers as over seventy percent indicated that the community supports their schools and nearly seventy percent of them believed that collaboration with community

members and working with other teachers are important to improve learning as well as to develop parental engagement activities at school.

In the qualitative piece of data, teachers' comments about **volunteering** at school, (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011), indicated that such school-based type of engagement was negatively affected by Covid restrictions. Only school A, before Covid-19 outbreak, facilitated a variety of curricular and extracurricular volunteering opportunities (See Section 7.5.2.1 for further discussion on volunteering). Teachers' top techniques to engage parents of ELLs were through communication, assigning interactive homework to support learning at home and linking ELL parents with various community members/ resources. Teachers, in their qualitative responses, listed various barriers they encountered throughout their teaching careers preventing effective ELL parental engagement. Those barriers include parent identified barriers due to Individual/ family factors (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011) that are mostly associated with linguistic/ cultural differences of parents of ELLs, parental unfamiliarity with the Irish school system, having differing views about importance of education, and differences in cultural norms that may limit parents' engagement and communication with school, and other logistical barriers (For further discussion on barriers to engagement, see Section 7.5.2.2).

7.4 Summary of Findings of Phase 2 of the Study

Phase 2 of the study involved an exploration of Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' experiences regarding their engagement in their children's education and the barriers that hindered them to be more engaged in the context of four Irish primary schools in Dublin (two with a Catholic ethos and two with an Islamic ethos). A qualitative approach was adopted for Phase 2 of the study. Semi-structured individual interviews served as the primary data source, supplemented by focus group discussions with the same participants. A total of N = 25 first-generation Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs from seven Arab countries were individually interviewed. The goal was to understand how these parents engage in their children's education in Ireland. Subsequently, 13 participants from the initial cohort took part in four follow-up focus groups. The parents were given the choice of language (either Arabic or English) to ensure that they felt comfortable sharing their perceptions. Accordingly, most individual interviews (N=18) and all focus groups(N=4) were conducted in Arabic and then transcribed and translated into English.

The findings indicated that parental engagement was perceived by most parents as a

responsibility, and home was perceived as the first place for their children's learning (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Parents defined their roles as relating more to home-based engagement which supports child's academic development through having positive child-rearing practices, setting expectations and learning at home activities (such as homework supervision, preserving Islamic values, Quran, and Arabic language maintenance, creating positive home learning environment etc.) Parents' culture and educational experiences in their home countries clearly define the way they are engaged with the education of their children. At home, even though parents have been faced by linguistic barriers (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) due to their lack of English skills, most of them made use of any resources available to them to be able to academically support their children (such as using the internet/ dictionaries/ relying on their spouses, older children for homework support).

Commentary on school to home communication **(**Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011) centred on the various means of communication (supported with technology) available at participating schools. However, many communication gaps related to the content of information received from teachers/school regarding curriculum content and child academic and social development. The frequency of some types of communication such as having one annual parent-teacher meeting and only one school report at the end of school year was perceived by most parents as problematic. School-based engagement (volunteering and participation in decision making (Epstein,1995, 2009, 2011) was limited and constrained by various factors, some related to parents related to their perceptions of school invitations, perception of discrimination, lack of English skills, and other logistical barriers related to their life contexts (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011). School-based activities were mostly attended by Arabic-speaking parents when their culture was recognised. Likewise, there was a preference to collaborate more with Islamic community resources that help parents maintain and preserve their children's Arabic Muslim identity. Parents also provided many suggestions on how to increase their engagement at home, at school and in the community context **(**Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011).

7.5 Discussion of Findings

In this section, research findings of both Irish primary teachers and Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs will be discussed further in relationship to the theoretical and empirical research reviewed in chapters two and three. Epstein (1987, 1990, 1992) states that parental engagement occurs in three main spheres, namely, the home, the school, and the community. Epstein (1995, 2009, 2011) further, suggests six types of engagement namely: parenting, learning at home, communication, volunteering, decision making and community collaboration that schools and families can use to facilitate partnership to increase their overlap (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011). However, each type of engagement poses clear challenges that must be addressed to involve all diverse families (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Epstein et al., 2009). These challenges have been critically considered by Hornby and Lafaele (2011) through their proposal of "barriers of engagement model" categorizing potential negative influences which act as barriers to the development of effective parental engagement. Those influences/ factors that act as barriers to engagement are divided into various categories including family factors (parents' beliefs, parents' lifestyle, class, ethnicity and parents' perceptions of school invitations), Child-related factors (age of the child), Parent–teacher factors (different languages between parents and teachers, opposing goals, and dissimilar attitudes) and societal factors (politics, demography, and the economy). In addition, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parent engagement (1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) enables some understanding the perspectives of Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs who participated in this study, regarding the concept of engagement and why they choose to be involved as well as the way they define their roles in the learning process of their children in the context of Irish education.

In this chapter, drawing together the findings from the teacher's questionnaire, parents' individual interviews and focus group discussions, ELL parental engagement at home, in school, and in the community will be discussed based on the six types of engagement classification by Epstein (1995, 2009, 2011) parenting, learning at home, communication, volunteering, decision-making, and collaboration with community. Afterwards, a critical consideration of the challenges that faced both group participants in this study (teachers and parents) will be discussed based on the barriers of engagement model (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Finally, the way participating Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs define the concept of engagement, the way they define their roles in the learning process of their children and the reasons behind their decisions to be engaged in the context of the participating Irish schools

will be discussed based on Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parent engagement (1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Both teachers and parents' perceptions and attitudes towards the importance of education and parental engagement will be briefly outlined before moving through the discussion of findings based on the theoretical frameworks.

7.5.1 Perceptions about Importance of Education and Family-School Engagement

Evidence from teacher questionnaire and parent interviews indicate that teachers and parents agreed on the importance of family-school engagement for children's success at school. Both teachers and parents viewed each other as important partners in the children's education and learning process. However, both groups showed some differing views of how parental engagement may be operationalised. Only eleven percent of all teachers surveyed perceived their pupils' parents as involved in their children's education. Besides, in qualitative comments, many teachers perceived ELL parents as disconnected from their children's schooling and lacking knowledge of the importance of their children's education.

These results correspond with studies indicating that teachers often hold negative perceptions of immigrant parents' roles in education, despite recognizing the importance of family engagement (Amatea, Mixon, & McCarthy, 2013). For instance, Andrews (2013) reported that when teachers lack familiarity with immigrant parents' cultural backgrounds, they may perceive their parenting practices as deficient and undervalue their engagement. Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs, on the other hand, showed positive attitudes toward the importance of their children's education and expressed feelings of gratitude for their children to be educated in Ireland. They, additionally, considered their children's education as a parental responsibility and reported awareness of their roles as partners in the education of their children. Family and home were perceived by almost all parents interviewed as the basis for children's learning and development. This is in line with previous research suggesting that Arabic-speaking immigrant parents place a great value of education, and they stress the importance of education as part of their children's social growth (Suleiman, 1996; El-Badry, 2008; Kulwicki, 2021). In addition, such differing attitudes/expectations between Arabic-speaking immigrant parents and teachers with regard to their perceptions of importance of education and parental engagement found in this study are in line with many studies in international contexts reporting substantial differences between teachers and

immigrant parents' perceptions and expectations in relation to education as well as parental engagement (Jones, 2003; Harry et al., 2005; Jones & Palikara, 2023; Gurr, 2010; Moosq, Karabenick & Adams, 2001). In addition, similar findings in the Irish context have been recently reported by Devine, Darmody, & Smyth (2023) that primary school teachers perceived immigrant parents as having lower levels of interest in their children's education while immigrant parents reported high levels of interest in their children's education however, they faced various challenges in navigating the Irish education system.

7.5.2 Considering Findings Based on Theoretical Frameworks/ Empirical Research

7.5.2.1 Six Types of Engagement (Epstein 1997, 2009. 2011)

Epstein's model of six types of engagement highlights the direct role that schools need to play in promoting parental engagement, concurrently, it intensifies the essential role that parents need to play in their children's academic life in order to increase their success (Epstein, 2011). In this section, the way the participating Irish primary school/teachers and Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs engage each other in the context of Irish primary schools are discussed below in light of Epstein's six types of engagement model.

Parenting

Epstein et al (2009) advises schools to assist families with parenting skills and family support through facilitating parental seminars/ workshops to help parents to become aware and knowledgeable about their children's development. Evidence from teachers' survey and parents' interviews in this study indicated that most participating schools do not have parenting programmes for parents of ELLs. Only in School A did teachers and parents report some examples of parenting support provided by the school through having informative parenting sessions hosted by professionals at school and online about (family time management, parental usage of technology and parental control over children's social media consumption). Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs, on the other hand, showed many examples of positive parenting practices such as choosing their children's schools that have cultural similarities and accept their cultural backgrounds. For example, parents in Catholic schools (A and D) indicated that the reputation of these schools as accepting and having culturally diverse environments was behind their school choice. Parents in Islamic Schools (B and C) referenced that the school culture including school ethos, teaching Arabic as a second language as key factors for their school choice. This corresponds with research conducted

in Islamic primary schools in Ireland by (Sai, 2018b) who also found the schools' Islamic ethos was an underlying motivation for Muslim parents to enrol their children at Muslim schools.

Parenting styles of Arab parents were found to be greatly influenced by their culture (Dwairy et al., 2006). Likewise, many parents in this study reported integrating their Islamic and Arabic cultural values and traditions into their parenting practices such as (teaching their children acceptance of diverse people, acceptance of other religions and cultures, respect for others as well as honesty). Similar findings by Reza (2013) and Snell (2018) who found immigrant parents teaching their children a lot of things that they do not usually learn at school such as (teaching their children self-respect and respect for others, value family and friends, and to work hard and maintaining their cultural values and heritage). In addition, Arabic-speaking parents in this study reported other positive daily parenting practices including time management, restricting access to TV and social media, and checking their children's school bags. Having high parental expectations was also apparent among parents in this study due to their constant discussions with their children about the importance of education and graduation and asking their children about the school day. These findings corresponded with research conducted by Vera et al (2012) and Jones & Palikara (2023) who both found immigrant parents were more engaged in home-based practices including talking with children about importance of learning and about their daily experiences at school. Academic socialization (positive attitudes towards education, parents-child communication about the importance of education as well as holding high expectations of success for children), as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.3 are among the most effective components of parental engagement for children's academic achievement (Jeynes, 2003, 2007; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Other positive parent–child relationships were evident in this study such as teaching children's protective skills such as (how to deal with strangers and other safety issues) as well as supporting their children's physical, emotional and psychological needs.

Barriers specific to cultural differences in terms of how the home culture and the school/ community culture differs, led to some parents in this study express some concerns over preserving their Muslim Arab cultural foundation in their children. Such concerns were reported by some parents in Catholic schools regarding their children wearing Halloween costumes at school which conflicts with their Islamic values. Similar recent findings by Adebayo and Heinz (2023) in the context of primary and post-primary Irish schools,

likewise, indicated that there are some tensions between “Irish” and “home-culture” values and parenting practices of immigrant parents that led to their concerns over their children’s difficulties to balance the values of their home culture while trying to fit in school culture. For example, some common cultural attitudes and practices in Ireland such as giving children “so many rights” was perceived as challenging for minority-ethnic parents. The implication of these findings is that schools should promote more culturally inclusive learning environments through teacher professional development, learning about differences and a more diverse teaching population (Adebayo & Heinz ,2023; Foley, Faas & Darmody, 2024). Sai (2018b) also indicated that Muslim parents’ decisions to send their children to Muslim Irish school was mainly due to their expressions of apprehension regarding exposing their children to non-Muslim environments which in turn might negatively influence their children’s Islamic culture and identity.

Understanding families’ backgrounds, cultures, and goal setting are critical for supporting parenting practices and for child development (Epstein et al., 2009). Both teachers and parents in this study also suggested that schools need to support immigrant parents through developing sessions and workshops to support their knowledge about parenting practices in professional ways such as raising their awareness in different stages of children development.

Learning at Home

Epstein et al (2009) have suggested that schools need to provide families with opportunities to support learning outside of school through assigning interactive homework and supporting parents with limited English proficiency to help their children with homework. Evidence from teacher's questionnaire, indicated that teachers were aware of the importance of many learning at home activities and their adoption of some effective strategies such as using pupils' home language and culture to help parents of ELLs getting involved with their children’s homework. However, they generally considered parents of ELLs as “not interested” and mostly unable to help their children at home, especially in relation to doing homework.

Epstein et al (2009) also indicates that learning at home as type of engagement is more schoolwork-specific than parenting where parents may become engaged at home by providing books or computers, assisting with homework, encouraging hard work in school, and emotionally supporting the child in her/his academic challenges. Several observations

emerged from the Arabic-speaking parents' individual and focus group interviews indicated that parents in this study supported learning at home in many ways and the importance of homework supervision and reading was prevalent for almost all parents. These finding is consistent with Jones Palikara (2023), Vera et al.(2012), Beauregard et al. (2014), and Poza et al. (2014) who found immigrant parents engaging in many learning at home activities including monitoring children's homework and talking with children about their daily experiences at school.

Even though many parents in this study have faced linguistic challenges while helping their children with homework, especially with subjects that need English skills. Many of them, however, reported that their homework support can come in the form of providing a quiet regular place and time besides using many online resources and dictionaries to support their own and their children's learning at home. This corresponds with research conducted by Guo (2013) who highlighted the significance of using online resources by immigrant parents to aid themselves and their children while supporting their children's homework and with learning at home in general.

Parents in this study also reported that through supervising their children's homework, reading to their children and listening to their children while reading, co-learning occurred because many parents in this study reported learning many English and Irish phrases beside other things related to Irish culture through their children. This finding supports literature indicating that parental engagement has many benefits, not only for children or teachers but also for parents (Park et al., 2017). While supporting learning at home, many parents indicated their responsibilities to recognise their children's weak points and learning problems and draw their teacher's attention to these issues. This supports research which demonstrates that parents' engagement in their child's learning gives them a good idea of their children's academic abilities (Barger et al., 2019).

Learning at home activities for all the Arabic-speaking parents interviewed in this study were clearly influenced by their culture. They showed great commitment and responsibility to teaching their children the holy Quran and Arabic language. This corresponds with qualitative research by Reza (2013) who found Muslim Pakistani parents in USA having a priority teaching their children Quran. Likewise, Al-deen and Windle (2015) found Arab Muslim mothers in Australia to place a high value on teaching their children Arabic literacy at home.

Previous research has indicated that immigrant parents often provide additional formal instruction to emphasize the maintenance of first language to their children (Guo, 2013). Similarly, in the Irish context, Kraftsoff and Quinn (2009) found immigrant Russian-speaking parents strongly supported maintaining Russian language to their children even though they faced difficulties in maintaining their own sense of linguistic identity, while at the same time supporting their children to succeed at Irish school. More recent research also explored the benefits of parental engagement in language and culture maintenance of four Polish families in Ireland when Machowska-Kościak (2020) found only two out of four Polish families were successful in maintaining their language and culture through sending their children to Polish complementary schools. However, similar to other immigrant parents in the USA (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009) and in line with the research by Cranston et al., (2021) with Arabic-speaking refugees in Canada, parents in this study also thought that Irish primary schools do not give sufficient homework, and this helped them to make a balance between the mainstream and complementary schools their children attend in Ireland. Some of the parents in this study, further, reported that these experiences influenced their views of the situation and the practices they adopted as they tried to assign extra work for their children to do at home as well as teaching their children primary school curriculum of their home country to make use of their time in a best way as well as to make their children explore different types of curriculums. It is very important to mention here that parents' perceptions, in this study, regarding small amount of homework in Irish schools may be influenced by their own experiences with large amount of homework they used to have when they were in primary schools in their home countries. Similarly, Huntsinger and Jose (2009), and Snell (2018) found immigrant parents’ engagement at home to be influenced by their education experiences in their home countries. The implication of these findings is that schools need to recognize what immigrant parents of ELLs bring to the education of their children and to consider the unique ways in which immigrant parents are already involved in their children’s education, such as using online resources and first language maintenance, to support learning at home instead of merely trying to get them engaged in traditional ways such as merely expecting parents to participate in school events, volunteer in school functions and attending school council meetings (Guo, 2013; Al-deen & Windle, 2015).

The patterns of Arabic-speaking parental engagement at home context appeared to have been negatively influenced by school closure during the Covid-19 pandemic, even though some parents perceived that their support and engagement with their children’s schooling at home

positively benefited them and their academic level developed. Several parents in this study, however, reported feelings of pressure and stress to keep their children focused on schoolwork due to their children's feelings of boredom. Other parental challenges related to the parents’ feelings of responsibility and lack of motivation while schooling and learning at home during the pandemic. This data supports research with immigrant parents of ELL in the US, where same challenges were encountered by immigrant parents with home-schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic (Soltero-González & Gillanders, 2021; Gallagher & Egger 2020; Garbe et al., 2020). Even though recent research suggests that immigrant parents, during the Covid-19 pandemic, reported being left uninformed and unprepared for navigating online platforms and online learning tools and thus needed more school support during the Covid-19 pandemic (Cioè-Peña, 2021; Daniela et al., 2021; Guruge et al., 2021; Lukawiecki et al., 2022). However, parents in both Catholic schools (School A and school D) who participated in this study reported that their schools supported them through providing them with additional learning resources including work materials, apps, online teaching services as well as online parenting sessions so that they could support their children's home-schooling during school closure.

Many barriers specific to parental engagement with learning at home including the lack of parental confidence in their capability in helping their children with homework, the age of the child, and lack of teacher's encouragement of parents to support their children’s learning at home. These findings will be discussed with reference to Hornby and Lafael (2011) framework of barriers of engagement in section (7.5.2.2).

Communication

Epstein et al (2009) has recommended that schools enhance strategic two-way communication through designing meaningful and effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school information exchanges. Both teachers and parents in four schools valued the importance of two-way communication for children's development. Teachers in this study further reported utilising some effective communication strategies such as using video and other visual clues to assist parents of ELLs to understand them and achieve two-way meaningful communication. Both groups also reported satisfaction with the different means of communication available and indicated that technology, incorporated after Covid, facilitated regular contact with each other. This is in line with the findings of Soltero-González & Gillanders (2021) which indicate that parents of ELLs appreciated having flexible communication with teachers through online school platforms during the Covid

pandemic school closure. Another aspect of communication that was also highly appreciated by some parents and teachers from School A in this study was the translation of some leaflets sent home in children's home language.

Epstein et al (2009) indicate that schools should communicate regularly with families about children's progress, children's learning difficulties and needs as well as about school programmes by using communication traditional and new technologies. Many gaps in communication have been reported by many parents in this study with respect to the clarity of information provided by school regarding curriculum content, the child's academic progress, the child's social daily life as well as when emergencies occur at school. Both parents and teachers in this study indicated that lack of communication about curriculum content led some parents of ELLs unable to support their children's learning at home. Accordingly, both teachers and parents in this study specified that preliminary communication and educating parents of ELLs about the content of Irish primary school curriculum at the beginning of each academic year is very important for their engagement as well as to give parents idea of what their children are learning in the school.

Parents in this study further expressed significant concerns regarding sensitive curricular areas, particularly Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) and certain Islamic materials in Irish secondary schools, which they perceived as potentially containing inaccurate information about Islam. Similarly, research by Cranston et al (2021) supports of the views of some parents in this study that differences in cultural views regarding the content of RSE lessons were also perceived as problematic. Concurrently, some parents in this study also suggested that Irish schools/educators need to understand "Muslims" and to familiarize themselves with the "type of culture they are dealing with" through regular communication and collaboration with parents to be able to understand them and accordingly accommodate their needs. Therefore, parents in this study emphasized obtaining guardian approval for RSE curriculum content or specific Islamic materials to mitigate cultural and religious conflicts and ensure alignment with Islamic teachings and values. However, as the National Curriculum is state-mandated, parental engagement must operate within this framework. In response, this study proposes the appointment of Islamic cultural liaison officers to promote constructive dialogue and enhance policy makers and educators' awareness of students' religious and cultural contexts. This study also suggests that Islamic Schools partner with Muslim community leaders to review materials and channel feedback through formal channels to state authorities. Likewise, Cranston et al (2021) suggested that an increased

understanding of Islam and Arabic cultures might facilitate Muslim Arab families' engagement at Canadian schools.

Epstein et al (2009) also indicates that parents who are not speakers of the dominant language of the society should be given the opportunity to communicate effectively with schools by providing language translators or by collaborating with trained interpreters. Both teachers and parents in this study reported low levels of school access to professional translation services including lack of access of competent interpreters as well as lack of material printed in a language that parents can understand. These findings are mirrored by those discussed in the literature Cranston et al.(2021), Bromley and Yazdanpanah (2021); Sanders-Smith et al. (2020), and Soutullo et al. (2016) that, due to the lack of translation services at school, parents were unable to understand simple communication with the schools' personnel and to even understand what is required from them as parents. Parents in Catholic School (A) and Islamic schools (School B and school C) further indicated the neglect of their expectation that the school provide English language support for parents, so that they could be more connected to the school and overcome the linguistic challenges they face while communicating with teachers or while helping their children at home. Similar findings by Gurr (2010) indicating lack of efforts by Islamic school in Australia to support immigrant parents, through teaching them English and how to be involved, so that they might be more connected to the school.

Involving Arabic language teachers as volunteers to interpret to Arabic-speaking parents in Islamic schools was perceived by some parents in this study as problematic due to the lack of interpreting ethics and skills for those teachers which negatively influenced the quality and effectiveness of communication between parents and school personnel. At the same time, involving pupils to translate for their parents in PTMs was perceived by teachers as problematic as it puts children under pressure in one hand, and the information intended for ELL parents might be distorted too. These findings suggest that the use of non-professional interpreters can be problematic regarding the transmission of clear and correct messages and, thus, developing family school engagement. Therefore, teachers in this study recommended organising evening English EFL classes for parents of ELLs as well as having trained competent interpreters to translate during PTMs and that any school to home communication should be comprehensible using the parents' primary language. Parents' suggestions for communication included accommodating their linguistic needs through enabling them to learn English more formally at school as well as having cultural brokers as

interpreters and some school staff/administrators who could speak their native language at school. Similar suggestions reported by Smith (2020) who noted that translation practices either written or spoken are only effective when materials are reliably translated. Similarly, Gardner (2019) recommends that to build effective relationships between immigrant parents and school personnel, schools' interpreters need to be trained to ensure they remain inconspicuous, so the communication is between the parents and the school personnel and not the interpreter and the parents (Parsons & Shim, 2019).

Volunteering

Epstein et al (2009) suggest schools offer a variety of volunteering opportunities and participation in school-based activities for parents to encourage them to be engaged as the school context with curricular and extracurricular activities. Evidence from teacher questionnaires and parents' individual and focus group interviews indicated an absence of volunteering opportunities in schools at the time of data collection due to Covid-19 pandemic that shifted the primary place of learning from school to home (Rozentale et al., 2021). Based on parents and teachers' reflections about volunteering before Covid, school A appeared to be more proactive in doing various curricular and extracurricular activities to enhance volunteering at school. While School A actively recruited volunteers prior to Covid-19, Schools B, C, and D did not, reflecting divergent institutional priorities and policy frameworks, including resource allocation and leadership styles (for further analysis of legislative influences on parental engagement, see Section 7.5.2.2). This aligns with Epstein et al.'s (2009) assertion that consistent, inclusive policies are fundamental to sustaining parental engagement. Nevertheless, both teachers and parents in school A as well as the other three schools (B, C & D) acknowledged lack of parents of ELLs volunteering at school-based activities. Most parents in this study indicated that taking part in school-based activities was the least common way they prefer to be engaged in their children's schooling, although several reported their participation in fundraising activities such as cake sale days and preparing donation boxes. However, their participation was limited to packing the charity boxes or baking the cake at home, afterwards, they sent them to school via their children. These practices reflect the Arabic-speaking parents' perception of parental engagement in this study as being constructed at home rather than being physically present to volunteer or to be generally present at school (for further discussion of Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' role construction, see Section 7.5.2.3). However, all parents reported their preference to take part in events that appreciate and recognise their heritage and culture

such as multicultural days. This is in line with Snell (2018) who found immigrant parents to rarely attend curricular and extracurricular school activities, though they enjoy participating in the multicultural festivals that the school organised on an annual basis. Therefore, Parsons and Shim (2019) also recommended that schools need to implement engagement programmes that consider cultural differences of families of ELLs and encourage them to partake in more culturally responsive activities at school such as family social events, and/or bilingual events such as heritage and culture nights.

In the same context, both teachers and parents in this study highly recommended incorporating the cultural and linguistic values and strengths of diverse ELL families into the school curriculum and volunteer activities. For example, involving parents in programmes like the Primary School Languages Initiative, such as teaching Arabic at school, could foster culturally meaningful engagement for parents of ELLs. This implication is similar to Little and Kirwan (2019) and Cranston, et al. (2021) suggestions that more culturally relevant understandings of immigrant families such as the inclusion of their home languages and cultures will enhance more collaborative partnerships between home, school and the community.

Many parents in Catholic school A appraised how their school is accommodating many of their religious and cultural needs such as facilitating Quran instruction within the school in the early mornings before the school day starts, distributing chocolates/sweets before Eid days, and providing halal hot meals for Muslim children at school. However, other parents criticized how their children’s school usually do not give enough attention and time to their religious events that occur during the academic year, even though many Muslim pupils attend that school, while they allocate a plenty of time celebrating Christmas and Halloween each year. This finding would correspond with research findings that have indicated that Muslim Pakistani parents in the context of US schools experience similar discrimination regarding maintaining their children's cultural identity by celebrating the traditional holidays of Eid and Ramadan at school (Reza, 2013). The implication here, according to parents in this study, is that Irish schools should empower pupils and their families by acknowledging their culture in ways such as introducing a formal Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha day celebration and let them celebrate these events with their children at school, so their children feel that they are also being represented and recognized at their schools. A similar suggestion by Foley, Faas and Darmody (2024) who recommended that Irish denominational schools need to accommodate migrant parents and their children through adoption of more culturally

responsive school environments. In addition, to promote greater cultural inclusion in Irish schools, Darmody and McCoy (2011) suggested that culturally responsive family-school engagement should recognize the value of the cultural background of diverse families who came from different backgrounds and use it as a resource rather than merely assimilating them into the majority culture. The findings of this research further suggest that Irish schools should actively engage with other cultures by including representatives from diverse backgrounds on the Parents Association Committee. To enhance understanding of Islamic culture, particularly the timing of Eid celebrations and other occasions, forming a sub-committee for Arabic-speaking Muslim parents could also be beneficial. Additionally, schools should consider implementing digital surveys in multiple languages and appointing community liaisons to support minority parents who may struggle to voice their concerns, attend meetings, or participate in the PAC. Finally, formalising cultural inclusion policies such as recognising Eid with the same prominence as Christmas would help ensure Muslim pupils and their families feel valued and represented at schools.

Decision Making

Epstein et al (2009) indicated that parents become partners with school personnel through contributing and acting in the decision-making process by exploring leadership roles in school through school councils and joining Parent Association committees. Evidence from teacher questionnaires and parents' interviews reported low levels of ELL parental participation in decision making process in most schools. Only Catholic schools (A & D) teachers reported having an effective and strong Parent Association Committee (PAC). In addition, taking part in the PAC was found to be the least popular type of engagement among most participating schools in this study. Only School A teachers (57%) indicated that their school is involving diverse parents of ELLs in decision making roles, simultaneously, only two parents, from School (A) had previously been engaged in the PAC of their children's school. However, most parents in this study as well as teachers in schools (B, C & D) believed that decision-making opportunities such as surveying ELLs parents, annually, for their ideas and involving them in other decisions regarding school issues are not evident in their schools.

Lack of parental awareness about the concept of decision making was evident in parents who participated in this study. This might be attributed to parents’ differing cultural and education experiences as in Arab countries parents are not normally engaged in making

decisions in school and PAC mostly do not exist in schools, so this practice might not be very familiar or meaningful to them. This finding, again, shows the influence of immigrant Arabic-speaking parents' culture and education experiences in the way they are engaged with their children's education. Such findings are in line with research findings of Australian Islamic school where decision making type of engagement was generally not common in Muslim parents' home countries (Gurr, 2010).

Some parents in this study, further, reported their hesitancy to suggest anything to teachers or to schools in general or even to initiate communication regarding anything not related to their children at school to avoid interfering them, claiming that schools have their own systems and therefore should not be interrupted by parental suggestions. This is in line with Vera et al (2012) indicating parental concerns over interfering with the work of school personnel. Other parents in this study, on the other hand, attributed lack of parental influence on some decisions as being restricted to school policy and regulations. Such comments agreed with teachers' perspectives regarding limited decision-making opportunities at the schools they work at, suggesting the need to build trust and transparency around decisions where parents' opinions need to be involved and that schools need to ensure having a strong and working PAC to include immigrant parents of ELLs as participants in school decisions and to increase school-based activities. Similar suggestions have been recommended by recent research in the Irish context that schools need to involve different stakeholders in the decision-making process and encouraging 'bottom-up' initiatives that reflect the needs of the communities where the schools operate (Foley et al., 2024).

Parents in both Catholic and Islamic school contexts reported contrasting views regarding some aspects of some decision-making opportunities at school. Parents in both Catholic schools (Schools A and D) appreciated being involved in many culturally sensitive decisions that are related to their children at school such as not having to attend Christian religion classes and being able to choose plain school uniforms without Christian religious symbols that would be against their culture. Parents in school (A) further appreciated how their school was culturally responsive to their dietary restrictions and provided their children with Halal food options as soon as school decided to serve pupils with hot meals for lunch. Parents in school (A) also appreciated how their school management involved them in a major decision since 2006, related to teaching their children Islamic religion at the time of Christian religion class, although such decisions were not open to Muslim parents at other Irish schools.

Parents in the Islamic school (C), on the other hand, criticized their school as not taking into

consideration the cultural differences among Muslims claiming that many aspects of Islamic culture were not clearly presented in this Islamic school. They, further, criticized their school as not involving them in some decisions that contradict with their culture such as having mandatory RSE classes, having unisex toilets at school as well as mixing boys and girls at the same tables in the classroom, claiming that having such things at school clash with the concept of Islamic school. Similar other issues such as teaching of music, teaching of some aspects of history and physical education in Islamic schools in Ireland, that are contrary to Islamic culture, have also been criticized by Muslim parents (Sakaranaho, 2015). However, such cultural contradictions reported by Muslim parents were not taken into consideration by the Board of schools Management stating that a minority of parents should not have a decisive role in the governance of the Muslim National Schools. In addition, even though the two Irish Islamic schools follow an Islamic ethos, however, the curriculum in both schools entirely follow the Irish national curriculum, that is to say, both schools teach the Irish curriculum in addition to Islamic subjects (Sakaranaho, 2018).

Challenges for Parental Engagement in (Volunteering/ Decision Making) at School.

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) in their theoretical framework of barriers to engagement indicated that minority ethnic parents are mostly less engaged, less informed and less represented at school. They are also more likely to have problems associated with language, transport, communication and childcare. Empirical literature reviewed in Chapter 3 also suggests that immigrant parents of ELLs are less engaged in school-based activities (Kim, 2009; Karaagac et al., 2022; Bouregrad et al., 2014). Likewise, evidence from parents' interviews and focus groups in this study indicated that Arabic-speaking parents' engagement at school (volunteering/ attending events at school and participation in decision making) were the least practiced among the other types of engagement due of a variety of challenges. Those challenges were greater than other challenges that faced parents in relation to their engagement at home or to school-home communication. Similarly, more barriers with engagement at school were found by Karaagac et al (2022) in their qualitative research investigating barriers of Syrian parental engagement in the Turkish primary school context. Both teachers and Arabic-speaking parents in this research shared similar perspectives on factors related to the lack of ELL parental engagement at school. Those factors have been grouped, as indicated by Hornby and Lafaele (2011) into two categories: family and parents factors related to parents' perceptions of school invitations to engagement, parents' beliefs,

parents' life contexts, ethnicity and gender. Societal/ school factors related to teachers' lack of time, teachers' lack of support and others related to school policies and funding. Primarily, both groups of participants agreed on the main institutional barrier to engagement, at the time of data collection, was Covid, as all schools around the world had strict restrictions that made them unable to participate in school activities. Those factors will be discussed in detail with reference to Hornby and Lafaele (2011) barriers of parental engagement model (See Section 7.5.2.2)

Community Collaboration

Epstein et al (2009) highlighted the importance of promoting collaboration with community resources to improve children's educational outcomes at home and at schools. This kind of community collaboration can be enhanced through several activities and facility provision including community agencies, such as public libraries, religious based institutions, and health care institutions (Epstein et al., 2009). Findings of teacher's questionnaire in this study indicate that (75 %) of teachers agreed that the community supports their schools. Some teachers also demonstrated linking parents of ELLs with community members/ resources to help them indulge in the community as their best practices to enhance ELL parental engagement. Parent interviews and focus groups in this study indicated that even though some parents reported engagement with some local Irish community resources such as visiting public libraries and attending activities and programmes organised in community centres, however, there was a preference to collaborate more with Muslim community organisations as well as to integrate more with community members who share same language, culture and religion to maintain their children's Arab Muslim identity. Foley, Faas and Darmody (2024) explained that because of cultural differences between immigrant families and the school culture in Ireland, immigrant families prefer to stick with communities who share similar cultures and the extent to which those families feel they are already part of their own communities outside of school can act as potential challenges for becoming engaged in the school life (Foley, Faas & Darmody, 2024). Likewise, teachers in one of the Islamic schools mentioned that even though parents sometimes are invited to some extracurricular activities at school, however, Muslim parents are generally more connected with each other in the mosque activities beside the school rather than being present at school. At the same time, all parents in this study reported greater engagement with various Islamic community organisations in Dublin such as mosques, Islamic centres, Muslim charitable organisations and weekend Quranic/Arabic language schools to obtain

the support of the various Muslim community organisations. They emphasized that these programmes not only enhance advanced Arabic literacy skills but also reinforce cultural identity. This finding aligns with recent research by Pedrak (2024) in Ireland, which demonstrated that Polish families participate in complementary Polish schooling primarily to develop advanced heritage language literacy and strengthen cultural identity while maintaining transnational family connections. Such findings may also explain the reasons behind lack of community and school-based engagement levels by Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs who participated in this study. Several barriers faced many parents in this study in relation to their collaboration with the Irish community. These barriers related mainly to the cultural/language differences between home and society. These barriers will be discussed in detail below in the section (7.5.2.2).

Both teachers and parents in this study provided recommendations to increase parents of ELLs engagement with various community resources. Teachers suggested strengthening ELL parents' awareness of resources available in the community and how to access them. While parents suggested more socializing opportunities with the various school community members through conversation/work groups that bring all parents with different backgrounds together. Similar suggestions have been provided by Bolivar and Chrispeels (2011) that through social relations of ELL parents with their children's friends and their families, they become even more confident and enthusiastic towards their children's learning.

Concluding Thoughts on Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence & Six Types of Engagement Model

As outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.7, Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence (1987, 1990, 1992) outlines three main contexts/spheres for children to develop and learn, namely, the home, the school, and the community indicating how the members of each sphere (parents, schools and community) can work together to support the development of children. Actions of members in each sphere can either draw these spheres of influence together with the child at the centre or push them apart (Epstein, 1987, 1990, 1992). When the spheres are overlapped, an area of overlap called "the zone of interaction" between home and school develops. The zone of interaction might be more maximised when schools elicit parental engagement and parents want to be engaged, hence, the spheres are pushed together achieving the most positive outcomes for children's development (Epstein, 1987, 1990,

1992). Epstein explains that the extent to which the spheres overlap is influenced by three major forces including (the characteristics, experiences, practices of families, the characteristics and practices of schools, the age of the child) acting as factors that push the spheres together or pull them apart. Hence, if there are commonalities among the forces they push, or merge together. However, when there are disconnecting or conflicting views or practices, the forces pull apart and the students learn less effectively (Epstein, 2011). Findings from teachers' questionnaires and parents' interviews and focus groups, as discussed above, demonstrate that the way participating parents and teachers engage each other appeared to be limited due to language and cultural differences between families' homes and Irish schools. Such differences of language and culture between homes/ schools acted as a force which pushes the spheres of home and school apart for most families (Epstein, 1987, 1990, 1992). A lack of overlap between the home, the school, and the community was clearly noted in this study throughout measuring and defining the extent of family-school engagement patterns based on both group participants experiences through the theoretical lens of Epstein's six types of engagement model (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011). As discussed above, each of the six types of engagement presented clear challenges for Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs who participated in this study in the way they are engaged with their children in Irish schools. Furthermore, engagement patterns of Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs have been found to be greatly influenced by their linguistic, cultural knowledge and their education experiences in their home countries. For example, the findings reveal that Arabic-speaking immigrant parents predominantly focus their engagement within the home sphere, prioritizing parenting and home-based learning over physical presence in school. This suggests their "zone of interaction" is shaped less by conventional school volunteering and more by culturally related practices, aligning with their role construction as described in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model (see Section 7.5.2.3; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). However, the Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' strong participation in culturally related school activities, such as multicultural events, indicates that the zone of interaction can be expanded when schools validate their cultural identity. Most participating schools, on the other hand, did not appear to accommodate their needs and knowledge through incorporating their funds of knowledge into school curriculum and through implementing culturally and linguistically relevant engagement practices to enhance their engagement with their children's education.

Only School A demonstrated accommodations for some needs of culturally and

linguistically diverse families and encouraged ELL parental engagement by inviting parents to participate in diverse activities (see Section 7.5.2.2, Table 12). The table highlights School A's successful, culturally responsive practices for engaging immigrant parents, emphasizing unique strategies for inclusion and collaboration. However, only two parents from school A, who had high levels of English proficiency and a bachelor's degrees, seemed to be engaged in many different practices such as taking roles in PAC and volunteering in different activities at school. Therefore, this research demonstrates that to maximize the overlap between home, school, and community spheres, more culturally relevant understandings of parental engagement can help foster collaborative partnerships among these groups (See Table 11 for suggested culturally responsive adaptations based on the research findings). These findings align with studies on Arabic-speaking immigrant families in the Canadian educational context (Cranston et al., 2021), which suggest that educational leaders and policymakers should critically examine dominant engagement models, such as Epstein's framework (2011). While Epstein's model is relevant for majority-group families, it often excludes immigrant parents who may lack the social capital to engage in the ways prescribed by current models (Cranston et al., 2021). Such findings are also supported by research indicating that, although Epstein's model aims to promote equal opportunity, its applicability is limited to specific cultural contexts (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Smith et al., 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Hill & Craft, 2003; McLaren & Dyck, 2004). Suggested culturally responsive adaptations based on the research findings are provided in Table 11.

Table 11 Culturally responsive adaptations based on the research findings

Key Finding	Current Practice	Proposed Change in Practice/Policy	Anticipated Outcome/Impact
Parental focus on the transmission of Arab cultural identity/Islamic principles, dedicated Arabic language/Quranic education.	Schools lack integration of ELL families' linguistic cultural values; assume disinterest.	Adopt multilingual and multicultural approaches to curricula development. Provide Arabic workshops for parenting and home-learning support.	Parents feel valued, improved engagement. Stronger cultural identity for children.
Gaps in school-home communication, reliance on poor translation.	Infrequent/unclear communication about curriculum/ student progress. Lack of necessary translation.	Provide translated curriculum summaries (especially RSE). Offer EFL classes and school-system seminars in Arabic. Provide professional translators and cultural brokers.	Greater engagement, Increased parent confidence. Improved two-way communication.
Parents desire school recognition of diverse religious and cultural events.	Catholic school calendars overlook important dates for diverse immigrant families.	Incorporate key celebrations into the school calendar respectfully.	Stronger belonging. Inclusive educational environment. Improved attendance during events.
Lack of parental awareness regarding decision-making roles	Immigrant parents are often excluded or underutilized in PACs.	Communicate roles/processes in Arabic. Recruit/support ELL parents for PACs. Implement "bottom-up" initiatives based on community needs.	More diverse voices in decisions, stronger trust, deeper engagement.
Arabic-speaking parents engage at school more when activities reflect their cultural norms and language.	Lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate volunteer opportunities.	Culturally themed events (e.g., heritage nights where families co-lead activities). Flexible volunteering/ teaching Arabic remotely.	Increased parent presence in schools Parents/students see school as inclusive space

Key Finding	Current Practice	Proposed Change in Practice/Policy	Anticipated Outcome/Impact
Parents prefer to collaborate through Islamic community centres rather than through Irish schools or communities	School activities usually do not align with parent strengths/preferences.	Co-deliver programmes with community centres (cultural events). Host bilingual/culturally specific events / Eid celebrations.	Deeper/ meaningful engagement, stronger community-school connections, reduced exclusion.

Addressing Challenges in Implementing Culturally Responsive Inclusion and Engagement Practices

The research findings discussed so far highlight the importance of culturally responsive engagement strategies while also addressing schools' concerns regarding funding, resource allocation, and expertise. Although proposed adaptations such as parenting workshops, home-learning support, and school-system seminars in Arabic, along with professional translation services effectively enhance engagement among Arabic-speaking immigrant parents in Irish schools, their implementation requires careful consideration of funding, institutional capacity, and specialist knowledge. Given limited school funding and resources (see Section 7.5.2.2 on economic barriers to engagement), securing external support is often necessary to sustain such initiatives.

To address these challenges, this study recommends that schools pursue targeted funding from educational authorities or immigrant integration programs to boost translation services, parenting workshops, and cultural brokerage. Additionally, collaboration with local Islamic centres and Arabic-speaking community groups could provide resources or volunteer expertise. For instance, to deliver Arabic-language parenting workshops or adopt multilingual curricula, initiatives requiring educators with relevant linguistic and cultural competencies, schools might collaborate with Arabic teachers from complementary weekend schools, Islamic schools or Islamic community centres. Crucially, schools should implant these practices into long-term strategic planning by investing in professional development on culturally sustaining pedagogies and establishing systematic protocols for translating key communications and curricular materials.

Policymakers and educational leaders must recognize that linguistic and cultural inclusion is not optional but fundamental to achieving inclusive education. Consequently, this study

advocates for dedicated funding, including national-level provisions, to support ELL family engagement through translation services, cultural mediators, and multilingual resources. Furthermore, it calls for a stronger policy emphasis on resourcing schools to meet the needs of diverse families, including support for EFL classes, bilingual programs, and community-led initiatives. While financial and logistical constraints persist, this research underscores the importance of investing in culturally responsive practices to address systemic inequities in family-school engagement. Without such investment, gaps in inclusion and family involvement will persist.

7.5.2.2 Barriers to Engagement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011)

The barriers that faced both Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs and Irish primary school teachers who participated in this study are discussed based on Hornby and Lafaele (2011) barriers of parental engagement model.

Parent and family factors

Parents' beliefs about parental engagement

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) outlined that parent's belief regarding their own ability to help their children succeed at school is a crucial factor to their engagement in school. Parental lack of linguistic confidence relating to their lack of knowledge of the English and Irish languages have been found as a considerable challenge for both teachers and some parents in this research as some parents reported concerns over supporting or helping their children with homework in a wrong way especially with the subjects that need English/Irish skills. Likewise, teachers in this study also reported concerns regarding assigning homework to ELL pupils, over parental ability to assist their children with homework. However, parents, in this study, who reported their inability to help their children with homework sought help from other family members such as husbands, who mostly have some English skills, and often from their older children who usually had experience of studying in Irish schools. This data supports recent research by Karaagac et al., (2022) with Syrian immigrant parents in Turkey, where older siblings were involved in helping their younger ones with homework at home due to parents' lack of knowledge of the Turkish language.

Other family factors related to immigrant parents of ELLs were reported by both teachers and Arabic-speaking parents in this study as barriers to engagement including lack of parental confidence in understanding and speaking the language of school with teachers in PTMs as well as parental reluctance to participate in school-based activities due to parents'

lack of linguistic skills in English/Irish. For example, one parent in School A reported her reluctance to volunteer in some curricular activities at the classroom, to avoid embarrassing herself and her children in front of their classmates, due to the way she speaks English. Similar barriers to school-based engagement reported by (Beauregard et al., 2014) that ELL parental engagement in volunteering and decision-making roles were limited due to their lack of English language proficiency. Additionally, Sanders-Smith et al., (2020) found, from the teacher's perspective, that parental lack of linguistic skills in the language of education was a clear challenge to ELL engagement at school. At the same time, some parents who perceived themselves as having low levels of education and English, in this study, stated that to be a member in PAC is beyond their abilities, therefore, may not bring any positive outcomes for their children or for the school in general (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, 1995), believing that such roles should be administrated by parents who have better English skills and a good background about the school system. Similar findings have been reported by Al-deen and Windle (2015) in their examination of the social/cultural capital of Arabic-speaking parents' engagement patterns in Australia.

Parents' Perceptions of Invitations for Engagement

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) indicated that one of the potential barriers to parental engagement is the parents' perceptions of the level of explicit and implicit invitations for engagement. When parents perceive that their children's schools are not open to involving them, this acts as a major barrier to parental engagement, therefore, parents' perceptions of school invitations are considered crucial in developing effective parental engagement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Many Arabic-speaking parents in this study reported that lack of school invitations in relation to volunteering and taking part in decision making was one of their main reasons for not being involved in these types of engagement. For example, several parents stated that they do not have enough information about PAC and could not fully understand how to become a member in the parents' association committee, while others have never been heard about such committee before because the school does not share such information with them. Similar findings have been reported in recent research in the Irish context that immigrant parents were found marginalized in the decision-making processes and such marginalization mostly resulted from the lack of linguistic and cultural diversity among teachers that led to inconsistency between the school's staff make-up and the community of the school (Foley, Faas & Darmody, 2024). At the same time, most of the parents in this study attributed their low levels of volunteering work at school to lack of

school invitations, even though some parents reported their interest to volunteer at school if they are invited. Similarly, Vera et al (2012) highlighted that some forms of engagement among ethnically diverse parents of ELLs, such as volunteering, were affected by their perceptions of schools as uninviting (Vera et al., 2012). Similarly, when parents perceive that teachers are not open to involving them in their children's learning, this acts as a major barrier to parental engagement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Most parents in this study, perceived Irish teachers as not inviting them to help their children overcome their difficulties in any areas of learning as teachers believe that pupils difficulties in learning is normal accepting the idea that children have different abilities in learning. Lack of teacher's encouragement to overcome challenges that face children’s learning, according to parents, not only discourage their engagement, but also may not make children overcome their learning difficulties, accordingly they may not develop effectively and might make them unable to progress or achieve better results in their education.

Parents’ Current Life Contexts

Parents’ current life contexts such as family circumstances including the marital status, the size of the family (young families / large families) as well as parents’ work situations, might lack the time to be involved, thus, can also be factors that act as barriers to engagement at school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In line with earlier research by Vera et al (2012) that found parental lack of time due to responsibilities at home and work schedules acted as a barrier for school engagement. Similarly, time was also a major challenge for most parents in this study, as they perceived their lack of time as a barrier to being present at school during school hours or participating in school-based activities. Parents of young children who do not yet attend school reported a lack of time and, furthermore, a lack of social support due to the absence of extended family members in Ireland. Additionally, the lack of childcare services at school posed further challenges, reducing their engagement with the school. Therefore, many parents in this study stated that schools need to understand the immigrant parents' circumstances that is usually different from that of Irish parents due to the absence of extended family members who might provide them with support and take care of children while they can attend PTMs or other school activities. Therefore, parents in this study suggested that schools should offer childcare services for younger siblings to encourage parental attendance at school activities. Similarly, time was identified as a barrier to engagement by both participant groups (teachers and parents) in this study. Teachers recommended overcoming this barrier by sharing all school schedules and activities in

advance via a school calendar. This would allow parents sufficient time to plan and, consequently, improve their engagement. Parents, however, suggested that schools increase flexibility in scheduling activities such as holding events on weekends or after school hours to boost attendance and participation.

Nevertheless, parents' expectations must be considered in light of the significant funding and resource constraints faced by schools. These limitations affect their ability to meet basic student needs such as separate male/female bathrooms as well as other demands like spacious classrooms and adequate sports facilities (see Societal/School Factors on economic barriers to engagement). Additionally, logistical barriers, such as offering childcare or scheduling flexibility for weekend or after-school events, pose further challenges in meeting parental expectations. Such constraints stem from teacher contracts, insurance liabilities, operational costs, and the need to prioritize core educational and safety obligations over supporting programs like childcare. Addressing these issues requires systemic solutions beyond simply increasing school funding. Strategic advocacy for dedicated government support, partnerships with community organizations for co-located services, and policy reforms integrating ELL family engagement into broader school funding models are essential. Without such approaches, well-intentioned suggestions risk remaining impractical rather than fostering meaningful parent engagement.

More logistical barriers to parents' engagement at both Islamic schools (B & C) have been reported by teachers and parents in this study. Both groups stated that lack of transportation caused by the long distance from most of the families' homes to both Islamic schools limited the amount of communication between parents and teachers and limited parents' engagement at school in general. This data supports earlier qualitative research of Muslim parents and teachers in one Islamic school in Australia, where good school-based engagement and communication were hindered by long distances between the school and the families' homes (Gurr, 2010).

Ethnicity and Gender

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) indicated that there are barriers relating to parents' ethnicity and gender that may also determine how much parents are involved with schools, for example, minorities such as immigrant parents of ELLs, as mentioned above, are less involved and may also have substantially different relationships with white middle-class teachers. White middle-class parents, on the other hand, do not face many barriers comparing to immigrants

in becoming engaged at school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

This study found that barriers related to culture, ethnicity, negative stereotypes, Islamophobia, and prejudice toward Arab Muslims, present both in schools and wider society, negatively influenced their school engagement and collaboration with community resources. While many parents described Irish people as open to diversity, accepting, "friendly," and "always smiling," the findings also revealed significant challenges faced by Arab Muslim parents and students within Irish schools. Racism, cultural discrimination, and systemic othering emerged as the most urgent issues to address. Parents reported experiencing prejudice, negative stereotypes, Islamophobia, and exclusion by some teachers. These teachers were perceived as intentionally ignoring them or failing to create a welcoming environment during school activities. Such marginalization aligns with findings by White-Smith (2018), Bromley & Yazdanpanah (2021) and Prokic (2024) who highlight how ethnic minority and immigrant parents are often sidelined by school personnel.

Although Muslim schoolgirls are widely allowed to wear hijabs in Irish schools and there is no public prohibition of such Islamic dress (Rougier, 2013), many parents in this study, however, reported feeling ethnically discriminated against by some teachers who "hardly smiled" at them when they visited their children's primary schools, attributing this to their way of dressing. Thus, they expressed their preference to remain invisible due to the negative stereotypes associated with Muslim women who wear the niqab (face covering) in public. This coincides with research suggesting that Muslim women are among the most affected by Islamophobia (Khokhar, 2022, Prokic, 2024). Their dress and veiling can single them out and isolate them, making them particularly vulnerable to physical and verbal violence (Khokhar, 2022). Similarly, many parents in this study with older children in secondary schools reported that they and their children were treated differently by others, including school personnel and teachers, because of their skin colour or because their daughters wore the hijab (headscarf) at school.

Literature indicates that Islamaphobia is greatly influenced by media, which can fuel hate speech and segregation of Muslims in the West (Farooqui & Kaushik, 2020). Some parents in this study, likewise, criticised the role of media that caused some negative labelling and stereotypes influencing both Arab Muslim parents and their children at school as well as at the community. For example, one parent criticised how her child was labelled by his classmates “as a terrorist” at school after one terror attack incident in France. Similar issues have been reported by Brooks, Ezzani, Sai & Sanjakdar, (2023) that Muslim students in

western countries including Ireland navigate Islamophobia in their day to day lives from non-Muslim class mates and teachers. Similar challenges including children's experiences of bullying and stereotypes have been also reported by Adebayo and Heinz (2022), who explored immigrant parents' perceptions regarding their children's schooling experiences in the context of primary and post primary Irish schools, which negatively influenced migrant families as they navigate the Irish education system as well as their children's mental health and wellbeing. In addition, such discrimination against Muslim Arabic-speaking parents acted as a barrier limiting their engagement in different school and community activities. These findings are consistent with those discussed in the literature in Chapters 2 and 3 (Torres-Zaragoza & Llorent-Bedmar, 2023; Prokic, 2024; Cureton, 2020; Aldeen & Windle, 2015), which highlight how discrimination and Islamophobia have limited the level of engagement of immigrant Muslim parents and their children in Western societies. Therefore, parents, in this study, warned that schools should not treat immigrant students differently or deal with them as "foreigners" or "outsiders" either in primary or secondary schools, or even to make them feel any difference than the other native students because such discrimination may have negative consequences in the society when those children grow up. In addition, many parents, in this study, stated that schools should understand that "immigrant parents" raise "Irish children" who feel Ireland as their home country rather than their original countries because most of them were born and raised in Ireland. Accordingly, as emphasized by Brooks, Ezzani, Sai, and Sanjakdar (2023), this study underscores the need for educational leaders in Ireland to address the sociohistorical roots of anti-Muslim oppression and implement inclusive practices to counteract racialization in schools.

Given that these findings directly align with Ireland's National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPR) (2023-2027) and the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI, 2021) schools must prioritize mandatory anti-racism training for teachers and staff. This training should address implicit bias, intercultural communication, and strategies to actively combat othering in school policies and practices. Additionally, as suggested by Parsons and Shim (2019),that schools should institutionalize structured welcoming systems such as cultural liaisons and multilingual outreach to ensure diverse parents feel valued. Over 60% of teachers in this study acknowledged needing professional development to improve engagement with diverse families. At the same time, schools should implement clear reporting systems for discrimination incidents and regularly assess parent experiences through surveys, as suggested by Bromley and Yazdanpanah (2021).

These findings suggest that the first priority for schools must be dismantling discriminatory structures not only to comply with national strategies but also to foster equitable collaboration between schools and all families. In addition, to overcome the above-mentioned differing attitudes among teachers and parents, Moosq, Karabenick and Adams (2001) recommended cultural awareness must be reciprocal, that is, teachers need to understand how to become more effective with parents of ELLs and to accommodate the individuality of those families, while parents also have a responsibility to understand their host culture. Such cultural awareness may be achieved through school-based mutual activities and roundtable discussions.

Other religious and cultural barriers influenced the parental engagement levels of some mothers who wear the niqab (face covering). These mothers expressed hesitation about attending or volunteering in mixed-gender school activities and events, explaining that their religious and cultural norms discourage unnecessary interaction between genders. As a result, they preferred to avoid mixed-gender environments and interactions with men, leading them to refrain from participating in such school-based activities. Accordingly, these parents indicated a preference for gender-segregated arrangements in school contexts. Some also raised concerns about co-educational activities, which may limit their engagement due to cultural norms. However, resource constraints, such as insufficient staffing and limited space could further restrict schools' ability to accommodate such preferences.

Child Factors

The Age of the Child.

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) indicated that parental engagement decreases as children grow older, reporting the lowest level of parental engagement at secondary school age. Several parents in this study indicated that generally the nature of their engagement at home, especially with regard to children's time management as well as homework support, is greater when children are in junior classes. When children grow older and progress in their education, the academic material becomes even more complicated, and children become more independent.

Parent–Teacher Factors

Opposing Goals

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) explain that sometimes parent–teacher goals are different, and this can be a barrier to family-school engagement. This has been found in this study

regarding school to home communication, even though over half of the teachers who participated in this study indicated that their schools have effective school-to-home communication with regard to annual PTMs and report cards that provide parents of ELLs with all information needed about their children's progress and needs. Parents, on the other hand, reported that they received insufficient feedback from the school in PTMs and end of school report with respect to their children's academic and social development, areas of weakness, as well as regarding guidance about how to help their children overcome challenges. Additionally, they reported mismatch between information received in PTMs and school reports; in the annual parent-teacher meeting, they felt that teachers usually use too much praise, while some parents reported being "shocked" when they received the feedback in the end of school report. At the same time, parents mentioned gaps in frequency of school to home communication and considered that only one PTM and one report during the entire academic year is not enough and leads to a delay in overcoming children's shortcomings. Similar challenges with communication have been reported by Baker et al (2016) who found gaps regarding school to home communication including quality, clarity, and timeliness of school to home communication. Parents in this study reported their desire to know exactly what their children need help with so that they can support them, therefore, they expressed a critical need for more frequent and more detailed feedback. These findings are consistent with those of Huntsinger and Jose (2009) in their comparative study which found that Chinese immigrant parents were more critical than American native parents of detailed report cards describing their children's academic achievement and how they can support their children in their weak areas of learning.

Parents in this study proposed several ways to enhance communication, including more frequent parent-teacher meetings (PTMs) and regular (monthly) written feedback on their children's academic progress. Additionally, they suggested modifying end-of-term school reports to provide more actionable insights for parents of ELLs, covering not only academic performance but also social integration at school, along with guidance on how to support their children's learning and address challenges. Again, while parents expressed a preference for detailed monthly feedback, this study acknowledges the impracticality of such a demand due to teachers' existing workloads, time constraints, and limited resources for providing individualized monthly updates. Therefore, this study recommends that schools implement efficient feedback strategies, such as digital platforms for quick updates paired with comprehensive quarterly skill reports, to balance parental expectations for transparency with

teachers’ workload limitations.

Dissimilar Attitudes

The attitudes of parents and teachers can also be a critical factor in understanding the complexity of parental engagement as both parties normally bring to “the melting pot” of parental engagement their personal attitudes that are rooted within their educational, ethnic, class and gendered experiences. For example, many parents are usually viewed by teachers as unable to support their children's education and, therefore, they avoid inviting them to take part in the learning of their children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011. p, 45). Both parents and teachers in this study reported differing attitudes regarding many aspects of school/ education that acted as barriers to family-school engagement. While many teachers in this study acknowledged that ELL parents usually cannot help enough at home because of their cultural differences and their lack of linguistic skills and familiarity with the Irish education system acting as barriers to their engagement at school. Whereas many parents in this study reported feelings of ignorance about the Irish school curriculum and about many processes of school. For example, parents reported being unfamiliar with many things in Irish schools such as “the pen license” because teachers and school presume that immigrant parents of ELLs “know everything about Irish schools”.

Dissimilar parents-teachers attitudes reported by parents in Islamic schools (B & C) in this study, resulting from cultural differences, when Irish teachers, who are mostly not familiar with the Islamic religion and culture of their students, discuss some religious/ cultural topics, narrate children’s specific stories or show cartoons/ movies that involve inappropriate scenes for their children’s ages and against their culture.

These cultural misunderstandings are frequently attributed to a limited understanding of religious and cultural diversity among the predominantly Irish, non-Muslim teaching staff in these Islamic schools. Consequently, these teachers face challenges in adapting to the Islamic ethos of their institutions (Sakaranaho, 2015; Kidd, 2014; Sai, 2018). Crucially, these difficulties may be exacerbated by the high homogeneity of the participating teachers in this study (98% Irish; see Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1). This lack of diversity within the teaching staff inherently restricts the range of perspectives and experiences needed to effectively engage with a linguistically and culturally diverse parent community. Similar issues have also been reported by previous qualitative research with Muslim parents in the context of Australian Islamic school (Gurr, 2010). In the context of Irish Muslim national

schools, Shanneik (2012) also criticised the over presence of non-Muslim teachers and principals in both Islamic schools in Ireland that led some Muslim parents to prefer to send their Muslim children to a Catholic school instead of a Muslim school to avoid any misunderstandings and confusion among their children because in Islamic Irish primary schools boundaries are very hard to detect since Muslims and non-Muslims are located in the same Muslim space (Shanneik, 2012). This also corresponds with research conducted by Cranston et al (2021) who found some differences in cultural and religious views between Arabic-speaking parents and teachers in Canadian schools due to teachers limited cross-cultural and interreligious understanding suggesting that increased understanding of Islam and Arabic cultures might facilitate family-school engagement (Cranston et al., 2021)

Different Languages Between Parents and Teachers

Differing language used between parents and teachers is a considerable factor which can create barriers to family-school engagement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Both teachers and parents in this study, as mentioned above, repeatedly cited the barrier of differing languages used between home and school as a key challenge to establishing meaningful and effective family-school engagement. Both teachers and parents also agreed that lack of parents English skills is the most obvious and critical challenge to communication, learning at home (helping with homework), school- based engagement (volunteering, attending curricular school activities and being members in PAC or involving in decision making) and community based engagement; this is similar to challenges, as discussed in chapter 3 that have been found in much international and national research on ELL parental engagement (Kim, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009; Darmody & McCoy, 2011; Baker et al., 2016; Cranston et al., 2021, Devine at al., 2023).

Societal/ School Factors

Political Factors

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) highlighted the importance of legislation on parental engagement at schools indicating that absence of specific legislation on parental engagement, such as principal/teacher training to provide them with the skills to work effectively with parents, might result in uneven practice reliance or voluntary participation to implement parental engagement programmes by schools. This is in line with recent research in the Irish context indicating that schools varied in their levels of readiness to engage with immigrant parents (Devine et al., 2023). Data from the teacher's questionnaire

and parent interviews (individual and focus group) demonstrate that school (A) was the most culturally responsive and successful in engaging immigrant parents of ELLs. It was the only school offering both effective engagement opportunities and culturally responsive, inclusive teaching (Table 12 highlights school A's effective inclusion and collaboration strategies).

Table 12 School A's effective inclusion and collaboration strategies

Successful Practice	**Purpose/Function**
Parenting Workshops	Support parents in becoming aware and knowledgeable about child development, while providing them with skills to facilitate learning at home (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011).
Translation of Notes/Flyers	Ensure all diverse parents can access vital school information in their home language.
Explicit Volunteer Invitations	Recruit diverse parents to contribute time and skills to curricular/extracurricular school activities (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011).
Home-School Liaison Programme	HSCL programme in engaging ELL families at school serves as primary contact & bridge between families and school staff.
Home Visits	HSCL officer connect with diverse families through home visits to encourage their engagement at school.
Facilitating Quran Instruction	Providing Quran classes in the early mornings before the school day starts to accommodate religious education.
Providing Halal Hot Meals	Ensures Muslim students have access to culturally appropriate meals in compliance with religious dietary requirements.
Teaching Islamic Religion During Christian Religion Class	Promotes inclusivity by offering alternative religious education for students of diverse faiths.
Parents' Room	Provides a dedicated, welcoming space for parents to meet with the HSCL officer and plan school activities, including volunteering opportunities.
Immigrant Parents in Leadership Roles (Parents Association Committee)	Involving immigrant parents in the PAC to contribute to school decision-making, ensuring representation for traditionally underrepresented groups in school governance.

These culturally responsive and successful engagement practices might be attributed to two reasons, the first is the school's long experience of accommodating so many immigrant pupils and the other reason is the role of the former school principal, who managed the school for so many years, before his recent retirement. These findings were based on evidence from parents' individual and focus group interviews who described the former school principal as "very understanding about how different people can come together" as well as "good at mixing cultures and religions". This is in line with recent findings in the Irish context, Foley, Faas and Darmody (2024) who reported that school principals play a critical role in creating an inclusive school environment by creating open lines of communication with parents, welcoming new families to the school and exemplifying culturally responsive attitudes.

Economic Factors

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) indicated that absence of funding will work as an economic factor to prevent effective parental engagement. The teacher questionnaire, in this study, demonstrated that many barriers that teachers faced to involve parents in curricular activities at school, related mainly to teachers' workload demands, time constraints during the school day and lack of school staff and support. Similar findings were reported in two qualitative studies investigating primary school teachers' perceptions of barriers of ELL parental engagement in Australia by Bromley and Yazdanpanah (2021) and in the USA by Soutullo and colleagues (2016). Teachers in this study also reported facing other barriers related to lack of school planning, lack of space at school, lack of funding and resources that limited inviting parents of ELL to be engaged at school. These findings support research indicating that teachers cannot work alone in engaging culturally and linguistically diverse families, and they need school leaders' support who have the power to shape the school culture through planning school policies and implementation of family school engagement (Soutullo et al., 2016; Marschall & Shah, 2016). At the same time, such findings support earlier research, discussed in chapter 3, highlighting the fact that immigrant parents often face structural and institutional barriers from being engaged in their children's education (Kim, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009).

Even though it was reported that both Muslim national schools in Dublin, Ireland, that participated in study, receive the same capitation grant as other national schools in Ireland

(Scharbrodt & Sakaranaho, 2011). However, evidence from individual interviews indicates that both Islamic schools (B and C) lack many facilities and resources which are necessary not only for engaging parents in their children's education but also for children's safety, learning and development. For example, many parents in Islamic school (B) mentioned lacking many important facilities at school such as spacious classrooms, school do not have a spacious sports yard for children so that they exercise and do sports as well as absence of warden service which expose children to road accidents. Parents in school (C) also reported lack of important facilities such as "separate bathrooms/toilets for boys and girls" and the school building is "small and narrow". Such lack of space and facilities, according to parents in this study, made the schools also unable to accommodate the high demands of Muslim families to enrol their children in these two national Islamic schools.

7.5.2.3 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Parent Engagement Model (1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) theorized, as outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.9, that parents become involved in their children's education due to four reasons, namely, role construction, sense of efficacy, perception of invitation to engagement, and life-context variables.

Role Construction for Arabic-Speaking Immigrants

The way parents perceive their role in their children's education is crucial for effective parental engagement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler,1997). For example, parents who view their role as limited to taking their children to school in the morning, thereby transferring responsibility for education entirely to the school and picking them up at the end of the day are less likely to engage actively in either school-based or home-based activities (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler,1997; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). In contrast, nearly all parents in this study viewed their children's education as a parental responsibility, reporting numerous positive home-based engagement practices. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) further indicate that parental role construction varies depending on parents' preferred types of engagement. Based on the data discussed above, and in line with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) framework, it is evident that most Arabic-speaking parents in this study interpreted their roles as encompassing parenting and home-based learning activities. The findings also suggest that Arabic-speaking immigrant parents in this study recognize the importance of

parenting and home-based learning for their children's academic development. Consequently, they prioritize these two forms of engagement. Similar patterns have been observed in studies of other immigrant parents, who tend to perceive their role primarily within the home context (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Vera et al., 2012; Karaagac et al., 2022; Jones & Palikara, 2023; Beauregard et al., 2014; Poza, Brooks, and Valdés, 2014).

Additionally, consistent with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005), parental role construction is socially and culturally influenced. The individual and focus group data from this study reveal that parents incorporate their cultural, linguistic, and religious values into home-based engagement to preserve their children's Muslim Arab identity. They perceive engagement as home-centred, prioritizing cultural/religious identity and parenting practices, while often viewing school-based activities as secondary, unless those activities affirm their cultural identity.

A central finding of this study is that Arabic-speaking Muslim parents predominantly view engagement as a home-based responsibility, emphasizing parenting and home learning while showing limited interest in school volunteering. Their participation in school-based activities such as fundraising often occurs remotely, reflecting a preference for contributing from home rather than being physically present in school settings. However, they demonstrate strong enthusiasm for culturally relevant events, such as multicultural days and Eid al-Adha/Eid al-Fitr celebrations. (For further discussion on culturally responsive framework, see Section 7.5.2.1). These findings align with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) theory of parental role construction, which posits that engagement preferences are shaped by sociocultural factors. Prioritizing home-based practices over school-based activities is a key distinction in reconceptualizing parental engagement among Arabic-speaking Muslim families. Accordingly, this research suggests that schools should not assume effective engagement requires only physical presence. Instead, they can accommodate these families' preferences by redefining engagement to include home-based practices. Thus, many engagement practices might shift or be adjusted to align with their role construction, as well as their linguistic, cultural and religious influences. For example, schools should continue using digital communication platforms for remote communication, as both teachers and parents reported these tools effectively supported school-home communication during COVID-19. Even after the pandemic, this technology facilitates regular contact and should be maintained, supported by translation services to ensure understandable two-way communication. Schools may also organise

virtual meetings like parent-teacher meetings and curriculum nights via video conferencing such as Zoom, Google Meet, potentially with translation services for deeper understanding. Through these platforms, parents can be encouraged to ask questions, share ideas, or engage in discussions at their convenience. Additionally, schools can support parents at home via the organisation of virtual workshops and seminars on parenting or learning at home, utilizing tools like Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams for live discussions, lectures, and Q&A sessions.

Schools could also offer flexible remote volunteering opportunities. For example, parents could teach Arabic online for the school community or share their expertise through virtual career talks and storytelling sessions. Additionally, schools can create opportunities for parents to participate in decision-making online, such as through feedback surveys using tools like Google Forms. They could also regularly solicit parental input on policies, events, or support needs. By leveraging technology and creative solutions, schools can maintain strong partnerships with parents without requiring physical attendance, ensuring all families feel included and supported.

Arabic-Speaking Immigrant Parents' Sense of Efficacy

The second reason for parental decision to be involved according to Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler model (1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) is parents' "sense of efficacy" or parental sense of responsibility which refers to their beliefs that they can be effective and make a difference in their children's educational careers. Many parents in this study showed a sense of responsibility towards their children's education, which was evident through repeatedly mentioning the word "responsibility" while defining the term parental engagement and through reporting many positive engagement practices. For example, Arabic- speaking parents of ELLs in this study also showed patterns of "sense of efficacy", being immigrants coming from totally different background towards the choice of their children's school that should have the necessary means to acknowledge and recognize their cultural and linguistic background. They also reported having a responsibility towards introducing and representing their "cultural background" and "religion" to the school community in a way that supports their children at school and not to let them feel different than the rest of their classmates. Many parents in this study also reported having a responsibility towards learning the language of the school to be able to help their children in their learning as well as to communicate with the school. Some parents in this study also

believed that via their support at home their children's academic level may shift from "average to advanced" if the teachers and schools keep updating them with their children's difficulties in learning. Accordingly, parents' perception of invitation to engagement is considered the third reason for parents' choice to be engaged or not in the theoretical model of engagement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). The authors specifically indicated that invitations to parents, that mostly come from the child, the school, and teachers, to be engaged in in their children's learning are crucial motivators because they show to parents that their engagement is welcomed as well as valued. Even though some parents from schools (A, B and D) reported receiving enough support from school/teachers when they approached them for their help when their children encountered difficulties in learning or in any other skills. However, the findings discussed in Chapter 5 and 6 clearly indicate that parents and teachers in this study have conflicting perspectives regarding "teachers' invitations" to overcoming children's weaknesses or difficulties in any areas of learning. While teachers, acknowledged facing difficulties in inviting parents of ELLs especially in relation to explaining to them how to support their children to overcome their difficulties in any areas of learning due to parents' lack of English skills. Parents in this study also perceived Irish teachers as not inviting them to help their children to overcome their difficulties in any areas of learning. To overcome this challenge, both teachers and parents in this study recommended the importance of guiding and assisting ELL parents, through educating them on how to help their children in their learning at home and how to be better homework helpers. Parents provided more specific suggestions to support learning at home including inviting parents to attend training courses like the ones that teachers attend at school, so that if home and school share the same leaning activities, there will be a consistency between both parties that would lead to maximize children's academic development.

Parental Perception of Invitation to Engagement

In line with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) who asserted that when parents think that parental engagement is not valued by schools, they are less likely to get involved. This has also been found in this study as one parent in school B reported her attempts to volunteer teaching Arabic and Quran at the school. However, her desire was constrained by the school who did not value her desire through requiring too much documentation such as police vetting and Child Safeguarding certificate which made her give-up and stop seeking opportunities to volunteer (see Chapter 6, Section 6.7.2). These

findings are consistent with Sanders-Smith et al (2020) results that reported volunteering difficulties due to school policies and practices.

Life-Context Variables

The fourth reason for parents' choice to be engaged is their life context variables (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). The authors refer in their model to parents' perceptions regarding whether they have the skills, knowledge and time to be successfully engaged in their children's education or not. Arabic-speaking parents interviewed in this study reported challenges relating to each of these conditions (See Section 7.5.2.2 above for a detailed discussion about parents' current life context as a barrier to their engagement at school).

7.6 Summary of Chapter

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the key findings from the research conducted, present conclusions, and offer recommendations. The findings of the current research suggest that, even though the primary teachers who participated in the survey generally perceived parents of ELLs as not involved and disconnected from their children's education, Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs cared about and were engaged in their children's education. However, parents in this study were more involved at home as they, primarily, considered their children's education as their responsibility constructing their roles with various learning at home activities more than with engagement at school. Both teachers and parents reported similar gaps and barriers regarding communication and various suggestions to overcome the language barrier and create effective two-way communication. Limited volunteering, school-based activities attendance and decision-making roles have been reported by teachers and most of Arabic speaking immigrant parents due to many family factors related to parents' perceptions of school invitations, lack of English skills, family circumstances such as having large families as well as other school factors related to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, teachers' lack of time, lack of support as well as other factors related to school policies and funding. Very few of the parents regarded engagement at school as one of their parental roles. Unlike home-based engagement, where Arabic-speaking parents identified their challenges and tried to overcome them so that they can

support their children, the challenges to school-based engagement were greater relating not only to family factors but also due to parent–teacher factors and other institutional and school factors. In addition, the patterns of parental engagement varied among the four participating schools where School (A) appeared to be more proactive in engaging parents of ELLs in different practices.

The influence of culture of Arabic-speaking parents' engagement was evident in almost all engagement practices, starting from their choice of their children's school as well as to other forms of Epstein's six types of engagement. Therefore, both teachers and parents in this study highly recommended incorporating the cultural and linguistic knowledge of families of ELLs into the school curriculum, home-based activities and school/community activities.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the conclusions and recommendations to be drawn from this research. First, a summary of research findings will be outlined based on research questions to consider if they were addressed by this research. Next, the contribution of the current research to the phenomenon under study, ELL parental engagement, will be presented. Afterwards, strengths and limitations that the current research encountered will be outlined. Based on the research findings, recommendations for the development and implementation of practices which promote ELL parental engagement to ensure ELL pupils achievement in Irish primary schools will be suggested. Then, potential areas for future research which could further investigate more perceptions and experiences regarding patterns and barriers of ELL parental engagement and, thus, enhance immigrant family-school partnership in the Irish education will be identified.

8.2 Returning to the Research Aims and Research Questions

This research aimed to understand the actual patterns of parental engagement among a sample of Arabic- speaking immigrant parents of ELLs and Irish primary school teachers in the context of four Irish primary (two Islamic and two Catholic) schools in Dublin. Accordingly, parents and teachers' perceptions of family-school engagement, the activities in which they engage and if there were some common challenges that face both groups were investigated. In addition, recommendations for the development and implementation of practices which promote ELL parental engagement to ensure student achievement in Irish primary schools were suggested. The study of ELL parental engagement is particularly timely for several reasons. First, the number of immigrants is growing in many European Union countries representing nearly 6.1% percent of its population (Eurostat, 2023). Many schools in countries with immigration flows face many challenges and have been found lacking in their response to the needs of pupils and families from diverse backgrounds or to sustain parents' engagement in their children's education (Baquedano-López, Alexander & Hernandez, 2013; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014, Brown et al., 2022).

Secondly, the large scale of immigration in Ireland since 1990s has led to an increase of ELL pupils in Irish schools causing many challenges including achievement gap between those

pupils (if home language not English) and their indigenous Irish counterparts (OECD, 2023). Another issue, referred to as a "diversity gap", resulting from differences in demographics between pupil and teacher populations has been also identified in the Irish education system (Heinz & Keane, 2018; Keane, Heinz & Lynch, 2023; Keane, Heinz & McDaid, 2023). This context of the rapid demographic changes in the classroom alongside the lack of cultural training among Irish teachers (Hannigan et al., 2024; Foley, et al., 2024) as well as lack of diverse teachers from migrant backgrounds, to properly address the growing number and needs of the ELL pupils, has led to many linguistic and cultural challenges in the Irish education system that might influence ELL parental engagement levels (O'Toole et al., 2019; Daniel, 2015; Johnson et al., 2016; Smyth et al., 2009). Research both in the international and Irish contexts, indicated that immigrant parents' perspectives regarding family-school engagement and factors that influence their engagement is limited (Darmody & McCOY, 2011; Durand, 2011; Antony Newman, 2019; O'Toole et al., 2019; Devine et al., 2023). Accordingly, this research focused on investigating the phenomenon of ELL parental engagement through investigating the perspectives of Irish primary school teachers and Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs who are also an under-researched group of parents in the western contexts (Al Khateeb et al., 2015; Gurr, 2010).

In accordance with the research design, the first phase of this study involved a mixed method investigation of the teachers' perspectives and experiences on engaging parents of ELLs in their children's education through the administration of an online survey. The second phase involved an exploration of Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' experiences regarding their engagement in their children's education through individual semi-structured interviews followed by focus group interview discussions involving the same participants as a second source of data. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 described the research findings in relation to these two research phases and provided a deeper understanding of how ELL parental engagement is perceived and experienced by the two groups of participants resulting in findings regarding extent of engagement and uncovering some challenges in the context of the four participating schools.

8.3 Response to Research Questions

The first research question was to investigate primary school teachers' attitudes and actions towards engaging parents of ELLs in the education of their children. Overall findings indicate that teachers had positive attitudes towards the importance of parental engagement for successful schools, teachers and pupils. Therefore, they reported awareness of the importance of effective two-way communication for family-school engagement as well as inviting parents of ELLs to be involved in many types of engagement that support ELLs academic development such as assigning interactive homework, encourage practice spelling, learning activities and reading. However, teachers generally perceived their ELL pupils' parents as not involved in their children's education, lacking familiarity with the Irish school system as well as lacking the knowledge about the importance of their children's education. In addition, the overall levels of ELL parental engagement, measured using Epstein's six types of engagement (1995, 2009, 2011) in most of the participating schools were limited. Among the four schools that participated in the current research study, only school (A) seemed to proactively engage parents of ELLs in different engagement practices and the reason might be attributed to two reasons, the first is the school's long experience of accommodating many immigrant pupils for many years. The second reason is the policy of the school principal who played a critical role in implementing effective ELL engagement practices and accommodating the cultural and the linguistic needs of the diverse pupils and their families at school.

The second research question examined Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' perceptions regarding parental engagement and how they are engaging with their children's learning and education in the context of Irish primary schools. Overall findings indicate that Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs had positive attitudes towards the importance of the education and schooling for their children's development and future. Parental engagement was perceived by most parents as a responsibility perceiving home as the first place for their children's learning and development. Therefore, greater parental engagement at home was found in this research study, as almost all participating Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs reported supporting their children's learning and progress at home in many positive parenting practices as well as in many learning at home activities. They showed significant support not only in mainstream Irish schools but also, they supported their children's learning and development in other complementary schools that their community provides such as, Libyan, Algerian community supported schools and weekend Quranic/Arabic language

schools. Parents, further, were found responsible teaching their children a lot of things at home that they do not learn at school including Islamic values, Quran, and Arabic language to maintain their children’s Arab Muslim identities. Such findings reflect the influence of parents' culture and religion in their engagement patterns. Further findings indicate that the influence of the culture of parental engagement practices of the participating Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs was evident not only in their desire to preserve their linguistic, religious and cultural values at home, but also, they showed a desire to show and preserve their culture at school and in the community contexts. This was apparently clear in their preference to take part in school-based extracurricular activities that are generally connected to showing their heritage and culture such as multicultural days. In addition, a greater collaboration with Arab Muslim community resources/ events and members to maintain their children's Arab Muslim identity.

The third research question considers Irish primary school teachers and Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' perspectives of challenges to family school engagement and practices that promote effective parental engagement. Many barriers to ELL parental engagement have been found in this research study within the three spheres of engagement, at home, at school and in the community (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011). The main barrier found in almost every form of engagement, based on both group participants' perspectives, is differences in language and cultural norms between home and school. Such differences in linguistic and cultural norms have led also to many differing views, attitudes and even goals between primary teachers and Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs with regard to the way parental engagement might be like. Even though school to home communication was valued by both sets of research participants who showed satisfaction with different means of communication available at the participating schools, however, teachers and parents had differing views of how effective communication with parents of ELL in the participating schools was. Teachers perceived communication provided by their schools to families of ELLs either in parent-teacher meetings or in end of school year report cards as informative and effective. However, many gaps in school to home communication were found in this research study, based on parents' perspectives, including lack of information provided by school regarding curriculum content, the child’s social life, as well as when emergencies occur at school. Further findings indicate lack of frequency, quality and clarity of information received in parent-teacher meetings and end of school year report regarding pupils’ academic development as well as lack of guidance about how parents can help their

children to overcome the challenges, they experience in their learning careers.

Lower ELL parental engagement patterns at school sphere / context (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011) were found in this study that could be attributed to evident obstacles and barriers that both teachers and parents faced. Many forms of school- based engagement such as volunteering, attending curricular and extracurricular school-based activities, and taking part in Parent Association committees were constrained by various factors, some of the factors were categorized as individual/family factors (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), primarily related to parents' lack of English proficiency, limited time, and logistical barriers such as transportation and childcare challenges. Other institutional/school barriers (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) to ELL parental school-based engagement at the participating schools related mainly to teacher's workload demands, time constraints, lack of school staff, lack of family school engagement planning, as well as lack of space, funding and resources at school. Both teachers and parents who participated in this research study also reported that their schools as not encouraging parents of ELLs to be more connected and involved in their children's education. Further barriers, from parents' perspectives, including negative stereotypes, prejudice, ethnic/cultural discrimination as well as the negative influence of media limited parents' integration and collaboration with the Irish community (Epstein, 1995, 2009, 2011).

Through the understanding of the above-mentioned engagement patterns and the barriers of ELL parental engagement from the perspectives of Arabic-speaking parents and Irish primary teachers, this research highlights the importance of investigating the extent of family-school engagement as well as the factors that impede effective ELL parental engagement. Accordingly, policy makers should develop strategies to effectively overcome the challenges that teachers and immigrant parents of ELLs face and initiating more culturally relevant parental engagement programmes.

Therefore, this study concludes that raising the awareness towards the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of primary school pupils and their families among all stakeholders including policy makers, school principals, educators and school administrators is required in response to the rapid demographic changes in the Irish education and to address the needs of the ELLs and their families. This study also highlights the importance of looking into the engagement practices of immigrant parents of ELLs to encourage schools to make use of their linguistic and cultural practices as advantages, rather than problems, in the Irish education system to empower children in their academic development as well as empowering their families in their engagement with their children’s education. Finally,

embracing a more culturally responsive educational and parental engagement opportunities at Irish primary schools is essential for ELLs academic, social and emotional development as well as to develop welcoming, equitable schools that represent the cultural backgrounds of all the pupils, and their families. However, failure to engage parents of ELLs will hinder their development and thus widen the achievement gap between immigrant pupils and their indigenous counterparts (OECD, 2023).

8.4 Research Contribution to the Field

This research is a study in an area which has not yet been widely researched in the context of Irish education, thus, it primarily contributes to the field of ELL parental engagement by understanding how Irish teachers and immigrant parents of ELLs from different culture, language and religion work together to support the learning process of ELLs. It specifically provides an insider account of engagement practices in Muslim Arabic-speaking families in non-Muslim majority country, which are under-researched immigrant group (Gurr, 2010; Al Khateeb et al., 2015).

Based on the research findings, this study contributes to knowledge of ELL parental engagement phenomenon in several ways: First, the study adds valuable information in support of ELL parental engagement in the Irish education through understanding ELL parental engagement patterns as well as identifying many challenges that immigrant parents of ELLs and primary school teachers face in relation to different forms of engagement at home, at school and in the community. Similarly, the suggestions provided to address the various barriers that face both parents and teachers can serve as a starting point for Irish schools to enhance ELL parental engagement and overcome the reported failure to sufficiently accommodate the needs of socio -cultural diversity student population (Brown et al. 2022; Faas, Smith, & Darmody, 2018; Hannigan, Faas, & Darmody, 2022; Adebayo & Heinz, 2023; Foley, Faas & Darmody, 2024).

Through cultural inclusion and implementation of several school practices, as suggested by the research findings in chapters 5, 6 and 7, this could possibly support relationships of other schools and families in different international contexts. The findings of the current research further add to the empirical research supporting claims that more decisions need to be made regarding professional development and training for Irish teachers for dealing with a range of linguistic and cultural differences and boosting effective engagement with parents of ELLs whose backgrounds are totally different from their own (Darmody, 2011; Bromley &

Yazdanpanah, 2021; Adebayo & Heinz, 2023; Hannigan et al., 2024; Foley et al., 2024; Keane, Heinz, & Lynch, 2020; Ní Dhuinn & Keane, 2021)

Another contribution to knowledge offered by the current research findings is that it adds to prior research evidence which shows a rich array of home-based engagement practiced by immigrant parents at other international contexts (Guo, 2011; Vera et al., 2012, Karaagac et al., 2022; Poza et al., 2014). The findings of this study, contributes further valuable information for educational policy makers that diverse parents of ELLs have broad understanding of learning that extend beyond Irish schools and involves the incorporation of their values, linguistic knowledge and cultural heritage.

8.5 Strengths of the Study

The current research has some strengths including inserting an open-ended question in the teacher survey questionnaires. Teachers responded overwhelmingly to the open-ended question, offering deep accounts of their experiences with parents of ELLs. This gave them the chance to express concerns not addressed in the survey's qualitative questions or to expound on issues raised. Additionally, the qualitative investigation of Arabic-speaking parents in a one-to-one semi-structured interview followed by focus group interviews as a second source of data for the same participants is another strength, as the semi-structured interview format allowed for the generation of nuanced insights on the interview topics and in the sharing of parents' experiences. While focus group discussion provided additional insight to the phenomenon under study and allowed for opportunities for parents to continue to share their experiences, especially after they had time to digest and think further about the different areas of engagement following the initial individual interviews, the focus groups allowed them to share opinions and bounce ideas off each other, thus, there was much more dialogue. Finally, as an immigrant Muslim Arabic-speaking parent, the researcher understood the language, culture and religion of the parents interviewed in this study, therefore, encouraged the participating parents to speak in the language of their choice, either Arabic or English (See the researcher's positionality in Chapter 4, Section 4.13). This facilitated the narration of parental lived experiences regarding their engagement in their children's education from their cultural perspective in their own language. At the same time, this had the advantage of engaging with the contextual meaning of the parents' experiences and avoided the possibility of misinterpretation of data in this part of research, thus, enhanced the validity and reliability of the study.

8.6 Limitations of the Study

The current research provided valuable insights, however, there are some noteworthy limitations to this study. Given the limited number of primary schools involved in this study (N=4) located in one city (Dublin) is the first limitation, as the small sample may limit the ability to generalize the results. If the patterns of ELL parental engagement that emerged in this study were to be investigated on a larger scale including schools in different rural and other urban contexts, findings could possibly show different concerns or might be more generalizable. In addition, while this study provides insights into the experiences of Arabic-speaking Muslim immigrant parents in Ireland, its findings may not be fully generalizable to other non-Arabic-speaking Muslim immigrant groups, such as Pakistani, Turkish, or Somali Muslims. Although some findings might be relevant to non-Arabic-speaking Muslim parents, cultural and linguistic differences could significantly influence how these groups engage with their children's schools or perceive family-school engagement barriers. Furthermore, although the schools involved in this research study have different ethos (Islamic and Catholic), other multi-denominational and non-denominational school types such as Community National Schools CNS and Educate Together ET Schools are not involved in this research, and the findings presented here may not apply in these types of primary schools. It may have increased the significance of the research findings if those schools had been involved.

The other limitation of this research is the response rate of the teachers' survey, even though there was an adequate sample size of teachers (N=45) to answer the research questions, this research did not have a 100% response rate. Therefore, findings for Irish primary school teachers in this study need to be considered cautiously due to the low number of teachers involved. In addition, the variance of teacher participation rate across the four participating schools was not equal. For instance, most responses came from school A with the largest number of participating teachers (N=15). However, school D had the least number of teacher responses (N=6) resulting in a smaller number of teachers than had been anticipated. In addition, the timing of the current study's data collection, which occurred in the academic year 2021/2022 following school closures in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, prompted most parents and teachers to reflect on their experiences of family-school engagement during the pandemic. As discussed in the literature review, parental engagement

at school differed for families worldwide due to school closures during the pandemic and ongoing restrictions in the 2021/2022 academic year. This variability created limitations in reporting actual levels of parental engagement. Likewise, it should be acknowledged that reliance on surveys to collect teacher data, while necessary due to COVID-19 restrictions during the collection period, presented a limitation. Under non-pandemic conditions, supplementing the teacher surveys with interviews or focus groups would have been highly beneficial to gain richer, more nuanced insights into teacher perspectives and practices. Finally, Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs who participated in this study were all mothers, even though both parents were invited to take part in the research in the recruitment phase, so the absence of fathers' perspectives might be a limitation too.

8.7 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

As family-school engagement, as discussed in Chapter 2, has many positive effects for parents, teachers, schools and pupils, therefore, it should be applied in all Irish schools. In addition, given the mounting evidence that ELL parental engagement supports immigrant pupils academic and social-emotional competencies in schools (Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003; Jung & Zhang, 2016; Smith et al., 2020), accordingly, during this research study several recommendations have been developed that might overcome challenges faced by both groups who were involved in this research. Those recommendations are divided into four essential areas: policy, practice, training and resourcing.

8.7.1 Policy (Long-Term Priority: Department of Education-Level Reforms)

- Develop an inclusive, culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate policy statement on family-school engagement that acknowledges and meets the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families.
- Develop school-home communication policy that encourages the use of diverse families' native languages and supports the use of competent interpreters at schools especially during schools’ events and in parent-teacher meetings.
- Develop a policy for more frequent and detailed communication regarding children's academic/social development at school.
- Develop multilingual curricula that recognize and respect the cultural heritage and

sensitivities of the diverse cultures they serve, particularly regarding sensitive topics such as religious education and RSE. The development of these curricula must actively involve parents of ELLs in the planning process.

- Inclusion of the native home languages of ELLs in the Irish primary school curriculum and empowering their parents through inviting them to support home language learning activities at school.
- Development of initial teacher education courses to prepare pre-service teachers for culturally relevant teaching and effective collaboration with culturally and linguistically diverse families.
- Increase diversity in the primary school teaching workforce by hiring more teachers from migrant backgrounds to better reflect the diverse student population in Irish schools (HEA, 2022).
- Develop an inclusive homework policy that provides interactive assignments, allowing parents of English Language Learners (ELLs) to support their children without requiring English literacy.
- Develop a clear policy statement that acknowledges and permits the celebration of multicultural and religious events for immigrant students across all school levels.
- Incorporating home visits by a home-school liaison officer to gain insights into immigrant families' backgrounds, recognize the strengths of multilingual families, and demonstrate these strengths in culturally relevant ways.

8.7.2 Practice (High Priority, School/ Parent led Actions)

- Bridging home culture and school culture by encouraging ELL students and their families to share their cultural knowledge, values, and experiences in the classroom.
- Announcing all school/community events, in advance, in school calendar and through different means to increase parent's participation.
- Supporting social networks through increasing parents' social connections with each other at school, so that parents can share insights, support and motivate each other in many situations.
- Provide childcare services and transportation, such as school buses to pick up parents before meetings and other school activities/events and return them to bus stops near

their homes.

- Survey immigrant parents regarding engagement ideas to incorporate their suggestions in planning parental engagement activities for greater inclusion.

8.7.3 Training (High Priority, School-Led Actions)

- Offer anti-racism and anti-bullying workshops for school personnel, equipping them with strategies to address stereotyping and discriminatory situations faced by immigrant students and their families.
- Provide intercultural training for all in-service school personnel including principals, teachers, and staff to enhance their cultural sensitivity toward diverse cultures and religions in the school environment.
- Train all school personnel to better understand ELL parental engagement, enabling them to effectively support diverse school communities by implementing culturally responsive practices.
- Organising workshops for parents of ELLs covering key aspects of the Primary School Curriculum, with a focus on literacy and numeracy skills.
- Hosting workshops for parents of ELLs to emphasize the importance of family-school engagement, teaching them how to support their children with homework and participate in parental engagement activities.
- Offering English language classes for the families of ELLs as it promotes integration and family-school engagement.

8.7.4 Resourcing (High/Medium Priority, School-Led Actions)

- Providing parents of ELLs with enough explanations, in their native languages, about school policies, rules and regulations to increase their information and familiarize them with the Irish education system.
- Provide enough information to parents of ELLs, in their native languages, about decision-making opportunities at school to build equal opportunities among all parents for school governance.
- Organising workshops to parents of ELLs to support family’s native language maintenance and promote language learning at home.

8.8 Recommendations for Future Research

Investigating the multidimensional aspects of ELL parental engagement is a relatively new topic in the Irish education. This research study has highlighted a wide variety of information regarding how Arabic-speaking immigrant parents of ELLs and Irish primary teachers work together to support ELL pupils in the context of four Irish primary schools in Dublin. The information gathered from this research responded to the research questions; however, the findings cannot be generalized to all immigrant parents from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds in all the Irish primary schools, or even a larger context as research data was restricted to information from only four primary schools in one city (Dublin) and the parent sample in the current research was Arab immigrants speaking the same language, Muslims, and all females. Therefore, it is recommended to replicate this study in different regions in Ireland and with a more diverse range of participants in terms of gender, race, and ethnic diversity to gain broader and additional perspectives on the phenomenon of ELL parental engagement. In the same vein, as there is a substantial achievement gap between many first-generation immigrant pupils and their Irish counterparts, especially in literacy skills, in the Irish primary and secondary schools (OECD, 2023). Therefore, a comparative study of patterns of parental engagement between Irish native parents and immigrant parents of ELLs from a range of backgrounds may shed some light on differences on parent engagement patterns in Ireland.

The lack of ELL parental engagement in the school context found in this research study is a concern. Therefore, another direction for future research is to explore this area through closer observation of the obstacles and barriers to ELL parent engagement at Irish school and accordingly provide solutions to overcome this problem. At the same time, Arabic-speaking immigrant parents' role construction presents an interesting case in research on ELL parental engagement. Therefore, conducting ethnographic work on home-based engagement, in the future, would provide a robust body of knowledge about how parental engagement might be perceived differently by different groups of immigrants, especially when the culture of home is totally different than the culture of school. Also, through discovering ELL parental engagement patterns only at home context would support the closer investigation of immigrant families' funds of knowledge and incorporate them in planning multicultural curriculum as well as culturally responsive parental engagement

activities for greater inclusion. Likewise, it would be worth listening to other perspectives regarding ELL parental engagement rather than just teachers and parents. Therefore, further research could qualitatively examine the principals, administrators and pupils' perceptions and experiences of ELL parental engagement, across different school contexts, including post primary or secondary schools through conducting interviews and focus groups to add various insights into the examination of the phenomenon of ELL parental engagement in Ireland. Finally, the findings of this study indicate that almost all Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs support Quranic education and Arabic language maintenance through enroling their children in weekend Arabic/Quran schools. Building on this, future research could conduct a longitudinal study tracking a cohort of immigrant Muslim Arab students from late primary through post-primary education and beyond. Using qualitative methods with students, parents, and possibly teachers in complementary schools to investigate participation trends, explore factors influencing retention or attrition, and explicitly compare the influence of religious/ cultural motivation with other pressures that make those students keep attending those schools.

8.9 Closing Summary

This chapter concluded the research study by summarizing the key research findings in relation to the research aims and questions and discussed the value and contribution thereof. It also reviewed the strengths and limitations of the study and proposed opportunities for future research. Based on this study, the researcher has also provided some policy, training, resourcing and practice recommendations regarding how to support ELL parental engagement among immigrant parents of ELL in the Irish education. This study highlights the need for further investigation into ELL parental engagement in the various contexts of primary and post-primary Irish schools. Concurrently, this research highlights the importance of multicultural awareness and inclusion in Irish education to sufficiently accommodate the needs of the fast-growing socio -cultural diversity student population and their families.

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APPENDIX 1. Ethical Approval

Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Application	Academic Year 2020/21
Applicant Code	MT8
Applicant/Supervisor Name	Souaad Srabiet / Dr Bronagh Ćatibušić, Dr Sarah Sheridan
Title of Research	Parental engagement in School: Perspectives of Arabic-Speaking Parents of English Language Learners (ELLs) and Primary School Teachers.
Date of this letter	13/01/2021

Dear Souaad,

Your amended submission (dated 11/01/2021) for ethical approval for the research project above was considered by the Research Ethics Committee, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, Trinity College Dublin and has been approved in full.

Please note:
(i) On completion of research projects, applicants should complete the *End of Project Report Form* (which can be found at: https://www.tcd.ie/slscs/research/ethics/) and submit one electronic copy (to slscs@tcd.ie)
(ii) The REC requests, in particular, that you attend to your commitments regarding the storage and destruction of data arising from this research, in keeping with REC policy and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines.

We wish you every luck with your research.

Best wishes,

Ciarán Kenny ___________

Dr Ciarán Kenny
Chair, Research Ethics Committee
School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences

Scoil na nEolaíochtaí Teangeolaíochta,
Urlabhra agus Cumarsáide,
Coláiste na Tríonóide,
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School of Linguistic, Speech &
Communication Sciences,
Trinity College,
Dublin 2, Ireland

T 353 (0)1 896 1560
slscs@tcd.ie
www.tcd.ie/slscs

Appendix 2: Gatekeeper E-mail

Dear principle

My name is Souaad Srabiet, and I am a PhD candidate in the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Studies, under the supervision of Dr. Bronagh Catibusic and Dr. Sarah Sheridan at TCD. As part of the requirements for completing the doctoral program; I am currently conducting a research study about the perceptions and experiences of Arabic-speaking parents of English language learners (ELLs), English language learners, and primary school teachers, regarding the topic parental engagement. This research aims at exploring the way Arabic-speaking parents and teachers work together to support English as additional language (EAL) pupils, the challenges faced by both teachers and parents that hinder parental engagement will also be examined. Your school is being considered as a possible site for my research study because it is a primary school located in the greater Dublin area and has considerable number of, Arabic- speaking, English as additional language (EAL) pupils. This email is to request your permission for the school teachers and Arabic-speaking parents of ELLs in your school to participate in my research study entitled: *Parental engagement in School: Perspectives of Arabic-speaking Parents of English language learners (ELLs) and primary school teachers.*

I plan to survey the teachers in your school; also, I plan to interview Arabic-speaking parents individually and in a focus group discussion during the school years 2021/ 22. The purpose of this research is not to evaluate a particular parent or teacher but to gain insight into the nature and the extent of ELL parental engagement so that may help school officials understand how to engage parents of ELLs in opportunities that support student learning.

I ask permission for your agreement to participate in the study which will require that you as the school principal send an invitation email with a link to an anonymous questionnaire. This should be sent to all teachers in your school to request they participate in the research study. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes for teachers to fill in if they agree to do so. Additionally, in order to recruit Arabic-speaking parents, the researcher will rely on you to contact all parents through sending

out written text messages (and possibly newsletters) to invite them to participate in my research study.

The data analysis and results of the study will be summarized with no school, teacher or parent identified. Teacher participants will remain anonymous; the school and parents' participants will be assigned pseudonyms to prevent identification. School name/ address will be coded using alphabetical letters (school A, school B) while pseudonyms as (parent 1 / parent 2) will be assigned to each participating parent to maintain confidentiality.

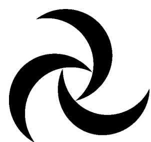
If you grant permission for me to conduct my research study at your school, please reply to this email with a scheduled time that you and I can meet regarding this research study. If you have any questions you can contact me at 1212121 or by email at srabiets@tcd.ie, or you can contact research supervisors Dr. Bronagh Catibusic at BRONAGHC@tcd.ie and Dr. Sarah Sheridan at SHERIDS1@tcd.ie.

Thank you for your time and your consideration about this project.

Souaad Srabiet

Doctoral candidate, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, TCD.

APPENDIX 3 Permission to Use and Adapt Teacher's Survey



Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships
Johns Hopkins University • 2800 North Charles Street, Suite 420 • Baltimore MD 21218
TEL: 410-516-8800 • FAX: 410-516-5572 • nnps@jhu.edu

September 14, 2020

To: Souaad Srabiet

From: Joyce L. Epstein & Steven B. Sheldon

Re: Permission to use:

- Sheldon, S. B. & Epstein, J. L. (2007). Parent and Student Surveys on Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Grades. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.

- Epstein, J. L. & Salinas, K. C. (1993). Surveys and Summaries: Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in the Elementary and Middle Grades. Baltimore, MD: Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University.

This letter grants you permission to use, adapt, and/or translate the surveys noted above in your study.

We ask only that you include appropriate references to the survey and authors in the text and bibliography of your reports and publications.

Best of luck with your project.

Appendix 4 Teachers' Survey

Parental Engagement in School: Perspectives of Arabic-Speaking Parents of English Language Learners (ELLs) and Primary School Teachers

You are invited to participate in a research study on the above topic; my name is Souaad Srabiet and I am a PhD candidate in the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Studies, under the supervision of Dr. Bronagh Catibusic and Dr. Sarah Sheridan at Trinity College Dublin. I am undertaking research to explore the nature and the extent of parental engagement in the context of the Irish primary schools, i.e. how Arabic-speaking parents of English language learners, ELLs, and primary school teachers work together to support children who are learning English as an additional language (EAL). Part of my study is to examine the teachers' perspectives, experiences and what practices teachers usually conduct to get the parents engaged in their children's education at home and at school. Your opinions and responses would make a valuable contribution to this study and we hope that you will share your views with us.

Purpose of the study:

Research has revealed that parental engagement in education is important for pupil's academic and social success at school. Hence, understanding the perspective of parental engagement from both the school and family stakeholder's viewpoints may help school officials understand how to engage parents of ELLs in opportunities that increase parental engagement and support student achievement. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a teacher at an Irish primary School having a considerable number of Arabic-speaking EAL pupils. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you should read the information below carefully, before deciding whether or not to participate.

What is involved?

You are asked to fill in all sections of an online questionnaire that is estimated to take 20 to 30 minutes to complete. The questionnaire is anonymous and does not ask for your name but it does ask you to fill in some information about yourself, such as; your age, qualification and experience in order to help us interpret the data. If you choose to participate, please click the link below. Afterwards, you need to click (I consent) to proceed to a secure site to complete the survey; your IP address will not be recorded to ensure there is no way you can be identified. By clicking in the link and completing the questionnaire, you are agreeing to have your data included in the study. Please note that the view of every teacher in different schools is of interest of us. If you have any questions, please contact the researcher at Srabiets@tcd.ie, or, you can contact research supervisors Dr. Bronagh Catibusic at BRONAGHC@tcd.ie. and Dr. Sarah Sheridan at SHERIDS1@tcd.ie.

. Moreover, should you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact the TCD Data Protection Officer, Secretary's Office, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin 2, Ireland. Email: dataprotection@tcd.ie Website: www.tcd.ie/privacy

Confidentiality

Again, the questionnaire is anonymous, so you are not required to put your name or the name of your school anywhere on it, therefore, it will not be possible to have your data removed from the study later. Any information you provide will be kept anonymous and your data will be treated in strictest confidence. The data and findings of this questionnaire will

help me complete my PhD thesis and may be published in education journals or presented at conferences in the future; however, any reporting of data will refer to group data only. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability and honestly. We hope that you will find answering the questionnaire an interesting exercise.

The link to the survey is as follows: <Survey link will be inserted here>

Thank you for reading this sheet – we hope that you consider taking part.

The information below will be visible to participants who click / type-in the survey link

This survey asks about your perspective, as a teacher, of parental engagement in your school. Your viewpoint is important and may help school officials understand how to engage parents of ELLs in opportunities that increase parental engagement and support pupil achievement. You are asked to fill in all sections of an online questionnaire that should not take more than 20 - 30 minutes to complete. The questionnaire is anonymous, so you are not required to put your name anywhere on it. The results will only be reported as part of a group.	**I consent**

YOUR EXPERIENCE AND BACKGROUND

A. What is your experience?

_____Years in teaching

_____Years in this school

B. What is your gender?

(a) Male ☐ Female ☐

C. What is your highest education?

- ☐ Bachelor's
- ☐ Bachelor's+professional certifications
- ☐ Master's
- ☐ Master's+professional certifications
- ☐ Doctorate

D. How do you describe yourself?

a. Irish

b. Other (describe)

E. Age:

- ☐ 20-30 years old
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ 61 +

	This question asks for your professional judgment about parent engagement. **Please SELECT the one choice for each item that best represents your opinion and experience**					
		Strongly Disagree (SD)	**Disagree (D)**	**Neutral (N)**	**Agree (A)**	**Strongly Agree (SA)**
1	Parent engagement is important for a good school.	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
2	This school has an active and effective parent organization.	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
3	Parent engagement can help teachers be more effective with more pupils.	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
4	Parents of children at this school want to be involved more than they are now.	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
5	Teachers do not have the time to involve parents in very useful ways.	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
6	Teachers need in-service education to implement effective parent engagement practices.	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
7	Parent engagement is important for pupil success in school.	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
8	This school views parents as important partners.	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
9	The community supports this school.	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
10	I think there are good relations between teachers, pupils, and parents in this school.	(SD)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)

	Directions: Teachers choose among many activities to assist their students and families. SELECT one choice to tell how important each of these is for you to conduct at your grade level.					
		NOT IMPORTANT (NOT IPM)	LITTILE IMPORTANT (LITTILE IPM)	NEUTRAL (NUE)	PRETTY IMPORTANT (PRETY IPM)	VERY IMPORTANT (VERY IPM)
11	Have a parent-teacher meeting with each of my students' parents at least once a year.	(NOT IPM)	(LITTILE IPM)	(NUE)	(PRETTY IPM)	(VERY IPM)
12	Contact parents about their children's problems or troubles.	(NOT IPM)	(LITTILE IPM)	(NUE)	(PRETTY IPM)	(VERY IPM)
13	Inform parents when their children do something well or improve.	(NOT IPM)	(LITTILE IPM)	(NUE)	(PRETTY IPM)	(VERY IPM)
14	Inform parents of the skills their children must develop in each subject I teach.	(NOT IPM)	(LITTILE IPM)	(NUE)	(PRETTY IPM)	(VERY IPM)
15	Provide specific activities for children and parents to do to improve the children's' learning..	(NOT IPM)	(LITTILE IPM)	(NUE)	(PRETTY IPM)	(VERY IPM)
16	Assign homework that requires children to interact with parents.	(NOT IPM)	(LITTILE IPM)	(NUE)	(PRETTY IPM)	(VERY IPM)
17	Suggest ways to practice spelling or skills at home before a test other	(NOT IPM)	(LITTILE IPM)	(NUE)	(PRETTY IPM)	(VERY IPM)
18	Ask parents to listen to their children read.	(NOT IPM)	(LITTILE IPM)	(NUE)	(PRETTY IPM)	(VERY IPM)
19	Work with other teachers to develop parent engagement activities and materials.	(NOT IPM)	(LITTILE IPM)	(NUE)	(PRETTY IPM)	(VERY IPM)
20	Work with community members, such as cultural groups and social organizations, to arrange learning opportunities in my class	(NOT IPM)	(LITTILE IPM)	(NUE)	(PRETTY IPM)	(VERY IPM)

	Schools serve diverse populations of families who have different needs and skills. The next questions ask for your judgment about specific ways of involving families at your school. Please SELECT one choice to tell whether you think each type of engagement is:					
	NOT IMPORTANT	=> NOT IMP	(Means this IS NOT part of your school now, and SHOULD NOT BE.)			
	NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED	=> DEV	(Means this it IS NOT part of your school now, but SHOULD BE.)			
	NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED	=> IMPRV	(Means this IS part of your school, but NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED.)			
	A STRONG PROGRAM NOW	=> STRONG	(Means this IS a STRONG program for most parents			
	TYPE OF engagement		**AT THIS SCHOOL**			
21	WORKSHOPS for parents to build skills in PARENTING and understanding their children at each grade level.		(NOT IPM)	(DEV)	(IMPRV)	(STRONG)
22	WORKSHOPS for parents on creating HOME CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING.		(NOT IPM)	(DEV)	(IMPRV)	(STRONG)
23	COMMUNICATIONS from the school to the home that all families can understand and use.		(NOT IPM)	(DEV)	(IMPRV)	(STRONG)
24	COMMUNICATIONS about report cards so that parents understand students' progress and needs.		(NOT IPM)	(DEV)	(IMPRV)	(STRONG)
25	Parent-teacher MEETINGS with all families.		(NOT IPM)	(DEV)	(IMPRV)	(STRONG)
26	SURVEYING parents each year for their ideas about the school.		(NOT IPM)	(DEV)	(IMPRV)	(STRONG)
27	INFORMATION on how to MONITOR homework.		(NOT IPM)	(DEV)	(IMPRV)	(STRONG)
28	engagement by families in PARENTS' ASSOCIATION leadership, or other decision-making roles.		(NOT IPM)	(DEV)	(IMPRV)	(STRONG)

29- How does your school involve ELL parents, who came from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds, into helping pupils with reading /writing, volunteer in school activities and programs, tutor, or anything such as that?

30- Does your school face any challenges with involving parents of ELLs? If so, how has your school responded to these challenges?

31- How could your school increase or promote ELL parental engagement?

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32 From your own perspective as a teacher, are there any challenges that hinder you from involving the parents of ELLs in your class? If so, how have you responded to these challenges?

____
_

33- In your opinion, what is the most successful practice that you or your colleagues have used/ heard of to involve ELL parents?

34- Do you have any other ideas or comments that you would like to add?
____
____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Epstein, J. L. & Salinas, K. C. (1993). School and Family Partnerships: Surveys and Summaries. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships.

Appendix 5: Interview Guide of Semi-Structured Interview

Interview protocol.

The interview will begin with an introduction between the participant and the researcher. The researcher will briefly explain the role, why the study is being conducted, provide a brief description of the interview process, and ask participants to sign / agree to (if recorded) the informed consent form.

Introduction

Thanks for participating and agreeing to be interviewed. There are no right or wrong answers; I am just trying to get your perspectives on how you help your child with school. We will be talking about parent engagement in your child's primary school. Our talk will be video/ audio recorded. If you would like for me to repeat or to explain a question, please ask. If you don't want to respond to a question, just let me know and I will skip that question. If you want to stop talking, let me know and the interview will stop.

Section 1: Background (demographic) information.

Gender: [1] Male------------------------ [2] Female- - - - - - - - -

1. Tell me a little about yourself –Where were you born? What is your native country?
2. Where did you attend school?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. What is your occupation?
5. How long have you been in Ireland?
6. How many adults (18 & up) live in your house? How are these adults related to you (Spouse, family, friends)?
7. How many children do you have?
8. How many children under 18 do you have that live in your house?
9. How many children do you have in primary school l? Do they all attend the same primary school?
10. How long have your child/children been in this school?
11. Why did you send your child to this school?

Section 2: Importance of parental engagement/ practices:

12. What does parental engagement mean to you in the school context?

13. In your opinion, how do you think parents can be involved in their children's' education?

14. Do you think that you build a positive environment at home, such as time schedule and explain the importance of school to your children, to support them in their education?

a. Can you share with me any things you say or do at home to let your child know the importance of education? Examples may be offered to encourage dialogue (e.g. talking to your child about what he/she did in school that day ,read to your child, listen to your child read , etc.)

15- How do you communicate with or get information from your child's school?

Examples, if needed, do you, usually, communicate through letters/texts from the school, talking to your Child's teacher/ other staff? Please explain.

a. How often do you attend your child's school activities?

b. When was the last time you visited the school?

c. Do you attend parent teacher meetings?

16- Have you volunteered in your child's school?

a. If yes, what have you done while volunteering?

b. If no, why not?

17- Have you ever participated in your child's school's DECISION MAKING or joined a committee (such as Parents' Association)?

a. If yes, share with me your experience?

b. If no, why so?

18- Can you reflect on some activities that you do at home to support your child's LEARNING AT HOME?

a. What makes you do these activities (teacher's request, or beliefs and values)
b. How can you describe your ability to help your child with their homework?
c. If you struggle, is there any support you can receive from your child's school?

19- Do you participate in any kind of community programs, such as events occurring in the community (as in local parks, libraries) that might interest your child, summer camps for children, Fundraising events, bazaars, etc. to support your child and his/her school?

a. Do you encourage your child to attend community- based language or cultural learning, such as, weekend Arabic classes, religious instruction, community events e.g. in the Mosque etc.?

Section 3: Challenges and suggestions for support:

20- As a parent, what would you describe as the most POSITIVE experience you have had regarding your engagement in your child's education? What are some NEGATIVE experiences, if any?

21- What kind of challenges do you face regarding your engagement in your child's education/schooling? Please, give me some specific examples.

22- In your perspective, how parental engagement can be improved at school?

23- Is there anything else you would like to add or comment on this topic? Can you think of anyone else I should talk to learn more about parental engagement in this school?

Thank the father/ mother for participating in the interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses. Explain that interview transcriptions will be shared with him or her for reliability and validity.

دليل المقابلة الفردية الشبه- منظمة (اسئلة الوالدين)

Appendix E Interview Guide of Semi-Structured Interview (Arabic Version)

المقدمة

اولا اود ان اشكرك علي تطوعك ومشاركتك في المقابلة والحوار معي. الهدف المنشود وراء هذة المقابلة هولجمع بيانات عن وجهات نظراولياء الامور لطلبة المدارس الايرلندية(المتحدثين اللغة العربية) بخصوص المشاركة والاندماج في العملية التعليمية مع اطفالهم في المدارس الايرلندية الابتداءية. كل الاسئلة التي ستطرح عليكم هي فقط لغرض دراسة الموضوع من منظوركم والاستفادة من خبراتكم كاولياء امور , لا تقلقو بخصوص ما اذا كانت اجوبتكم علي خطا اوعلي صواب لان كل الاجابات هي انعكاس لخبراتكم فيما يخص الموضوع ولا تحمل خطا اوصواب. المقابلة ستكون مسجلة صوتيا, اذا لم تفهمواي من الاسئلة ساقوم باعادتها وشرحها حتي يسهل عليكم الاجابة عليها. اذا لم ترغبوا في الاجابة علي اي سؤال, يمكنكم التمنع علي الاجابة واخباري حتي انتقل الي السؤال الذي يليه واذا لم ترغبوا في استكمال المقابلة, ساقوم بالتوقف عن التسجيل فورا والغاء مشاركتكم من البحث.

<u>معلومات اساسية ديموقرافيا</u>

الجنس: ـذكرــــ انثـ ـــــــــــــ

1. أخبرني قليلًا عن نفسك؟ اين كان مكان ولادتك؟ ما هو بلدك الاصلي؟
2. في اي بلد تلقيت تعليمك؟ ما هو
3. مستواك الدراسي؟ ما هي
4. وظيفتك؟
5. منذ كم سنة وانت مقيم في ايرلندا؟
6. كم عدد البالغين (18 سنة وما فوق) الذين يعيشون معك في نفس المنزل؟ ماهي صلة القرابة بينكم (زوجك ، افراد عائلتك، اصدقائك)؟
7. كم لديك من اطفال؟
8. كم عدد الأطفال الذين تقل أعمارهم عن 18 عا مًا و يعيشون معك في نفس المنزل؟
9. كم لديك اطفال يدرسون في المدرسة الابتدائية؟ هل يلتحقون جميعهم بنفس المدرسة الابتدائية؟ إذا كانت الإجابة لا ، فلماذا؟
10. منذ متي التحق اطفالك بهذه المدرسة؟
11. ما هو السبب وراء اختيارك لهذه المدرسة ليدرس بها اطفالك؟

<u>اسئلة عامة</u>

12. ماذا يعني لك مصطلح (مشاركة الوالدين) في الاطار التعليمي؟
13. في اعتقادك، كيف يمكن لاولياء الامور او الوالدين أن يشاركوا او ينخرطو في العملية التعليمية لأبنائهم؟

<u>انواع المشاركات في العملية التعليمية</u>

14. هل تعتقد انك تخلق بيئة تعليمية ايجابية في منزلك, ، مثل تحديد جدول الزمني وشرح أهمية المدرسة لأطفالك حتي تدعم حب التعلم والتعليم لطفلك ؟

ا. هل يمكنك ان تشاركني بعض الأشياء التي تفعلها في المنزل, علي سبيل المثال,التحدث إلى طفلك عما فعله في المدرسة في ذلك اليوم ، تقرأ لطفلك ، وتستمع إليه وهو يقرا ,لتحفيزه علي التعلم؟

15. كيف تتواصل مع مدرسة طفلك أو تحصل على معلومات منها؟ أمثلة ، إذا لزم الأمر ، هل تتواصل عادةً من خلال الرسائل المكتوبة / رسائل نصية هاتفية ، هل تتحدث إلى معلم طفلك / او اي من الموظفين بالمدرسة؟ يرجى التوضيح.

ا. هل تحرص علي حضورك للأنشطة المدرسية ؟

ب. متى كانت آخر مرة قمت فيها بزيارة المدرسة؟

ت . هل تحضر اجتماعات اولياء الامور والمعلمين؟

16. هل قمت باي عمل تطوعي في مدرسة طفلك من قبل؟

اذا كانت الاجابة بنعم, هلا شرحت لي طبيعة هذا العمل التطوعي ؟

ا. اذا كانت الاجابة لا, ما السبب لعدم تطوعكم؟

17. هل سمحت لك الفرصة بالمشاركة في اتخاذ اي قرار يخص طفلك في نطاق المدرسة؟

ا. هل سبق لك أن انضممت إلى اي من اللجان المنظمة داخل المدرسة(مثل منظمة اولياء امورالطلبة)؟

ب. اذا كانت الاجابة نعم, هلا شاركتني تجربتك؟

ت . اذا كانت الاجابة لا, لم لا؟

18. هل تقوم بأنشطة معينة في البيت لدعم تعلم طفلك و تعزيز التعليم خارج المدرسة؟

ا. ما الذي يجعلك تقوم بهذه الأنشطة (طلب من المعلم، أوبسبب العادات و القيم)؟

ب. هل بالامكان ان تصف قدرتك على مساعدة طفلك في واجباته المنزلية؟

ت. إذا كنت تواجه اي صعوبة في مساعدة طفلك في واجباته المدرسية، فهل تتلقي اي دعم من مدرسة طفلك لحل الاشكال؟

19. هل بالعادة تشارك في أي نوع من البرامج اوالانشطة الاجتماعية المجتمعية، مثل المناسبات والفعاليات المحلية التي بالعادة تنظم في الحدائق المجاورة او في المكتبات) التي قد تهم طفلك ، والمخيمات الصيفية للأطفال ، وفعاليات جمع التبرعات ، والبازارات ، وما إلى ذلك لدعم طفلك و مدرسته

ا. هل تشجع أطفالك إلى الالتحاق بدروس اللغة العربية في عطلة نهاية الأسبوع ، والتعليم الديني ، والفعاليات المجتمعية ، كتجمعات الجالية والاسواق الخيرية في المسجد وما إلى ذلك؟

الاسئلة الختامية

20. بصفتك ولي امر, كيف يمكن ان تصف اكثر تجربة ايجابية بخصوص مشاركتك في العملية التعليمية المدرسية لطفلك ؟ و ما هي بعض التجارب السلبية التي واجهتك, إن وجدت؟

21. ما نوع العقبات التي تواجهك لتكون مشارك فعال في العملية التعليمية لطفلك داخل نطاق المدرسة الايرلندية, هل من الممكن ان تعطيني امثلة محددة في هذا الخصوص؟

22. من وجهة نظرك , كيف يمكن لعملية ادماج ومشاركة الوالدين في تعليم الاطفال في المدارس الايرلندية ان تتطور وتتحسن؟

23. هل هناك أي شيء آخر تود إضافتة أو التعليق عليه بخصوص هذا الموضوع؟ هل بامكانك ان تقترح أي شخص آخر من الممكن التحدث إليه لمعرفة المزيد عن مشاركة الوالدين في هذه المدرسة؟

اشكرك علي المشاركة في هذه المقابلة,كما نعدك بالحفاظ علي خصوصية الاجوبة والمحافظة علي التسجيلات والتعامل معها بسرية تامة. كما اود تذكيركم انه سيتم ارسال نسخة من نص المقابلة علي بريدكم الالكتروني لضمان دقة وصحة البيانات.

APPENDIX 6 Focus Group Interview

General questions:

1. As a parent, can you describe your overall experience with parental engagement in your child's school?
2. How your school experience in your home country differs from the education your child is receiving in Ireland?
3. Do your experiences with education in your home country influence your engagement in your child's education? How?
4. How would you describe your experience with your child’s education during the COVID-19 school closure?
5. Has your children's school provided any resources or assistance during the COVID-19 school closure that helped you to support them in their education?

Engagement practices:

6. What kind of parenting resources would you like to see more in your child’s school?
7. How your child’s school/ teacher makes it easier for you to become involved in decision making regarding your child at school?
8. Are you satisfied with the information you receive about your child's progress in School, such as at parent-teacher meetings, school reports, etc.? How can this information be improved?
9. How do you think a good two-way communication between you as a parent and your child's teacher can be achieved?
10. What kind of things that your child's school usually do that help you to encourage your child learn more at home?
11. Parents, sometimes, do not have time to volunteer more at school context. How could schools accommodate these obstacles and make it possible for parents to be engaged in volunteering activities?
12. What is the most useful community resources that have been available for you as an Arabic-speaking parent in your local community context?

Challenges and suggestions for support:

13. If you have experienced different challenges with your child's school because of the different language and culture, how schools can overcome these barriers?
14. What kind of engagement practices/ activities that schools can use to engage parents from diverse backgrounds and cultures to feel more connected and welcomed in the school context?
15. What kind of support can schools provide for parents who do not have English language skills, so they can be more involved in their children's education?
16. If you could change one thing about how you are engaged in your child's education, what it would be?

Focus group Interview Questions (Arabic version)

1. بصفتك ولي امر، كيف يمكن ان تصف تجربتك مع المشاركة في العملية التعليمية في الإطار المدرسي لأطفالك بشكل عام؟

2. بناء على تجاربك التعليمية في موطنك الاصلي, كيف يختلف التعليم هناك عن التعليم الذي يتلقاه طفلك في أيرلندا؟

3. هل خبرتك التعليمية التي تلقيتها في البلد الذي نشأت فيه تؤثر بشك لٍ او باخر على كيفية مشاركتك في تعليم طفلك؟ كيف؟

4. كيف تصف تجربتك مع التعليم عن بعد أثناء إغلاق المدارس خلال جائحة كورونا؟

5. خلال جائحة كورونا، هل قامت المدرسة بتقديم أي نوع من الدعم والموارد الاضافية التي ساهمت في مساعدتك لدعم تعليم طفلك عند إغلاق المدارس والانتقال للتعليم عن بعد؟

انواع المشاركات في العملية التعليمية

6. هل هناك أي نوع من الخدمات او الموارد لدعم أولياء الأمور في مجالات تربية الأطفال (مثلا محاضرات حول الامومة والابوة) التي ترغب في رؤيتها في مدرسة طفلك؟

7. كيف يمكن لمعلم طفلك او للمدرسة بشكل عام ان يتيحوا لك المجال للمشاركة أكثر في اتخاذ القرار بشأن طفلك في المدرسة؟

8. هل أنت را ضٍ عن المعلومات التي تتلقاها حول تقدم طفلك في المدرسة من خلال اجتماعات أولياء بالمدرسين وتقارير نهاية السنة الدراسية، وما إلى ذلك؟ كيف يمكن تحسين هذه المعلومات لتكون شاملة أكثر؟

9. كيف يمكن تحقيق تواصل فعاّل بينك كولي امر مع معلم طفلك او مع المدرسة بشكل عام؟

10. ما هي الأشياء التي تحث مدرسة طفلك على اتباعها لتساعدك على تشجيعه ليتعلم أكثر في نطاق المنزل؟

11. أولياء الأمور عادة بسبب انشغالهم وضيق الوقت يمنعهم من الانخراط في الاعمال التطوعية في سياق المدرسة. كيف يمكن للمدارس استيعاب هذه العقبات وتمكين الآباء من المشاركة في الأنشطة التطوعية أكثر؟

12. بصفتك ولي امر ناطق باللغة العربية، ما هي الموارد الاجتماعية المحلية المتاحة لديك والتي بإمكانك الاندماج والمشاركة فيها في سياق الحي او المنطقة الذي تسكن فيها ؟

الاسئلة الختامية

13. إذا واجهتك تحديات متعلقة باختلاف اللغة والثقافة بينك وبين مدرسة طفلك الابتدائية، فكيف يمكن للمدارس من وجهة نظرك التغلب على هذه الحواجز؟

14. ما هي الأساليب والأنشطة المختلفة التي يمكن للمدارس اتباعها لإدماج أولياء الأمور الذين لديهم خلفيات وثقافات متنوعة ليشعروا بالترحيب والتواصل في نطاق المدرسة؟

15. ما نوع الدعم الذي يمكن أن تقدمه المدارس لأولياء الأمور الغير متحدثين باللغة الإنجليزية حتى يتمكنوا من الاندماج والمشاركة بشكل أكبر في تعليم أطفالهم؟

16. إذا كان بإمكان تغيير شي واحد حول الكيفية التي تشارك بها طفلك في العملية التعليمية فما هو هذا الشيء؟

APPENDIX 7: NVivo

ELL Parental engagement in Irish Primary Schools

Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Parents perceptions on the concept of Parental Engagement		0	0
Parents awareness about their roles on their children's education with references to how to be engaged	Parents are well aware of the importance of education and on their big roles in their children's education.	24	57
Parents responsibilities towards the selection school	References to school selection based on Ethos and culture correspondence in Islamic schools. In Catholic schools, they choose cultural understanding and diversity welcoming school to help them integrate with school community.	27	61
Parents extra responsibilities towards Irish schools	Parents references to the their roles in representing their culture to the school and learning the schools language etc.	10	16

Name	Description	Files	References
Different education experience with lack of familiarity of the Irish education system	References to parents' different education experiences at home country that sometimes positively influenced the way parents are engaged with their children and other times negatively influence their engagement patterns.	10	42
Parents at home		0	0
Encourage physical exercise and limit TV and media consumption	Parents best strategies to help their children to invest their free time in a best way.	8	11
Encourage the child to talk about school day	the way parents used to make the child talk about what has he/she learned/ experienced at school.	15	19
Explaining the importance of education, graduation and having a good job in the future	Parents narrations regarding their constant discussions with their children about importance of going to school and having qualifications in the future.	17	28
Know child weaknesses and problems and share them with teacher	Some parents references to the advantages of being engaged with their children's learning at home.	8	14

Name	Description	Files	References
Teach children good manners, Islamic values and life skills	Parents references to their responsibility to raise their children with Islamic values, teach them ethics and how to deal with their friends and other school community	17	25
Time schedule	Parents experiences about giving their children time schedule when they come home from school	16	25
Values of Arabic language and Quran learning and Islamic culture retention	Being living in Ireland as immigrants, parents' responsibilities towards their children's education is bigger than native parents especially with regard to maintaining their language and culture.	23	53
Parents positively support learning at home	parents' own experiences in the way they support their children to learn more at home	27	71
Home schooling during school closure in Covid-19 pandemic	Experiences of stress and boredom in the time of home-schooling during school closures in the pandemic	11	41
Read, listen and encourage reading by visiting libraries and purchasing books	Mothers' ways to encourage their children read, in Arabic and English, regularly at home	18	36

Name	Description	Files	References
References to the father and older children’s roles in supporting mothers when they need help.	Due to language challenges, mothers reported that they rely on their husbands, and sometimes in older siblings who can speak the language, in many engagement practices such as, communication, and helping with homework.	12	26
Challenges to engagement at home		0	0
Linguistic Challenges with English/Irish languages and difficulties in helping children with homework	Parents references to Language barrier that prevents them to help children in homework, especially in English and Irish subjects	19	28
Change in engagement over time.	Different engagement patterns based on the child’s age and how these patterns change over time with references to the involvement of fathers and older children to support younger ones with Irish school curriculum when mothers are no longer able to help.	22	42
Slow learning/ lack of involving parents in homework and other activities that could be done at home.	References to slow learning patterns in Irish schools that lacks assigning interactive homework and not involving parents in homework and preparing for assessment	16	44

Name	Description	Files	References
Mothers' strategies and suggestions to overcome the language barrier at home	Parents references to their own ways to overcome language challenges while helping with homework, besides their suggestions to enhance their engagement at home	18	29
Communication		0	0
Regular attendance in PTMs		20	23
Good School to home Communication experiences through different means of communication available at school.	Positive communication experiences between mothers and teachers or school in general.	15	35
Enhanced Communication through Technology	References to easier and effective communication opportunities that have been applied through online communication apps, especially after Covid pandemic.	19	26
Infrequent and limited feedback, regarding different aspects of the child progress, in PTM and end of school report.	Parents' references to infrequency and lack of information regarding their children's academic, social and behavioural development in PTM and end of school report. They also mentioned that sometimes there are no compatibility in the content of each.	9	32

Name	Description	Files	References
Lack of translation services at school that led to poor communication		16	27
Lack of communication regarding curriculum content	Many issues have been raised with regard to some subjects and some parts of curriculum in Irish school that contradict with cultural norms and need more communication in advance.	15	20
Challenges of Communication	Parents experiences with lack of English skills that led to many difficulties in their communication with schools	20	43
Parents at school		0	0
Positives: Children are receiving high quality education	References to effective, interactive, pupil centred way of teaching that make children more self-reliable at learning whether at school or at home while they do the homework.	10	32
School supports pupils and parents	Mothers' references to a large amount of social, cultural and educational support that they and their children receive from Irish schools, whether when they first came to Ireland or at the present time.	25	75

Name	Description	Files	References
Regular participation in multicultural day, fundraising events such as Cake sale and family fun days	Fundraising activities such as Cake sale day and multicultural family fun days seem to be the most preferable school activities that mothers attend, there are references to their happiness while they share cultural dishes, traditions costumes etc.	23	45
Positive Decision-making experiences	Experiences about being involved in things related to their children at school	23	36
Being a member in PAC	Two mothers' experiences of being a member in PAC	3	13
Limited DM opportunities at school	References to school policies and regulations and sometimes lack of resources that limit mothers' chances to be fully involved in DM at school	23	41
lack of school support and resources	References to shortage of some services and resources at school and mothers' desires to fill theses gaps through volunteering but the school is not facilitating volunteering due to policy and regulation	23	48
Lack of volunteering opportunities in schools	References to absence of volunteering opportunities at schools and narration of patents attempts to volunteer but their attempts were refused by schools due to school policies for volunteering.	15	27

Name	Description	Files	References
Challenges to engagement at the school		0	0
1- School is not inviting parents to attend many activities at school		17	23
2- Concerns to be too involved in Decision making at school.		6	8
3- Covid-19		22	40
4- Cultural discrimination		7	12
5- Lack of time		16	29
6- Language challenges		20	43
7- Taking care of younger children and other logistical barriers		13	23

Name	Description	Files	References
8- Wearing hijab and feelings of shyness		7	8
9- Some teachers lack experience. linguistic and cultural understanding	References to some misunderstanding between mothers and teachers due to lack of teachers experience and culture difference between home and school	15	25
Parents at the community		0	0
Cultural Welcoming Neighbourhood and Local Community Centres	References to positive welcoming experiences from Irish people in different places in the community.	11	21
Preferences to engage with Arab Muslim community in Mosques	Parents preference to be integrated more with Muslim Arab families in local Islam centres.	18	25
Attending weekend Arabic schools and religious instruction	Almost all mothers reported that their children attend Arabic, Quranic weekend schools.	21	26
Experiences in former primary schools	References to positive and negative engagement experiences with former schools, including (educate together schools)	7	22

Name	Description	Files	References
References to the necessity to be integrated into Irish culture	Due to difference in culture between home and school, mothers also need to be integrated with Irish school culture to support their children, at the same time preserve their Arabic identity.	13	43
Experiences of older children in secondary schools	References to challenges that face parents and their children, they also reported that parental engagement is almost absent there.	7	20
Challenges of community collaboration (negative stereotypical attitudes, ethnic discrimination)		10	26
Suggestions for future		0	0
Frequent and inclusive PTM and School reports		10	19
Allow volunteering and more communication needed.		10	28

Name	Description	Files	References
Childcare, social and translation services at school		8	22
Culture and religion inclusion		14	39
Invitations to attend parenting workshops, sports, school-based activities.		15	29
More inclusion in decision meeting		7	12
Parents need to learn English and be aware of school regulations and activities		8	26
School should support parents to learn the language		10	22
Schools should encourage learning at home.		3	5