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Family Involvement in Charter Elementary Schools: A Case Study Using the Family Involvement Questionnaire-Elementary Version (FIQ-E)

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By

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This dissertation has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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"Jeśli nie możesz wejść przez drzwi, wejdź przez okno."

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ABSTRACT

Family involvement has been shown to have positive effects on the academic and socio-emotional and behavioral outcomes of school-aged children across all age ranges, but most especially among elementary-aged students. The Family Involvement Questionnaire-Elementary (FIQ-E) has been validated for use with students in grades 1-6 across public and parochial elementary schools in the US, which has been extended to primary schools in New Zealand and Belize. The FIQ-E was used in the current study in a charter elementary school in the Midwest. The participants included 40 family responses and one administrator. The results indicated there was a statistically significant difference in family involvement among students receiving ELL services. On average, participants whose students did not receive ELL services reported higher levels of total family involvement compared to those whose students did receive ELL services. Although this study sample was limited to one charter elementary school, the results were unique in that the sample occurred during a global pandemic. The results of this study support the effects of the pandemic on family involvement in schools, such that Home-Based Learning was higher than both Home-School Involvement and School-Based Learning, respectively. Implications for future research are discussed.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Family involvement, or parent involvement, has been prioritized by schools in recent years, motivated, in part by legislative actions that required schools to develop plans and implement actions to increase parent/primary caregivers/family involvement in schools to promote student achievement. More recently, this was implemented first in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; 2002), and later in the Every Child Succeeds Act (ECSA, 2015), which required that schools allocate no less than 1% of their funding to promoting parent/family involvement. Under NCLB (2002), schools receiving federal funding were mandated to develop a parent involvement policy that would outline the importance of parental involvement to student success and to integrate programs (e.g., Head Start) that would develop strategies to increase parent involvement. Under ECSA (2015), the mandate for parent involvement was amended to family involvement, which extended the requirement of schools to attempt to involve family members, not only parents/primary caregivers. Furthermore, ECSA (2015) detailed the types of activities that schools must engage in to promote family involvement, which include professional development, home-based programs, disseminating information, collaborating with community-based organizations, and other activities (Henderson, 2016). Such legislation has put the onus on schools to implement initiatives to increase family involvement, which in turn has increased the need for a reliable and valid measure of family involvement in schools.

Effects of Family Involvement on Students

Family involvement has been shown to be beneficial for student development and learning. A meta-analysis by Jeynes (2005) of 41 studies, yielding a total number of participants that exceeded 20,000, evaluated the effect of family involvement with academic achievement among urban academic achievement among students in grades K-6. Jeynes (2005) found that parental involvement had a large effect size, ranging between .70 to .75 on measures of academic achievement. These results were consistent for overall academic achievement, GPA, standardized tests, as well as other academic measures, such as grades. In another meta-analysis, Jeynes (2007) evaluated the effect of family-involvement on academic achievement in secondary schools. The analysis included 52 studies evaluating primary caregivers of students in grades 6-12. The overall effect of parental involvement on academic achievement was .50 to .55 (Jeynes, 2007). These findings were also consistent across race/ethnicity, which is particularly significant as this indicates that family involvement may be a source of intervention to close the educational gap among minority children (Jeynes, 2007). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of several other meta-analyses showed that parental involvement on student academic achievement across school ages was .51, compared to the overall average effect size of .40 for all educational interventions (Hattie, 2009).

Definition of Family Involvement

Despite the plethora of research demonstrating the importance of family involvement in schools for student development and learning, definitions of family involvement have varied between scholars (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000; Golnick &

Raftery-Helmer; 2015; Kim & Sheridan, 2015). Christenson and Sheridan (2001) defined family-school relationships as a deliberate, ongoing relationship that improves student development and learning, either directly or indirectly, and addresses any existing barriers in meeting this goal. However, this definition does not lend itself to creating a measure to assess family involvement due, in part, to its lack of specificity in identifying measurable behaviors, and a lack of consideration of developmental issues of students across the age span (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Research, however, shows that the nature of family involvement does look differently across the span of the children's development (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988). Whereas at the elementary age, parental involvement tends to be more evident within schools (e.g., teacher-parent contact, chaperoning, conferences), at the high school age, it tends to be more focused at home (e.g., helping with homework), which is less likely to be seen by teachers and school staff (Gotts & Purnell, 1987).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model. Bronfenbrenner (1986) outlined an ecological model that provides a framework for understanding child development in the context of multidimensional environmental systems. This model postulates that various systems affect child development in increasingly concentric environmental systems, namely the mesosystem, exosystem, and chronosystem. According to this model, the mesosystem comprises the most direct environmental variables affecting child development, including genetics, or nature, the interaction between nature and nurture, family, health care, childcare, peers, and school. The exosystem includes systems that affect child development more indirectly by affecting family processes (i.e., maternal

work, paternal work, and the community). The chronosystem consists of the broader social context in which the child is raised that can affect development, which can include socioeconomic status, parental education, and television and media influences (Bronfenbrenner). This multidimensional model of development, which takes into account various environmental influences on child development, provided the foundation for a more detailed model of the influence of family on development.

Epstein's Family Involvement Model. Epstein's (1995) model of family involvement, endorsed by the National Parent Teacher Association (Manz et al., 2004), further delineated the facets of family involvement in schools, outlining five types of involvement specifically related to family-school involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, and decision-making. Volunteering (e.g., classroom volunteering and parent chaperoning) and decision-making (e.g., participation in parent-teacher organizations and participation in school-board meetings) refer to more traditional forms of family involvement in schools (Epstein; Manz et al., 2004). Parenting (e.g., family support programs and parent-training/education programs) and learning at home (e.g., informing parents of student responsibilities and activities and interactive homework assignments) recognize the forms of family involvement that occur at home, or outside of the school setting (Epstein; Manz et al., 2004). Communication refers to all forms of home-school communication, such as conferences, notices, updates, and report cards conveying information about school-activities to parents (Epstein). Finally, although falling somewhat outside of the typical conceptualization of family-school involvement, Epstein delineated a sixth type of involvement, broader in scope,

collaborating with community, which refers to the various methods by which schools may involve outside community resources (e.g., health care services and community centers).

Family Involvement in High School

The preponderance of research evaluating the effects of family involvement on student development has focused on elementary school aged children, with relatively little attention being placed on the effects of family involvement on high-school aged youth (Grover, 2015; Simon, 2001). Parent involvement in their child's school tends to decrease as children progress in their schooling (Catsambis & Garland, 1997; Lee, 1995; Leon, 2003; Simon, 2004). However, studies suggest that parental involvement in high school continues to be associated with higher grades and improved emotional and behavioral health outcomes (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988). Indeed, there is a paucity of research on family involvement in high school, suggesting it may be less common than involvement at earlier grade levels (Leon, 2003). This may be because, typically, definitions of family involvement developed for elementary-aged children are applied to high-school students and families (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988).

The nature of family involvement in schools may also look different across grades. Changes in types of family involvement among high school students may be reflective of the changing roles of adolescents within their families. Gotts and Purnell (1987) developed a model of school-family involvement, comparing involvement at the elementary school and high school level. Parents at the elementary level tend to be more globally involved in their child's schooling, whereas parents of secondary school children

tend to be focused more on their own child's activities and progress. Whereas parents at the elementary school level are drawn to school activities, parents at the secondary level appreciate communication from the school, particularly as it relates to their child's academic and/or behavioral problems (Gotts & Purnell, 1987). Leon (2003) noted that secondary school parents were either unaware of parent groups associated with the school, did not want to embarrass their teenagers by participating in school activities, or have older children in secondary school that they trust. Furthermore, high school parents were more likely to initiate phone contact after being informed of their child's academic or behavioral difficulties. Leon (2003) found that high school parents' involvement was more difficult for teachers to observe than elementary school parents' involvement, often including activities at home, such as helping with homework until their child's teacher(s) bring a problem to their attention. In this way, direct parental involvement at the secondary level can become somewhat aversive, in that parents are typically only called to become involved in their student's educational life when that student is exhibiting a problematic behavior.

Research suggests that while family involvement looks different in secondary school, it is still an important factor in students' education and development. Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) found that while home- and school-based involvement decreased over time in middle and high school, the level of academic socialization (parents' valuation and expression of the importance of education and supporting a student's academic and career goals) stayed consistent. Although academic socialization has been studied as a separate variable from home-based involvement (e.g., Bhargava &

Witherspoon, 2015). Notably, Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014) found that while home-based and, to a slightly lesser extent, school-based involvement did have positive direct and indirect effects on academic and behavioral functioning in secondary school, academic socialization (parents' valuation and expression of the importance of education and supporting a student's academic and career goals), had the strongest increased academic and emotional functioning in high school. Indeed, at the secondary level, when parents support adolescents' autonomy while continuing to support their academic, learning, and career goals, family involvement in middle and high school is associated with increased academic achievement (Eccles et al., 1993; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil). Contrarily, whereas parental homework help is positively associated with student achievement in elementary school, it is negatively associated with academic achievement in middle school, likely due to the student's need for increased self-efficacy (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil).

Assessment of Family Involvement

Despite the importance placed upon family involvement in schools on student learning and development, there has been limited psychometric research on the instruments used to measure family involvement (Pomerantz & Monti, 2015). The most common method of measuring family involvement consists of utilizing parent, teacher, and/or student reports (Pomeratz & Monti, 2015). Such assessments generally require a reporter to rate parental involvement in their child's educational life, defined by the resources (e.g., time and energy) parents allocate to their child's educational life (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Pomerantz & Monti, 2015). However, many assessment

tools utilize teachers' reports of parent involvement on the basis of a narrow description of behavioral criteria, such as time spent on school-based activities including classroom volunteering and volunteering in parent-teacher organizations (PTO; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Pomerantz & Monti, 2015). This type of one-dimensional view of family involvement is a significant limitation in assessing family involvement in schools. Indeed, research suggests that family involvement is multi-dimensional (e.g., Grolnick & Slowiaczek; 1994). Hence, an assessment of family involvement should include behavior across settings, including school (e.g., parent-teacher association/organizations and chaperoning), home (e.g., homework help), and other settings (e.g., athletic events; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

Family Involvement Questionnaire – Early Childhood Version. Utilizing the framework proposed by Epstein (1995) for assessing family involvement, Fantuzo et al. (2000) developed the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ), to assess primary care-giver involvement with children in pre-kindergarten through first grade. The FIQ was later identified as the FIQ-Early Childhood version (FIQ-EC; Manz et al., 2004), and will be referred to as such in this paper. This study utilized a partnership-based method of item development with parents and teachers from a large urban school district.

To develop the items of the FIQ, Fantuzzo and colleagues (2000) utilized Gaskin's (1994) model, which involves four progressive stages that ensure the items have cultural validity of the measure. Participants include the researchers and representatives of the relevant group. The group works collaboratively to develop items of the measure through a four-stage process. The stages included explaining the rationale for the measure

and its benefit, reviewing the categories from which the items would be developed, identifying the response format, and reviewing and interpreting the findings after data collection and analysis.

To develop the FIQ-EC, a research committee, including researchers, school administrators, teachers, and parents, met over a 6-month period. The team reviewed Epstein's (1995) six categories in developing questions to assess family involvement and discussed the relevance of the categories to early childhood programs. The team created focus groups to identify the most frequent and relevant behaviors in each category and items and response formats were created. The items were tested with several groups of parents to establish cultural validity and ensure parents understood the items and that the items reflected the parent-child interaction. This process yielded 42-items scored on a 4-point scale (1 = *rarely*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *often,* 4 = *always*).

Fantuzzo et al. (2000) established construct validity of the FIQ using a factor analysis with varimax rotation, which yielded a three-factor structure. The three-factors were associated with school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school conferencing, with Cronbach's alphas of .85, .85, and .81 respectively. School-based involvement included items associated with parental actions and activities that occur in school with their children (e.g., volunteering in class, fundraising, and event planning). Home-based involvement included items related to promoting learning at home (e.g., providing learning materials and engaging in learning activities at home and in the community). Home-school conferencing included items related to parent-school communication (e.g., parent-teacher communication).

Fantuzzo et al. (2004) further validated the dimensions of the FIQ-EC in their study with families of 144 urban children enrolled in the Head Start program. The participants included primary caregivers of students aged 46 to 68 months, who were 96% African American and 46% male. The primary caregivers were 73% mothers, 8% fathers, 9% grandparents, and 10% other relatives or foster families. The FIQ-EC was administered to primary caregivers in the beginning of the school year and correlated with three outcome measures assessed at the end of the year. The three measures included the Preschool Learning Behavior Scale (PLBS; McDermott, Green, Francis, & Stott, 1996), assessing approaches to learning; the Conners' Teacher Rating Scale-28 (Conners, 1990), assessing problem behaviors in the classroom, including conduct problems, hyperactivity, and inattention/passivity; and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Third Version (Dunn & Dunn, 1997), assessing receptive vocabulary skills. The results showed that home-based involvement showed the strongest relationship to later preschool achievement as measured by the PLBS, as well as lower levels of behavior problems in the classroom. Furthermore, school-based involvement was found to be associated with fewer disruptive behaviors during play within the classroom of Head-Start students. Although both home and school-based involvement made an appreciable impact on student behavior within the classroom, home-based involvement yielded a statistically significant different in effect on classroom behavior among Head Start students (Fantuzzo et al., 2004).

Family Involvement Questionnaire – Elementary Version. Manz et al. (2004) extended the research on the FIQ-EC by adapting the measure to be used with families of

children in 1st through 5th grades. The FIQ-Elementary Version (FIQ-E) was developed using the same methods used to develop the FIQ-EC. Focus groups consisting of family members and teachers from two elementary schools in low-income urban areas were asked to consider and modify the items of the FIQ-EC for use with elementary-aged students. Family members (n = 20) consisted of parents and grandparents of children in 1st through 5th grades. Teachers (n = 21) were also representative of the1st through 5th grades. Focus groups with family members were conducted in four sessions, while two focus groups were conducted with teachers. The focus groups began by reviewing the items of the FIQ-EC as they related to the dimensions of family involvement outlined by Epstein (1995). Participants were then asked to rate the appropriateness of the items in the FIQ-EC to elementary-aged children. Based on their observations, items were kept, modified, or eliminated. Participants were also asked to identify other behaviors that were reflective of family participation in schools for elementary-aged children, which were then grouped by the five major types of involvement delineated by Epstein (1995). Furthermore, focus group participants were asked to provide additional family involvement behaviors relevant to elementary school students.

This process resulted in a 46-item FIQ-E, which included 39 of the original 42 items of the FIQ-EC, some of which were modified to be more appropriate to elementary-aged students (Manz et al., 2004). An additional seven items were included in the FIQ-E that were determined by the focus group to be important to family involvement among elementary-aged students, which yielded a 46-item survey. The final version of the FIQ-E was reviewed by the family volunteers of the focus group.

The FIQ-E was administered to the primary caregivers of 444 elementary-age students in the first through fifth grades from two urban elementary schools in the northeast US (Manz et al., 2004). More than 85% of students in the schools sampled qualified for free and reduced lunch. The participants were 96% African American and 4% Caucasian (Manz et al., 2004). Of the primary caregivers, 23% were of first grade students, 23% were of second grade students, 18% were of third grade students, 29% were of fourth grade students, and 5% were of fifth grade students given only one elementary school sampled included a fifth grade (Manz et al., 2004). Of the respondents, 79% were mothers and 77% of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 40 years.

Manz et al. (2004) confirmed the three-factor structure of the FIQ-E, with the factors being associated with home-school communication, home-based involvement, and school-based involvement. The three factors had good internal validity (α = .91, .88, and .84, respectively). Of the 46 items, 43 items loaded onto one of the three factors, with two items loading on two factors and one not loading on any factor. These three items were omitted from the final version of the FIQ-E. Manz et al. (2004) demonstrated that the FIQ-EC could be extended to students through 5th grade and further validated the three-factor structure found by Fantuzzo et al. (2000).

Semke et al. (2010) utilized the FIQ-E with students with disruptive behaviors in kindergarten through 3rd grade in both public and parochial schools in the Midwest. The FIQ-E was used to show that how parents conceptualize their role (e.g., what they believe they should do as parents) mediated the negative effect of parental stress on all three dimensions of the FIQ-E (i.e., home-based learning, home-school communication, and

home-based involvement). They further found that parent efficacy only had a mediating effect on home-based involvement. This study further validated that the dimensions of the FIQ-E measure distinct factors of family involvement (Semke et al.).

The FIQ-E has also been validated in New Zealand (Garbacz & Sheridan, 2011) with students in the 1st through 6th grades. The authors made slight modifications to the verbiage of certain questions to make them more appropriate for the culture in New Zealand; however, the meanings of the questions remained unchanged. The factor structure did not confirm the identical factor structure found by Manz et al., (2004), but they did find a similar three-factor structure with different item loadings. The adaptation and modification of the FIQ-E was identified as the Family Involvement Questionnaire-New Zealand (FIQ-NZ; Garbacz & Sheridan, 2011). These findings support the usefulness and applicability of the FIQ-E as a multidimensional assessment of family involvement.

Further supporting the potential applicability of the FIQ-E to varied populations, Garbacz et al. (2021) evaluated the FIQ-E with 185 primary caregivers in Brazil. Similar to the results found by Garbacz and Sheridan (2011), a confirmatory factor analysis did not support the three-factor structure found by Manz et al. (2004). The results yielded a five-factor structure (i.e., home-school communication, home expectations and monitoring, educational support, school and community involvement, and school attendance (Garbacz et al., 2021). Notably, Home-School Communication was also identified in the Belize study, which underscores the robustness of this factor and its importance in family-school involvement.

Family Involvement Questionnaire – High School Version. Grover (2015) and Grover et al. (2016) extended the FIQ to high school students in grades 9-12. The FIQ-HS was developed from the FIQ-E, which was originally validated up to grade 5 (Manz et al., 2004), but was later validated for use up to grade 8 (Semke et al., 2010). Of the 43-items included in the FIQ-E, 34 were retained in the FIQ-HS based on face-validity as the items related to high school students (Grover et al.). The 11-items that were removed were determined not to pertain to behaviors of high-school students (e.g., do creative activities with my child like singing, drawing, and story-telling). Items that were added included 6 items that were focused on transition activities, including preparing the student to transition to higher education, employment, and independent living (Grover et al.). Additionally, changes in verbiage were made to retained items to reflect age-appropriate modifications; for example, the word "child" was changed to "teen."

The FIQ-HS was administered to 517 primary caregivers of adolescents currently enrolled in high school (Grover et al., 2016). The mean age of participants was 45 (SD = 5.25) and 96% Caucasian. The respondents were mothers (80%), fathers (17%), step-parents (2%), and other (1%). Of the students, 11% were receiving special education services, and 2% were unsure. Schools were recruited via consent obtained from the school administrators who were given the option of having parents contacted by mail or email. All five schools recruited elected to contact parents via email. The questionnaire was administered on the online survey site, *Qualtrics*®. The email invitation included an explanation of the purpose of the survey and link to the survey. Family members indicated that they were at least 18 years old and gave consent to participate in the study

by selecting the link to access the survey. Participants completed a demographics questionnaire, which included the relationship to the student, parent age, racial/ethnic background, and special education status of the student, as well as the FIQ-HS. After data was collected, each school received a report showing the results. The reports contained the demographic data, the total FIQ-HS score, and the three subscale means (i.e., school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school based involvement; Grover et al., 2016).

Grover et al. (2016) found that the 40-item FIQ-HS had high internal reliability ($\alpha = .93$). A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the structural validity of the FIQ-HS (Grover et al.) across the three constructs of the FIQ-E (Manz et al., 2004). The 34-items of the FIQ-HS that were consistent with the FIQ-E were assigned to their respective factors. The confirmatory analysis did not support the same three factor structure found by Manz et al. (2004). An exploratory factor analysis with orthogonal (varimax) rotation was conducted supporting a three-factor solution. Of the 40-items of the FIQ-HS, 25 items loaded significantly onto one of the three factors: home-based school communication ($\alpha = .89$), home-based activities ($\alpha = .71$), and school-based activities ($\alpha = .77$), accounting for 31.97% of the variance, with home-based communication accounting for 14.19% of variance, home-based activities accounting for 10.27% of variance, and school-based involvement accounting for 7.20% of variance. There were 15 items that did not load onto any factor, compared to 6 items that did not load onto any factor in the Manz et al. (2004) study. For these 15 items, researcher judgment was used to place them onto one of the three factors (Grover et al.).

A significant finding of the Grover (2015) study was that the one charter school included in the study had significantly higher levels of home-school communication and total family involvement. The mean home-school communication of the charter school was 3.09, compared to 2.28, 2.24, 2.07, 2.58, and 2.28 (M = 2.22) of the public schools. The mean total family involvement was 3.03 at the charter school, compared to 2.65, 2.67, 2.58, 2.68 (M = 2.65). Given only one charter school was included, statistical analyses could not be performed; however, Grover noted this as a significant point for future research. The difference between family involvement found between high schools and charter high schools found by Grover (2015) suggests that there may be differences in family involvement between traditional public and charter schools overall. This has been substantiated by previous research on family involvement in charter schools, discussed below. Before reviewing the literature on family involvement in charter schools; however, it is important to understand how charter school systems function, particularly in Minnesota, where this study was conducted.

Charter Public Schools

Minnesota passed the first charter school law in 1991 (*Laws of Minnesota 1991*) and since then, charter schools have increased from 2% to 5% from the fall of 2004 to the fall of 2014 (Thompsen, 2016). A charter public school, henceforth referred to as charter school, is a publicly funded school that is governed by a charter, or contract between a group or organization and a district, state, or other entity (Thompsen, 2016). A charter exempts a school from most state rules and regulations, varying by state, allowing the school more flexibility and autonomy (Buckley & Schneider, 2007; Finnegan et al., 2004;

Powers, 2009; Thompsen, 2016). In place of state regulations, charter schools must comply with the educational outcomes detailed in the school's charter (Powers, 2009). The students attend charter schools by choice and teachers also teach at the schools by choice and are not necessarily mandated to hold valid teaching licenses (Buckley & Schneider, 2007; Finnegan et al., 2004). Charter schools tend to be smaller and localized in urban, lower socioeconomic (SES) areas, serving a higher percentage of minority and low SES students than public schools, but serving fewer students in special education (Finnegan et al., 2004). Given that parents elect to enroll their children into charter schools, there is research that shows that parents think that charter schools are better than public schools their children were enrolled in before.

Family Involvement in Charter Schools. Finn et al. (1997) found that most parents of children enrolled in charter schools feel that charter schools are better than non-charter schools in terms of class size, school size, teacher involvement, and quality of instruction and curriculum. Furthermore, Finn et al. found that students of charter schools reported higher student satisfaction. Within the context of choice-based enrollment, it may be that parents feel a greater amount of responsibility for sending their students to a charter school, hence they may be inclined to be more involved in their students' school and education. Research does suggest a small, but significant effect of enrollment in choice-based charter schools; however, this effect is significantly reduced when factors such as parental education are controlled for (Tedin & Weiher, 2011).

Additionally, many charter schools have a culture, if not a written contract, that encourages greater parental involvement in the school with stronger and more specific

policies on family involvement (Buckley & Schneider, 2007). Charter schools in 14 states have mandatory parent involvement contracts, ranging from 10 to 72 hours of required family involvement each school year (Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009). Becker et al. (1997) found that parent contracts mandating family involvement are effective in increasing involvement in schools. Such contracts typically offer parents a choice to contribute to the school financially if they are not able to participate in the school, but there are concerns that these contracts may discourage families from lower SES backgrounds from enrolling their children into schools with mandated family involvement. Hence, it may be that the culture of charter schools lends itself to increased family involvement, as was alluded to in Grover's (2015) initial results.

Previous research regarding family involvement in charter schools has found mixed results. Finn et al. (2000) reported that 88% of charter schools in California have parents on their governing bodies. Additionally, in a survey of National Education Association teachers, 21% reported that parents initiated the development of their charter school (Finn et al., 2000). In another survey of parents of 30 charter schools across nine states, 64% rated parent involvement as better at the charter school than public school in their district, and 43% cited greater opportunities for parental involvement as a reason they chose a charter school (Finn et al., 2000). Similarly, in a comprehensive evaluation of 477 charter schools from 1999 to 2002, Finnegan et al. (2004) found that charter schools were more likely than public schools to have high family involvement, with 87% of charter schools having parents serve on advisory committees and 82% serving on the governing board. Furthermore, charter school parents were more likely to participate in a

wider variety of activities, including supervising lunch or field trips (81%), fundraising (77%), and assisting in classrooms and other instructional programs (61%; Finnegan et al., 2004).

Conversely, there have been studies that have not found significant difference between family involvement in charter and public schools. Gleason et al. (2010) found that among middle schools, family involvement did not vary significantly between parents of students in charter schools and public schools. Charter school parents were significantly more likely to volunteer or attend school activities, but were also slightly less likely to be a member of the PTA. Similarly, in a study of Washington D.C. public and charter schools, Buckley and Schneider (2007) found that charter school parents were not significantly more likely to volunteer for a school event or be a part of the PTA and were significantly less likely to help with homework (55%), but were significantly more likely to speak with teachers at least once a month (83%), to speak with administrators at least once a month (44%), and get information from school staff (55%).

Interestingly, Tedin and Weiher (2011) found that while charter school parents were less involved than public school parents in school-based activities during the first year of charter school enrollment, they were significantly more involved in home-based and home-school involvement, including non-academic school-based activities (e.g., sports and community involvement). This pattern changes in the second year of charter school enrollment, at which point charter parent school-based involvement increases, becoming significantly higher than that in public schools. Home-based and non-academic involvement remained significantly higher among charter school parents (Tedin &

Weiher, 2011). This finding suggests that there may be a period of socialization in which families become accustomed to the charter school climate.

In addition to varied results on family involvement in charter schools, a survey of Midwest charter school directors found that 29% of directors reported that Midwest charter school directors reported slightly lower levels of parental involvement than did public school principals (Gross & Pochap, 2007). Furthermore, 29% of charter school directors reported that engaging parents was one of their greatest challenges and 10% of directors reported feeling unconfident in engaging parents.

Factors Affecting Family Involvement in Schools

Given the mixed results on family involvement in high schools found in previous research and the lack of research comparing family involvement in charter and public schools, there is a need for research on family involvement in both charter and public schools. This would present a self-selection bias that may affect the generalizability of research on family involvement in public schools to charter schools. Furthermore, several factors have been identified as affecting family involvement in public high schools; however, there has been considerably less research evaluating the effects of these factors in charter high schools.

School Size. There is evidence that there is an inverse relationship between school size and parental involvement in public schools (Goldkinnd & Farmer, 2013; Walsh, 2010). Goldkinnd and Farmer (2013) further found that school climate, as measured by safety and respect, mediates the relationship between school size and parental involvement in larger public middle and high schools, such that larger schools

were seen as having a poorer school climate, which lead to lower levels of parent engagement and communication. Given that charter schools tend to be smaller, and have choice-based enrollment, it is likely that parental involvement may be higher in charter high schools.

Grade of Student. Research suggests that school-based involvement decreases as adolescents get older, however, evidence suggests that parent involvement continues to be associated with improved academic and socioemotional outcomes (e.g., Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015; Catsambis, 2002; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Simon (2001) found that when parents attended college-preparatory workshops (school-based involvement) and had regular conversations at home with their secondary students regarding post-graduate plans (home-based involvement), students' had higher GPA's and earned more course credits in both English and math during high school. These results were found independent of students' grades in those subjects prior to high school. The positive effects of family involvement, while becoming weaker over time, persist through 12th grade (Catsambis, 2002). The strongest positive effects in 12th grade have been found for parental support and communication about their educational progress and future goals on educational achievement. Notably, parent involvement did not have a significant effect on all outcome measures, such as standardized test scores (Catsambis, 2002; Catsambis & Garland, 1997).

Gender of Student. Research indicates that parent involvement may vary by student gender (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015). Research suggests that family involvement is lower when the student has internalizing or externalizing behavior

problems, and given male students are more likely to qualify under Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD), this would suggest that there may be a gender effect to family involvement (Angran & Fischer, 2017; Semke et al., 2010). Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) found that while there was no gender difference in school-based involvement among 8th grade students, home-based involvement was significantly higher among females, whereas parent communication with the school (home-school involvement) was significantly higher among male students. However, these results have not been consistent. Bhargava & Witherspoon (2015) found that home- and school-based involvement was higher for male students, whereas parents of female students engaged in significantly more home-school activities (e.g., volunteering at school). Given that male students are more likely to have behavioral problems in school and are at higher risk for dropping out, schools may reach out to parents of male students to report behavioral problems, which would explain increased home-school communication.

Family Racial/Ethnic Background. Research has been mixed as to the effect of racial/ethnic background and family involvement. Studies have found that levels of home-based involvement were higher among African American families (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Specifically, Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) found that while African American parents engage in less school-based activities, they were significantly more involved in home- and school-home activities (e.g., home-school communication) than white parents. This may be because African American parents are more sensitive to perceptions of their students' autonomy at school. African American parents may also be more reticent to participate at their

student's school due to negative personal experiences in schools, such as experiences of prejudice (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015). Contrarily, Tedin and Weiher (2011) did not find a significant difference in family involvement across racial/ethnic backgrounds. These possible differences of parental involvement across race have not been sufficiently investigated in charter high schools.

Socioeconomic Status/Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility. Previous research suggests that family SES has some effect on family involvement, although the effect is small. Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) found that school-based involvement was significantly lower among parents from a low SES background, as compared to those from a high SES background. Low SES parents may be less likely to engage in school-based involvement due to practical barriers (e.g., transportation, work schedules, childcare). It may also be that low SES parents may be hesitant to be directly involved in schools because of a perceived lack of knowledge or skill (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Interestingly, SES did not have a significant effect on families' communication with their students about their education or academic expectations (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015; Catsambis, 2002). Indeed, some studies have found no significant effect on family involvement (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Charter schools tend to be located in urban and low SES areas (Finnegan et al., 2004), which would suggest that school-based involvement would be lower, however this effect may be mediated by the charter school culture of encouraging parent participation.

Special Education Status. Research suggests that parental involvement may be affected when a student has an Individual Education Plan (IEP), or receives special

education services. Kirksey et al. (2022) followed students from kindergarten to evaluate changes in parental involvement once a student was on an IEP. They found that parents' home-based involvement increased slightly after the student qualified for an IEP. Notably, parents from lower SES backgrounds and families who immigrated to the U.S. showed a greater increase in parental involvement then other parents once their24tudentt qualified for an IEP. This suggests that schools may be less likely to involve such families until they are mandated to by special education law. This finding suggests that families of students who qualify for FRL and/or receive ELL services, but do not have an IEP, may report lower levels of family involvement.

Parental involvement has been shown to be associated with improved outcomes for students receiving special education. In a national longitudinal study following 2,900 secondary school students with disabilities for 5 years after high school graduation, the two factors that most significantly predicted post-secondary employment were having work experience in high school and parental expectations and support of post-secondary employment (Wehman et al., 2014). In a qualitative study, Morningstar et al. (1995) conducted focus groups with 40 students with disabilities, ranging in age from 13 to 19, investigating the students' perceptions regarding family involvement in the transition from secondary school. Secondary students receiving special education services identified three factors that they considered to be most influential in the transition process, including family involvement in the planning of their future after high school, involvement in the transition process (e.g., involvement in IEP meetings), and family

support of the students' growing autonomy through secondary school and beyond. The impact of family involvement in charter schools needs further study.

English Language Learner Status. Students and families for whom English is not a primary language have a unique challenge in engaging and becoming involved in schools. In focus groups, Spanish-speaking parents of high school students have expressed a need for greater bilingual communication options (e.g., school mailings), as well as considerations for bilingual parents whose first language is not English (Reynolds et al., 2015). Bilingual parents for whom English is their second language indicated that school personnel often speak too quickly and/or use jargon and colloquialisms that make effective communication difficult. As charter schools are typically smaller, teachers may have more time to spend with families whose primary language is not English. A qualitative study using interviews to evaluate strategies used to engage families by urban elementary schools found that charter schools found that a common technique to reduce language barriers was to translate school newsletters and offer interpreter services for in-school meetings (Smith et al., 2011).

Summary

Research suggests that family involvement among elementary families, as measured by the FIQ-E, may be higher among families with students in charter schools than those of public schools (Grover et al., 2016). However, due to limited research of family involvement in charter schools, we don't know how or why it may be higher. Studies also suggest potential differences in family involvement associated with the grade of students (e.g., Catsambis, 2002), gender of students (e.g., Bhargava & Witherspoon,

2015), family racial/ethnic background (e.g., Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015), and socioeconomic status (e.g., Bhargava and Witherspoon, 2015). Some research has also suggested that family involvement may vary based on whether a student receives ELL services (Reynolds et al., 2015).

Additionally, previous research has indicated that school administrators have varying levels of confidence in their ability to engage family members in school activities (Gross & Pochap, 2007). Qualitative research on charter schools that are exceptional at facilitating family involvement has shown that schools with the greatest success at involving families utilize various strategies across several platforms (e.g., internet bulletins, text messages, and phone calls; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009; Smith et al., 2011). As studies indicate that the incorporation of non-traditional means of reaching out to families is most effective at increasing family involvement, a secondary aim of this study is to evaluate the means by which participating charter schools attempt to involve families.

Purpose of the Current Study

This study aims to assess family involvement in charter elementary schools, as measured by the FIQ-E (Manz et al., 2014), and evaluate trends and school strategies related to family involvement in these schools. The primary research questions of the proposed study are:

(1) Does the FIQ-E have good internal consistency in charter schools?

(2) What is the level of family involvement in charter elementary schools, and are there any student demographics that affect family involvement (e.g., FRL, IEP, and ELL)?

(3) What methods are used by charter elementary school administrators to initiate and encourage family involvement (e.g., methods of communication and activities)?

Chapter 2: Methods

Study Design and Overview

The aim of this study was to measure the level of family involvement in charter elementary schools. Initially, the recruitment of participant schools was targeted; however, due to a poor response rate from schools, the participant pool was expanded in order to secure a participant charter elementary school. One charter elementary school was secured for inclusion in the study. More participant schools were recruited; however, none were willing to participate in the study. Having only been able to collect data from one school, the study currently represents a case study of one charter elementary school.

Participants

FIQ Respondents. Of 537 families that received the FIQ email, 40 family responses were obtained, for a response rate of 7.5% to the FIQ-E. As shown in Table 1, mothers comprised 70% of respondents. The racial/ethnic background that the family identified with most were 50% Caucasian/white (n = 20), 13% African American (n = 5), 8% Latino/Hispanic (n = 3), 8% Native American/Inuit (n = 3), 8% multiracial (n = 3), and 13% other (n = 5), as shown in Table 1.

The student sample being reported on were 50% male (n = 20), 47.5% female (n = 19), and 2.5% other (n = 1), shown in Table 2. Students were in the following grades: first grade = 11 (28%); second grade = 5 (13%); third grade = 7 (18%); fourth grade = 4 (10%); fifth grade = 13 (33%). The number of years students had been attending a charter school were as follows: 12.5% (n = 5) attended 1 year, 32.5% (n = 13) 2 years, 10% (n = 4) 4 years, 15% (n = 6) 5 years, and 12.5% (n = 5) 6 years, with 7.5% (n = 3) not

reporting. Of the students being reported on, 20% were on an IEP (receiving Special Education services; n = 8), 68% were not (n = 27), and 13% did not know (n = 5). Primary caregivers reported that 45% (n = 18) qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), 43% (n = 17) did not qualify for FRL, and 13% (n = 5) did not know. Primary caregivers reported 12.5% (n = 5) of students were receiving English as a Second Language (ELL) services, 80% (n = 32) did not receive ELL services, and 7.5% (n = 3) did not know (Table 2).

Table 1

Demographics of Primary Caregivers to Student

	N	Percentage
Relationship to Student		
Mother	28	70%
Father	5	12.5%
Step-Parent	0	0%
Grandparent	0	0%
Aunt/Uncle	0	0%
Foster Parent	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Not Indicated	7	17.5%
Race/Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	20	50%
African American	5	13%
Latino/Hispanic	3	8%
Native American/Inuit	3	8%
Multiracial	3	8%
Other	5	13%
Not Indicated	1	.03%

Table 2

Student Demographics

Variable	*N*	Percentage
Gender		
Male	20	50%
Female	19	47.5%
Other	1	2.5%
Grade		
1st	11	28%
2nd	5	13%
3rd	7	18%
4th	4	10%
5th	13	33%
Years in Charter		
1st year	5	12.5%
2nd year	13	32.5%
3rd year	4	10.0%
4th year	4	10.0%
5th year	6	15.0%
6th year	5	12.5%
Not Indicated	3	7.5%
IEP		
Yes	8	20%
No	27	67.5%
Do Not Know	5	12.5%
FRL		
Yes	18	45%
No	17	42.5%
Do Not Know	5	12.5%
ELL		
Yes	5	12.5%
No	32	80%
Do Not Know	3	7.5%

Administrator Respondents. The administrator survey was sent to three administrators, of which one responded. The respondent reported they were a school principal. The respondent reported having been an administrator at their current school

for two years. The respondent reported having been an administrator at any school for two years.

Measures

Family Demographics Questionnaire. The demographics questionnaire (Appendix A) is a brief, 8-item questionnaire assessing the respondents' relationship to the student, the racial/ethnic background the family most identifies with, the grade of the student, the number of years the student attended a charter school, student gender, student special education status, FRL eligibility, and ELL services. Respondents should be able to complete the questionnaire in 5 minutes or less (Grover, 2015).

Family Involvement Questionnaire-Elementary Version (FIQ-E). Family involvement in their elementary-aged charter school student was measured with the FIQ-E (Manz et al., 2004). The FIQ-E (Appendix B) is a 43-item questionnaire aimed to assess family involvement with elementary-aged students. The FIQ-E is a multidimensional measure yielding three factors: Home-School Communication, Home-Based Learning, and School-Based Learning (Manz et al.; Appendix C). The items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *rarely*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *often*, and 4 = *always*). The FIQ-E was validated for use with students in grades 1 through 5 in the US (Manz et al., 2004). The FIQ-E has a three-factor structure (Home-School Communication, Home-Based Involvement, and School-Based Involvement), which demonstrated good internal validity (α = .91, .88, and .84, respectively). Semke et al. (2012) confirmed the internal consistency for the School-Based Involvement, Home-Based Involvement, and Home–School Communication scales (α =.82, .86, and .85, respectively) with families of

children grades kindergarten through 3rd grade in public and parochial schools in the Midwest.

The FIQ-E has also been adapted for use in New Zealand (FIQ-E NZ; Garbacz & Sheridan, 2011) and Brazil (Garbacz et al., 2021). Garbacz and Sheridan (2011) confirmed a three-factor structure, although the items did not all fall on the same factors as found by Manz et al. (2004). The FIQ-E NZ also reported good internal consistency for the School-Based Involvement, Home–School Communication, and Home-Based Involvement scales (α =.83, .86, and .76, respectively). In their study, Garbacz et al. (2021) found a five-factor model (Home-School Communication, Home Expectations and Monitoring, Educational Support, School and Community Involvement, and School Attendance), all of which had good internal consistency ($\alpha \leq .75$).

Administrator Questionnaire. An administrator questionnaire (Appendix D) was developed for this study to assess the methods participating charter school administrators use to increase family involvement within their schools. The questionnaire includes items assessing the length of time the administrator has been in their role at the current charter school, how many years they have been an administrator at any charter school, how important they believe family involvement is, how big of a challenge it is to engage parents, how confident they are in their ability to engage parents, and the means by which their school increases family involvement. These activities were developed from studies assessing family involvement practices of exemplary charter schools (Smith et al., 2011; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009).

Procedures

Recruitment started in October of 2020 through February of 2022. Data included in the results were collected in August to September of 2021 and no further schools agreed to participate after those dates. School administrators were contacted via email (Appendix E). The purpose and scope of the study was described, and participation of the school was requested. Schools that agreed to participate in the study were provided with an email parent invitation describing the study with a link to the FIQ-E (Appendix C). Consent to participate in the study was obtained from each school principal that agreed to participate in the study.

Schools were then provided with an email invitation to parents/primary caregivers and asked to email primary caregivers of students in the 1st to 5th grades. The email included a cover letter, a statement of implied consent, and a link to the FIQ-E survey. Each survey was anonymous, with no identifying information associated with the survey results. No identifying information was collected from participants.

Administrators were also asked to complete an Administrator Survey assessing methods of increasing family involvement in their school. Administers were emailed a cover letter and statement of implied consent, as well as a link to the online survey. Each survey was anonymous, with no identifying information associated with the survey results.

School Reports of Results. The participating school received a comprehensive report of the results of the Demographic Questionnaire and FIQ-E for their school. The report included demographic data of respondents (e.g., relationship to the student(s), age,

race/ethnicity, and the IEP status of the student). Means, standard deviations, and ranges of each of the three scales (i.e., home-school communication, home-based communication, and school-based activities), as well as the total score were reported. Item means, as well as number and percentage of each response option (i.e., rarely, sometimes, often, and always) for each item were also reported.

Analyses

Due to the small sample size, statistical analyses were limited for the current study. To answer the first research question, "Does the FIQ-E have good internal consistency in charter schools?", the FIQ-E scale reliability was reported for the FIQ-E Total and the Home-Based Involvement, School-Based Involvement, and Home-School Communication subscales. Internal reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All statistics were calculated using *SPSS*. To answer the second research question, "What is the level of family involvement in charter elementary schools and are there any student demographics that affect family involvement?", FIQ-E Total and subscale descriptive statistics were reported, and independent samples *T*-tests were also conducted to evaluate the relationship between dichotomous demographic variables (i.e., gender, FRL, ELL, and IEP status) and the FIQ-E Total and subscales. To answer the third research question, "What methods are used by charter elementary school administrators to initiate and encourage family involvement (e.g., methods of communication and activities)?", all responses from the administrator survey were reported. Administrators were asked to report how long they have been administrators in their current school and in general, how important they believe family-involvement is (1 = *Not at All* to 10 = *Extremely*), how

confident the administrator is in their ability to engage parents/family members at your school (1 = *Not at All* to 10 = *Extremely*), and how big of a challenge it is to engage parents at their current school (1 = *Very Challenging* to 5 = *Very Easy*). Administrators were also asked to select any means by which they encourage family involvement from a list of 18 activities, or to provide any other means of increasing family involvement not listed.

Chapter 3: Results

The small sample size limited the type of analyses that could be completed. First, Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was conducted to establish internal consistency of the total scale and three subscales and descriptive statistics are reported to summarize the scores on the FIQ-E.

Reliability

The Cronbach's alpha of the full 43-item scale of the FIQ-E was high (α =.95). The Cronbach's Alphas of the subscales was also high: Home-Based Learning (α = .90), Home-School Communication (α = .90), and School-Learning (α = .88) subscales were also high.

Scale Descriptives

The FIQ-E Total Score is comprised of the sum of all 43 items (scored 1 = *Rarely* to 4 = *Always*). The range of possible scores for the Total scale is 43 to 172, when all items are completed. The descriptive statistics of the Total scale are presented in Table 3. In this study, the mean Total score was 96.97 (*SD* = 28.15). The Home-School Communication scale is comprised of 13 items for a minimum possible score of 13 and a maximum possible score of 52. The mean Home-School Communication score was 32.04 (*SD* = 8.02). The Home-Based Learning scale is comprised of 17 items, for a possible score range of 17 to 68. The mean in this study was 46.40 (*SD* = 9.54). The School-Based Involvement scale is comprised of 13 items, for a possible scale score of 13 to 52. The mean School-Based Involvement score in this study was 22.86 (*SD* = 7.58).

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics of the FIQ-E Total and FIQ-E Scales

Descriptives	FIQ Total	Home-School Communication	Home-Based Learning	School-Based Involvement
Mean	100.03	32.04	46.40	22.86
Median	101.00	33.50	48.00	22.00
Mode	86	28	49	17
Std. Deviation	22.55	8.02	9.54	7.58
Minimum	43	13	17	13
Maximum	138	43	59	41

Family Characteristics and FIQ-E Scales

Table 4 shows the FIQ-E scores by demographic variables. Individual sample *T*-tests were run on the relationship of the respondents to the student, gender of student, IEP status, and FRL status on the FIQ-E Total and subscale scores. No significant differences were found between groups for having an IEP, qualifying for FRL, gender of the student, or the respondents' relationship to the student (i.e., mother or father). There was a statistically significant difference between groups based on ELL status for the Total score $t(28) = -2.52$, $p < .05$. On average, participants whose students did not receive ELL services reported higher levels on the Total score ($M = 103.12$; $SD = 19.14$) compared to those whose students did receive ELL services ($M = 75.00$; $SD = 31.56$).

Table 4.

Family Involvement Questionnaire-Elementary Version Scale Scores by Demographics

Variable		Home-School Communication		Home-Based Learning		School-Based Involvement		FIQ Total	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Student Gender	Male	32.33	9.57	46.29	11.87	24.27	8.81	103.06	26.56
	Female	31.69	6.13	46.54	5.65	21.23	5.76	96.36	16.70
ELL	Yes	26.00	14.73	40.33	20.43	15.00	2.00	75.00	31.36
	No	32.79	7.16	46.88	8.14	23.29	7.16	103.12	19.14
FRL	Yes	34.08	8.75	47.69	10.33	22.45	8.76	104.92	23.00
	No	30.67	7.56	45.69	9.31	23.50	7.02	97.12	22.72
IEP	Yes	34.17	11.04	46.33	15.48	22.83	6.18	103.33	30.78
	No	32.84	5.98	47.43	5.09	23.00	7.65	101.32	17.79
First Grade		30.50	10.80	46.86	14.08	24.50	9.09	97.88	32.45

Administrator Survey

Due to the small sample size, only descriptive statistics could be reported on the administrator survey. The administrators were asked three questions about family involvement in their school: (1) How important do you believe it is to engage parents/families at your current school?; (2) How confident are you in your ability to engage parents/family members at your school?; (3) How big of a challenge is it to

engage parents at your school?. Questions 1 and 2 was rated on a 1-10 scale (1 = *Not at All* to 10 = *Extremely*). Question 3 was rated on a 1-5 scale (1 = *Very Challenging to* 5 = *Very Easy*). The importance of engaging families (Question 1) was rated as a 10 (*Extremely*) by the administrator (i.e., principal). The level of confidence of the administrator in engaging families (Question 2) was rated as a six. The administrator rated Question 3 (How big of a challenge is it to engage parent at your school?) as a three.

Administrators were also asked to select from a list of 18 activities compiled from studies assessing family involvement practices of exemplary charter schools (Smith et al., 2011; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009). Items that were endorsed by the administrator included: sending home/email school newsletters, using an online parent portal to track student assignments and grades (e.g., Infinite Campus and Schoology), offering newsletters and school materials in multiple languages, offering parent-teacher conference times beyond school hours (e.g., evening conferences), offering interpreter services (in person or by phone), using social media to provide updates and news, providing opportunities for parents to participate on the school governing board, offering multiple means of communication (e.g., phone call, text, email) to notify parents of updates about their student (e.g., tardies and absences), and attending workshops or classes offered by the school. Items that were not endorsed by the principal included: parents have the opportunity to help in the classroom, parents have the opportunity to assist in other activities (e.g., supervising lunch, field trips, school dances), using a "parent contract" mandating or suggesting the number of hours parents should volunteer,

offering alternative opportunities to volunteer (e.g., school maintenance and beautification), posting updated volunteer opportunities and requests on the school website, providing opportunities for parents to help in extracurricular activities (e.g., bring snacks for sports teams), providing opportunities for parents to participate on a parent organization (PTO/PTA), and engaging in fundraising.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Family involvement has been shown to significantly affect academic achievement, both at the elementary (Jeynes, 2005) and secondary school levels (Jeynes, 2007). Charter schools have choice-based enrollment and parents report feeling that charter schools have better class sizes, school sizes, teacher involvement, quality of instruction, and curriculum (Finn et al., 1997), which may lead to higher levels of family involvement in school. Many charter schools also have a culture that encourages family involvement, as well as stronger and more specific policies on involvement (Buckley & Schneider, 2007).

This study aimed to investigate family involvement in charter elementary schools using the FIQ-E. The most significant issue that was faced was difficulty in the recruitment process. Initially, recruitment of charter schools was targeted; however, given virtually no responses from administrators, recruitment was widened to any charter elementary schools in order to secure participant schools. In this process, only one school agreed to participate in this study. This is clearly the most significant limitation of the study and significantly reduced the types of analyses that could be utilized. This issue will be discussed further in the limitation section of the discussion.

Regarding the first research question about the internal consistency of the FIQ-E in charter schools, this study found that the FIQ-E Total score had very good internal consistency in a charter elementary school. The FIQ-E subscales also had high reliability in a charter school setting ($\alpha \geq .88$). This suggests that the FIQ-E is a reliable measure of family involvement in charter elementary schools, which extends the body of research

from public and parochial elementary schools (Manz et al., 2004; Semke et al., 2010). Initially adapted from the FIQ-EC (Manz et al., 2004), the FIQ-E was developed using focus groups and validated through factor analysis, supporting the construct validity of the instrument with use in elementary schools in low-income urban areas with students in the 1st to 5th grades (Manz et al., 2004). The instrument was then validated with students with behavioral problems in kindergarten through 3rd grade in both public and parochial schools in the Midwest (Semke et al., 2010). The FIQ-E has also been adapted for use internationally, with a similar factor structure found with 1st to 6th graders in New Zealand (Garbacz & Sheridan, 2011) and a five-factor structure found with primary schools in Belize (Garbacz et al., 2021). This study further supports the use of the FIQ-E in charter schools.

Regarding the second research question regarding the level of family involvement in charter elementary schools, and student demographics that affect family involvement (e.g., FRL, IEP, and ELL), the results found in this study based on data from one charter elementary school suggest that whether a student receives ELL services may be a significant factor in the level of family's overall involvement. This study found a significant difference between students receiving ELL services and the Total FIQ-E score, such that families of students receiving ELL services reported a significantly lower total score than those whose children did not receive ELL services. While these results have limited generalizability to other charter elementary schools, this finding does support the findings of Reynolds et al. (2015), who suggested that parents for whom

English is a second language reported difficulty communicating with school staff due to issues such as fastness of speech, jargon, and colloquialisms.

Fantuzzo et al. (2000) found that the three FIQ-E factors ranged from a mean of 48.3 to 48.7 among male students and 49.6 to 49.9 among female students. In comparison, this study found that the range of the FIQ-E factors ranged from a mean of 24.27 to 46.29 among male students, and 21.23 to 46.54 among female students, with School-Based Involvement being the lowest and Home-Based Learning being the highest. Fantuzzo et al. (2000) found that the mean of the three FIQ-E factors ranged from 48.7 to 50.8 among first-grade students. This study found the mean of the factors ranged from 24.50 to 46.86 among first graders. Again School-Based Involvement was lowest among first graders and Home-Based Learning was highest in this study.

This study is unique in that family involvement was assessed during a global pandemic, which has at times necessitated that students were not able to physically attend school and families to quarantine. The impact of this pandemic on children's education will certainly be studied for decades. Although the results of this study only reflect family involvement in one charter school, it does contribute to the general body of knowledge regarding family involvement in charter elementary schools during a pandemic.

This is reflected in the results found in this study. Home-Based Learning includes activities that families do to support their child's learning in the home (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Items on this scale include reading with their child, helping with homework, and limiting television and video watching. This study found that Home-Based Learning was the highest dimension of family involvement assessed (M = 46.40; SD= 9.54). Home-

School Communication includes interactions between the family and school personnel. Items include attending conferences, talking to the teacher on the phone, and writing notes with the teacher about their child or activities. This study found that Home-School Communication was lower (M = 32.04; SD = 8.02) than Home-Based Learning. Given social distancing precautions, there have been many precautions that both schools and families have taken which can limit the number of interactions between home and school. It may be that families and teachers are finding it more difficult to get to know one another on a more personal level and, therefore, may not feel as comfortable reaching out to one another. Not surprisingly, this study found that School-Based Communication was the lowest scale (M = 22.86; SD = 7.6). This dimension includes activities that typically happen in the school, including volunteering in the classroom, taking their child to school, and attending family-school association meetings. Such activities may have been impossible during the time this data was collected due to social distancing restrictions. The results found in this study do provide evidence demonstrating the effects of the pandemic on family school involvement.

Regarding the third research question as to the methods used by charter elementary school administrators to initiate and encourage family involvement, this study surveyed charter school administrators to determine common methods used to involve families in school. The two administrators surveyed both reported that their school offers newsletters and school materials in multiple languages and offers parent-teacher conference times beyond school hours (e.g., evening conferences) in order to engage families. Notably, neither administrator endorsed the use of parent contracts mandating or

suggesting a minimum number of hours parents should volunteer at the school. Studies have suggested that charter schools may have higher levels of family involvement in part due to parent contracts (Buckley & Schneider, 2007; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009). The results of this study suggest that this may not be a primary reason for potentially increased family involvement in charter schools.

Limitations

The major limitation of this study is clearly the limited sample size. Given only one charter school agreed to participate in the study, no comparisons between schools could be made. Furthermore, the number of respondents within that one school was rather low. This has clear implications to the generalizability of these results. The types of statistical analyses that could be done on this data were severely limited due to the small sample size both within the participating school and across schools. It is notable that several schools did respond to the invitation to participate, however, chose not to participate because of the language needs of their parent population. Several schools asked about alternate forms of administration due to a high proportion of parents that cannot read or do not speak English. One school declined to participate, stating that they had recently sent parents several surveys regarding programming during the current COVID-19 pandemic and did not want to further overwhelm parents.

Future Research

The results found in this study, although limited in scope to one charter elementary school, suggest a need for further investigation of the effects of social distancing on family involvement. Given that schools are mandated to engage in family

involvement by ECSA (2015), the dilemma of how schools can encourage involvement within the social norms of a pandemic is a significant one. Research should investigate alternate means of promoting interaction between home and school, such as the use of video conferencing. Furthermore, longitudinal research should evaluate how family involvement will fluctuate after COVID-19. Additionally, research evaluating the effects of the fluctuations of family involvement will impact student achievement, as well as socioemotional and behavioral development.

Future researcher should also focus on measuring family involvement in schools with larger populations of non-literate and non-English speaking families, as well as families with vision and hearing impairments. This was a notable barrier in recruit participant schools in this study. Given the difference in dynamics of a primary caregiver completing the FIQ-E anonymously online, as opposed to being read or signed the questions, whether in person, online, or via telephone, it would be interesting to investigate how these alternate methods of surveying primary caregivers may have on the results obtained. Surveying special populations such as these poses practical and logistical difficulties that may have the effect of not hearing the voices of these families. This would undoubtedly affect the development of children. Future research should consider using some of the technological advances necessitated by social distancing to broaden their scope of research populations.

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Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

Directions: Please select one answer for each question.
Please Note: If you have more than one child in grades K to 5, please ***respond for <u>one</u> child only***

1) What is your relationship to the student(s)?
- □ Mother
- □ Father
- □ Stepparent
- □ Grandparent
- □ Aunt/Uncle
- □ Foster Parent
- □ Other (*please specify*)

2) What grade is your student in?
□ K □ 1st □ 2nd □ 3rd □ 4th □ 5th

3) How many years has your elementary student attended a charter school?
□ 1st year □ 2nd year □ 3rd year □ 4th year □ 5th year □ 6th year

4) What gender is your high school student?
□ Male □ Female □ Other

5) Which racial or ethnic group does your family *most* identify with?
- □ African American
- □ Asian or Pacific Islander
- □ Caucasian or White
- □ Latino or Hispanic
- □ Multiracial
- □ Native American or Inuit
- □ Other

6) Does your elementary student have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)? (Are they receiving special education services?)
□ Yes □ No □ Don't Know

7) Does your elementary student qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch?
□ Yes □ No □ Don't Know

8) Does your elementary student receive English as a Second Language (ELL) services?

□ Yes □ No □ Don't Know

Appendix B

Family Involvement Questionnaire – Elementary Version

Directions: Please select how often you engage in each of these activities. Select one response for each item.

Please Note: For the purpose of this questionnaire, the word ***teachers*** may include various school staff, such as guidance counselors, principals, school psychologists, or school social workers.

If you have more than one child in 1st to 5th grades, please ***only respond for one child in the 1st to 5th grade.***

1.	I help my child with homework	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
2.	I keep a regular morning and bedtime schedule	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
3.	I check that my child has place to keep school materials	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
4.	I arrange times for classmates to come play	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
5.	Parents at school support each other	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
6.	I talk to my child's teacher about work my child should practice at home	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
7.	I maintain clear rules at home	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
8.	I talk to my child's teacher about personal matters if relevant to school	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
9.	I read with my child	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
10.	I call my child's teacher if I am concerned about something my child said	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
11.	I do creative activities with my child	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
12.	I talk to parents about school meetings and events	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
13.	I volunteer in my child's classroom	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
14.	I talk to my child's teacher on the telephone	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
15.	I contact my child's teacher or principal to get information	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
16.	I review my child's schoolwork	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*

17.	I talk to family and friends about my child's school progress	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
18.	I attend conferences with my child's teacher	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
19.	I talk to my child's teacher about classroom rules	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
20.	I spend time working on math skills	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
21.	I attend parent workshops or trainings at school	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
22.	I talk to school personnel about job training	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
23.	I attend organized family–school association meetings	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
24.	I take my child to school	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
25.	I talk to my child's teacher about my child's accomplishments	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
26.	My child has chores at home	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
27.	I talk to my child's teacher about daily school routines	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
28.	I suggest activities or trips to my child's teacher	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
29.	I take my child to places in the community to learn special things	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
30.	I take my child to the library	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
31.	I talk to my child's teacher about my child's difficulties at school	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
32.	I bring home learning materials	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
33.	I participate in fundraising activities at school	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
34.	I talk to my child's teacher or principal about disciplinary matters	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
35.	I go on class trips	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
36.	I ask my child about their day at school	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
37.	I talk to my child about how school helped myself and other caregivers	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
38.	I limit TV and video watching	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
39.	I write notes with my child's teacher about my child or activities	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
40.	I pick my child up from school	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*

41.	I talk to my child's teacher about my child's relationship with peers	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
42.	I meet with families outside of school	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*
43.	I share stories with my child about when I was in school	*Rarely*	*Sometimes*	*Often*	*Always*

Appendix C

Family Involvement Questionnaire-Elementary (FIQ-E) Subscales

Home-School Communication
I attend conferences with teacher
I contact teacher or principal to get information
I talk to teacher about daily school routine
I talk to teacher about classroom rules
I call teacher if concerned about something child said
I talk to teacher about child's relationship with peers
I write notes with teacher about child or activities
I talk to teacher about child's accomplishments
I talk to teacher about child's difficulties at school
I talk to teacher about work child should practice at home
I talk to teacher about personal matters if relevant to school
I talk to teacher or principal about disciplinary matters
I talk to teacher on telephone

Home-based Learning
I limit tv and video watching
I review child's schoolwork
I take child to library
I keep regular morning and bedtime schedule
I share stories with child about when in school
I take child to places in community to learn special things
I check that child has place to keep school materials
I read with child
I bring home learning materials
I maintain clear rules at home
I ask child about day at school
I child has chores at home
I do creative activities with child
I spend time working on math skills
I help with homework
I talk to family and friends about child's school progress
I talk to child about how school helped caregiver

School-based Involvement
I suggest activities or trips to teacher
I attend parent workshops or training at school
I take child to school
I volunteer in classroom
I participate in fundraising activities at school

I go on class trips
I arrange times for classmates to come play
I talk to parents about school meetings and events
I pick child up from school
I talk to school personnel about job training
I parents at school support each other
I attend organized family–school association meetings
I meet with families outside of school

Appendix D

Administrator Questionnaire

1) What is your position in your school?
2) How many years have you been an administrator at your current charter high school?
3) How many years have you been an administrator in any school?
4) How important do you believe it is to engage parents/families at your current school? *(1-10)*
5) How confident are you in your ability to engaging parents/family members at your school? (*1-10*)
6) How big of a challenge is engaging parents at your current school? (*very challenging*, *mildly challenging, neutral, mildly easy, very easy*)
7) Please select all the activities that your school engages in to promote family involvement. *Check all that apply.*

    Parents have opportunities to help in the classroom.

    Parents have opportunities to assist in other activities (e.g., supervise lunch, field trips, school dances)

    Use a "parent contract" mandating or suggesting the number of hours parents should volunteer. If so, how many hours?

    Offer alternative opportunities to volunteer (e.g., school maintenance and beautification).

    Post updated volunteer opportunities and requests on the school website.

    Send home/email school newsletters.

    Use an online parent portal to track student assignments and grades (e.g., *Infinite Campus* and *Schoology*).

    Offer newsletters and school materials in multiple languages.

    Send mass texts/emails for emergencies (e.g., snow day).

    Provide opportunities for parents to help in extracurricular activities (e.g., bring snacks for sports teams).

    Provide opportunities for parents to participate on a parent organization (e.g., PTO/PTA).

    Provide opportunities for parents to participate on the school's governing board.

    Offer parent-teacher conference times beyond school hours (e.g., evening conferences).

    Offer interpreter services (in person or by phone).

Offer multiple means of communication (e.g., phone call, text, email) to notify parents of updates about their student (e.g., tardies and absences).

Use social media to provide updates and news.

Engage in fundraising.

Attend workshops or classes offered by the school.

Other. *Please describe*:

Appendix E

School Administrator Study Consent Form

On behalf of the School Psychology program at Minnesota State University, Mankato, thank you for your consideration and interest in our research. We are seeking to gather family involvement data in charter elementary schools. This research is being conducted by Dorothy Lipski, M.A., who will be directly supervised by Dr. Kevin Filter of the Psychology department.

It is our plan to share the outcomes of the study with the participating schools. We are approaching you with this invitation because of our focus on elementary charter schools as the population of interest. We ask that you read this form before agreeing to participate in this research study.

Purpose

Previous research has demonstrated that family involvement in education is an important contributor to children's school success. Children from families that have high rates of involvement typically earn higher grades, perform better on standardized assessments, earn more course credits, and were more likely to remain enrolled in school and graduate (Catsambis, 1988; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005). We intend to investigate factors of family involvement in charter elementary school settings. Additionally, we are evaluating methods used by charter elementary school administrators to promote family involvement in their school.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate family involvement in elementary charter schools using the Family Involvement Questionnaire-Elementary School version. Responses to this questionnaire will also give us insights as to specific practices that may be manipulated, or interventions that schools may put into place, which can increase family involvement.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this research by signing this consent form, we ask that you disperse survey links to 1st through 5th grade parents directly via email. You will be provided with an email invitation for parents to participate in the study with a link to the questionnaires. Parents who choose to participate in the study will complete two short questionnaires, the Family Involvement Questionnaire and a demographic questionnaire.

The Family Involvement Questionnaire-Elementary version will ask parents about their involvement with their child's school and academic well-being. The demographic questionnaire will ask basic questions about the parent, their child(ren), and their family's make-up. These two questionnaires should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Parents who agree to participate will be directed to an online survey system (through Qualtrics). Parents will initially be directed to a consent form, which they will need to agree to before they may complete the Family Involvement Questionnaire and demographic questionnaire. Once they have completed both questionnaires online, their responses will be sent to a secured online database where we can retrieve them.

Risks and Benefits
There is little risk involved with the study. However, some parents may experience feelings of embarrassment for the answers that they may choose. This risk should be mitigated by the fact that responses will be anonymous.

There are no direct benefits for the parents participating in this research, but the results of this study may help guide your school to improve family involvement practices.

Confidentiality
All records of this research, including all questionnaire data and parent contact information, will remain confidential. In any sort of report, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a parent or school. Parent informed consent forms are anonymous, meaning we will not be collecting any individually identifiable information from participating parents, such as names or birthdays.

School privacy will be maintained by using a false name for the school, and all other individuals that may be identifiable in this research. Additionally, these false names will be used in all communications and all research published from this data.

All data collected from this research will be stored on a secured Minnesota State University-Mankato server. Only the researchers will have access to the records. These records will be kept for 3 years before being destroyed. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato IT Solutions Center (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

Voluntary nature of the research project
Participation in this project is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

Contact
If you have any questions about this research study, contact Kevin Filter, Ph.D. at kevin.filter@mnsu.edu or 507- 389-5828. If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at 507-389-1242.

I consent for the researchers to recruit parents from the following school to participate: _____.

I have read the above information and understand that participation is voluntary, and I may cease participation at any time. I consent to school participation in this research project.

_____	_____
Name of School Administrator (print)	Position
_____	_____
Signature of School Administrator	Date

Appendix F

Parent/Guardian Online Informed Consent Form

Dear Parent/Guardian,
You are invited to participate in a research study on family involvement in elementary schools. This study is being conducted by Dorothy Lipski M.A., under the direct supervision of Dr. Kevin Filter in the Psychology department of Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU). The purpose of this study is to evaluate family involvement in charter elementary schools. If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your family and your involvement in your elementary student's school and academic well-being.

If you agree to participate, please click the arrow button at the bottom of this page. You will then be directed to complete the Family Involvement Questionnaire and a demographic questionnaire. The questionnaires will take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may stop at any time by closing your web browser. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

We want the process of participating in this study to be enjoyable. However, some people may experience feelings of embarrassment for the answers they may choose. This risk should be reduced by the fact that all responses will be anonymous.

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this research, but the results of this study may help guide your school to improve their family involvement practices.

Your participation in this study will not be revealed to anyone at your student's school, nor will your name appear in any reports or presentations. All data collected from this research will be stored on a secured MNSU server. Only the researchers will have access to the records. These records will be kept for 3 years before being destroyed. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the MNSU IT Solutions Center (507-389-6654), and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

If you have any questions about this research study, contact Kevin Filter Ph.D. at kevin.filter@mnsu.edu or 507-389-5828. If you have any questions about participants' rights and research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at 507-389-1242.

Submitting the completed questionnaires will indicate your informed consent to participate in this study and indicate your assurance that you are at least 18 years of age and a parent/guardian of an elementary school student.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration!

Please click the arrow below if you agree to participate in the study.

If you do not want to participate in this study, you may close this web browser now.

You may print a copy of this page for future reference.

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