SOCIOCULTURAL AND DOMESTIC INFLUENCES TO ONLINE LEARNING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

INFLUÊNCIA DE ASPETOS SOCIOCULTURAIS E DOMÉSTICOS NA APRENDIZAGEM ONLINE EM PAÍSES EM DESENVOLVIMENTO

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Abstract
This paper aims to discuss to what extent social, parental and family aspects affect the performance of university students in the Southern Africa Region. Principles of online teaching and learning and the qualitative and quantitative methodologies inform this research. Data comprises information and ideas of students and their parents or guardians, collected through a survey on online teaching and learning processes in the region. Data analyses indicate that over 77% of learners were not satisfied/successful with online learning. Financial challenges, however, are not the main reason of frustration. Only 39% of students report difficulties related to finances. A large number of respondents indicates issues related to negative parental and family involvement, such as lack of parental guidance and encouragement in favour of online learning and denial of this modality of education, as the major problems behind students’ frustration, dissatisfaction and failure. It is highlighted, therefore, that positive parental involvement is a key for students’ success, especially in the online learning process.

Keywords
Online learning; Parental/family engagement; Performance of university students.

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Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é discutir até que ponto aspectos sociais e familiares afetam o desempenho de estudantes universitários na Região da África Austral. O estudo baseia-se em princípios de ensino e aprendizagem online e adota as metodologias qualitativa e quantitativa. A base empírica integra informações e ideias de estudantes e seus pais ou encarregados recolhidas através de um inquérito sobre o ensino e a aprendizagem online na região.

O estudo indica que cerca de 77% dos aprendentes reportam insatisfação/insucesso com a aprendizagem online. No entanto, as dificuldades financeiras não representam a principal causa de frustração. Aliás, apenas 39% dos estudantes reportam dificuldades de ordem financeira. A maioria dos informantes indica aspectos relacionados com a falta de envolvimento, encorajamento e orientação dos pais e familiares a favor da aprendizagem online e a negação desta modalidade de educação como sendo os principais fatores na base da frustração, insatisfação e insucesso. Neste âmbito, sublinha-se o envolvimento positivo dos pais e familiares como aspeto determinante para o sucesso dos alunos, especialmente em contexto de aprendizagem online.

Palavras-chave

Aprendizagem online; Envolvimento de pais e familiares; Desempenho de estudantes universitários.

1. Introduction

Teaching and learning in Higher and Tertiary Education no longer know barriers of time and space. Nowadays, in many countries and institutions, students, lecturers, and society at large are connected online and they perform different activities connected on the Net (Meneses, Fernandez & Regana, 2011). In developing countries, however, although the use of digital technologies is unquestionable, conducting teaching and learning processes using digital and online tools and platforms represents a new model of education, to which the common institutions still need to adapt.

This paper aims to discuss to what extent social and domestic issues impact the University students’ performance in online learning abruptly adopted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in Higher and Tertiary Education in the Southern Africa Region. To fulfil this aim, it is relevant to assess how students perceive the online learning that they have gone through since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and to identify and
describe social and domestic factors that might have influenced students’ performance (success or failure).

Understanding the role of social institutions and domestic setups and their impact on students’ online learning outcomes in the Southern Africa Region, where this modality of education is not yet consensual due to sociocultural and economic circumstances, is of vital relevance (1) to enlighten decision making about the online learning, (2) to allow planning and implementation of activities and strategies to raise awareness about the relevance and philosophy of online learning process. This will allow parents/guardians and society at large to effectively play their role in the process of online learning to promote relevant experiences and success.

The study seeks to answer questions about what are the main sociocultural and economic factors involved, featuring students’ families in the Southern Africa region, and how these factors affect the newly adopted online teaching and learning processes. This will help to address current challenges in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and also to implement activities to promote online education and meet current global trends of Higher and Tertiary Education.

Literature about online learning in the Southern Africa Region reveals frustration and dissatisfaction of students with the online process (Nhatuve, 2020). In this context, in line with the theory of online learning (Ally, 2008; Anderson, 2008a), it is predictable that some cultural, social and economic issues play a negative role in the online learning. Economic factors (challenges in acquiring compatible devices and limited access to the Internet) do not allow students to efficiently do e-activities; perceptions about online learning (online learning doesn't promote quality; the denial of the whole process; lack of the knowhow in using ICT technology) and difficulties to provide necessary time for online learning do not allow the parents to play their role in online learning.

1.1. Background

Teaching and learning processes, be it face-to-face – traditional style of formal education – be it online – relatively new modality – aim to equip individuals with knowledge and abilities to do things and solve problems in a society. However, strategies, materials, roles of learners, teachers and society at large are not necessarily the same for the two modalities of education (face-to-face and online learning). There are strategies that are
effective in a physical environment of teaching and learning and others that are mostly efficient in online processes of education.

Although it is generally assumed that online teaching and learning is a new modality, there are certain societies, institutions and countries have long since adhered to, mastered and legitimized it as normal way of learning (Bates, 2017). To underscore the relevance of both traditional and online approaches of education, some institutions, in normal circumstances of teaching and learning, have encouraged the use of blended learning (Dziuban et al., 2018). Nevertheless, in some societies and institutions, the adoption of online modalities of education was relatively late. This is the prevailing situation in many developing countries, in the Southern Africa Region in particular, where many institutions adopted it just to overcome difficulties related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In most of the cases, some of the challenges faced by societies that recently adopted the online teaching and learning to minimize negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic attach the roles of the different entities (students, teachers, families …) to the process of online education. Most of the entities ignore or neglect their roles to allow relevant experiences of online learning, leading to frustration, demotivation and failure (Nhatuve, 2020). This makes it of particular relevance to identify and discuss the role and traits inherent to families and issues that jeopardize the online learning process.

An effective designing, planning and implementation of online teaching and learning processes allows for good experience of e-learning and e-teaching (Mattar, Loureiro & Rodrigues, 2020). As such, it is of capital importance that when designing, planning or implementing the online learning process, institutions that adopted it recently include activities to raise parents' and society's awareness regarding their role, in the domiciliary context, to allow efficient online learning.

1.2. Theoretical framework

With the coming of the digital and online era, it became clear that strategies used for traditional teaching and learning could not effectively be used for teaching and learning in a virtual environment using online tools and platforms (Moreira, 2018; Moreira & Rigo, 2018; Moreira & Schlemmer, 2020). The education sector, therefore, had to develop a theory that could govern the online teaching and learning. Although
this theory consists of particular principles of online education, it is a part of a general theory of education.

Ally (2008), Anderson (2008), Brenton (2009), Craig et al. (2008) are some of the prominent authors whose contributions gave shape to what is now known as the theory of online learning. In general, the contribution of these authors encompasses the definition, characteristics, material, strategies, and philosophy of online teaching and learning processes.

Regarding the concept and characteristics of online education, it is consensual that it consists of teaching and learning processes done in a virtual ecosystem (environment), through the use of online tools and platforms (Ally, 2008; Brenton, 2009). According to Ally, “to promote higher-order thinking on the Web, online learning must create challenging activities that enable learners to link new information to old; acquire meaningful knowledge; and use their metacognitive abilities” (p. 16). This strategy of teaching and learning knows no barriers of time or space, it promotes learners’ independence, it can be asynchronous or synchronous, it is conducted through a variety of material (texts, videos, audios, pictures …), it allows teachers to recommend e-activities, relevant and updated material according to specific needs of the students.

Anderson (2008a), in turn, affirms that online teaching and learning processes are learner, knowledge, assessment and community-centered processes (pp. 44-52). Also, Anderson highlights that students’ and also parents’ perceptions about online learning are not always conducive to a smooth online learning process. Family members “have been significant sources of support and assistance to independent study learners” (Potter, 1998 apud. Anderson, 2008a, p. 62). Therefore, lack of encouragement and positive perception of family members is a potential source of demotivation and frustration for e-learners.

In fact, social and domestic environment and contribution are key for student success in online learning. Parents in particular can play a variety of roles as educational influencers, as partners of the students, as face-to-face teachers at home (Harding, 2011). This emphasizes the role of parents as a determinant for better experiences in online learning. A good perception and commitment from parents regarding online learning is crucial for “the provision of learning facilities such as the use of gadgets and internet services and the understanding of learning materials” (Sari & Maningtyas, 2020, p. 97).
2. Literary review

The onset of digital and online teaching and learning, thanks to development of Science and Technology, and the subsequent change of students', lecturers' and parents' roles to satisfy demands of the new modality of education (the online teaching and learning) (Bates, 2017, pp. 100-103) triggered interest on studies about the impact of each actor's (learners, teachers and parents) role on the students' performance in online learning. Therefore, relevant researches about this topic and, in particular, about the parents' role, were carried out some decades before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019 (Rahman, 2001; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harding, 2011; Emerson et al., 2012). However, most recently, the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown measures adopted by several countries emboldened the interest of scholars in identifying and understanding the roles of different entities and encouraging better practices and attitudes to allow efficient online learning of the students (Amber et al., 2020; Sari & Maningtyas, 2020; Bhamani et al., 2020).

A review of research about the role of parents reveals that parental involvement in students' schooling is crucial for their success, regardless of the modality (online or face-to-face) adopted to conduct the learning process (Johnston, 1998, p. 192). Likewise, “parental engagement has the greatest impact when it is focused on linking behaviours of families, teachers and students to learning outcomes” (Emerson et al., 2012, p. 50). The parental interventions in students’ learning alluded to by Emerson is emphasized all the more in the context of digital and online learning at home.

Moreover, effective and positive parental intervention in students’ schooling, especially in the online learning process, has a range of positive effects on students’ performance: including, “higher grades and test scores, higher successful completion of classes, higher graduation rates [educational outcome] […] more regular school attendance, better social and emotional development, and improved pro-social behaviour [developmental outcomes]” (Emerson et al., 2012, p. 50).

A study undertaken by Rahman (2001) involving parents of students at Pepin High School indicated very positive parental engagement in the learners’ activities at home so much so that high levels of satisfaction and success were recorded. However, Rahman underscores that in Pepin, Wisconsin (America), “parent’s level of education, at least in the group of parents surveyed, has little to do with parent's desires and expectations for
their children” (p. 46). This is particularly important to note seeing that the parents of students in the Southern African region have very disparate levels of education, from very basic to advanced levels of being formally educated.

Indeed, as stated by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003, p. 12) many people (parents, friends …) influence students’ education, and according to these two authors, parents’ involvement in learners’ lives is mostly favoured or jeopardized by family social class and parents’ level of education (pp. 85-86). Desforges and Abouchaar present a different perspective regarding the effect of parents’ level of education in their engagement in the learners’ activities. For these two authors, the higher the social class and level of education, the higher and more positive the parents’ involvement and attitude towards students’ schooling. Similar results were recorded by Sari and Maningtyas (2020) analysing parents’ engagement in remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In turn, Harding (2011, pp. 246-250) examined parental roles in home education in Australia and concluded that three major roles are associated to them. Firstly, parents play the role of a learner to develop knowledge and skills to monitor learners’ lives at home. Secondly, they play the role of partners of their children and together (children and parents) carry out activities to allow students to learn effectively. Thirdly, parents are teachers of their children: they guide, they assess, they do recommendations, and they provide assistance for a better learning process.

Already in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, Amber et al. (2020) investigated the experience of parents whose children, prior to the lockdown measures, have attended traditional environments of education, and due to the pandemic have shifted to remote learning. Findings from this study indicated that, although they were generally happy with online learning, they faced “difficulties with balancing responsibilities, learner motivation, accessibility, and learning outcomes” (p. 45).

Likewise, Bhamani et al. (2020) examined parents’ experiences in children’s home learning in urban areas of Pakistan during the Covid-19 pandemic. The most relevant points standing out from this study is that the sudden closure of schools affected both learners’ and parents’ routine and children would fail to schedule and do e-activities and assignments in due time. Additionally, and in line with Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), there are many challenges faced by parents whose impact is negative for students’ online learning, specially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges involve:
“1. the effects of extreme poverty and of social chaos and threat in some neighbourhoods;
2. the effects of psychosocial illness, notably depression;
3. the impact of inappropriate values and beliefs underlying a fatalistic view of education;
4. parental lack of confidence in or knowledge about how to be appropriately involved” (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003, p. 88).

In such, literary review about the impact of parents’ engagement in learners’ lives and activities, especially in the context of online learning, underscores that parental engagement, attitude and beliefs play a crucial role in students’ performance, motivation, success and satisfaction. Furthermore, family social class and parents’ level of education influence parents’ intervention in students’ lives and activities. In fact, family’s role consists of nurturing students’ learning process; “we expect ‘successful’ parents to understand and empathize with their child; and that they will provide kind, compassionate, and loving guidance through content areas of utmost difficulty” (Bates, 2017, pp. 100-101).

In line with this, a study carried out among medical students in the Philippines in 2020 by Baticulon et al. (2021) show that being in the home setting where other family members also live posed a challenge in that online language did not always have enough time to do their schoolwork online as they encountered personal challenges in adjusting to the new way of learning, and principally because they had responsibilities at home. Having to perform domestic duties at home at the same time as they had to be learning, posed a huge obstacle to their overall learning.

3. Method
This study is informed by qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach enables us to identify and discuss different aspects regarding families’ economic conditions, worldviews, attitudes and engagement in students’ online learning. In turn, the quantitative study allows us to quantify each aspect of parental involvement and to compare them and determine to what extent specific behaviour, actions or perceptions affect students’ performance, success and satisfaction.
Participants in this study are parents and guardians of university students in the Southern Africa Region, whose children, after having experienced only face-to-face modality of learning during several years, shifted to online learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of 228 individuals (parents/guardians) participated in this study providing information about their experience, perceptions and opinions regarding the newly adopted online teaching and learning processes.

Data collection was conducted through a survey sent to students of different Universities in the region who were already doing online learning. The Surveyplanet platform was used to carry out the survey through the link [https://s.surveyplanet.com/oJNbQmo_q](https://s.surveyplanet.com/oJNbQmo_q). The survey comprised questions about online learning in social and domestic contexts. Of all answers given by students and parents, the study considered the ones regarding parents’ engagement and involvement in their children's learning to comprise the data analysed.

As such, data analysis consists of firstly identifying different aspects of parental involvement that play a role in students' online learning. Secondly, the study focuses on examining the impact of specific parental roles on students' performance. Thirdly, each attitude, worldview, idea or suggestion are discussed in light of the theoretical framework and different ideas and findings highlighted in the literary review. Data is presented through graphs that indicate statistical information concerning the topic under study.

4. Data analysis

Students whose parents represent our target group assess their online learning differently. As illustrated in Graph 1, some students were satisfied while others were frustrated. Of utmost relevance in this case, is the quantitative interpretations of figures represented in the graph.
How was/is the online teaching and learning during the lockdown?

Figures in the Graph 1 reveal that 4% of students think that the online learning process was very good, hence, they managed to learn better, and 19% felt that the online learning process was normal, and they managed to learn. All together, these figures represent 23% of satisfaction and success. Nevertheless, 63% of the 228 students whose parents are involved in this study faced difficulties to learn and they claim that the process was not good, while 14% state that the online learning was frustrating, and the did not learn at all. As such, students who did not have a good experience of the online learning represent 77% of the participants.

Clearly, statistical figures reveal higher figures of dissatisfied and unsuccessful students than those who had a better experience of the online learning process. The difference between the level of dissatisfaction/failure (77%) is extremely disquieting, in a context and strategy of learning in which the learner is the protagonist of relevant learning activities, based on several and diversified learning materials (Anderson, 2008a).

Since a variety of factors (parental engagement, teachers’ direction, availability of resources…) can influence students’ performance, in line with the scope of this study (social and domestic aspects) it is interesting to access some factors regarding the readiness of the families to play relevant parental engagement and allow students to embark on the online learning process.
Graph 2 below illustrates statistical figures concerning where students live (cities, towns, rural area). The fact that the area of residence can depend on (or can correspond to) economic and social class of students’ families justifies the need to identify where students live. Majority of university students living in cities and towns are in better conditions (usually those students belong to higher and medium classes and they can have access to various alternatives of Internet services…) and positions to undertake online learning activities than those students who live in rural areas.

Graph 2: Students’ residence (from where they do online learning activities)

Where do students live?

61% City
28% Town
11% Rural area

The interpretation of the Graph 2 above allows us to assert that the majority of students (whose parents comprise our target group), of whom 77% acquiesced frustration and failure, live in cities and towns. This group of students who live in cities and towns represent a total of 89% (61% of students living in cities and 28%, in towns), whereas, 11% of learners live in rural areas. Considering the assumption regarding residence of University students and social status of their families, one can assume that 89% of students belong to higher and medium classes, with necessary economic conditions to allow smooth online learning process.

Beside residence of students, identifying the amount of Internet bundles that a student buys (or parents provide) per month for online learning purposes can help to understand the level of readiness of the family to effectively assist students to do online learning. The fact behind this assumption is that without Internet, there is no possibility of doing
online learning (Anderson, 2008a): the less Internet bundles, the less capacity to do online learning; the more Internet bundles, the higher probability to do online learning. The Graph 3 bellow illustrates figures related to Internet bundles that students buy per month for online learning. This graph shows that 14% of students only manage to buy up to 500mb per month and 8%, up to 1000mb. This amount of Internet bundles can be considered to be very low for university students’ online learning processes, taking into account that the process of online learning implies downloading texts, videos, pictures or voice notes sent by the lecturers (Ally, 2008), or reading, listening or viewing them online.

Alongside the figures alluded to above, the Graph 3 indicates that 24% of students afford to buy up to 2000mb of Internet bundles for online learning. Although it is not the amount to recommend for a University student doing online learning, 2000mb can allow students to do basic e-activities, but with some limitations. Fortunately, the majority of students affirm that they afford to get more than 2000mb (going up to 8000mb). This group of students represents 54% of the 228 respondents. In terms of Internet services, key requisite for online learning, this group is in good position to do online learning (see Graph 3).

Graph 3: Internet Access (how much megabytes do you buy per month?)

*How much megabites/gigs do you buy to do what you want, including online learning?*

- 2% Less than 100 mb (per month)
- 4% 100 mb (per month)
- 3% 200 mb (month)
- 8% 500 mb (per month)
- 5% 1gb (per month)
- 24% 2 gb (per month)
- 54% > 2gb (per month)
Having identified some facts concerning where students live and the amount of Internet bundles they afford to buy for online learning, being cognisant about the relevance of parents and other family members, and the domestic setting to encourage students and provide necessary requisites and environment for online learning, it is crucial to understand their involvement in the process. The relevant information about parents’ and family members’ engagement is represented in Graph 4 below.

Graph 4: Social and familiar facts in online learning

What are the problems that compromised your online learning?

- Difficulties to get data and computer (socioeconomic challenges) 39%
- Always busy at home, with no time to learn (sociocultural problem) 25%
- Denial of online education (sociocultural) 26%
- Acceptance of online learning (sociocultural) 10%

Presenting problems that compromised the online learning, students indicate three major difficulties revealed by their parents or guardian. The first problem – difficulties to get data and computers – has to do with economic challenges faced by families, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 39% of respondents claim that difficulties to get data and computers negatively affects their efforts to allow the online learning.

The second and the third problems revealed by family members has to do with sociocultural aspects. A total of 25% of students did not have good experience in online learning at home because they were always busy, with no time to learn. This has to do with cultural practices in which children at home have to do all chores, and also implies failure of parental engagement in their children’s learning (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Amber et al., 2020; Bates, 2017). In turn, 26% of parents do no approve the online
modality of learning. These parents believe that online learning is a waste of time and it doesn't promote quality of education (only 10% of parents approve this modality). All issues indicated in Graph 4 regard parental involvement in their children's learning. On one side families face financial challenges to provide computers and Internet services (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003) and, on the other side, they face challenges related to their worldviews and the denial of the online modality of education.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study is to understand how some factors (mostly economic and sociocultural) related to society and families affect online learning at University level in the Southern Africa Region. This was triggered by higher figures of students bemoaning not doing well in the online learning process recently adopted in order to overcome the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, the interpretation of Graph 1 representing how students assess the online learning underscores high levels (77%) of frustration and failure.

However, as asserted by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), many aspects can influence students' performance, be it in face-to-face learning, or in online learning. Due to the fact that in most of the cases the online learning occurs at home in domestic contexts, parental and family engagement plays a determinant role (Johnston, 1998; Emerson et al., 2012; Sari & Maningtyas, 2020). The fact that family members play a relevant role in students' performance triggered the need to understand some aspects featuring families of the students.

Data in graph 2 and 3 provide relevant information to identify and discuss what is behind such high levels of dissatisfaction and failure in the online learning process at home. It is notable that the majority our students' families live in towns and cities (89%); 24% of them can afford to buy up to 2000mb of Internet, and over 54% can afford to buy between 2000mb and 80000mb per month. These figures allow us to include the majority of our students' families in higher and medium classes, therefore, able to provide necessary conditions for online learning. In this context, “the effects of extreme poverty” (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003, p. 88) cannot be labelled as the major problem. An attempt to understand parental and family involvement in online learning of their children discloses negative parental and family engagement/involvement in the online
learning process due to financial challenges and sociocultural issues. The first problem concerns the challenges to provide adequate gadgets and data. This problem affects, in line with the Graph 3, 39% of students. In this regard, the principles of online learning (Anderson, 2008; Ally, 2008; Bates, 2017), are very clear: no effective online learning without compatible gadgets and Internet. This reveals, in part, poor design, planification and implementation of online learning (Mattar, Loureiro & Rodrigues, 2020).

The second problem regarding parental and family involvement is about overwhelming children/students with domestic duties to the extent that they fail to do their online learning. For this problem, 25% of students report to not have had a good experience in online learning because they were always busy, with no time to learn at home. It is well known the negative effect of domestic activities and chores to students. Learners who are supposed to do a lot/all of domestic activities do not have enough time to focus on their learning, and as a consequence, they do not have good learning experiences (Okpechi, Eloma & Bassey, 2016).

This is one of the factors disclosing lack of positive parental and family involvement in the students’ online learning process. It is, however, most regrettable and unacceptable that a learner, at university level in particular, fails to do e-activities because they are assigned domestic duties. Parents (and other family members) must decide in favour of students and help (encourage) them to make enough time for learning.

The third and last parental and family problem has to do with perceptions and worldviews about online learning – some institutions still don’t acknowledge degrees obtained through online learning. Due to the fact that for several years face-to-face learning was the sole main modality of learning, and the online modality is fairly new and has been adopted in many institutions of the region due to the Covid-19 pandemic, parents and family members seem to despise and reject it.

Nevertheless, beside financial challenges, the dislike and plain disregard of online learning is likely a consequence of lack of information about how it works and its advantages for the students, teachers and society at large (Ally, 2008). This triggers the need to raise awareness about online teaching and learning and how it can be administered.

The use of Information and Communication Technologies is more and more irreversible. Many institutions have adopted it worldwide. This makes it urgent for societies and
institutions in developing countries to adapt themselves, accept the new modality of education, and meet global standards of teaching and learning in Higher and Tertiary Education Institutions (Bates, 2017; Meneses, Fernandez & Regana, 2011). In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, online teaching and learning have proven to be an effective alternative in many countries.

Problems such as financial challenges hindering effective online learning are not particular to our target group. They were reported in other studies carried out before and during the Covid-19 pandemic (Bhamani et al., 2020; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). Whilst in many societies (developed countries), parents hallowed the shift to the online learning, especially with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (Amber et al., 2020; Sari & Maningtyas, 2020), our respondents express denial and revulsion of it. Furthermore, similarly to Rahman (2001), our study did not allow us to identify how parental engagement depends on the level of education of parents. This issue is clearly disclosed by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) whose study confirms that the higher the social class and level of education, the higher and more positive the parents’ involvement and attitude towards students’ schooling.

The fact that only 39% report frustration of online learning due to financial challenges, while 51% (Graph 4) reveal challenges regarding sociocultural factors – failure of parents to judge and act in favour of students; the loathing of the online modality of learning. This connotates negative parental and family involvement/engagement as the major problem behind student dissatisfaction and failure to learn effectively. Parents must guide, must provide, must encourage, must teach to allow “higher grades and test scores, higher successful completion of classes, higher graduation rates [educational outcome] […] more regular school attendance, better social and emotional development, and improved pro-social behaviour [developmental outcomes] […]” (Emerson et al., 2012, p. 50).

6. Conclusion
Based on qualitative and quantitative methodologies the paper examined data regarding online learning undertaken by university students in the Southern Africa region. The study focused on aspects related to social and family roles in the performance of students. Data analysis consisted of identifying firstly the level of students’ satisfaction with the
newly adopted online learning. This analysis disclosed that over 77% of students were not satisfied (they reported failure) with online learning.

Secondly, the study sought to verify what the potential factors behind students’ frustration and failure to learn are. Three factors were considered: place of residence of students, capacity to acquire Internet bundles, and perceptions and attitudes of parents and family members (parental engagement). The study indicated that over 89% of students live in cities or town and 78% of them afford to buy between 2000mb and 80000mb of Internet per month. This enabled us to include the majority of our students in higher and medium social classes, hence, in conditions to afford expenses of the online learning.

In what regards parents’ and family’s involvement in students’ learning, the study indicates that only 39% of dissatisfaction is due to financial challenges faced by families, while over 51% is due to negative parental and family involvement in students’ activities. On one hand, parents fail to provide healthy and fruitful environments for online learning and they overwhelm students with domestic duties therefore discouraging their learning. On the other hand, parents do not approve the online modality of learning, hence, lack of involvement, lack of provision of necessary material, and lack of necessary encouragement.

In conclusion, this study indicates that the majority of frustration and failure of students in online learning is not due to financial challenges. The difficulties due to negative parental and family involvement weigh on the learners more. It is, therefore, important to highlight that, for students’ success, firstly parents play the role of a learner to develop knowledge and skills to monitor learners’ lives at home. Secondly, they play the role of partners of their children and together (children and parents) carry out activities to allow students to learn effectively. Thirdly, parents are teachers of their children, they guide, they assess, they do recommendations, they provide assistance for a better learning process (Hardings, 2011).
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Article received on 18/07/2021 and accepted on 23/09/2021.

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