

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FIRST-TIME HOMESCHOOL GUARDIANS IN THE
SOUTHEASTERN REGION OF THE UNITED STATES DURING THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Mary E. Higgins

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. The central research question is: What motivated first-time homeschool guardians in the southeastern region of the United States to homeschool their children during the COVID-19 pandemic? David C. McClelland's motivational needs theory framed this study as it asserted individuals must satisfy four needs: achievement, affiliation, power, and avoidance. The relationship between McClelland's theory and this study was the motivating factor behind the homeschool guardians' decisions. This study included 11 participants selected through snowball sampling. A qualitative phenomenology method was used to collect data by conducting individual interviews, focus groups, and journal entries from the participants. The data analysis followed the guidelines constructed by Moustakas using the transcendental phenomenological approach. Motivation, support, and challenges were three significant themes revealed following the thematic analysis. The research study's results contributed to an increased understanding of first-time homeschool guardians' motivations to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic. Homeschool guardians shared negative experiences with virtual learning via Zoom and abrupt school closures. Motivational factors to homeschool included flexibility with their daily schedule and curricula. The results supported previous researchers' claims that K-12 educational institutional closures disrupted education.

Keywords: homeschool, compulsory attendance laws, motivational needs theory, motivation

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord Almighty, my Creator. God gave me the strength and perseverance to push forward on this journey.

Terric Higgins, my amazing husband, has always been my greatest supporter, encourager, confidant, and best friend. I want to acknowledge your unwavering sacrifices, and I would not have completed this voyage without you. I love and appreciate you. Audrey Fuller, my mother, also deserves acknowledgment for her support and encouragement as I migrated through this doctoral program.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Copyright Page.....	4
Dedication	5
Acknowledgments.....	6
Table of Contents	7
List of Tables	13
List of Abbreviations	14
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	15
Overview	15
Background	15
Historical Context	16
Social Context.....	17
Theoretical Context.....	18
Problem Statement	19
Purpose Statement.....	19
Significance of the Study	20
Research Questions.....	22
Central Research Question.....	23
Sub-Question One	23
Sub-Question Two	24
Definitions.....	24
Summary	26

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	27
Overview.....	27
Theoretical Framework.....	27
McClelland’s Motivational Needs Theory.....	28
Related Literature.....	32
Homeschool History	33
K-12 Educational Institutions	35
Politics.....	38
Homeschool Increase	39
Homeschool Demographics	41
Homeschool in West Virginia.....	42
Homeschool Choices	43
Virtual Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic.....	45
Homeschool During COVID-19 Pandemic	47
Student Learning Disrupted	48
Homeschool Guardian Motivations	49
Homeschool Controversy.....	54
Summary	56
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS.....	58
Overview.....	58
Research Design.....	58
Research Questions.....	59
Central Research Question.....	59

Sub-Question One.....	59
Setting and Participants.....	60
Setting.....	60
Participants.....	60
Researcher Positionality.....	61
Interpretive Framework	62
Philosophical Assumption	62
Ontological Assumption	62
Epistemology Assumption.....	63
Axiological Assumption	63
Researchers Role.....	63
Procedures.....	64
Permissions	65
Recruitment Plan.....	65
Data Collection Plan	66
Individual Interviews	67
Focus Groups Data Collection Approach	70
Journal Prompts Data Collection Approach	71
Data Synthesis	73
Trustworthiness.....	73
Credibility	74
Transferability.....	74
Dependability.....	75

	10
Confirmability.....	75
Ethical Considerations	75
Summary	76
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	77
Overview.....	77
Participants.....	77
Results.....	84
Motivation.....	86
Forced Virtual Learning.....	88
Academics.....	89
Withdrawal.....	91
Support.....	92
Cooperative Groups	93
Facebook Groups	94
Family	94
Challenges.....	95
Abrupt School Closures	96
Emotional Distress	96
Curriculum Choices	97
Outlier Data and Findings.....	98
School District Response	98
School District Unprepared.....	98
Research Question Responses.....	99

Central Research Question.....	99
Sub-Question One.....	101
Sub-Question Two	103
Summary.....	104
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	106
Overview.....	106
Discussion.....	106
Interpretation of Findings	107
Summary of Thematic Findings.....	107
Implications for Policy and Practice	111
Implications for Policy.....	111
Implications for Practice	112
Theoretical and Empirical Implications.....	113
Theoretical Implications	113
Empirical Implications.....	116
Limitations and Delimitations.....	118
Recommendations for Future Research	119
Conclusion	120
References.....	122
Appendix A.....	136
Appendix B.....	137
Appendix C	138
Appendix D.....	141

Appendix E	143
Appendix F.....	144

List of Tables

Table 1. Homeschool Guardian Participants.....	79
Table 2. Themes and Sub-themes.....	86

List of Abbreviations

Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE)

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI)

West Virginia Home Educator Association (WVHEA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Homeschool guardians are unique and diverse in their reasoning for homeschooling their children. Homeschooling educates children in their home environment under the parent's supervision (Gann & Carpenter, 2017). For this study, homeschool guardians are individuals over 18 responsible for educating the children in their homes. In this study, the homeschool guardians have primary control over their child's education. The number of homeschool guardians has increased nationwide, with a record-setting increase in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic [COVID-19] (Eggleston & Fields, 2021). There were approximately 3.2 million homeschool students before the mandatory K-12 educational institution closings in the United States (Duvall, 2021). In 2020, the number of homeschool students increased in the United States by 5.6% (Eggleston & Fields, 2021). This chapter explored the background of the study through historical, social, and theoretical contexts. This chapter also included an overview of the problem, the purpose, the significance of the study, research questions, and definitions of relevant terms.

Background

Homeschooling is a way for children to learn in their home environment instead of attending a K-12 educational institution (Neuman, 2019). However, there is limited research on the COVID-19 pandemic's contribution to homeschool guardians' decision to continue to homeschool once K-12 educational institutions reopen. This chapter includes details regarding the background of homeschooling, K-12 academic institutional virtual school at home, the history of homeschooling, and McClelland's motivational needs theory. The problem in this study was the disruption in student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the

COVID-19 pandemic, many guardians educated their children at home, utilizing an online platform provided by their local school district (Price et al., 2021). This study aimed to understand the homeschool experiences of first-time homeschool guardians during the closing and reopening of K-12 educational institutions. The research included the participants' experiences from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic-induced K-12 educational institution closures, the homeschool decision, and their persistence in their homeschool program. The research in this study was significant because it provided insight into the motivation of homeschool guardians' who decided to continue homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened.

Historical Context

There is controversy around the official start of homeschool initiatives, with various researchers crediting multiple eras, attitudes, and movements (Brewer & Lubienski, 2016; Raley, 2017). John Holt, an educational theorist, was credited with starting the modern homeschool movement in 1977 by the Coalition for Responsible Home Education [CRHE] (2014). Holt famously argued that the classroom environment is oppressive and used to make students compliant. After being illegal in states like North Dakota, Michigan, and Iowa, in 1993, homeschooling became legal in every state in the United States (Coleman & McCracken, 2020). The compulsory school attendance law ensures that every child has access to an equitable education (Grady, 2017). Without a specified homeschool law, homeschool guardians should follow the state's guidance to private schools (Coleman & McCracken, 2020).

Historically, homeschool enrollment has doubled since 1999 without explicitly mentioning a primary factor contributing to homeschooling (Digest of Education Statistics, 2015). The number of homeschool students increased by approximately one million from 2016 to

2020, including a 2.6 % increase in minority students (Bennett et al., 2019; Duvall, 2021; Redford et al., 2017; Stewart, 2020). Parents decide to homeschool for various reasons; the most commonly noted reason is meeting the child's or family's needs (Dennison et al., 2020). Homeschool guardians must abide by their respective state's compulsory school attendance law. The mandatory school attendance laws in the United States vary depending on the state (Grady, 2017). It is common for state legislators to introduce amendments to the current binding attendance law to increase oversight and effectiveness (Milbourne, 2019). Homeschool guardians who understand homeschooling laws are more likely to adhere to the rules and avoid legal entanglements.

Social Context

Homeschooling remains high on contentious societal issues that influence education and remains the subject of revision due to evolution (Green-Hennessy & Mariotti, 2021). Organizations that advocate for the guardian's right to homeschool have tripled since 1986 (Homeschool Legal Defense Association [HSLDA], 2018). Researchers revealed that homeschooling is suitable for families and benefits society because it contributes to positive social outcomes for students (O'Hagan et al., 2021). Anti-homeschool individuals believe homeschooling is a threat to society because homeschoolers lack the social skills to contribute productively to the community (Abuzandah, 2020). Further research can contribute to the literature concerning the social outcomes of homeschool students. Students, guardians, teachers, community members, lawmakers, and prospective homeschool guardians benefit from future research on the social outcomes of homeschooling and societal benefits. There is a common misconception that homeschool students are isolated from traditional schools. In the United States, 14 states permit homeschool students to participate part-time in public school activities.

Additionally, students not enrolled in public schools are prohibited from participating in public school activities in 10 states, while the remaining states allow county-level decision-making authority on this issue (Heuer & Donovan, 2017).

Theoretical Context

Previously completed research on the parents' perceptions of homeschooling primarily relate to their motivation to begin without including circumstances such as the pandemic (Bell et al., 2016). This study focused on first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic and decided to continue homeschooling despite the reopening of K-12 educational institutions. Several theorists, such as Abraham Maslow, Clayton Alderfer, and David McClelland, completed scholarly work concerning individual motivations. Alderfer (1972) expanded Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation by developing the existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory. Alderfer's theory narrowed Maslow's theory to three main elements: needs, relatedness, and growth. In ERG theory, Alderfer outlines that individuals have specific demands that must be met to achieve their desired outcome. Individuals who use the frustration regression model are focused on immediate changes contributing to their overall desire (Sachs, 2012). The theory appropriate for this research study was David McClelland's motivational needs theory. This research study extended McClelland's theory by understanding the unmet needs of first-time homeschool guardians in the southeast region of the United States. In addition, this research study added to the current literature on home education by addressing the disruption in student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Problem Statement

The problem is that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted students' learning within the United States (Storey & Zhang, 2021). The coronavirus pandemic shut down most K-12

educational institutions in the United States around March 13, 2020 (*Coronavirus and School Closures*, 2020). The closing of K-12 educational institutions affected approximately 55.1 million students in roughly 124,000 public and private schools within the United States (*Coronavirus and School Closures*, 2020). The problem is that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted student learning in the United States because of the mandatory closing of K-12 educational institutions. Many guardians of K-12 students began virtual learning under the direction of their local school district approximately on March 16, 2020.

Most governors in the United States ordered K-12 educational facilities to close around the week of March 16, 2020 (*Coronavirus and School Closures*, 2020). The short notice given to the guardians concerning K-12 educational institution closings served as a burden and required a quick response. Guardians experienced frustration in the uncertainty of assisting their students with virtual online learning. Guardians were required to adjust to childcare, acquire or adjust internet speed, and secure a dedicated workspace for their children (Vogelbacher & Attig, 2022). The virtual public school-at-home approach consisted of a K-12 educational institution teacher instructing the students on the online platform provided by the local school district. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meets were teachers' most common online platforms to facilitate instruction. Before this transition, many guardians and K-12 teachers did not have experience learning or teaching online.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. At this stage in the research, homeschooling is the notion of the guardian educating their children in their home using their

preferred curriculum and schedule. Additionally, homeschool students are not enrolled in a K-12 educational institution and are registered with their respective county's board of education as homeschool students. Virtual school-at-home is an online public school-at-home provided by the K-12 educational institution to students currently enrolled in their respective school districts. The child's guardian does not select the curriculum nor control the daily school schedule and must adhere to the requirements set by the school administrators (Huck et al., 2021).

Additionally, virtual school-at-home requires student enrollment in a K-12 educational institution servicing their local school district. This study described the experiences of guardians in the southeastern states of the United States who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, there is a quest to uncover the first-time homeschool guardians' feelings about educating their children. McClelland's theory of motivational needs and how the satisfaction of some met needs contributed to the guardian's homeschool motivation guided this study. This theory affirmed that satisfaction is possible despite an individual retaining unmet needs (McClelland, 1961). The analysis described the homeschool experiences of 15 homeschool guardians in the southeast region of the United States who decided not to return their children to their respective K-12 educational institutions.

Significance of the Study

Theoretical, empirical, and practical implications encompassed a significant part of this study, specifically in the results section. There is a need to study the lived experiences of first-time homeschool guardians who continued homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened in the United States. The lived experiences of first-time homeschool guardians are essential because it potentially affects future homeschool guardians and individuals persisting in their homeschool program. Demographics, resources, outside obligations, guardians' level of

education, guardians' employment status, and homeschool regulations were examined in this study. This study focused on the lived experiences of first-time homeschooled guardians who began homeschooling their children during the COVID-19 pandemic and decided to continue despite the reopening of K-12 educational institutions.

McClelland's motivational needs theory formulated the basis of theoretical significance for this study. McClelland's (1961) theory expands on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Guardians' rationale for homeschooling their children varies. McClelland used each of the four motivating drivers (achievement, affiliation, power, and avoidance) to emphasize motivational factors for human behavior. Some homeschool guardians reported adverse social environments as a motivation for homeschooling (Stewart, 2020). Safety as a motivation revealed that homeschool guardians decided to homeschool to protect their children against racism and violence. This study highlighted first-time homeschool guardians' lived experiences with homeschooling during the closure and reopening of K-12 educational institutions. Previous studies reported that homeschool guardians mentioned safety as one of the top three reasons for homeschooling; drugs, racism, bullying, and peer pressure were all aspects the parents tried to avoid (Guterman & Neuman, 2017; Ray, 2017; Walden, 2017).

Empirically, this research is related to other studies because of the focus on the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, this study focused on the disruption of student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study extends the existing literature on first-time homeschool guardians' lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other researchers have written extensively on general factors that motivate homeschool guardians to educate at home (Averett, 2021; Ray, 2022; Stewart, 2020). Homeschool literature on safety and individualized learning are common themes concerning why

guardians remove their children from K-12 educational institutions (Abuzandah, 2020; Carlson, 2020; Dennison et al., 2020; Duvall, 2021). There is a gap in the literature concerning the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the precise disruption of student learning.

There is limited literature on first-time homeschool guardians during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern portion of the United States. Previous research studies broadly outline the influences on guardians' homeschooling decisions (Brewer & Lubienski, 2017; Duvall, 2021). There is a need to research how homeschooling has developed to include elements of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as K-12 educational institution closures. In practicality, school board members, teachers, community leaders, and other caregivers may benefit from this study by obtaining a general sense of guardians' desires, needs, and motivations to educate their children. Furthermore, the change proposed by this study may lead school administrators to better understand guardians' frustrations concerning their children's education. Lastly, this study highlighted the need for advocacy organizations to determine the level of support needed to assist guardians in successfully homeschooling their children (HSLDA, 2018).

Research Questions

The research questions provided the foundation for understanding first-time homeschool guardians' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and what led them to continue homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened. This qualitative research design permitted open-ended questions that allowed participants to elaborate on their homeschool experiences. For example, some guardians may have achieved power through home education while others potentially fulfilled the need for achievement or cultivated a sense of closeness. Alternatively, homeschool guardians may operate under the fear of avoiding a particular issue or affiliation associated with fulfilling a sense of belonging. Specifically, in this study, homeschool

guardians elaborated on the details surrounding the disruption of their children's learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following questions guided this study.

Central Research Question

What motivated first-time homeschool guardians in the southeastern region of the United States to begin homeschooling their children during the COVID-19 pandemic?

This question examined the motivations of individuals who became first-time homeschool guardians and lived in one of the states in the southeastern part of the United States. The central research question investigated why participants decided to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, this question attempted to uncover the overall lived homeschool experience of the first-time homeschool guardians and the COVID-19-related elements surrounding their homeschooling experience. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted student learning (Pei et al., 2021).

Sub-Question One

What were the homeschool experiences of first-time homeschool guardians during the initial K-12 educational institution closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

This question focused on the first-time homeschool guardians' initial experiences during the closure of K-12 educational institutions. The homeschool guardians answered this question by discussing their experiences adhering to any K-12 educational institution closure guidance, including participating in virtual public school at home provided by their local school district. This question uncovered the motivating factors behind the homeschool guardian discontinuing their child's participation in the virtual public school at home. The participants may also address what motivated their decision to withdraw their child from the K-12 educational institution. This question allowed the first-time homeschool guardians to describe their experience submitting

their homeschool request or adhering to their state's compulsory school attendance laws. The compulsory school attendance laws governing homeschooling vary by state (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021).

Sub-Question Two

What homeschool experiences led first-time homeschool guardians to decide to continue homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened during the COVID-19 pandemic?

This question solicited information to understand better why first-time homeschool guardians continued homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal was to gather information on the homeschool guardians' motivations behind continuing homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened for in-person learning. This question contributed to understanding the fulfillment of the homeschool guardians' needs associated with homeschooling. McClelland's (1961) theory described that individuals strive to satisfy one of the four dominant need motivators based on prioritization.

Definitions

1. *Homeschooling* – Educating children in their home environment or an alternative place using a curriculum selected by the guardian (Coleman & McCracken, 2020).
2. *Virtual Public School* – When schools replace traditional face-to-face learning with remote learning using a digital online platform (Huck et al., 2021). Students learned via an online platform provided through their local school district and funded by the state.
3. *Compulsory School Attendance* - The age at which children must enroll in a school setting. In West Virginia, homeschooled students' compulsory attendance age is between six and 17 years (FindLaw, 2021).

4. *Homeschool Guardian* – The person legally responsible for instructing the child and following any state compulsory school attendance laws (W.V. Code §18-8-1, 2020).
5. *Homeschooling Groups* – A group of homeschool guardians and children who regularly interact in person or online. The purpose of the group is to network, share resources, provide support, and facilitate other opportunities for socialization (HSLDA, 2018).
6. *Pedagogy* – The art of teaching based on the instructors' beliefs about the most effective way of learning (Firmin et al., 2019).
7. *Advocacy Groups* – Groups that support the guardians' rights to homeschool. The Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is a national advocacy organization inclusive of attorney volunteers and community members who support homeschool guardians (Watson, 2018).
8. *Notice of Intent* – West Virginia requires a letter be sent to the office of attendance in the county of the child's residence that outlines the guardians' intention to homeschool. The notice of intent must contain the name, address, and age of the student. Additionally, the letter must include affirmation by the guardian that the student will receive instruction in reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies. This process varies according to the homeschool guardians' state of residence (HSLDA, 2018).
9. *Coronavirus Pandemic* – The ongoing respiratory syndrome spread that began in January 2020. The declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic was issued on March 11, 2020 (Rochman et al., 2021).
10. *K-12 Educational Institution* – Private or public institutions that serve students from kindergarten through the 12th grade. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of K-12 educational institutions (Huck et al., 2021).

Summary

Home education is not a new phenomenon; however, there was an increase in home-educated students during the COVID-19 pandemic (Eggleston & Field, 2021). The Census Bureau released a study that revealed the number of homeschooling students increased by about 5.4% during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, K-12 educational institutions closed in the United States. The problem was that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted students' learning in the United States and across the world (Vogelbacher & Attig, 2022). Unfortunately, limited available research gives a voice to first-time homeschool guardians who initiated their homeschool program during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two created a basis for this research study by synthesizing relevant literature on the disruption of student learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in K-12 educational institutions in the United States. Additionally, the researcher synthesized the literature on homeschooling in the United States in this chapter. McClelland's motivational needs theory framed this study, and this chapter began by synthesizing the literature concerning the motivational needs theory and the four types of motivational needs. According to McClelland (1961, 1988), the four types of motivational needs are achievement, the need for power, affiliation, and avoidance. The related literature section focused on topics relevant to the disruption in student learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The closures of K-12 educational institutions due to stay-at-home orders during the pandemic affected the lives of guardians of children in traditional schools (Ettekal & Agans, 2020). The sub-topics in this literature review included homeschooling during COVID-19, K-12 educational institutional closures, politics, the disruption of student learning, and homeschool guardians' motivations. A summary of McClelland's motivational needs theory and related literature concluded this chapter.

Theoretical Framework

McClelland's motivational needs theory was most relevant to the goals of this study, specifically related to the concept of motivation. The theoretical framework is the foundation that supports the rationale for the research study based on constructed knowledge (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). McClelland's motivational needs theory framed this research regarding the influence of the disruption of student learning caused by COVID-19, resulting in K-12 educational institutional closures. David McClelland was a well-known American psychologist of the 20th

century who was considered a pioneer in human motivation. McClelland asserted that every individual has needs that drive satisfaction (2014). This theory is prominent in determining the motivation of individuals driven by success (Di Pietrantonio et al., 2019). McClelland's motivational needs theory is used in literature to explain motivation through performance in work and school environments.

McClelland's Motivational Needs Theory

David McClelland (1961) developed the acquired needs theory, also known as the motivational needs theory. McClelland asserted that the three needs for human motivation were achievement, affiliation, and power. McClelland's (1988) publication included a fourth need, the need for avoidance. This theory builds on the foundation of understanding the ingrained motives within individuals. Based on this theory, the reward must match the individual's motivation. Individuals with a need for achievement had a strong desire to complete a task or set precedence (McClelland, 1961). For example, homeschooled guardians with a need for achievement would choose to homeschool because their child's progress was within the guardian's control.

Individuals with a need for affiliation desired to retain the acceptance of a group or had a low desire to disagree due to fear of isolation (McClelland, 1961). As a result, homeschool guardians with a need for affiliation may have decided to homeschool because someone they knew made that decision. Individuals who used power as a dominant motivator desired authority over others. For example, homeschool guardians who fulfilled a need for power may have decided to homeschool to remove themselves from governmental control. Lastly, individuals who operate under a need to avoid often elude situations in which they expect an unpleasant outcome (McClelland, 1988). Therefore, homeschool guardians who desired to avoid their children's teacher may have homeschooled to avoid encountering a specific individual.

McClelland's study suggested that social changes and evolutions influenced him within society as he asserted that motivation was complex (Hoffarth, 2020). Motivation is based on ideas concerning the individual's desires for achievement, affiliation, or influence (Andersen, 2018). Several theories served as a baseline to guide the motivations of homeschool guardians' who decided to homeschool and have generated a lucrative amount of research. Abraham Harold Maslow, Clayton Paul Alderfer, and David Clarence McClelland were three of the most famous theorists to construct motivational theories. Maslow, Alderfer, and McClelland focused on determining specific factors around individual motivation throughout their work. Maslow developed his theory of motivation on the idea that individuals must satisfy needs in a particular order to reach satisfaction. Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs that began with satisfying physiological, safety, love, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs (Acquah et al., 2021; Maslow, 1943).

Alderfer (1972) built his ERG theory on the foundation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Alderfer's ERG theory had three primary needs: existence, relatedness, and growth (Alderfer, 1972; Maslow, 1943). This theory asserted that the needs contributing to the motivation were not constant and were subject to change based on environment, academics, or family circumstances (Alderfer, 1972). The ERG theory's core components were connected directly to uncovering the motivating factors that contributed to the fullness received by the guardian when meeting the child's needs (Alderfer, 1972; Averett, 2021). Unlike Maslow, Alderfer believed his theory connects to an individual's desire to satisfy specific needs without achieving simultaneous fulfillment (Acquah et al., 2021; Alderfer, 1972).

McClelland (1961) built his theory of human motivation upon Maslow's work and focused primarily on the importance of dominant motivators. McClelland's (1988) and

McClelland and Johnson's (1984) theories extended Maslow's work by describing four human needs: the need for achievement, the need for affiliation, the need for power, and the need for avoidance. McClelland's theory reiterated that the dominant motivator depended on the individuals' culture and life experiences. The motivational needs theory uses the characteristics of individuals to determine their dominant motivators, such as achievement, affiliation, power, or avoidance. McClelland's theory differed from Maslow's theory and Alderfer's theory because McClelland focused on satisfying the current needs rather than developing new needs. Life experiences were the dominant feature in this theory as they determined the motivating factors behind the individuals' choices. In each theory, the theorists strived to explain the underlying reasoning behind why a person was motivated and the root of their motivation.

McClelland explicitly outlined four dominant motivators in his theory: achievement, affiliation, power, and avoidance (McClelland 1961, 1988). The need for achievement resulted in accomplishments through consistency. Affiliation as a motivator involves the need to have a good relationship or some other form of bonding (McClelland & Johnson, 1984). Power or authority was the need to control one's work or the work of others. In need of power, a strong need to take control of a situation is a common factor. Avoidance as a motivator included individuals avoiding interactions that produced an undesired outcome (McClelland, 1988). Future researchers and scholars can rely on McClelland's theory of human motivation to understand its influence on individual achievement (Di Pietrantonio et al., 2019). McClelland advised that the motivators were not innate; he posited that individuals developed them during their lifetime.

The Need for Achievement

The need for achievement was the first dominant motivator describing people who enjoyed working alone, engaging in risks to accomplish goals, and regularly setting challenging goals (McClelland, 1987). Human beings in this category required challenging tasks that were possible because they were motivated by achieving. Individuals in need of the achievement category valued relationships that rose above achievement levels. A dominant achievement motivator required regular feedback to ensure they made adequate progress toward their goal. Characteristics of individuals in this category include the following: reliable, high-performing, creative, and complex minds (Andersen, 2018). There was the potential to increase self-esteem once the individual mastered skills and developed their talent (Acquah et al., 2021).

The Need for Affiliation

The need for affiliation was the second dominant motivator, describing people who desired to be liked, enjoyed collaborating, and had a deep desire to belong (McClelland, 1987). This type of person was described as social, often followed the group's desires, and typically did not speak up if they had any objection (Andersen, 2018). Individuals in this category worked best in a group environment and were uncomfortable with unpredictable risks, and the group's opinion was important to these individuals. An individual with this motivator thrived as a team player and was not an effective leader (Acquah et al., 2021).

The Need for Power

The need for power was the third dominant motivator describing a person who controls and enjoys competition and status (McClelland, 1987). People motivated by power require direct feedback because they enjoy the competition. These individuals also help others further their accomplishments. Power as a dominant motivator was a characteristic of people who like to win

arguments and influence others to take on their opinions. Personal or institutional power also falls into this category, as the individual relies heavily on reputation (Andersen, 2018). Those with a need for power also enjoyed having authority over their work or the work of others (Acquah et al., 2021).

The Need for Avoidance

The need for avoidance was the fourth dominant motivator, which characterized the individual desire to avoid situations. The dominant motivator of avoidance involved individuals avoiding people or situations due to a fear of rejection or failure (McClelland, 1988). This need also included avoiding problems or other individuals with whom they had an unpleasant exchange. In addition, avoiding unpleasant past experiences produced feelings of general anxiety in individuals, further increasing the need to avoid. McClelland further noted that this fear could consciously or unconsciously affect the individual's motivation (1988).

Related Literature

There is an increasing amount of literature on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. Many researchers agreed that closing K-12 educational institutions disrupted the learning and education structure in the public school system (Hoofman & Secord, 2021; Storey & Zhang, 2021). School closures disrupted students' learning because of the instability in facilitating academic instruction to the student (McWilliams & Kitzmiller, 2019). There was a widespread interruption to the school system, which disrupted students' learning in the United States. The disruption resulted in billions of dollars spent on resources to facilitate learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Keierleber, 2020). The unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic disruption resulted in quick decisions on school closures, online instruction during the

closure, and reopening. According to Broom (2020), 56.6 million students were enrolled in K-12 educational institutions before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruption in the lives of millions of people, including children and adolescents (Ettekal & Agans., 2020). Therefore, this study encompassed scholarly literature on homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. This study explored the experiences of first-time homeschool guardians during the COVID-19 pandemic. This section included a review of current scholarly literature concerning the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this section focused on the implemented alternative learning approaches, the disruption of student learning, and its perceived influence on homeschooling. Reviewing the literature revealed a gap in the experiences of first-time homeschool guardians in the southeast region of the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Homeschool History

Homeschool regulations were contentious within the political, social, and legal realms. The state and other legislature oversight powers contributed to the debate on homeschooling laws (Brewer & Lubienski, 2016). The contemporary emergence of homeschooling began in the early 1970s when there were many social and legal issues (Thomson & Jang, 2016). Homeschooling practices received oversight through state regulation, which permitted the state authorities to enact legislation regulating homeschooling. Throughout history in the United States, education has been considered a private matter, further widening the distance between citizens and the state (Firmin et al., 2019). The variation in the state's powers contributed to state compulsory attendance laws, regulations, and requirements for homeschool guardians. Before the end of the 19th century, attending school was voluntary (Tilhou, 2020). Massachusetts was the first state to adopt a compulsory attendance law that required children to attend school for at

least 12 weeks every year (Tilhou, 2020). There were exceptions for some families who could prove this requirement would be financially difficult.

The history of compulsory attendance laws contributed to the variations of attendance laws enacted in each state, including varying interpretations of the law (Bell et al., 2016; Marks & Welsch, 2019). Individual states within the United States vary their requirements related to compliance, such as submitting a notice of intent to homeschool, yearly assessment regulations, and curriculum choices (Carlson, 2020; Walden, 2017). In the 1960s, guardians began to speak outwardly about their concerns with public schools and alternative approaches concerning child development (Raley, 2017). Although homeschooling is legal in every state, 30 states require homeschool guardians to submit a notice of intent to homeschool each year. The remaining states only required the homeschool guardian to submit notice once (Carlson, 2020; Walden, 2017).

In previous years, states compiled isolated tragic cases involving homeschooled students to enact legislation for additional state oversight. Homeschool families tend to share common characteristics, including parent-directed student education, resulting in individualized student learning plans (HSLDA, 2020). The homeschool guardians had sole educational control over many academic-related decisions, provided they followed applicable compulsory state laws. Historically, guardians decided to homeschool to prevent their children from experiencing negative implications in traditional school settings. Negative traditional school experiences contribute to anxiety and depression in adolescents (Harper & Brewer, 2021). Multiple studies have investigated why homeschool guardians choose to homeschool; unfortunately, very few focused on switching educational instructional methods during a pandemic such as COVID-19 (Neuman, 2019).

K-12 Educational Institutions

Many families worldwide experienced a shock to their daily structure during the announcement of K-12 educational institution closures at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the states in the United States initially closed for a few weeks and then extended the school closure through the end of the school year. Ohio was the first state to announce that all K-12 educational institutions would close due to the COVID-19 outbreak (Grossman et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the everyday lives of many individuals worldwide (Engzell et al., 2021; Hammerstein et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic led to unprecedented disruption to K-12 educational systems, which affected more than 90% of students worldwide (Gore et al., 2021; Gouseti, 2021). The length of the K-12 educational facilities closures varied depending on the state. As a result, K-12 educational institutions interrupted students' learning, resulting in varying levels of achievement for students. Hammerstein et al. (2021) determined that K-12 educational institutions that remained closed during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced student achievement.

One of the primary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic mentioned in the research was the change in the achievement gap following the school closures (Haeck & Lefebvre, 2020; Hammerstein et al., 2021). Engzell et al. (2021) conducted a study to evaluate student learning during the eight-week closure while students learned at home. The study concluded that students made very little progress while learning from home. Regions with extended school closures and weaker structures had a more significant loss in student learning. Most states' K-12 educational institution structure changed by implementing state and county COVID-19 pandemic response policies.

The closure of K-12 educational institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed alternatives to delivering student instruction on a large scale in the United States (Carpenter & Dunn, 2019). There was a significant shift from traditional in-person learning to virtual learning through remote instruction (Limbers, 2021). The quality and quantity of education varied during the closures because online instruction and technology were unequally distributed (Keane, 2020). Students in different regions experienced vastly different learning experiences due to access to resources. Governors decided the instructional fate of the public school system based on guidance from the Center for Disease Control. There were many controversies around the United States concerning the state leaders' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Not every state followed the same procedures and instruction implementation plan.

In some states, K-12 educational facilities were closed for all students except for children of essential workers. The length of the school closings varied as some governors did not close the educational facilities or only closed them for an initial period (Hale et al., 2020). Measures taken by the states ranged in intensity and varied based on the needs of the individual states (Krishnamachari et al., 2021). At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, states created policies that would generate indicators in the areas of containing the virus, providing economic support, choosing lockdown style, and overall response from the government (Hale et al., 2020). States responded similarly in the early stages of the pandemic, with the most significant difference in the northeastern and midwestern states.

The states in the northeast were the strictest concerning the containment index. To track the effectiveness of policies and school closures because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government began using the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker to track government policies and interventions (Hale et al., 2020). The tracker aimed to determine the

effectiveness of different implemented approaches by individual states. State officials attempted to find a way to measure if the policies implemented were effective. The Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker used an ordinal scale to determine the severity of the measured state policy.

Several researchers used this tracker to study the effectiveness of preventing the spread of the coronavirus because that was directly related to the operation of K-12 educational institutions. Krishnamachari et al. (2021) studied the impact of state-mandated K-12 education facility closures and revealed that the effectiveness of the closure was unclear. In addition, several researchers revealed that the closures did not significantly reduce the spread of the disease. As a result, the K-12 educational institutional closures may have interrupted students' learning, causing disproportionate challenges for students. Additional research into the disparity in student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic closures revealed a disproportionate effect on disadvantaged and minority communities (Tieken & Auldridge-Reveles, 2019).

Educational institutions' closures negatively disrupted students' learning because of the inconsistency in instruction from the teacher to student. Tieken and Auldridge-Reveles (2019) researched the effects of an educational facility closure due to a lack of financial support and found that closures created spatial injustice that resulted in unequal opportunities. Fifty-seven million students' learning was interrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic (Donohue & Miller, 2020). There were mixed results on the effectiveness of school closures and the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Contrary to some researchers, other researchers revealed that school closures effectively slowed the progression of COVID-19. Moreover, researchers estimated that educational facility closures attributed to a reduction in fewer cases of COVID-19 when measured over 26 days.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted student learning and drastically changed the world of education (Ettekal & Agans, 2020; Popa, 2020). Specifically, in West Virginia, the governor announced closing 680 K-12 educational institutions for two weeks on March 13, 2020 (Damron, 2020). There was an additional announcement from the governor's office extending the closure through the end of the academic year. This announcement by the governor's office sparked controversy amongst parents, city leaders, school administrators, and teachers. Many controversial debates occurred about facilitating instruction, developing future policies, and reopening procedures following the closure. Most West Virginians opposed school closures and did not favor government policies (Tieken & Auldridge-Reveles, 2019). The new way of educating students included virtual field trips and class sessions. Students were assigned structured formal assignments using an online platform like Zoom or Google Classroom (Price et al., 2021).

Politics

The political context affected the attempts to compare each state's responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in an orderly way. Composite measurements combined various indicators to create a general idea. The misinterpretation or assumptions of the effect generated measurement bias that favored one group of individuals (Hale et al., 2020). The states were divided by political parties' responses, potentially affecting the COVID-19 caseload. Democratic-populated states had the highest number of cases, which resulted in a higher level of government response when compared to Republican states. Democratic and Republican governors often swayed narratives to please their constituents; it was unknown whether this was deliberate. The United States had a unique political climate which was a factor during the

COVID-19 pandemic as it concerned individuals complying with state-ordered mandates (Krishnamachari et al., 2021).

State and local policy decisions concerning education during the COVID-19 pandemic were controversial. Researchers reported that partisanship became a priority for some individuals, holding their political views higher than their concerns over the coronavirus. Krishnamachari (2021) reported that registered Democrats were 13.1 % less likely to be socially mobile during the stay-at-home orders. On the contrary, they revealed that registered Republicans were 27.8% more likely to be mobile during the stay-at-home orders. The politics in school districts played a significant role in the implemented policies and citizens' perspectives. Education policies were not politically neutral; therefore, they were one of the major areas affected by policymakers (Tieken & Auldridge-Reveles, 2019). Although states responded in a similar format, there were differences concerning significant components, such as instruction procedures and the return to in-person learning.

Homeschool Increase

Homeschooling became a viable option for some families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2016, the Department of Education statistics revealed approximately 2.3 million registered homeschool students (Abuzandah, 2020; Bennett et al., 2019). Before the school closures due to the stay-at-home orders, guardians of public-school students were dissatisfied with the teachers' standards and the physical conditions inside the school (Neuman, 2019). The number of current homeschooled families was estimated because of the lack of reportable data available on homeschooling (Bennett et al., 2019). Since 2016, the number of homeschooled students has remained steady, with increases noticed in minority families (Firmin et al., 2019; Powell, 2021). Although homeschooling was not a new

concept, it became an investigable option for some families during the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of families homeschooling increased to 11.1% within the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic (Eggleston & Fields, 2021).

There was a considerable amount of literature on homeschooling because it was a controversial subject, with research investigating the motivations for homeschool decisions. The most prevalent research on homeschool guardians' decisions to educate in the home includes ideology, pedagogy, opinions of the government, and the public school system (Brewer & Lubienski, 2016). In addition, there were limitations when researching data on first-time homeschool guardians because of the vague reporting requirements that vary by state (Carpenter & Gann, 2016; Walden, 2017). Nevertheless, the broad influence of homeschooling on students, society, and homeschool guardians was widespread and plentiful from various angles. Homeschool is the art of a guardian educating their child in the home instead of an educational institution (Price et al., 2021; Ray, 2018). Homeschool guardians vary in their motivations for deciding to homeschool. In most states, the guardian was permitted to select the curriculum, determine the grade level, and set the school day schedule.

Most states require homeschool guardians to have an active notice of intent to homeschool on file with their respective counties (HSLDA, 2018; Jarvis, 2018). The notice of intent informs the county board that the child will not attend their local county K-12 educational institution. Eleven states do not require the guardian to notify their county of attendance of the intention to homeschool (Coalition for Responsible Home Education [CRHE], 2014). The motivations for the decision to home educate varied depending on the family, geographic location, and other individualized characteristics. Of the most common homeschool motivations, safety concerns ranked the highest. A survey estimated that 20.2% of students experienced

bullying in the school environment, which led their guardians to withdraw and begin homeschooling (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Homeschool guardians continued to educate their children because many believed their home environment was safer than the school environment. Guardians cited safety, drugs, and other harmful exposures as the most significant factors in their decision to homeschool (Duvall, 2021). Homeschooling is the fastest-growing type of education at home in the United States and is estimated to double over 20 years (HSLDA, 2020; Jarvis, 2018; Ray, 2018).

Homeschool Demographics

According to Bell et al. (2016) and McFall (2019), demographics related to income, parental education, family size, and parental occupations influence the achievement of the homeschool student. There were variations in homeschool students concerning their ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, age, and family compilation. The United States Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics maintained statistical data on homeschool families. In a recent report distributed by the United States Department of Education (2017), 79% of homeschool families held household income above the poverty line. In the last two decades, the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (2018) reported that 89% of homeschool families had married parents, including 19.4% of the mothers working part-time outside the home. The racial makeup of homeschool families encompassed 83% White, 7% Hispanic, 5% African American, and 2% Asian or Pacific Islander (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018; Powell, 2021; Watson, 2018). African American families experienced the most significant increase in homeschooling, rising from 3.3% to 16.1% in the fall of 2020 (Crary, 2021).

Homeschooling varied as each family and student had specific needs to fulfill their academic potential. Marks and Welsch (2019) researched the demographic background of homeschooling guardians. The primary teacher is commonly a mother who does not work outside the home and has acquired a post-secondary education. Thomson and Jang (2016) dove further into developing demographic profiles that included the homeschool family was likely to have multiple children and utilize a high level of parental monitoring. Researchers Firmin et al. (2019) found that 15% of the participants in the study obtained an undergraduate degree while 54% held graduate degrees. The United States of America encompasses rural, city, and suburban areas with homeschool families in each region. Homeschooling was growing in each demographic because homeschoolers did not fit into one category.

Families below the poverty line were more likely to be homeschooled when compared to families above the poverty line (CRHE, 2014). Four consecutive surveys by the United States Census Bureau (2021) revealed that approximately 20% of homeschool guardians had a household income of less than \$25,000, while 17.4% earned over \$150,000 per year. These surveys debunked the myth that homeschool guardians are middle to high-income earners. In addition, homeschool guardians of other races besides White were interested in homeschooling. For example, a 2021 survey revealed that African American homeschooling families increased from 3.8% in 2016 to 18.3% in 2021 (United States Census Bureau, 2021).

Homeschool in West Virginia

The compulsory school attendance laws varied and were subject to the interpretation of the public officials who held authority in the individual state. The West Virginia Compulsory School Attendance (2020) § 18-8-1 governs the practice of homeschooling in West Virginia. Contributions to the topic revealed common themes surrounding motivations for homeschooling

in the United States of America. Despite decades of research, there was a failure to acknowledge the level at which the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted student learning in West Virginia. The compulsory school attendance law in West Virginia requires children to begin school before their sixth birthday and continue until their 17th birthday. Homeschool guardians in West Virginia who desire to begin home instruction must submit their completed notice of intent to their respective county superintendent or county school board before beginning home instruction.

The West Virginia Compulsory School Attendance (2020) law requires a homeschool guardian to possess a high school diploma or equivalency. A notice of intent to homeschool must include the child's name, address, and age. The homeschool guardian must also declare they intend to instruct reading, language, mathematics, science, and social studies (West Virginia Compulsory School Attendance, 2020). Home instructed students are assessed annually; in grades three, five, eight, and eleven, the assessment results are submitted by June 30 to the county's attendance office. In West Virginia, four percent of compulsory school-age students in kindergarten through grade 12 had a homeschool notice on file, which denotes a 27% increase from 2012 (Watson, 2018; Williams, 2017). West Virginia has become a more pro-homeschool state because of the increase in the number of homeschool guardians in 2020 and 2021.

Homeschool Choices

Various homeschool structures are available to guardians who elect to educate their children at home. Unschooling, cooperatives, traditional homeschool, and hybrid structures are the most common forms of home education. Homeschool guardians who used the unschooling method believed students learn best when exploring their desired interests (Lapon, 2022). Unschooling has a student-centered foundation where the student shapes the mission of the education. Students who find it frustrating to sit in the classroom or at the computer for an

extended period may flourish under the unschooling structure (Lapon, 2022). The choice of homeschool structure varies depending on the unmet needs of the family and the student.

The cooperative homeschool structure consists of families who gather and work cooperatively to achieve a common goal (Johnson, 2020). A cooperative is often mistaken for a homeschool group because they share common characteristics. Cooperatives are typically more extensive than homeschool groups and involve field trips, parent meetings, and other activities selected by the families. Cooperatives allow homeschool guardians to rotate leading the group of homeschool students concerning specific lessons or activities. Traditional homeschoolers typically follow a daily schedule that mimics a traditional K-12 educational institution. There are traditional components, such as outlining each subject's specific time and day. The traditional homeschooler also has homework to complete at the end of the homeschool day. Additionally, the family follows the local county school schedule, including holidays and breaks (HSLDA, 2019).

Hybrid as a school choice became increasingly popular as it included a combination of traditional in-person learning and learning at home. Technology-assisted homeschool students collaborate with other students and teachers under the hybrid model. In addition, new information in documentaries and information sessions is released to provide insight to the public on the learning strategy. Twenty-six states in the United States utilized the hybrid model by allowing homeschool students to participate in their local school district (Hamlin, 2020). Limbers (2021) revealed that Texas middle school and high school students prefer a hybrid format that includes online and in-person learning.

Virtual Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Burgess and Sievertsen (2020) mentioned the disparities between families concerning their ability to assist students in learning. There were many challenges faced by students, teachers, parents, and policymakers during the transition from in-person learning to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The amount of time, skills of the parent, resources available, and level of knowledge created learning disparities for students. Virtual school at home taught by teachers utilizing online platforms varied nationwide. In the initial stages of the transition, some students needed access to instructional material or the Internet (Damron, 2020). K-12 educational institution officials strived to mediate some of the common challenges experienced by families. Various school districts made accommodations to seek internet service discounts and mail packets of work to affected students (Carpenter & Dunn, 2019).

The emergency remote teaching practices were pandemic pedagogy, encompassing circumstances that required instantaneous transition to home education. The transition to home education required an immediate online teaching and learning strategy (Gouseti, 2021). Carpenter and Dunn (2019) studied the perspectives of families concerning their remote learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers found that some parents noted that they would homeschool in the fall. Although this study focused broadly on families' homeschool experiences, it added to the literature and revealed that the disruption affected future educational decisions. The virtual public school at home was introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted Governor Justice to close all K-12 educational institutions in West Virginia (Damron, 2020). Guardians had to adhere to the stay-at-home order and engage in school at home to assist their children by utilizing a virtual learning platform.

During the closure, guardians became teachers by proxy because their children remained enrolled in their local K-12 educational institution. School at home entered the national stage during the COVID-19 pandemic and forced parents to take on the primary educator of their children at home (Ettetal & Agans, 2020). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 3.2 million students homeschooled (Duvall, 2021). The widespread school closures across the nation increased the number of children educated at home to over five million. A United States Census Bureau survey of American families revealed that the number of students taught in their homes doubled during the spring and fall of the 2020 academic year.

During the closure of K-12 educational facilities, distance learning students received support from their county school system. Students required assistance with utilizing technology, maintaining social networks, and achieving academic proficiency (Price et al., 2021). Teachers offered encouragement through the online video conference platform and made efforts to stay engaged with students. Some teachers provided structured assignments delivered through online platforms like Google Classroom or Zoom. The parents benefited from receiving technical guidance concerning how to use each online platform, as this was a new tool for most individuals. Although many teachers were unprepared for facilitating distance instruction, some counties provided technical professional development training. Educators used technology applications to mimic the instruction typically facilitated during in-person learning. Unlike virtual school-at-home students, homeschool students were limited in the resources and assistance they received from their local county district.

Internationally, schools implemented platforms such as Google Meets, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom (Broom, 2020). Every subject, including gym classes, was held virtually in some school districts, allowing parents to drop off completed assignments if necessary. Access to

devices, reliable internet, and a variation of skill levels were some of the most common challenges teachers and administrators faced during the closures. The school districts could not rely simply on school-issued Google Chromebooks to facilitate learning. Social media platforms were beneficial for low-tech students because some students did not have technology in their homes (Keierleber, 2020). Before implementing the technology tools, approximately 60% of teachers received professional training concerning technology functionality (Broom, 2020). Unlike homeschooled students, in-person learning students were at a greater risk of isolation. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, school closures exacerbated physical isolation because of the decline in peer-to-peer associations (Tieken & Auldridge-Reveles, 2019).

Homeschool During COVID-19 Pandemic

Some studies revealed that homeschooling nationwide increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was common to hear murmuring about the decline in student enrollment in various counties. Seventy-three percent of parents surveyed revealed they would allow their child to participate in online education (Henderson et al., 2021). Homeschool guardians who do not desire government intrusion in their child-rearing process choose to homeschool to have a voice in their children's education (Raley, 2017; Thomson & Jang, 2016; Watson, 2018). Guardians opposed to all government-funded educational institutions did not participate in their local school district (Bell et al., 2016; DeAngelis & Dills, 2019). It was common for homeschool guardians to mention that their decisions relied on their abilities to make appropriate choices for their children. Many homeschool guardians believed they could provide a practical education through home education (Ray, 2017; Thomas, 2016; Tilhou, 2020). This level of motivation derived from the homeschool guardians' belief that educating their children was their parental right and did not include the government. The perspective of this group of homeschooled guardians was that the

government must maintain law and order and not have educational authority over their children (Abuzandah, 2020; Cervone, 2017; Powell, 2021). Other research studies revealed conflicting assertions concerning the increase in homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Duvall (2021) mentioned that some guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic did not continue homeschooling. There is no clear understanding of the decrease in homeschooled students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other scholars revealed additional reasons for the homeschool decline, including the lack of parental expertise, students' completion of K-12 education, or the families moved to another state (Duvall, 2021). One-third of the guardians surveyed reported constant frustration and stress because they were unsure how to support their child academically, socially, or emotionally (Goldberg et al., 2021). Guardians reported the increased tension in their households due to their dual role as guardians and educators. The role-related challenges increased anxiety among the guardians revealing that they often felt inadequate.

Student Learning Disrupted

The current literature confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted students' learning. Several authors have recognized the variety and extent of the disruption of students' learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Student learning inequalities and academic achievement were two of the most affected areas resulting from the COVID-19 school-related closures (Carpenter & Dunn, 2019; Hammerstein et al., 2021). Some researchers mentioned different characteristics explaining the reasoning behind the disruption in students' learning. Student learning was disrupted because of the differences in the use of technology, adapting to remote learning, and curriculum adjustments for distant learning (Hammerstein et al., 2021). A survey of distance learning students engaged in remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

revealed a lack of motivation related to social isolation (Goldberg et al., 2021). Although summer vacation can interrupt student learning, the COVID-19 pandemic-induced school closures more seriously affected student achievement. Educators, parents, and policymakers are accustomed to the decline in achievement over the summer break in which students lose some of the skills they learned in the prior year. Researchers have estimated a 38-point loss each year when students are given an assessment that measures their academic progress after the summer break (Hammerstein et al., 2021).

The impact of the K-12 educational institutional closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic was significant. A survey conducted by Dorn et al. (2021) revealed that high school students were more likely to drop out of high school because of the disruption in their learning. Achievement gaps were a common reoccurrence for students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Wyse et al., 2020). In the United States, students who began school in 2020-2021 were more than three months behind in mathematics (Dorn et al., 2021; Gore et al., 2021). Students' assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that students scored approximately four-five months behind in reading (Dorn et al., 2021). The disruption resulted in minority and low-income students experiencing the lowest achievement rate. In addition, 35% of parents indicated concerns about their child's mental well-being during school closures.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was clear evidence that traditional teaching and learning would leave a lasting change in education (Bolton, 2020; Broom, 2020; Keierleber, 2020). The disruption in students' learning can impact students for many years after they complete their K-12 education. Donohue and Miller (2020) revealed that learning loss would affect the student for up to two decades, including loss of future earnings. Students in lower-income areas were affected significantly because of the lack of access to resources.

Neighborhoods that were income deficient depended more on school-based resources and tools to assist students in achieving academically.

Homeschool Guardian Motivations

The motivating factors that influenced the decision of individuals to educate their children in their homes were endless. Homeschool guardians were motivated for various reasons, such as maintaining control and achieving academic success. The reasons also included religious practices and the need for a safe environment (Bell et al., 2016; Morrison, 2014; Watson, 2018). There was limited research on motivating factors for first-time homeschool guardians' motivation to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic. The most common motivating factors for homeschool guardians included ideology, pedagogy, environmental factors, academic achievement, and the separation of government and family (Bell et al., 2016; Carpenter & Gann, 2016; Ray, 2018). Control over pedagogy increased the likelihood that students would receive the content in a learning style that matched their personality. Bell et al. (2016) asserted that the longer a child is educated at home, the more their potential to achieve academic success increases. Homeschool students demonstrated higher math, language, and reading scores compared to traditional public school students (Carlson, 2020).

Some guardians reported an increase in academic achievement because their students were more relaxed due to the flexibility of the daily schedule (Duvall, 2021). In addition, homeschooling guardians reported noticing a decrease in their children's anxiety which attributed to an overall increase in their mental health stability (Duvall, 2021; Goldberg et al., 2021). While many scholars agreed that there was a lack of significant researchable data on homeschooled students, the current information gathered from statistical data supports the movement (Carpenter & Gann, 2016; Ray, 2018). The National Home Education Research Institute collected annual

research data on home education statistics (Watson, 2018). Multiple literature sources provided a deeper understanding of homeschool guardians' motivating factors, including curriculum control, teaching styles, environment, political influences, religious inspirations, and legislative changes (Abuzandah, 2020; Bell et al., 2016; Thomas, 2016).

The rise in technology is attributed to guardians' persistence in homeschooling, as they can access helpful online resources to educate their children (Hamlin, 2020). Many homeschool guardians asserted they allow their child's passion to drive the learning instead of instilling passion into the student with a preselected pedagogy. Homeschool students reported feeling relieved of the stress they experienced in the traditional in-person school setting. Eighty-seven percent of peer-reviewed research articles on social and emotional development revealed homeschool students perform better than conventional school students (Ray, 2022). Researchers revealed homeschool students adapt to adulthood with an easier transition because they participate in local community service projects more frequently than conventional school students (Hamlin, 2020; Ray, 2022).

Religion

An influence over the decision to homeschool was often rooted in the religious motivations of the homeschool guardian. Due to the prevalence of religion in homeschool research, religious groups were the driving force behind the increase in homeschooling. On the contrary, homeschooling began as a grassroots movement in the 1960s, with groups of non-religious people referred to as hippies (Raley, 2017). Hippies were considered anti-government individuals and preferred to be the dominating authority figure in their children's lives (Morrison, 2014; Raley, 2017; Watson, 2018). Many homeschool guardians asserted that incorporating

religion into their child's academic experience was their primary reason for homeschooling. Faith was a central part of the homeschool routine for many homeschoolers.

Some homeschool guardians incorporated educational activities containing Bible reading, studying Bible passages, singing hymns, and engaging in daily devotions (Carpenter & Gann, 2016; Thomas, 2016). Almost 50% of homeschool guardians selected religion as a primary reason for homeschooling (Powell, 2021; Ray, 2017; Walden, 2017). In the research compiled by Thomas (2016), most participants noted they used the Bible at least once during the instructional day. This element was one of the significant parts of the day for some homeschool families who decided to homeschool based on their religious beliefs (Carpenter & Gann, 2016). Homeschool guardians who choose to homeschool because of religious beliefs have higher confidence in their child's academic success. There is a correlation between homeschool guardians' religious preference and their belief that homeschooling is a right given to them by God, not the state (Firmin et al., 2019; Thomas, 2016).

Pedagogical

Previous studies suggested that the best route to academic success for students was through child-centered learning experiences (Bell et al., 2016). Many homeschool families were motivated by their freedom and flexibility to choose the best pedagogical approach to meet their needs. The pedagogical choice was related to customizing learning for the student and embracing natural learning and teaching styles. The Department of Education conducted a survey that discovered that homeschooled students participated in cultural activities at a higher rate when compared to public school students (Hamlin, 2020). In addition, 29% of homeschool guardians reported teaching art, music, foreign language, and literature (Hamlin, 2020). The freedom in pedagogy allowed for individual accommodation for each child in the home instruction

environment. Furthermore, the teacher-to-student ratio is a barrier for students receiving individualized attention in the traditional classroom setting. The homeschool curriculum is customized to accomplish more academically, use varied pedagogical approaches, and enhance familial relationships (Abuzandah, 2020; Firmin et al., 2019). Many skills taught in the home environment, such as morals and values, can contribute to students' potential for success in the real world.

Homeschool guardians motivated by the quality of education were not against government intrusion. Generally, these homeschool guardians had a specific issue with the content or curriculum taught in K-12 educational institutions. A study in South Dakota demonstrated the issues surrounding curriculum by revealing that 72.5% of homeschool guardians used a curriculum similar to public schools (Carpenter & Gann, 2016). A similar curriculum outlined the need for a few changes for the homeschool guardians that fell in this category. There was a strong desire to meet students' needs through home education or traditional school (Tilhou, 2020; Watson, 2018).

Homeschool guardians who elected to homeschool as a last option typically exhausted other school alternatives. Homeschool guardians who participated in some of the elements of public school were considered discretionary participants. This type of homeschool guardian was motivated to provide a better academic experience for their children and did not have issues with government-funded schools (Carpenter & Gann, 2016; Morrison, 2014; Watson, 2018). Homeschool guardians in this category followed a traditional school schedule like public schools (Watson, 2018). There was a connection between this category of homeschooling guardians and the community because they often had friends who were teachers or volunteered at local schools.

Student Achievement

Student achievement is the concept of students successfully progressing to the next level or meeting standards created as benchmarks for the learning plan. Abuzandah (2020) acknowledged a strong association between student achievement and their academic, social, and developmental environment. In a safe environment, students achieve a higher rate of academic success. Watson (2018) cited that 91% of homeschool guardians polled selected a safe environment and eliminated peer pressure as their reasons for home education. Desired environments included a proactive learning system encompassing acquiring knowledge and social skills. Student achievement drew a connection to students' level of activities in the community. Homeschoolers participated in more civic activities when compared to public school students. Critical thinking had a higher probability of existing in-home education when compared to a public school that had a preset curriculum focused on the student as the learner.

Students with a voice in selecting their projects, studying languages, or choosing books to read had a higher success rate (Ingram, 2020). A high level of student engagement contributed to increased student achievement and was directly connected to improving parental involvement (Bennett et al., 2019). In a study conducted by Bell et al. (2016), parents in the high need support profile reported a higher academic level of engagement and efficacy for homeschooling. Furthermore, parents who were more involved in their child's academic learning were less likely to have students that engaged in deviant behavior (Thomson, 2016).

Homeschool Controversy

The act of homeschooling is controversial as it has led to many public and prolonged disagreements (Fletcher, 2021). The public disputes include supporters and opponents of homeschooling. Homeschooling supporters often rally for less legislative supervision of

homeschooling and prefer less intrusion from governmental officials. Opponents of homeschooling prefer increased oversight through legislative action because they believe the guardians have significant control. State legislators contribute to the debate as each state creates and enforces different homeschool laws. Supporters of homeschooling often use a foundation that correlates with their legal right to make decisions for their children. Anti-homeschoolers use safety and socialization concerns as their main argument against homeschooling.

Research has provided significant information about homeschool guardians and prospective homeschool guardians joining homeschool support organizations to increase their involvement in their children's education (Morse, 2019; Simmons & Campbell, 2018). Organizations, such as the Homeschool Legal Defense Agency, Christian Home Educators of West Virginia, and Coalition for Responsible Home Educators, assist many homeschool guardians in understanding the compulsory attendance laws in their state (Watson, 2018). Individuals who support homeschooling often believe the educational authority for students should be their guardians, and there is not enough questioning of school norms (Bartholet, 2020). Homeschool supporters posit that anti-homeschoolers fail to provide evidence-based reasons to ban homeschooling.

On the other hand, some individuals against homeschooling advocate for outlawing the practice of homeschooling. Parties against homeschooling, such as the National Education Association (the most prominent teacher's union in the United States), asserted there was a need for additional homeschool regulations oversight, citing ideas such as child abuse or students not receiving an equitable education (Hamlin, 2020; Raley, 2017). Individuals against homeschooling also insisted that homeschooling increased social inequality and was a detriment to society (Puga, 2019). Opponents of homeschooling mentioned that homeschooled students did

not have access to school-based services, such as mental health services, which would be available in a traditional setting (Harper & Brewer, 2021). Homeschool opponents, such as Harvard law professor Elizabeth Bartholet, called for a ban on the option of homeschooling because they believed homeschool students were isolated, in imminent danger, and received less than a quality education (Hamlin, 2020).

Supporters and opponents of homeschooling each have a foundation for their arguments. Their statements contribute to the continuation of the debate on the effectiveness of homeschooling. Individuals who oppose homeschooling believe homeschool parents should have a legitimate reason for desiring to homeschool. In the opposite direction, supporters of homeschooling question the official or agency tasked with defining terms such as fair, substantial, or reasonable. Individuals against homeschooling mentioned that parents could not be multi-subject experts; therefore, their children would not have access to quality education (Fletcher, 2021; Hamlin, 2020). Homeschool supporters countered the attack on their expertise because they believed they knew how to individualize their children's learning experience. Additionally, they believed teachers could not offer customization (Puga, 2019). Controversially, homeschool and public school guardians have similarities concerning their dissatisfaction with the educational system in the United States (Neuman, 2019).

Summary

Chapter Two synthesized researched literature on the theoretical framework of David McClelland's (1961) motivational needs theory. The literature was also synthesized on subtopics concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption of students' learning. The subtopics included defining homeschooling, the historical foundation of homeschooling, various types of home education, compulsory homeschool laws, homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic,

and homeschool guardians' motivations. This chapter revealed the gap in the literature concerning the homeschool experiences of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. A review of existing literature revealed that no qualitative research offers a voice to first-time homeschool guardians of students whose learning was disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. Chapter Two provided the foundation for this transcendental phenomenological study to address this literature gap.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. This transcendental phenomenological study explored how first-time homeschool guardians in the southeast region of the United States described their homeschool experience. This chapter highlights the methodology, research design, and settings plan. Additionally, this chapter includes a description of the participants, the role of the researcher, data collection methods, data analysis, and procedural steps. Concluding this chapter is a brief statement on the trustworthiness and ethical considerations relevant to the research data and participants.

Research Design

This qualitative research approach describes, explains, and interprets the data collected to focus on the entirety of the participant's experiences instead of specific parts (Moustakas, 1994). This qualitative approach was appropriate because this study's goal was to utilize inductive reasoning gathered from observation. This qualitative approach allows the researcher to construct research questions that explain the participants' experiences in their natural settings using their actual experiences (Gall et al., 2007). This study used the phenomenological research design because of the value of inner perception held by the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

The transcendental phenomenological research design originated through Edmund Husserl's scholarly work because of his belief that knowledge was best acquired when preconceived bias was rejected. Husserl further noted that eliminating bias was associated with the researcher's consciousness, and excluding themselves was vital to the research (Gall et al.,

2007). The transcendental phenomenological approach allows the researcher to understand various perspectives without prejudgment (Moustakas, 1994).

This study used the transcendental phenomenological approach to understand the homeschool guardians' lived experiences without including the researcher's own experiences. This approach expanded the natural meaning of the phenomena through its transition into an identity. The natural importance of the phenomena formed as participants shared their lived homeschool experiences through the only lens they shared as a collective. Those guardians who are not homeschooling still experience some feelings about homeschooling through the homeschooling experiences of others. A thorough investigation into the homeschool experiences held by homeschool guardians included an analysis of themes retrieved from interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. This study focused on the lived experiences of guardians who began homeschooling their children during the COVID-19 pandemic and decided to continue despite the reopening of K-12 educational institutions.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What motivated first-time homeschool guardians in the southeastern region of the United States to homeschool their children during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-Question One

What were the homeschool experiences of first-time homeschool guardians during the initial K-12 educational institution closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Sub-Question Two

What homeschool experiences led first-time homeschool guardians to decide to continue homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Setting and Participants

The participants contributed to the study from their home environment. Due to educating their children from home, it was appropriate for homeschool guardians to reveal their homeschool experiences from their usual environment. The participants were residents of one of the states in the southeast region of the United States, 18 years of age or older, and currently homeschooling their children. The states in the southeastern region include Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. The homeschool guardians met virtually during the study's interviews and focus group sessions.

Setting

The setting in this study was virtual; however, the physical location of each participant varied. This study focused on first-time homeschool guardians residing in the southeast region of the United States. The implementation of homeschool instruction began during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants' homes were appropriate interview settings because of the characteristics of a phenomenological study. This phenomenological research aimed to capture the shared experience of the participants in their respective home environments. The setting included using Zoom's online video conference platform to conduct individual interviews and focus group sessions. I identified the participants using pseudonyms corresponding to the alphabet in the order in which they were interviewed. Further communication took place via email or a Zoom call.

Participants

This study included 11 first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic from the southeastern region of the United States. Creswell

(1998) recommended the inclusion of 5 to 25 participants as a benchmark for researchers conducting a phenomenological study. The homeschool guardians who participated in this study were adults acting in the capacity of primary teachers for their children. The participants included homeschool guardians of students ages 5 to 18 who previously were enrolled in a K-12 educational institution. The participants confirmed their student was officially homeschooled in compliance with Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, or West Virginia's compulsory attendance law. I collected basic demographic information from the participants in the study. The participants did not need to be the child's biological parent but had guardianship and educational decision-making authority concerning the child.

Researcher Positionality

My motivation for conducting this study revolved around my position as a homeschool parent for the last seven years. I have experience as a parent of a public school student and a homeschool student. Each of my children were enrolled in the public school system before I decided to homeschool permanently. I have a notice of intent to homeschool on file at my local county school of attendance office because this notice is required in my state. My research paradigm is derived from a position closely related to post-positivism. My axiological philosophical assumption relates to my motivation for conducting the study. I can relate to the participants on both spectrums of educating their children and making education-related decisions. Knowing my sources of inspiration and connection to the study was critical to ensure I positioned my thoughts outside of this research study. The research remains bias-free and untainted when the researcher is aware of their connections to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers must address potential biases to avoid false conclusions created through statements

from the participants.

Interpretive Framework

This study used a postpositivism interpretive framework to reveal first-time homeschool guardians' lived experiences. Postpositivism is a research method that offers an alternative to a single factor as the sole source of knowledge (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Studies grounded in postpositivism recognize that the element of cause and effect is possible but may not be a factor (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Inclusive in postpositivism are determination, reductionism, empirical observation and measurement, and theory verification (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). This study included a list of logical steps involving multiple perspectives from the various participants. Thus, there was a low probability of a single reality shared by the individual participants. The interpretive framework for this study described the influences on first-time homeschool guardians' decisions to homeschool their children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Philosophical Assumption

The three philosophical assumptions addressed in this research were ontological, epistemological, and axiological. Including the philosophical assumptions in this research provided the research study's positionality from the researcher's perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The consistency of the philosophical assumptions provided a glimpse into my life related to my belief system and values. As the researcher, I provided a lens to the reader of how I approached this research study using the axiological philosophical assumption. This approach allows the reader to understand my homeschooling experience as a homeschool guardian to assist in effectively reading the research.

Ontological Assumption

The study's philosophical assumption related to the ontological assumption because it

highlighted the varied perspectives of first-time homeschool guardians. I observed and interviewed the homeschool guardians to determine their homeschooling experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ontological philosophical assumption relies on the presence of multiple realities reported by the researcher through the development of themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, the school of relativism was relevant as I explored different ideas that replicated the participants' experiences. The facts in this study reflected the homeschool guardians' viewpoints because they were the study's participants.

Epistemology Assumption

The epistemological assumption uncovers the relationship between the researcher and the research study topics (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The reality of the first-time homeschool guardians was the driving force behind acquiring new knowledge to insert into this research. I considered the participants' feelings, beliefs, and thoughts to summarize their reality within the epistemological assumption. The patterns generated from the first-time homeschool guardians' lived experiences contributed to my research by creating new theories or positions.

Axiological Assumption

The axiological philosophical assumption was essential to my research. I am a homeschooling parent with values aligned with the homeschool guardians' right to feel protected while educating their children. The axiological philosophical assumption requires me to remain aware of my values and biases. Creswell & Poth (2018) suggested that researchers bracket their experiences to ensure the validity of the research is maintained. I removed my biases concerning my homeschooling experience from the research study to highlight the voices of the participants. Therefore, researching my study's axiological assumption illuminates my involvement as a homeschool parent.

Researchers Role

As the researcher, I did not have any authority over the potential participants, nor did I have an issue with the research site. My role as the researcher included asking the participants about their homeschool experiences and encouraging them to express their thoughts and feelings about their homeschooling decisions. I have been a homeschool parent for approximately seven years. Before deciding to homeschool, I explored alternatives, such as public schools outside my local district and private schools. Although I am a homeschooling parent, I believe everyone has different motivations for their homeschooling decisions. I assumed that some participants might not reveal everything in the individual interviews, focus group sessions, or journal prompts. My interpretation of the participant's understanding of the questions was critical to restating the question to garner additional information. I believe that all guardians deserve respect in selecting an educational foundation for their children.

Procedures

In this research study, I recruited participants using purposeful sampling. A snowball strategy was also utilized through solicitation in Facebook groups, specifically homeschool groups in states within the southeast region of the United States. Upon receiving the participants' contact information, I sent out screening surveys, recruitment flyers, and informed consent forms. The surveys screened for eligibility to ensure the participants qualified to participate in the research study (see Appendix A). The recruitment flyer provided additional information about the study and the type of research participants who were eligible to participate (see Appendix B). The informed consent form was used to advise the participant of their rights and protections concerning their participation in the study (see Appendix C). In addition, the consent forms included information about the study, such as procedures, possible risks, possible benefits,

and participant termination procedures. Upon receiving the consent forms and screening surveys, I scheduled individual interviews with the eligible participants. I conducted interviews which lasted approximately 20-45 minutes. I transcribed the interviews upon completion and returned them to the participants for member checking. Member checking validates the transcribed information for the accuracy of the participant's voice (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Once the participant returned any requested changes, I amended the transcripts and analyzed them according to Moustakas's (1994) guidelines for transcendental phenomenology. I scheduled the focus group sessions via Zoom video conferencing platform. I used Otter.ai transcription website upon completing the individual interviews and focus group sessions. The journal prompt responses were included in the research to illuminate the participants' voices. The participants' identities were protected by using pseudonyms, and the data was kept on my password-protected laptop. This study achieved triangulation during the data analysis phase in the areas of agreement and repetition.

Permissions

Site permissions were not required as the homeschool guardians participated from their homes or other chosen location. The focus group met electronically via Zoom, an online video conferencing platform. I asked the participants for permission to record each interview and the focus group session. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires the researcher to advise the participants of their rights during and after their participation in the research study (see Appendix C). I ensured the participants understood they could withdraw their consent to participate at any moment during the research process (see Appendix C). The oversight of the IRB was solidified through an application process and the receipt of approval to conduct the research (see Appendix D).

Recruitment Plan

The recruitment flyer solicited first-time homeschool guardians to participate in the study and provided a survey to ensure the participants met the eligibility criteria. In soliciting participants, I composed a flyer to post on social media platforms, specifically in homeschool Facebook groups (see Appendix E). The sample pool for this study included members of homeschool cooperatives, homeschool organizations, registered homeschool guardians, and homeschool social media groups. The most appropriate strategy for this study was snowball sampling because it allowed participants to refer to other qualified potential participants. I used an informed consent form that indicated that participating in this research study was voluntary. Creswell and Poth (2018) advised researchers to inform the participants of any undue risk associated with their participation in the research study.

Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which the participants must have specific traits that are considered rare (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the criteria for this study were that the participants must be at least 18 years old, reside in the southeast region of the United States, began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic, and currently homeschooling in compliance with their state compulsory attendance laws. Snowball sampling was appropriate because I planned to rely on referrals from others who had access to potential participants and other data sources. The final sample size was 11 first-time homeschool guardians in the southeastern region of the United States.

Data Collection Plan

I used triangulation by incorporating multiple methods of collecting data to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. The triangulation of data sources increases confidence in the research study because of independent measures (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In

triangulating the data, I provided a clear understanding of the problem. Semi-structured individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts were used in this research study to collect data. Semi-structured individual interviews combine unstructured and structured procedures encompassing a preset list of questions (Claxton & Michael, 2020). Although there was a preset list of questions, I had the freedom to follow up with unstructured questions to garner clarification from the participant. Focus groups offer real-time conversations to better understand the participants' positions, feelings, and attitudes. Journal prompts collect the participants' enriched perspectives and allow them additional time to edit their thoughts before submitting their final responses (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews are pertinent to phenomenological research studies to gather information from the participant through an informal and interactive process (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, I interviewed each participant using pre-constructed interview questions. I recorded each interview to ensure the transcription was accurate before analyzing the information. I clarified interview questions within the interview to gather additional information from the participants and to simplify any potential areas of confusion (Miles et al., 2014). The interviews were conducted and audio/video recorded via Zoom's video conferencing platform. The study's interview portion included semi-structured questions allowing the participants to elaborate on their experiences.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. Describe any influences the COVID-19 pandemic has had on your decision to become a homeschool guardian. CRQ

3. Please tell me about your homeschool experiences concerning your decision to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic. CRQ
4. Describe your achievements during your homeschool experience. CRQ
5. Describe your challenges during your homeschool experience. CRQ
6. What steps did you take to improve your homeschool experience? CRQ
7. What external factors influenced your decision to homeschool during K-12 educational institutional closures? SQ1
8. At the beginning of your homeschool experience, how did you seek assistance in getting started? SQ1
9. Describe your daily homeschool schedule at the beginning of your homeschool experience. SQ1
10. What feelings did you experience on your first day of homeschooling? SQ1
11. Describe your homeschool experiences with selecting your homeschool program curriculum or structure. SQ1
12. Describe your experience with constructing your homeschool schedule. SQ1
13. What materials did you use in your homeschool program? SQ1
14. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your homeschool experiences regarding becoming a first-time homeschool guardian? SQ1
15. Describe your homeschool daily schedule at the beginning of your homeschool experience when K-12 educational institutions reopened. SQ2
16. How did your decision to continue homeschooling after the K-12 educational institutions reopened influence your relationship with your family members and friends? SQ2

17. What internal factors influenced your decision to homeschool after K-12 educational institutions reopened? SQ2
18. Describe your homeschool experiences with withdrawing your child from the K-12 educational institution. SQ2
19. Describe some favorable situations you experienced when continuing your homeschool program. SQ2
20. How did you prepare to continue homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened? SQ2
21. What improvements, if any, did you notice in the student while homeschooling? SQ2
22. What are the differences, if any, did you notice in your current homeschooling experience compared to the beginning of your homeschool experience? SQ2
23. What else would you like to add to our discussion about your homeschool experiences with continuing as a homeschool guardian? SQ2

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

I analyzed the data collected from the individual interviews using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen analysis methods (Moustakas, 1994). This method requires a description of the complete experience of the phenomena. Once I completed the interviews and transcribed the data, Moustakas (1994) suggested focusing on the participants' transcripts. This step included reading each participant's statement and recording the critical information. During the statement reading, I implemented the technique of horizontalization. Horizontalization is a part of the reduction process in phenomenological research studies that allows each participant's statement equal treatment. Next, I labeled each significant word, phrase, or sentence as repetition in the data demonstrates significance.

While reading the transcripts, I highlighted the essential statements using a coding method that included using different color highlighters in Microsoft Word. In the next step, I created a list of the invariant horizons by outlining nonrepetitive views (Moustakas, 1994). The method I followed required me to cluster the consistent meanings into themes and synthesize the implications into textual descriptions using verbatim participant quotes. I bridged the different themes to determine if a theme held a hierarchy position in analyzing the interviews. Moustakas (1994) implied that I should draw a figure as a summarization of the results, write up the results, and provide an ending remark.

Focus Groups Data Collection Approach

I used four focus groups with three to four participants in each group to allow every participant to share their experiences in a group setting. The participants chosen for the focus group sessions were current participants involved in the research study during the interview data collection phase. Focus groups assist the researcher in gaining additional insight into the participants' lives by fostering dialogue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Patton (1990) noted that the focus group is separate from a discussion group and advised researchers to keep the group focused on the interview process. The focus group met via Zoom, an online video conferencing platform. The focus group was audio/video recorded electronically to capture statements that could have been missed while taking notes by hand. I employed my skills as a moderator and observer to illuminate the participants' feelings and opinions. The focus group questions were open-ended and presented in a standardized format.

Focus Group Questions

Influences on Homeschool Decision-Making

1. Please introduce yourself.

2. What are significant factors stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic that affected your child's education? CRQ
3. Describe any influences on your decision to homeschool. CRQ
4. What were your thoughts about homeschooling before making the final decision to homeschool? SQ1
5. What were some homeschooling experiences as a first-time homeschool guardian that influenced your decision to continue homeschooling? SQ2

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

I analyzed the data from the focus group by using the Otter.ai transcription website to create a log of statements. After replaying the audio and manually editing the transcript, I highlighted the participants' voices in the research study. During the focus group session, I restated the questions to identify and clarify areas that needed further exploration. In addition, I used the memoing technique by incorporating my handwritten notes taken during the focus group to assist me in interpreting the findings for the final written report. I followed an analysis strategy that considered whether the participant answered the question completely and its importance to the topic. Incomplete participant responses were placed into a separate section to determine relevancy. I noted the similarities and differences between the focus groups and the interviews by comparing the data gathered. The similarities and differences were used to assist with creating theme headings.

Journal Prompts Data Collection Approach

The participants completed a six-question journal prompt and returned it to me via email. The purpose of using the open-ended question format was to receive responses from the participants in a conversation style. The conversation style allowed the participant to add

additional details because they had more time to provide an enriched perspective. I included a cover letter that described the research's purpose and assured confidentiality with the distribution of the journal prompt questions (see Appendix F).

Journal Prompt Questions

1. Describe the most significant reasons you decided to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic. CRQ
2. Describe the most significant challenges you experience during your homeschool program. CRQ
3. What advice do you have for first-time homeschool guardians? CRQ
4. Describe successful interactions, if any, between yourself and other homeschool guardians. SQ1, SQ2
5. Describe negative interactions, if any, between yourself and other homeschool guardians. SQ1, SQ2
6. What had the most significant influence on your homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic? CRQ

Journal Prompt Data Analysis Plan

Coding was vital to analyzing the journal prompt responses by using descriptions of the reactions to determine frequency or sequencing. Bell and Waters (2014) suggested that researcher's glance through the responses before beginning the coding and recoding process. The patterns in the responses, such as the frequency of a word or phrase, generated its dominance. I coded the participant responses by labeling relevant words, phrases, sections, or sentences. Labels included the experiences, activities, concepts, opinions, differences, shock value, and repetition offered throughout the participants' responses. I created categories and headings to

bring the labels together in a cohesive manner. Finally, I thoroughly used memo writing by taking complete notes when correctly documenting the responses.

Data Synthesis

Data synthesis involves combining the collected data from multiple sources to capture the essence of the data and relay it in a pictorial form to the reader of the research study. Moustakas's (1994) data synthesis begins with epoché, allowing experiences to form a new consciousness. I achieved epoché by setting aside my prejudgments and experiences related to homeschooling. I accepted the participants' responses as their lived experiences, unique to them, in a pure way. I used extreme effort to avoid placing a piece of data where it did not belong. Through the organization of data, I went beyond summarizing and critiquing sources to highlighting the participants' voices. I compiled the data from the interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts into a structural consensus that yielded substance. I employed a process known as free variation through imaginative variation. This variation allowed each participant's experience to be synthesized (Neubauer et al., 2019). I used Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel to organize, analyze, and find insights from the individual interviews, focus group sessions, and journal prompts. Saturation was reached when the participants' responses became repetitive, and no new information was available (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I achieved saturation in this study by categorizing the responses to determine themes.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) created a foundation for researchers to increase confidence in their research. Trustworthiness builds faith in a study based on credibility, transferability, dependability, authenticity, and confirmability. Reliability in qualitative research concerns the element of truth regarding analysis and interpretation. Direct quotes provide additional levels of

trustworthiness through authenticity by offering snippets of what the participants verbalized. I described the research procedures in this study to achieve trustworthiness in the following sections.

Credibility

Credibility is the foundation of internal validity and is one of the essential criteria in qualitative research (Claxton & Michael, 2020). Trust is built through transparent communication practices and serves as the study's foundation for attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used member checking to ensure credibility during the data collection phase to ensure my transcriptions' accuracy. It was vital to the research study that the participants' perspectives were given. The transcription document contained results from recorded data based on what was gathered from the individual interviews and focus group sessions. Member checking allowed the participants to be a part of the research study in a manner that ensured validity and dependability. Credibility increases integrity in the research study's results to demonstrate internal validity (Birt et al., 2016).

Transferability

Transferability is the external validity that provides readers with information about other situations (Patton, 1990). The research participants and the settings were two elements used to determine transferability (Linda & Guba, 1985). I used thick descriptions in the research findings to show that the results may apply to another context. This research study provided insight for those homeschool guardians in the southeastern region of the United States who were currently homeschooling or desired to homeschool. In addition, there was the potential for other stakeholders, such as county board administrators, to review the current homeschool guardians' feelings, attitudes, and opinions on educating their children. Therefore, I used thick, rich

descriptions to interpret the participants' homeschool experiences to create meaningfulness for the outside reader. Describing the homeschool guardians' homeschool experiences through solid descriptions developed a conceptual structure and purpose.

Dependability

Dependability is the stability of data consistency and various conditions (Claxton & Michael, 2020). I read the transcripts multiple times to understand the actual value of the data to avoid changing the interpretation. Dependability demonstrates that the findings are consistent and replicable through a compelling description of the procedures undertaken for the study. Authenticity is vital to the research process because it determines how the researcher presents the participants' feelings. This research study included a step-by-step process of the procedures I used to ensure dependability.

Confirmability

Confirmability is congruence between multiple people concerning the data's accuracy, meaning, or relevance (Claxton & Michael, 2020). Confirmability is employing others to read the transcripts to remove researcher bias and prevent the participant's responses from carrying the researcher's voice (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I collected data from various sources and used an audit trail to confirm the research findings. Using the audit trail helped me avoid personal preconceptions while only including participants' responses. I employed triangulation to test the validity and understand the phenomena.

Ethical Considerations

There are many ethical considerations involved in research; confidentiality and the role of the researcher are two of the common concerns (Miles et al., 2014). I ensured confidentiality in my research by using pseudonyms and informed consent forms for participation (see Appendix

C). I ensured the collected data was secure and provided complete disclosure to the participants. Although I could not ensure confidentiality during the focus group sessions, I advised each participant of the other's ability to hear and potentially see them. Furthermore, research suggested that I ensure the participants understood and had complete information about the study. The participants retained their freedom of participation in the research study and understood that they could withdraw at any time. In addition, the research study was free from deception to the participants, and their information will be destroyed after three years.

Summary

This qualitative research process involved determining a research design, composing research questions, obtaining permission from participants, securing a setting, and uncovering the researcher's position. Additionally, I created research procedures to employ data collection methods and maintain a high level of trustworthiness during the research study. This phenomenological study used interviews, focus group questions, and journal prompts to understand the lived experiences of first-time homeschool guardians in the southeast region of the United States. This research design catered to gathering data to uncover the phenomena through the participants' lived homeschool experiences. The data collected was analyzed using transcription, member checking, and ethical consideration to maintain integrity.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. The phenomenological approach provided a foundation for the research that allowed the lived experiences of homeschool guardians during the COVID-19 pandemic to form a universal essence. In phenomenology, the goal is to take the lived experiences of a specific group and reduce their individual experiences to a common shared experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The central research question in this study sought to examine the richness of the shared experiences of 11 homeschool guardians in the southeast region of the United States. This chapter provided background information for each participant in a narrative form of the data, including themes, subthemes, and codes. Themes in tables organize the data. The responses to the central research question and sub-questions concluded this chapter.

Participants

The population for this research study was 11 first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Southeastern region of the United States (see Table 1). Participants that met the eligibility criteria were selected from the sample pool of survey respondents. The eligibility criteria included residing in one of the 12 states and beginning their homeschool program after March 2020. The solicitation was conducted via social media using a flyer posted on Facebook (see Appendix E), and participants were screened using a survey through Google Forms. Once each homeschool guardian completed the screening survey, the consent form (see Appendix C) was provided to obtain participants' signatures. The

research tasks began with scheduled individual interviews with each homeschool guardian. The interactive parts of the research tasks (individual interviews and focus group sessions) were conducted using Zoom. After completing the individual interview, the journal writing prompt was emailed (Microsoft Soft Word attachment) to each homeschool guardian. Each homeschool guardian who participated in the research study was assigned a pseudonym.

Table 1*Homeschool Guardian Participants*

Homeschool Guardian Participant	Year Began Homeschooling	Number of Homeschool Students	State of Residence
Abby	2020	1	Florida
Becky	2020	2	Alabama
Carla	2020	2	North Carolina
Edith	2020	2	Alabama
Faith	2020	3	Louisiana
Gayle	2020	1	Alabama
Heather	2020	1	North Carolina
Isabella	2020	1	Florida
Jackie	2020	1	Georgia
Louisa	2020	2	West Virginia
Molly	2020	1	Florida

Homeschool Guardian 01 – Abby

Abby is a mother of four children, only one of the participants who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Abby started homeschooling her son in 2020 from a public school in Florida. Before beginning homeschooling, she tried virtual public school via the Zoom platform with her son. Abby's son's public school began online instruction in the spring of 2020 during the initial phase of the school closures. Abby outlined multiple challenges she and her son faced when navigating the online classroom, turning in assignments, and participating in the Zoom class session. She said, "It reminded me of how college students would basically have to teach themselves and do the assignments."

Homeschool Guardian 02 – Becky

Becky is a mother of two children enrolled in South Carolina public school during the COVID-19 pandemic. When their public school decided to close schools in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all learning transitioned to virtual via Zoom. The virtual public school through Zoom was convenient at the time because she worked full-time outside of the home. Later that year, Becky and her family moved to Alabama. Once in Alabama, she did not seek to enroll her sons into public school to continue virtual learning through Zoom. Becky mentioned, "Virtual school taught me that my kids are not very disciplined on their own." Becky decided not to work full-time and remain at home to homeschool her sons.

Homeschool Guardian 03 – Carla

Carla is a mother of two children enrolled in North Carolina public school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Carla did not homeschool immediately and allowed her children to participate in the virtual public school for the remainder of the school year. Carla shared that her kids were not learning much during that time. She stated, "My son was in high school; he did

have some Zoom classes, but my daughter received a weekly list of suggested activities, and that was it." Carla became concerned as summer approached, and the school district did not send out plans that suited her family for the upcoming school year. She began researching and planning during that summer and began homeschooling her children in the fall of 2020.

Homeschool Guardian 4 – Edith

Edith is a mother of two children; both of her children were enrolled in the Alabama public school system when they closed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Edith asserted they lived in a "wonderful" area in one of the best public school districts in Alabama. Specifically, Edith mentioned, "We live in a great school district; we have great schools around us." Before schools closed, there was no genuine concern about her children's academic achievement. When schools closed, she had an opportunity to uncover what her children knew and decided that virtual learning through Zoom would not suffice. Edith began homeschooling her children in 2020.

Homeschool Guardian 5 – Faith

Faith is a mother of three children; two of the three children were enrolled in the Louisiana public school system when they closed in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Faith was homeschooled as a child and had only spent 11 days in public school during her childhood. Faith had an adamant goal of not homeschooling her children before the schools closed in her state. She tried two weeks of virtual public school through Zoom and decided it was not working. She decided homeschooling was a more viable option. She explicitly stated, "If he's going to be home with me, then we're going to make this work for him specifically, and I'm not even going to try to follow any of their plans." At that moment, Faith officially began communicating with her state to homeschool her children in 2020.

Homeschool Guardian 6 – Gayle

Gayle is a mother of a son who was enrolled in the Alabama public school system when they closed in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She is now a stay-at-home mom and a homeschool curriculum and resource consultant. Gayle has a background in fine art and did not believe she knew much about education. However, she mentioned, "I'm one of the smartest people I know, even if it's just via common sense." With that statement, Gayle determined that virtual public school on Zoom once a week would not benefit her son and that homeschooling was the more appropriate route. She began homeschooling in 2020.

Homeschool Guardian 7 – Heather

Heather is a mother of three boys; only one was enrolled in the North Carolina public school system when they closed in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Heather's other two children were not old enough to attend school then. After attempting virtual public school using Zoom, she determined there was a better way besides having her son sit in front of the computer screen for five to six hours a day. She thought, "there's got to be something better." Heather had neighbors that homeschooled their children; she consulted with her neighbor and then decided to homeschool her children in 2020.

Homeschool Guardian 8 – Isabella

Isabella is a mother of two boys who were enrolled in the Florida public school system when schools closed in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Isabella had to choose in the fall of 2020 between in-person learning with a mask all day or virtual public school via Zoom. Isabella decided to homeschool her children in the fall of 2020 because neither option suited her children and family. Isabella stated, "When I looked at the available choices, I didn't

love either. I thought, well, you know what, let's give it a go. Because no matter what I do, I think it's still better than my choices.”

Homeschool Guardian 9 – Jackie

Jackie is a mother of one daughter who was enrolled in the Georgia public school system when schools closed in the spring of 2020. The school closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She felt that when schools closed in March, that was the end of the academic year for her daughter due to unsuccessful attempts with the virtual public school via Zoom. She revealed, "We did the distance learning, and doing distance learning with a kindergartener was not fun." Jackie began homeschooling her daughter later that year in the fall semester of 2020 after making a homeschool room in the home during that previous summer.

Homeschool Guardian 10 – Louisa

Louisa is a mother of two boys who were enrolled in the West Virginia public school system when schools closed in the spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Louisa worked from home at the onset of the pandemic. Louisa tried virtual public school using Zoom with her boys and completed the worksheet packets sent home by the school. Louisa decided that the current options offered by the school system were not working for her family. She stated, “I thought to myself, if I'm going to spend six or eight hours teaching them, I could just do this myself and plan our curriculum.”

Homeschool Guardian 11 – Molly

Molly is a mother of one daughter who was enrolled in the Georgia public school system when schools closed in the spring of 2020. The school was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Molly and her daughter moved to Florida during the initial part of the pandemic. She described the environment in the Florida school system as chaotic and inconsistent concerning

mask mandates and social distancing. Molly decided to avoid the chaos and homeschool her daughter. She noted, "Yeah, I just don't want to deal with any of that. I'm going to just chill in the house."

Results

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. The shared experiences of 11 homeschool guardians were illuminated using the phenomenology qualitative research design. Data was collected from each homeschool guardian through individual interviews, focus group sessions, and journal prompts. The individual interviews and focus group sessions were conducted virtually using Zoom and were semi-structured to permit elaboration and deviation from the homeschool guardian. Each participant also completed a written response to a journal prompt sent via email. I transcribed all the data using Otter ai and Zoom transcription embedded into the Zoom software. The participants responded openly about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Similarities among the participant's responses were revealed through data analysis. In analyzing the data, I began bracketing out my preconceptions through epoché and dividing the data into important statements with their respective meanings to develop codes and themes.

Code and Theme Development

Code and theme development was the next step I completed after assembling all the various elements of the research. Coding is a crucial connection between data collection and their explanation of meaning (Saldana & Omasta, 2018). Through coding, I summarized the different sections of the data without reducing the meaning. I used descriptive coding to find

keywords from the individual interview and focus group transcripts and extracted meaning from the responses. I merged and reduced codes to develop major themes and subthemes. Major themes were developed once I noted the repetitive and intersecting participant responses. The analysis process continued with extracting codes from the journal prompts to contribute to thematic development. Three major themes were developed through data analysis that answered the central research question, “What motivated first-time homeschool guardians in the southeastern region of the United States to begin homeschooling their children during the COVID-19 pandemic?” The following three themes emerged: motivation, support, and challenges. Table 2 displays the three themes, subthemes, and core codes.

Table 2*Themes and Subthemes*

Major Theme	Subthemes	Core Codes
Motivation	forced virtual learning, academics, COVID-19, schedule, withdrawal	Screen time, interest, grades, bullying, individualized learning, flexibility, progress, skills, real world, travel, mask mandates, freedom
Support	cooperative groups, Facebook groups, family	family time, positive experience, online resources, relationships,
Challenges	abrupt school closures, emotional distress, curriculum choices	Shut down, anxiety, uncertainty, fear, overwhelmed, classical conversations

Motivation

The homeschool guardians that participated in the research study indicated a variety of motivating influences on their decision to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic. Subthemes of motivation were developed based on the participant's responses, including forced virtual learning via Zoom, academics, COVID-19, schedule, and the ease of withdrawal from the school system. Nine of the 11 participants in the research study described a negative experience with the virtual public school using Zoom. Becky mentioned, "Virtual school was a nightmare; it

was very hard for him." In addition, six of the 11 participants specifically highlighted the amount of screen time as the reason for leaving virtual public school to homeschool. Carla had a very strong opposition to virtual learning using Zoom. She noted, "It was my goal to make sure my kids weren't sitting in front of a screen for six to seven hours a day." Ten of the 11 homeschool guardians shared that COVID-19 pandemic-related issues forced them to take a deeper look into the academic progression of their students. Edith mentioned, "COVID gave the reason to homeschool and allowed us to see via virtual public school that he had not mastered certain skills in math." She learned that her children had different learning styles, and the learning style was essential to choosing the right curriculum for them. Edith focused heavily on math individualized learning curricula for her son.

On the other hand, Gayle mentioned, "We were considering homeschooling before COVID, and COVID gave a push we needed to get started." She further explained that the COVID-19 pandemic made it easier because she had always wanted to homeschool her son. Mask mandates influenced seven of 11 participants when deciding to homeschool. Faith felt concerned when her school created requirements restricting parents from entering the school and all-day mask-wearing for the students and staff. She understood that the COVID-19 virus was new, and no one knew anything about it. She further explained, "It was just a big no for our family; the restrictions they were going to put on our kids were not okay." Abby and Louisa's school district also implemented full-time mask mandates for students and staff. They shared the same feelings as Faith and were against full-time mask mandates. Abby was mainly concerned about her kids not seeing the facial expressions of their teachers or peers, and she felt "mask caused less interaction with children and teachers."

Every homeschool guardian participant mentioned a flexible schedule as a core motivator for homeschooling. Isabella said, "I try to think of learning more openly, which helps me to be less rigid with my schedules." She also mentioned that everyone could participate in her son's education with a flexible schedule. The flexible schedule allows her to follow a village learning model, which permits her in-laws and her parents to teach her son when they visit. She believed her son benefited from learning from others and not with just the two of them on an island alone. Nine of the eleven participants recalled having an easy time withdrawing their student from the public school system. Gayle mentioned that her state, Alabama, was very homeschool friendly. She followed a simple process of sending in a letter of intent and waited to receive an approval response that said "okay." She mentioned, "It's very easy to homeschool in Alabama." She realized immediately after the decision that she had more freedom to do what was best for her son.

Forced Virtual Learning. Virtual learning using Zoom, the online learning platform, was implemented by the school district for each of the 11 participants. Nine of the 11 participants described their experience with virtual learning using Zoom as unpleasant. Edith revealed in her interview that watching her son do school online was an eye-opening experience. Once virtual school began, she noticed that her son did not know math facts she thought he had learned in his previous grades. She stated, "Virtual public school wasn't an option because kids were not where they needed to be and behind significantly in math." Faith decided to remove her son two weeks into the beginning of virtual public school after noticing the lesson plans used by the teacher were not working for him. She found a support group for homeschoolers in Louisiana that helped her create her homeschool program. She further emphasized the issues with virtual

learning by saying, "we absolutely did not want our kids to waste time at home with virtual learning."

Academics. All 11 participants highlighted overall academic improvements within their students as a motivational influence on their decision to homeschool. Louisa and Molly specifically mentioned noticing drastic improvements in reading among their children. Molly recalled her daughter's transition from reading sight words to reading complete sentences in books. She said, "She actually started reading during homeschooling under COVID." This was a massive accomplishment for Molly and her daughter. Much like Molly, Louisa was able to push her son more to get him to thrive into a boy that loves to learn. A common denominator was the academic progression once homeschooling began and the ability to focus on the child's interests.

Abby mentioned that not replicating public school at home led to improvements in her child. Abby shared her approach, "I began homeschooling with de-schooling to get rid of school structure in our minds and focus on his interest." Carla, Edith, Faith, and Isabella revealed that removing the focus on grade levels was a critical factor in the academic improvement of their children. Edith stated, "Progress began to be made once we realized grade levels didn't matter." The four participants asserted that removing the grade levels also created a sense of competition.

Becky indicated during the school closures that she could see where her son struggled academically. Once schools closed and they had more time together, she was able to help him in those areas. She also mentioned in the interview, "before homeschooling, he would make bad grades. Homeschool allows us to use all seven days in the week." Becky also mentioned, along with Heather, that their students thrived academically during their homeschool program. Isabella said in her interview that her son now enjoys learning and working on new academic projects.

COVID-19. Every participant felt they could offer their children a better education during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the options provided by the school districts. Nine of the 11 homeschool guardians indicated COVID-19 pandemic-related issues, such as the abrupt school closures and mask mandates, contributed to their motivation to begin homeschooling. Jackie described the abrupt school closures in her district. She stated, "Schools closed. We did not hear any instruction from a teacher for a couple of days, and they gave us online resources, nothing constructive." She further described feeling the school system and teachers were unprepared for COVID and wanted her daughter to have a harmonious year.

Isabella mentioned that she could offer a better solution to her child instead of being in a "masked classroom all day." She recalled when the teacher was wearing a face shield and a face mask. The teacher was not equipped with a microphone, and everything was on Zoom. She knew she had to withdraw her child and homeschool. Heather also mentioned she could do better than the public school system offered, which included masks and social distance restrictions all day. Participants repeatedly mentioned the unpreparedness of the school district but empathy for the unforeseen pandemic.

Schedule. The participants agreed that developing a schedule is a critical component of their daily life, and changing their schedules to fit their new life was vital. Seven participants mentioned flexible schedules as a crucial influence on their decision to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gayle decided to do year-round homeschooling, start school later than public school, and go with a natural way of learning. Gayle explained:

We are year-round homeschoolers with a very relaxed schedule. Um, I don't fight anything that I don't want to do naturally versus anything he wants to do naturally. I'm a night owl, so my homeschool day starts, on average, like 9:30 a.m.-10:00 a.m.

Gayle recalled that her son was doing summer work and her mother mentioned that "he should get a break." She took this time to explain to her mother the benefits of her year-round schedule and the breaks they take during the other months. Similarly, Carla highlighted flexibility as a contributor by stating, "We didn't have a set schedule as long as the work gets done." She discovered they could take days off and pursue other interests such as foreign language or cyber security. Carla also realized the schoolwork was completed in less time; if not, she could assign it the next day. This sentiment was echoed by Isabella and Jackie, with Jackie revealing, "I can cancel school at any time, and we can pick it back up later."

Withdrawal. The withdrawal process varied based on the state but generally included submitting a notification of the student's intent to withdraw. Nine of the 11 participants mentioned they were required to submit an annual notice of intent to homeschool. Louisa specifically explained, "I submitted my notice of intent to homeschool and my high school diploma to the county. I received an email back that they received it. That was pretty much it." Additionally, the homeschool guardian may be required to submit a yearly progress report or portfolio to the school board or attendance office. Nine homeschool guardians mentioned they easily withdrew their children from public school through a simple process. Becky indicated that in Alabama, "You can remove your student at any point provided they are not truant." Edith, also in Alabama, revealed she had zero issues with withdrawing her children. She decided to use the cover school, although it was not required. Isabella and Molly resided in Florida and revealed they easily withdrew their students by submitting a letter of intent. They both indicated they received thank you and approvals letters promptly. Isabella stated, "I found the withdrawal process very easy. I keep records for my portfolio, I submit work samples, and there was an interview done with a state of Florida registered teacher."

Molly shared a similar sentiment, "It was already easy enough to sign up for homeschooling. The next big thing I have to do is at the end of the year with the evaluation." Abby and Faith had a different experience when compared to the other nine homeschool guardians. Abby explained, "I called the school to let them know we had made the decision, and there was a lot of pushback. They said I had to do certain things, which I discovered was false." Faith also mentioned receiving a negative response when she sent the notice to the school. Faith stated, "I got an email back from his principal saying, I'm sorry, we're not withdrawing anyone right now." Faith explained she continued with the withdrawal process and continued to email her intent to homeschool and finally received an email that said her student had been withdrawn. Overall, 81.82% of the participants reported that removing their students from public school was straightforward.

Support

The participants in this research study described receiving support from various sources such as cooperative groups, Facebook groups, and family members. Each participant described at least one of the previously mentioned support aspects as an influencing factor for homeschooling. Cooperative groups allow homeschoolers to gather with other homeschoolers that have shared interests. Specifically, five of the 11 participants belonged strictly to cooperative groups, while six belonged to a homeschool group on Facebook. Carla belonged to a cooperative group (co-op) and a homeschool group on Facebook. Carla described her experience with her co-op stating, "They meet once a week, and each parent volunteers to serve a different purpose." She further mentioned, "We really enjoy getting to know the other families." Similar to Carla, Faith found comfort in the co-op as it was and still is a place for her to ask questions, learn new tips, and encourage others on their homeschooling journey. Faith remarked, "We joined a

homeschool co-op. So, one day a week, we're meeting with other homeschoolers with the same educational beliefs." During their focus group session, Becky and Molly each mentioned homeschooling Facebook groups serve as a significant support for their family. Becky stated, "Joining the Facebook group helped to decide to homeschool full-time." The participants revealed that the Facebook groups shed light on what other homeschoolers were doing in their homeschool program. Molly said she joined the homeschool Facebook group specific to her state to ensure she followed the homeschool laws.

Family support and the impact of homeschooling on their family was another aspect mentioned by the study participants. Louisa and Abby said they were hesitant when telling their family members about their decision to continue homeschooling, although the K-12 educational institutions had reopened. Louisa mentioned that homeschooling gave her family the time and flexibility to travel; other family members were grateful to see them more often. She stated, "I was terrified of telling parents that we were going to homeschool, but they were surprisingly incredibly supportive." Louisa felt relieved because her parent's opinions were important. Abby also mentioned that she was hesitant to tell her family about homeschooling. She said, "They were very against it at first, but once they saw how the entire family flourished, they became very supportive." Abby contended that the basis for her family member's initial concerns was that they did not believe she could teach her son what he needed.

Cooperative Groups. The impact of cooperative groups was mentioned in detail by Carla, Heather, and Isabella. Isabella said a meeting with the cooperative (co-op) group provided a sense of camaraderie between homeschooling parents. She further described their first co-op meeting as "welcoming" and "very inviting." Isabella also said, "The co-op group was a place where I learned about various resources and other homeschooling styles." Cooperative groups

are regarded as a place that offers encouragement and motivation to homeschool parents and students. Heather revealed that she needed her co-op and saw the meetings as a time for her to find suggestions for her second son, who was struggling with reading. Heather mentioned, "The biggest influence for us was seeing how much my son was learning and seeing he was thriving academically; that kept us going; we're a part of two different co-ops."

Facebook Groups. Facebook groups were mentioned by six of the 11 participants as a resource for support, encouragement, and advice during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the six participants revealed that Facebook homeschool groups gave them a sense of comfort and direction. Abby highlighted that she joined homeschooling Facebook groups to learn about different ways to run a homeschool program. Molly revealed she joined Facebook groups specifically for homeschoolers in Florida. She noted, "We joined some more Facebook groups that were more specifically homeschoolers." A common denominator among the participants was the desire to abide by homeschool laws in their state and construct a program similar to other homeschool families.

Family. In highlighting the influence of family on participants' decision to continue to homeschool, three of the 11 participants mentioned that their family members were not supportive of homeschooling. Becky revealed she could tell by the look on some of their faces that they did not understand or support homeschooling. Becky's family members were against homeschooling because they were concerned about her children's emotional and social development. Eventually, her family became supportive once they saw progress in her children. On the other hand, Gayle's mother has recently mentioned her opposition because her grandson never has a break from learning. Gayle mentioned her mother said, "He didn't get the summer off." Other members of Gayle's family were supportive based on knowing her character. Gayle

revealed that her family was supportive by saying, "they know I don't jump into anything easily without research."

Challenges

The participants in the research study described the abrupt school closures, emotional distress, and curriculum choices as their shared challenges while homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each participant mentioned they experienced challenges following the abrupt closures of the K-12 educational institutions in their state during the COVID-19 pandemic. All the participants described receiving short notice concerning the school closures of the K-12 educational institutions. Louisa described the abruptness of the schools shutting down in West Virginia. She was given two weeks' worth of worksheets for her sons to complete at home, and then they were instructed to use the online platform Zoom for classes. Louisa described the school closures period as a struggle. She mentioned, "We rarely got any information from the school district, just random emails from the teacher." Seven of the 11 participants said emotional struggles such as anxiety, fear, and being overwhelmed with decisions concerning schooling were significant challenges during the pandemic. Becky highlighted her thoughts on making sure she was aligning her son's needs and diploma requirements correctly. She expressed, "The key thing for me was to make sure he had certain lessons in case he wanted to go to college." Curriculum choices as a challenge were mentioned by eight of the 11 participants. Carla said, "I think the biggest challenge was finding the right curriculum materials for what we're looking for." Edith soon realized that her son had to go down a grade level for math when researching a curriculum to choose. The eight participants that mentioned choosing a curriculum as a challenge concurred that the curriculum is not a one size fits all plan.

Abrupt School Closures. Becky described an extreme challenge when the schools abruptly shut down in her district in South Carolina. Becky said, "They were sent home to do remote learning, and I was working full-time." Becky described her experience with rapidly quitting her job so she could go home to be with her kids because someone had to be home to help them. Becky further noted how she felt forced to look for an alternative to in-person school because her kids were forced to work from home. Carla elaborated on her experience during the abrupt school closures. She stated, "My daughter received a weekly list of suggested activities, and that was it." The challenge surrounding the abrupt school closures for Carla was the lack of guidance from the school district. Gayle mentioned in her school district in Alabama that the sudden school closures were very challenging for everyone. Gayle further elaborated, "We met by Zoom only once or twice, and we were left to our own devices about how to handle a child's academics."

Emotional Distress. Participants experienced emotional distress when beginning to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each of the 11 participants described at least one moment of uncertainty about how to proceed with educating their child during the COVID-19 pandemic. Faith revealed she experienced distress related to being forced to consider many issues, such as remote learning or homeschooling. She further stated, "I would not have homeschooled had I not been forced to find an alternative." Specifically, six of the 11 participants mentioned fear and anxiety concerning making the right schooling decisions for their children. Faith said, "I struggled with leaving my son enrolled in public school and continuing with the virtual." She mentioned she feared he would fall too far behind if he continued learning via Zoom. Becky and Louisa recalled fear in the opposite direction, as they described feelings of uncertainty as to their competency to homeschool their children. Becky expressed, "We were

scared to death of homeschooling before, whereas now it's like, this is doable." She explained that the fear taught her a lot about her kid's motivation and discipline levels. In overcoming her fear, Becky said she realized she could educate them at home because she knew exactly what they needed. Louisa described her experience with anxiety concerning the decision to homeschool as an experience of questions. She discussed how she questioned herself about having authority over her kids. She wondered if she could teach them and if they would listen to her. Louisa said, "I had a lot of anxiety but also a little relief that it was okay if we didn't get something."

Curriculum Choices. All 11 participants mentioned they spent time searching online and engaging in trial and error with curriculum options. The time spent researching curriculum and deciding on the ultimate curriculum choice varied by the participant. Abby mentioned the challenges of finding the right curriculum. She stated that "some worked, and some didn't." Five of the 11 participants credited Classical Conversations for pointing them in a good direction to select a curriculum. Jackie recalled deciding to homeschool and choosing Classical Conversations instead of researching the many curriculum options available in the world. She stated, "Classical Conversation was a good fit instead of me having to just come up with something for the rest of the year or buy a curriculum." Jackie mentioned, "The curriculum choices were massive, and I struggled to decide before choosing Classical Conversations." Edith, similar to Jackie, credits Classical Conversations when tackling the mountain of curriculum choices, and she liked the classical model of learning offered by Classical Conversations. Before finally deciding on Classical Conversations, Edith recalled a moment when they were selecting a math curriculum, "I think we've changed math curriculum every year just because we were trying to find the right one."

Outlier Data and Findings

There were two outliers identified during this research study's data collection and analysis phase. The first outlier finding represented important statements associated with Abby concerning the school district response to withdrawing her son from the educational institution. The second outlier finding was identified as having a significant impact on Carla related to the unpreparedness of the school district.

School District Response

While 10 of the 11 homeschool guardian participants reported they had an easy time withdrawing their student from the public school system, Abby did not. Abby revealed that the school administrators were "snappy" with her and advised her of improper withdrawal information. Abby recounted her phone call to the district regarding her desire to homeschool. She stated, "When I called them, there were a lot of pushbacks, and they said I would need to do certain things. I would need to have a curriculum picked out. And they really discouraged it in that way." Abby expressed how she researched and knew the information they gave her was false. Abby said explicitly, "Florida law allows me to either pick one or not pick one. The only thing I must do is prove that they're learning throughout the year, and she kind of was snappy with me on the phone."

School District Unprepared

Although 10 of the 11 participants did not mention school administrators as an influence on homeschooling, Carla had a significant experience with school district leaders in her area. Carla stated, "I think that that was the biggest thing was our district and their response. And had it been different? We may not have started homeschooling." Carla frequently explained her desire for consistent communication from school leaders concerning mask requirements, virtual

learning, paths to continuing education, and school reopening. Carla said, "The district really didn't seem to be making any preparations or plans for the return to school in the fall." The other homeschool guardians did not have significant interaction with school administrators. Jackie noted, "School systems were not prepared, nor should they have been."

Research Question Responses

This study on first-time homeschool guardians that began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic was designed to answer the central research question and two sub-questions. The research questions sought to understand the experiences of homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic and continued homeschooling after public schools reopened. The themes developed in the previous section were used to answer each research question.

Central Research Question

The central research question in this study was, "What motivated first-time homeschool guardians in the southeastern region of the United States to begin homeschooling their children during the COVID-19 pandemic?" This question was developed to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many participant responses were collected during the data collection process focused on three main themes: motivation, support, and challenges. The participants in this study described their experiences with becoming first-time homeschool guardians during the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary motivation for homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic was experiencing forced virtual learning via Zoom.

In her interview, Heather described her experience during the COVID-19 pandemic concerning guidance from the school that contradicted her child-rearing philosophy:

They announced that the public schools were going to do a virtual format, and they wanted my kids to sit in front of the computer screen for eight hours a day. I said no, there's got to be something better. In the prior years, it was a big deal not to have your child in front of the screen for multiple hours a day, and now they want to educate screen. As the situation progressed, the virtual learning experience got worse, and I decided, well, maybe I can homeschool my child.

Similarly, the excessive exposure to the computer screen was also a concern for Isabella. Isabella felt she knew homeschooling was the best option for her during the COVID-19 pandemic because she had two choices. She mentioned, "I had the virtual option, which was in front of a screen all day, or brick and mortar, which required the kids to be masked all day." Isabella explained, "I was confident as a previous educator, I had the ability to research resources in an effort to begin homeschooling." Louisa offered the root of her motivation to homeschool, which was almost identical to Heather and Isabella. Louisa stated in her interview, "They expected students to spend six to eight hours in front of the computer. The technology support wasn't there, and I figured I could do this myself, which is why we started homeschooling."

The K-12 institutional school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic served as an opportunity for two participants. Jackie and Gayle mentioned during their interview and journal prompt their desire to homeschool before the pandemic. Jackie said, "I didn't want to be forced into continuing to learn virtually; it was not fun. I always wanted to homeschool, and now the COVID-19 pandemic provided the opportunity." Gayle was also driven by her underlying desire to homeschool. She expressed, "Homeschooling was an option I was considering, but the COVID-19 pandemic made the decision easier. She expressed in her journal prompt, "The pandemic simply helped us make the decision earlier and easier."

Carla had a somewhat different stance; she was not concerned about the amount of screen time exposure. Her main concern was the lack of importance placed on uploading academic material to the platform. Carla was motivated to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic because there was "little to no education taking place via virtual learning." She stated, "Each Zoom class was optional, and there were only a few assignments in each class." Carla was not confident the school system would have a solid plan by the fall, leading to her sending in her notice of intent to homeschool. Becky noted that she was generally led to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic because she felt forced to participate in virtual learning via Zoom. Becky stated, "We didn't have much of a choice when they closed it, you know, we had to go to virtual learning, and virtual school was stressful."

Sub-Question One

The intricacies surrounding the decision to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic is at the basis of this research study. The first sub-question, "What were the homeschool experiences of first-time homeschool guardians during the initial K-12 educational institution closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic," focused on the participants' experiences during the initial stages of the school closures. The initial stages included the school district's announcement of the K-12 educational institution closures and their guidance after the announcement. The primary theme relative to this question was challenges, and abrupt school closures was the subtheme.

In this study of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic, abrupt school closures were a common challenging experience among the participants. Every participant mentioned that the sudden closure of the K-12 educational institutions yielded some challenges. Shutting down K-12 educational institutions due to a

pandemic was unprecedented before 2020 in the United States of America. Molly highlighted that the closure of schools suddenly influenced her decision to homeschool. She stated, "Schools being closed and trying some half-baked virtual class made it all seem pointless." Molly could not say if she would have started homeschooling outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, although her sister homeschools her kids. She found the closure of schools and the initial start of homeschooling overwhelming. Molly figured she had already helped her child do so many things; certainly, she could teach her.

Faith summarized experiencing uncertainty during the initial K-12 educational institution closures. She mentioned, "The shutdown forced me to pull my son out of school quickly. Had we not been shut down the way we were, I don't think I would have pulled him as quickly." Edith had a similar experience when her son was forced to do online school after the closures. Edith noticed her son was not doing well on the virtual learning platform and realized her son had not mastered specific math skills. She explicitly mentioned, "Virtual school gave the reason and allowed us to see he had not mastered certain skills in math. I knew the homeschool route was a better option."

The abrupt school closures of the K-12 educational institutions sent a message of urgency that exploded worldwide. Louisa offered her experience with the abrupt school closure. She believed the schools closed so fast that they did not have time to prepare for the next steps. Louisa revealed, "When schools closed in March, they sent home packets of assignments that were supposed to last two weeks. My boys finished them in one week." Louisa mentioned that the next step was virtual learning, but she knew they had no support. She claimed, "The technology support wasn't there." She continued, "So this is why we started homeschooling." Isabella echoed Louisa and offered her experience with the abrupt school closures. She stated,

"The schools in Florida closed in the spring of 2020 and were back open in the fall of 2020."

Isabella felt the hastiness of the opening and closing of schools was a challenge for her and her family. While the schools were closed, Isabella became interested in finding things for her son to learn. Isabella also mentioned, "I found myself also learning a lot."

Sub-Question Two

The K-12 education institutions reopening dates and procedures varied from state to state. Sub question two, "What homeschool experiences led first-time homeschool guardians to decide to continue homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened during the COVID-19 pandemic," focused on the participants' experiences. This question sought to understand what influenced their decision to homeschool once schools were reopened for in-person learning. First-time homeschool guardians elaborated on various experiences that led to a continuation of their homeschool program, although in-person learning was available in their district. Flexibility and maintaining control over their schedule were the primary reasons for the participants.

Faith never wanted to homeschool her children before the COVID-19 pandemic. She attempted two weeks of virtual school, and it did not work out well. As a result, Faith began researching ideas and determined homeschooling was the best option for her son. It was a way to avoid forced virtual learning and regain control of her schedule. Faith specifically explained her thoughts during her interview:

I think because of the pandemic, there are more people in our area homeschooling than there ever were before, and so that's been really nice. Having the flexibility to do things during the day with friends that we wouldn't normally be able to do.

Edith recalled her decision to continue homeschooling when her school district reopened schools. She believed homeschooling provided more flexibility during the day and allowed her to

control the subjects and the amount of time spent on each. She further explained, "By choosing to homeschool, I was able to customize my son's schedule so he could spend a longer time on his weaker subjects."

Abby mentioned her son's adaptation to their new schedule influenced her decision to continue homeschooling, although her school district offered in-person learning. She noticed her son was happier, "he could get up in the morning and not be rushed, and the temper tantrums were much less." Abby mentioned she wanted freedom in her written journal prompt response. She disclosed:

When the kids were home, it made me realize I could have a different lifestyle with less pressure from the public school system. Flexible schedules were at the top of the list, such as waking up when we chose and enjoying a calm breakfast.

Carla offered a similar experience when deciding to continue homeschooling. There was a significant focus on not replicating school at home. Carla noted, "When homeschooling, we don't have to switch to a different subject when the bell rings. We can continue when interested. Also, we can eat when we want and not at a specific time."

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. This chapter described the results of the analysis of 11 homeschool guardian participants. Data was collected from individual interviews, four focus group sessions, and written journal prompt responses. Moustakas (1994) served as a guide for analyzing the results. Themes and sub-themes were identified, along with descriptions for each theme that contributed to insight

into the experiences of first-time homeschool guardians. The major themes included motivation, support, and challenges. This chapter also discussed outlier data findings. Data analysis and participant quotes answered the central research question and the two sub-questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The driving forces that led families to begin to homeschool are significant, especially under unprecedented circumstances, such as a pandemic. This study sought to add to current educational information on the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians' decision to homeschool. Previous studies focused on general motivation influences, such as ideology, pedagogy, school environment, government, and academic achievement, outside of a pandemic (Bell et al., 2016; Carpenter & Gann, 2016; Ray, 2018). Therefore, this study sought to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. This discussion chapter summarizes the research study's findings using interpretations based on the themes that emerged during the analysis phase. Following the interpretation of research findings, there is a discussion on implications for policy and practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations, and delimitations. Concluding this chapter are suggestions related to recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This discussion section of the chapter outlined the research study's findings relevant to the themes discovered during the data analysis. The research study's findings explained the development of the themes that emerged while analyzing the motivation to begin and continue homeschooling through the lens of first-time homeschool guardians during a pandemic. This section interpreted the study of motivation through the fulfillment of needs lens. Following the interpretation of the findings is a description of the policy and practical implications that offered recommendations to stakeholders with a vested interest in

homeschooling. The theoretical and empirical implications section emphasized the contribution of this study to the research relevant to motivation and homeschooling. The limitations and delimitations section focused on explaining this study's limits. Finally, the recommendations for future research provided proposals for scholars to develop the literature relevant to homeschooling.

Interpretation of Findings

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. The data was collected using three methods, individual interviews, focus group sessions, and written journal prompts. The data analysis led to the development of three major themes, motivation, support, and challenges.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The interpretation of the research study's findings illustrated the alignment of the themes and sub-themes with the participants' experiences that influenced their motivation to begin and continue homeschooling. Motivation included five sub-themes, forced virtual learning, academics, COVID-19, schedule, and withdrawal. Support as a theme included three sub-themes, cooperative groups, Facebook groups, and family. The final theme, challenges, contained three subthemes, abrupt school closures, emotional distress, and curriculum choices. The interpretations of these findings included two main interpretations: (a) they were left without a choice, and (b) they made a choice. The interpretation of the data explained the motivational influences of the homeschool guardians' decisions and was developed based on their responses presented in Chapter Four. It was significant to highlight the relationship between COVID-19 pandemic issues and the specific motivation of the participants. Husserl describes transcendental

phenomenology as the process in which the researcher strives to garner an unbiased description of the raw collected data (Moustakas, 1994). In this research, bracketing out the researcher's personal bias was imperative to capture the participants' transcendental experiences outside their regular everyday ones.

They Were Left Without a Choice. One intriguing aspect of the homeschool guardians who participated in this research study was that all but two did not foresee themselves as homeschool guardians. There was a curiosity concerning homeschooling held by two participants. However, they did not take action to begin homeschooling before the COVID-19 pandemic. McClelland's motivational needs theory sought to understand how people make choices (Kurt, 2021). The participants dealt with unpleasant COVID-19 pandemic-related issues following the abrupt K-12 educational institutional closures. The shutdown of the school system forced virtual learning on families and disrupted the learning of the homeschooled guardians' children. Previous researchers concluded that the closures of K-12 educational institutions disrupted education (Hoofman & Secord, 2021; Storey & Zhang, 2021). The disruption motivated the participants to consider other options for educating their children besides public school. It also permitted them to take a more profound interest in their children's learning styles and individual needs. The participants decided to homeschool because their experience during the shutdown was negative. This experience directly motivated the participants to homeschool.

According to McClelland (1988), individuals motivated by the need for avoidance often expect the situation to have an unpleasant outcome. The negative experiences included unreliable and inconsistent communication between teachers and school administrators. The participants avoided unpleasant situations by homeschooling. In addition, the participants experienced fear and anxiety when the K-12 educational institutions closed. They were forced to follow the vague

guidance from the public school system, which included virtual school and emailed worksheets. Tiekens and Auldridge-Reveles (2019) revealed that the closure of educational institutions negatively disrupted students learning primarily due to inconsistent instructional methods. Heather feared the effects of her son sitting in front of the computer screen for hours, whereas virtual learning via Zoom was difficult for Becky's son.

The participants were forced to learn how to use Zoom and follow inadequate instructions from the school system. The participants fulfilled their need for power by choosing to homeschool. The power held by the participants was in their ability to maintain control by rejecting the virtual school option and in-person mask mandates. The need for power describes individuals that retain control over situations or individuals (McClelland, 1987). The motivation to homeschool during the pandemic came in additional forms beyond the abrupt school closures and forced virtual learning. The homeschooled guardians encountered further emotional distress when faced with the idea that their children would not learn much in the virtual school. They did not foresee any positive changes happening if they continued in virtual school and waited for further guidance from the school system. Feeling left without a choice, the homeschool guardians faced distress and uncertainty head-on by deciding to homeschool their children rather than continue with virtual school.

They Made a Choice. The participants' persistence assisted them in completing the steps to begin and continue their homeschool program. The initial motivation to continue homeschooling was related to flexibility, curriculum choices, and new connections. Withdrawing their children from public school was easy and led them to continue homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened. Educating their children included teaching them at different times, spending more time on needed areas, individualized learning, and anything else they

wanted. The reopening of the K-12 educational institutions did not affect the participants. Some asked their children if they wanted to return to in-person school. As they expected, the consensus concerning returning to in-person school with mask mandates was declined because the children were happier at home.

All participants were motivated by their children's academic progress and wanted to keep the momentum forging ahead, which led to their motivation to continue homeschooling. The participants satisfied their need for achievement when they noticed their children were learning in their homeschool program. McClelland's achievement theory asserts that the reward must match the individual's motivation (McClelland, 1961). They were comfortable with their new schedule and way of life that did not include all the COVID-19 pandemic-related chaos in the public school system. All the participants joined support groups to ease the anxiety of homeschooling for the first time. The support groups served as a fulfillment of the need for affiliation. According to McClelland (1961), individuals motivated by a need for affiliation desire acceptance of a group. The participants were secure in joining homeschool-specific groups because they each had the common trait of being a homeschool guardian. There was also a significant concern in ensuring they did not violate the law by not returning a form or following up with the end-of-the-year reporting. Faith joined a cooperative group because she wanted to meet in person with like-minded people.

All the participants showed strength and courage by trying different curricula until they found the one that worked for their families. Focusing only on their children allowed them to see their academic progress, which motivated them to continue homeschooling. The flexible schedules of first-time homeschooled guardians also motivated them to continue homeschooling. They experienced a sense of freedom from the rigid schedule and demands of the public school

system. Initially, they were forced into homeschooling to find a better way to educate their children. They exercised their freedom of choice by continuing to homeschool when other options were available. The motivational rewards received by the participants during their homeschool program motivated them to continue homeschooling.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The results of this study may have policy and practice implications that could benefit potential stakeholders. The implications for policy and practice were derived from the themes and the interpretation of this study's results. The participants in this study were first-time homeschool guardians that began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, the participants were the guardians of public-school students prior to deciding to homeschool. This thought would elude that the guardians did not have a direct or immediate issue with the public school educational system prior to 2020. Policymakers, school administrations, current and future homeschool guardians, and teachers may use the results of this study.

Implications for Policy

Homeschool families are impacted by decisions that are made by stakeholders, which can be used to develop policies that legislate and regulate homeschool practices. The group of stakeholders includes individuals such as state legislators or school administrators such as superintendents. A policy stakeholder relevant to this research is someone with influence or the ability to grant legal authority for change. In this research study, the participants reported differences in their state's homeschool laws, specifically reporting requirements. State legislators in Alabama, Florida, and North Carolina may use these results to require homeschool guardians to file a notice of intent to homeschool annually. Eight of the 11 participants in this study were required to provide a one-time notice of intent to homeschool at the beginning of their

homeschool program. In contrast, the remaining three participants were required to file a notice of intent to homeschool annually. The annual notice of intent will contribute to ensuring the county is knowledgeable of the presence of each student subject to compulsory attendance. Additional differences included some participants having to file with the state department of education while others were required to file with their local school district. Centralizing the state filing requirements would provide clarity to initiating the homeschooling process.

School administrators may benefit from creating a homeschool social media group or page that is managed by the county board of education for homeschoolers in their county. Each of the 11 participants in this study mentioned they joined a cooperative group or a Facebook group to ensure they were adhering to the homeschool laws in their state. This group should become a formal part of the county school's homepage to allow prospective homeschool guardians to receive information directly from the county regarding how to homeschool legally.

Implications for Practice

The implications for practice in this research study may guide stakeholders with a vested interest in the homeschooling community. These stakeholders may include but are not limited to current and future homeschool guardians and current or future educators. The experiences revealed in this research study may provide insight for anyone considering homeschooling and current homeschool families regarding curriculum choices. There is an abundance of curricula available, and this research study offered several examples of curricula used in trial and error by the participants. The trial-and-error experiences of the participants may serve as comfort to other homeschool guardians by revealing that homeschooling is not a one size fits all strategy.

Current and future educators may also benefit from researching the advantages of the curriculum style and Classical Conversations mentioned in the research findings. The

participants in this study reported improvements in two specific subject areas, reading and math. Research on the various homeschool curricula may assist in the creation and implementation of certain attributes that are found in the majority of homeschool curricula. In the school setting, it is difficult to individualize student learning; however, it may be possible to include different group activities commonly used in home education settings. Including attributes from home education plans may be effective for many diverse school settings and students.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This qualitative research study revealed theoretical and empirical implications. Theoretical implications in research may confirm or debunk a theory, and the confirmation or debunking may be based on an anticipated outcome versus the actual outcome revealed through data. Empirical implications are based on what the researcher knows, and the implications are suggested based on activities, motives, or things that were observed. Theoretical and empirical implications surfaced through the lived experiences of first-time homeschool guardians in this research study.

Theoretical Implications

This research study assisted the advancement of David C. McClelland's motivational needs theory. This study contributed to the human motivation theory by applying the four motivation needs to first-time homeschool guardians. According to McClelland (1961, 1988), the four types of motivational needs are achievement, power, affiliation, and avoidance. This research study highlighted the motivational influences that led the participants to begin homeschooling and continue homeschooling when in-person school options were available.

The Need for Achievement. The need for achievement relates to this research study in the form of the academic progress of the homeschooled child. Each participant in this study

mentioned some form of academic progress within their student. Witnessing the academic progression of their child satisfied the need for achievement within the homeschool guardian. Faith mentioned she was concerned about her children's academic progress. She wrote in her journal response prompt, "Zoom classes met once a week, and they sent home busy work lessons. I finally gave up and ordered curriculum and started teaching my son." She noticed an improvement in her son instantly after beginning to homeschool him. Jackie had an experience related to the need for achievement, and she was satisfied when her mother saw progress and became very supportive of the concept of homeschooling. She specifically stated, "Mother was against it but came around after she saw progress."

The Need for Power. The participants were motivated by the need for power when they decided they would not continue to participate in forced virtual learning through Zoom. Deciding to homeschool allowed the participants to meet their need for power by quitting virtual learning and controlling their schedule and how their children learned. Heather asserted, "The local elementary school's decision to educate an entire day via computer was not okay. I was not okay with putting my son in front of a computer from 8:30 in the morning to 2:30 in the afternoon. So we began homeschooling." Carla echoed that assertion of power by mentioning how she felt in control of her schedule. She said, "One of the benefits of homeschooling is having our own schedule. We can sleep until we wake up."

The Need for Affiliation. Every participant used Facebook groups and cooperative groups to affiliate with other homeschool guardians that shared similar characteristics such as geographic region or educational philosophy. The participants fulfilled their need for affiliation through the groups. Jackie mentioned, "We share material and ideas and have a group of friends for our kids to play with." Ten of the 11 participants reported positive interactions with other

homeschool guardians they met through the cooperative and Facebook groups. Edith revealed, "We are a part of a homeschool community. We have lots of positive interactions weekly and sometimes more often." The affiliation in the homeschool groups replaced any affiliation that was a by-product of the participant's association with the school system.

The Need for Avoidance. In homeschooling, there is little interaction with the public school system outside of the initial notice of intent to homeschool or any yearly reporting requirements. The participants in the study were able to avoid any issues that stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic and the school system once they withdrew. Molly specifically mentioned satisfying her need for avoidance by asserting that avoiding the chaos was important to her. She stated, "The longer I homeschool, the more I'm like, yeah, I'm not gonna bother with putting her back in school." Abby confirmed a similar sentiment to Molly, mentioning that homeschooling allowed her "to avoid fundraisers, classroom parties, and kid fights."

The participants in this research study noted they felt confident in their ability to homeschool after they acquired more homeschooling knowledge and noticed their child's progression. Naturally, most participants mentioned they were unsure about their ability to homeschool their child during the initial start of their homeschool journey. Gayle was the only participant who felt confident enough to homeschool her son. She stated, "I am one of the smartest people I know." Once their knowledge regarding homeschooling increased, their motivation increased to continue homeschooling. Becky's confidence level increased, and she is now considering homeschooling her other son when he is school-age. She mentioned, "If my youngest one wanted to homeschool, I would be open to it. It's been that positive for us."

The theoretical findings of this study support the idea that humans have four dominant motivators, the need for achievement, power, affiliation, and avoidance. These motivators play a

key role in the decision-making process. McClelland's motivational needs theory is applicable beyond determining the needs of employees and businesses. The motivational needs theory provided insight into the motivation of homeschooled guardians in this research study. The participants in this research study were each driven by a characteristic of each of the four needs in the motivational needs theory. The participants revealed their motivational influences through interviews, focus group sessions, and written journal prompts.

Empirical Implications

Empirical implications were evident through the voices of the participants in this study. This research contributed to the literature concerning the experiences of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. In conducting previous empirical peer-reviewed searches, there were no previous studies that explored the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians' decision to homeschool and continue homeschooling after schools reopened. Additionally, there was a literature gap concerning the experiences of first-time homeschool guardians in the southeast region of the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. Primarily the research supported some of the existing literature about homeschool guardians, specifically their motivation to homeschool. Previous researchers mentioned a flexible schedule, curriculum choices, achieving academic success, and dissatisfaction with the school system as motivating factors for homeschooling (Bell et al., 2016; Morrison, 2014; Watson, 2018).

This research study confirmed that some of the aforementioned motivating factors also influenced first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Edith expressed, "We have a fluid schedule. Our schedule is not the same every day."

Isabella resonated with Edith's statement as she further explained, "I can tailor learning to my child's level, and I have autonomy over schedule and curriculum." When speaking about academic success, Faith highlighted, "there has been a huge change in my son academically. He has made progress in reading." Homeschool guardians in this study were not dissatisfied with the public school system prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The literature also suggested religion and politics as factors that motivated individuals to homeschool. Religion and politics did not influence the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians homeschool decision in this research study. Previous studies revealed that religion was a primary reason for homeschooling. Almost 50% of homeschool guardians noted religion as their primary reason for homeschooling (Powell, 2021; Ray, 2017; Walden, 2017). This was not confirmed in this research study. Only three participants mentioned religion as an influence on their motivation to homeschool. Jackie, Faith, and Abby each stated that God led them to homeschool. Jackie specifically highlighted, "God laid it on my heart to homeschool because school today is different than 30 years ago." Ticken and Auldridge-Reveles (2019) mentioned that politics played a significant role and that educational policies were not politically neutral. Ten of the 11 participants did not mention politics or the political climate concerning COVID-19 as an influence on their decision to homeschool. Gayle, the only participant to mention politics, stated, "The school environment became politically charged, and I just didn't want to deal with it." This study extends previous research by providing the experiences of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during a pandemic. Previous researchers revealed the motivations to homeschool under conditions outside of a pandemic (Brewer & Lubienski, 2017; Duvall, 2021).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations in research studies are probable weaknesses of the study that are beyond the researcher's control (Peoples, 2021). There were two limitations in this qualitative research study. The limitations centered around the responses received from six of the twelve states and time elapsed since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first limitation involved the lack of participants from Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Although this research study was open to participants in twelve states in the southeastern region of the United States, six states were represented in the data analysis. Responses from only six of the states decreased the generalization of this study to a narrow population sample. The second limitation included participants were interviewed two years after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants experience may yield a different result if they were interviewed in 2020 and not 2022.

Delimitations are the research study boundaries created by the researcher (Peoples, 2021). There were five delimitations within this qualitative research study. The first delimitation required participants to be guardians or have educational decision-making authority over a school-age child. The rationale for this delimitation was to ensure that the guardian had control over the direction of the child's education. The second delimitation required the child to be enrolled in a public or private school that closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This delimitation was relevant to the participant's experiences with contacting the educational institution to withdraw the student. The third delimitation was this study's restriction to participants that were first-time homeschool guardians with no prior homeschooling experience. This delimitation ensured that the participants offered an experience related directly to beginning a homeschool program for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study conducted under conditions outside of a pandemic may reveal different motivations for the participants' decision to homeschool. Their experiences were relevant to beginning their homeschooling program during a pandemic, resulting in a particular set of conditions, such as limited access to in-person assistance. The fourth delimitation in this study related to restricting participation to individuals who were currently homeschooling as of their participation in the research study. This delimitation excluded any participants that began homeschooling in 2020 but were no longer homeschooling as of 2022. This delimitation was relevant to the participant's experiences of continuing to homeschool after the K-12 educational institutions reopened. The fifth delimitation of this qualitative research study involved the purpose and the methodology.

The purpose was to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic through their lived experiences as new homeschool guardians. The methodology selected for this qualitative research study was transcendental phenomenology which did not permit the inclusion of my personal experience as a homeschool guardian. The bracketing out of my personal experiences allowed for an unbiased understanding of the everyday lived experiences of first-time homeschool guardians.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study's findings, limitations, and delimitations provided two recommendations for future research studies. The first recommendation for future research studies relates to this study's delimitation to homeschool guardians in the southeastern region of the United States. Future researchers may find it beneficial to conduct a case study to determine how living in a particular part of the world impacts their decision to homeschool. The final recommendation for future research includes homeschool guardians who decide to return their

children to a K-12 educational institution. Previous research studies broadly outline the influences on guardians' homeschooling decisions when they return (Brewer & Lubienski, 2017; Duvall, 2021). Researchers may benefit from conducting a narrative research study involving collecting individual stories and documents from participants to investigate the decision-making process of ending their homeschool program and returning to the educational system.

Conclusion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern region of the United States. This study sought to understand the lived experiences of first-time homeschool guardians' motivation to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, this study strived to understand the motivation behind the homeschool guardian's decision to continue homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened for in-person learning. This research study focused on the following research questions: What motivated first-time homeschool guardians in the southeastern region of the United States to begin homeschooling their children during the COVID-19 pandemic? What were the homeschool experiences of first-time homeschool guardians during the initial K-12 educational institution closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic? What homeschool experiences led first-time homeschool guardians to decide to continue homeschooling after K-12 educational institutions reopened during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The research data collected from the 11 first-time homeschool guardians in the southeastern region of the United States supported each of the research questions. The data were gathered through individual interviews, focus group sessions, and written journal prompts. The three major themes that emerged from the data analysis included motivations, support, and

challenges. Motivation as a theme described the motivation to homeschool relative to the participants' experiences with forced virtual learning, academic progress, COVID-19, schedules, and withdrawal from the school system. Support as a theme referred to experiences held by the participants concerning their association with cooperative groups, Facebook groups, and their family members. Challenges were indicative of the participant's experiences with the abrupt school closure, emotional distress, and curriculum choices.

The theory that guided this study was McClelland's motivational needs theory. The theory highlighted how the participants fulfilled four dominant needs concerning their homeschooling motivation. The primary findings in this study indicated that first-time homeschool guardians' motivation was significant to their decision to homeschool and continue their homeschooling program. Factors such as forced virtual learning, academic achievement, support groups, and abrupt school closures influenced the participants' decision to homeschool.

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Appendix A

Screening Survey Questions

1. **Name:** _____
2. **Email** _____
3. **Are you 18 years of age or older?**
 - Yes
 - No
4. **Are you currently homeschooling a child between 6-18 years of age, and did you begin your homeschooling program after March 2020?**
 - Yes
 - No
5. **Are you a resident of one of the following states: Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, or West Virginia?**
 - Yes
 - No
6. **How old are you?**
 - 18-29
 - 30-39
 - 40-49
 - 50-59
 - 60 or over
7. **In which state is your legal residence?**
 - Alabama
 - Arkansas
 - Georgia
 - Florida
 - Kentucky
 - Mississippi
 - North Carolina
 - South Carolina
 - Louisiana
 - Tennessee
 - Virginia
 - West Virginia
8. **In which year did you begin homeschooling?**
 - 2020
 - 2021
 - 2022
9. **How many children are you homeschooling?**
 - 1-2
 - 3-4
 - 5-6
 - 6 or more

Appendix B

Recruitment: Flyer

Research Participants Needed

The Lived Experiences of First-Time Homeschool Guardians
During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic:
A Transcendental Phenomenological Study

- **Are you 18 years of age or older?**
- **Are you a legal resident of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, Virginia, or West Virginia?**
- **Do you currently homeschool children between 6 and 18 years of age?**
- **Did you begin homeschooling for the first time in or after March 2020?**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern states of the United States.

- **Participants will complete an online survey (15 minutes) to determine participation eligibility.**
- **Participants will be interviewed using Zoom, Google Meets, or Microsoft Teams (30-45 minutes).**
- **Participants will be a part of a focus group (1-1.5 hours).**
- **Participants will complete a six-question journal prompt and submit it via email to me.**
- **Participants will receive a \$20 visa gift card as compensation for participating in the research study.**

If you would like to participate, please contact me at [REDACTED] for a survey to determine eligibility for participation. A consent form document will be emailed to you one week before the interview, and you will need to sign and return it prior to the interview.

Mary Higgins, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

The records of this study will be kept private and destroyed after three years. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify participants. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you before I share the data.

Please contact Mary Higgins at [REDACTED] for more information.

Appendix C

Participant Informed Consent Form

Title of the Project: The Lived Experiences of First-Time Homeschool Guardians During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Mary E. Higgins, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

You are invited to be in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and currently homeschooling a student from age 6-to 18 in one of the states in the southeastern region. The southeast regional states include Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Additionally, you must have begun homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic, which commenced after March of 2020. Participating in this research study is voluntary. Please read each section of this form and ask any questions before electing to participate in this research study.

Mary Higgins, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern states of the United States.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Respond to this email by completing the Google Form link below to determine your eligibility to participate. <https://forms.gle/oKDdJJBdjtKdoNBQ9>. You will be asked to include your email for communication purposes only. The eligibility survey should take approximately 15 minutes.
2. Participate in a virtual interview that will last approximately 60 minutes using an online platform, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or Google Meets. This interview will be audio/visually recorded for transcribing purposes later.
3. Participate in one focus group session that will last approximately 90 minutes using an online platform, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or Google Meets. This focus group session will be audio/visually recorded for later transcription. Other homeschool guardians will be participating in the focus group discussion.
4. Participate in journaling by answering six prompt questions. I will email questions to you, and you will return answers via email. The journaling process will take approximately 45 minutes, but the length depends on individual participants.

The study may indicate participants' perceived influences of the COVID-19 pandemic on their motivation to homeschool during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you encounter in everyday life.

Liberty University will not provide medical treatment or financial compensation if you are injured or become ill due to participating in this research study. Furthermore, consenting does not waive any of your legal rights nor release any claim you might have based on negligence.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from their participation in this study.

Compensation: Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Following the conclusion of the research study, participants will receive a \$20 Visa gift card. Participants should not expect to receive direct benefits from participating in this research study. Email addresses will be requested for compensation purposes; however, they will be pulled and separated from your responses by Google Forms to maintain anonymity.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private and destroyed after three years. In a report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify participants. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you before I share the data.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. The interviews will be conducted online via Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or Google Meets without any other person in the room.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group. Sharing information discussed in the focus group is discouraged; however, it is possible.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address found in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you, aside from the focus group, will be destroyed immediately and will not be a part of the research study. Focus group data collected will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study should you decide to withdraw. Your responses will not be included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Mary E. Higgins. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Sarah Pannone, at [REDACTED].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu. By signing this document, you agree to participate in this research study. Ensure you understand the background of the study before you sign the consent form. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any

questions about the research study after signing this document, you can contact the research study team using the contact information provided above.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix D

Institutional Review Board Approval



July 7, 2022

Mary Higgins
Sarah Pannone

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-1087 THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FIRST-TIME HOMESCHOOL GUARDIANS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN REGION IN THE UNITED STATES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Dear Mary Higgins, Sarah Pannone,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review.

This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d): Category 2. (ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording). Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional
Research Ethics Office

Appendix E

Recruitment: Facebook

ATTENTION FACEBOOK FRIENDS

I am conducting research as a part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree at Liberty University. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians to begin homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern states of the United States.

To participate, you must:

Be 18 years of age or older.

Currently, provide homeschool instruction to a student aged 6-18.

Began homeschooling during or after March 2020.

Be a legal resident of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, Virginia, or West Virginia.

Participants will be asked to complete an online survey (15 minutes) to determine participation eligibility. Eligible participants will be interviewed online (60 minutes), be a part of an online focus group (60-90 minutes) and complete a six-question journal prompt form (time frame varies). If you meet the study criteria and would like to participate, please direct message me or email me at [REDACTED]. A consent form document will be emailed to you one week before the interview, and you will need to sign and return it prior to the interview. If you would like to participate, click on the link below.

<https://forms.gle/oKDdJJBdjtKdoNBQ9>

Participants will be given a \$25 Visa gift card as compensation.

Appendix F

Journal Prompt Cover Letter

April 1, 2022

Dear Participant (Name)

I am Mary Higgins, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. I am in the process of conducting a qualitative research study in which you are a participant. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the motivation of first-time homeschool guardians who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic in the southeastern states of the United States. As a part of one of the primary data collection methods, I am requesting participants complete six journal prompt questions. Your responses are significant in collecting data for this research study. Please find the journal prompt questions attached and feel free to add any additional comments.

The records of this study will be kept private and destroyed after three years. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify participants. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you before I share the data.

If you have any concerns about the journal prompts, please get in touch with me at

[REDACTED]

Thank you very much for your assistance in the research study.

Mary E. Higgins