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Strategies adopted by immigrant parents in language and education integration of children: The case of Nigerians in Lisbon, Portugal

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## **Abstract**

**Title:** Strategies adopted by immigrant parents in language and education integration of children: The case of Nigerians in Lisbon, Portugal

**Keywords:** Immigrant parents, Language, Education, Integration, Nigeria, Portugal

Available statistics show that in Europe, 1.92 million immigrants were admitted to EU member states in 2022, of which 14.6% were children. Studies have also found that the level of language and educational integration of immigrant children to a great extent tends to be influenced by the level of parents' active involvement in such schools of their children. This study focused on exploring the strategies adopted by Nigerian immigrant parents in the language and educational integration of children in Lisbon, Portugal. Guided by the theory of social capital and ecological systems theory, qualitative data were collected using in-depth interviews with eight Nigerian immigrant parents who were purposively selected. The study found that parents adopted strategies such as constant school visitation, monitoring, buying additional educational materials and setting family rules in the language and educational integration of children. The study found that despite the existence of language support for children and parents in Portuguese schools, challenges such as lack of English proficiency among Portuguese teachers, and long waiting times in Portuguese language class registration have continued to militate against utilising the support programmes. To address these challenges and to improve language support for parents and children, the study recommends measures such as employing teachers who are proficient in Portuguese and English, Prioritising parents of school-age children in language courses and grouping Portuguese language classes according to the educational qualification of learners.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS USED**

CLAIM	Centres for the Integration of Migrants Network
ACIDI	Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural
ACIME	Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Minorias Étnicas
ACM	Alto Comissariado para as Migrações
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CNAIM	National Support Centres for the Integration of Migrants
EC	European Commission
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MIPEx	Migrant Integration Policy Index

NPE	National Policy on Education
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PALOP	Portuguese-speaking African countries
PLNM	Portuguese language as a non-mother tongue
PNAI	National Program of Action for Inclusion
SEF	Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

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# 1 CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of my study, the problem statement, the research objectives and questions, the rationale for the study, the relationship with social work with families and children, and the structure of the thesis.

### 1.2 Background to the study

In Europe, 1.92 million immigrants were admitted to EU member states in 2022, of which 14.6% were children (European Union 2022). More so, a study by International Organisation for Migration (2022), identified Finland, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Germany, and Sweden as the immigrants' choice destinations across Europe. In addition, child migration has witnessed an unprecedented rise and has been identified as an overwhelming global phenomenon (Bhabha & Abel, 2019). According to a report by McAuliffe and Khadria (2019), the population of children living in countries other than where they were born was estimated at 40.9 million which constituted 1.6% of the population of children globally and 14.6% of the migrant population globally.

Consequently, the growing population of immigrant children has confronted host countries with overarching child welfare and educational integration concerns and has continued to attract scholarly attention. As Koehler and Schneider (2019) put it, there is growing pressure on host countries to develop and implement both short-term and long-term measures to address the needs of the rising number of immigrant children. Notable among the key integration needs of immigrant children have been found to be the acquisition of proficiency in the official school language (Cummins 2001; Cummins et al. 2007; Suárez-Orozco, 2017), which is usually the official language of the country (Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014). Therefore, educational integration of immigrant children involves developing and implementing relevant policies aimed at facilitating and promoting simultaneously language acquisition and educational achievement.

The migration flows into Portugal have intensified since the late 1970s following the large arrival of the immigrant population from Portugal's former occupied African colonies, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique, and Angola (Hortas, 2008). The mid-1990s is also considered the turning point in Portuguese migration flow as it marked the period when migrants from nations aside from Portuguese-speaking African countries started



arriving in large numbers (Peixoto et al. 2009). The population of immigrants in Portugal has continued to grow which according to RIFA (2019) rose from 480,300 in 2018 to 590,348 in 2019 and is comprised of diverse immigrant communities. The latest statistics of immigrants in Portugal according to SEF (2021), show an increase of 8.3% and a total number of 698,887 registered migrants. More so, available statistics show that migrants from English-speaking countries represent countries with the lowest number of registered immigrants in the SEF portal. According to SEF (2021), the number of registered Nigerian immigrants stood at 866.

The level of educational integration of immigrant children to a great extent tends to be influenced by the level of parents' active involvement in such schools of their children (Benner et al. 2016; Jabar et al.2021). However, as has been documented in studies, factors such as the educational attainment of parents influence parent's involvement in school because as Lee and Bowen (2006), puts it, parents who have a higher level of educational attainment often inspire their children and are able to provide support and resources that could improve children's educational outcomes. Parents who have higher educational attainment are likely to have knowledge of the educational system and available support in school in schools (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). More so, parents' social network has been identified as an integral part of school involvement because such networks could assist them to obtain useful information regarding school programmes, educational opportunities, community supports, and school programmes (Dijkstra et al. 2004; Li & Fischer, 2011). Parents' social networks in school according to Anderson et al. (2015) help them to connect with other parents who may share similar experiences, successes, and challenges in the integration of children into the school. Studies have also found that parent's material and economic resources stand out as a decisive factor in the educational integration of children because it determine to a great extent how parents provide educational materials to their children both at home and in schools (Altzinger et al. 2015; Duncan et al. 2007; Sirin, 2005).

The Portuguese commitment to the integration of children in schools has led to the development and implementation of policies such as the Portuguese language as a non-mother tongue (PLNM). The PLNM was established as a full discipline and included in the basic education national curriculum (primary and secondary) (Faneca et al. 2016). More so, to ensure its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, an operational guideline was introduced in 2007 which aligns with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Faneca et al. 2016). In addition, National Plan for the Integration of Students of Linguistic Minorities and the National Program of Action for Inclusion PNAI was also

implemented in 2008 (National Action Plan for Inclusion (2009)). This policy focused on addressing poverty among the elderly, and children; correcting disadvantages in education, and reinforcing the integration of immigrants (National Action Plan for Inclusion, 2009). The central focus of the recent integration policies in Portugal has been to ensure more inclusion of minority cultural and language groups (Cook, 2018). The population of immigrant children is also characterised by strong spatial polarisation with greater concentration in Metropolitan areas (Hortas, 2008). Discussions on the integration of immigrant children in Portuguese schools have focused on the issue of the autonomy of schools to deal with the peculiar needs of newly arrived children; teachers who can provide educational and social support; teacher training for Portuguese as a second language and having sufficient teachers with a specialty in Portuguese as a second language (Pinto, 2012; Pinto & Araújo 2013; Pinto & Araújo 2016). Departing from the issues highlighted above, education has continued to be prioritised by the Portuguese government because it is crucial to achieving other domains of integration of immigrant children into the mainstream culture.

### 1.3 Statement of the problem

The crucial role which the educational environment plays in the integration process of immigrant children has continued to generate growing debates as it relates to the development and implementation of functional and effective multilingual educational policies (Monteiro, 2010; Pires, 2007). Despite the fact that Portuguese schools have been found to be inclusive in its integration policies, the presence of diverse cultural and linguistic minorities tends to complicate the process of integrating immigrant children into the Portuguese education system (Baganha, 2005; de Queiroz, 2006; Peixoto et al., 2009; Padilla & Ortiz, 2012; Solovova 2019). Considering the growing population of newly arrived immigrant children, as well as descendants of immigrants, issues relating to the best curriculum to teach children in Portuguese schools have been challenging (Hortas, 2008; Marques et al. 2008; Faneca, et al. 2016). In other words, it does appear infeasible for the Portuguese state to incorporate various minority languages into the educational curriculum and language support programmes in schools. Consequently, the reality is that teachers in Portuguese schools tend to be unprepared to provide education to children from different language variations and varieties (Madeira 2015; Martins et al. 2019). Further, studies have found that in reality, the structure and objectives of educational integration policies for immigrant children in Portugal have remained deeply rooted in its monolingual habitus and focused more on the ideology of '*Portugalisation*' of children from cultural and linguistic minorities rather than the preservation of heritage

language and the development plurilingualism (Reis & Gomes, 2016). This has huge implications for the educational performance of immigrant children.

More so, factors such as low academic performance, growing school dropout rate, and limited immigrant parent involvement in their children's schools are notable language-related integration issues affecting immigrant children in Portugal (Marques et al. 2007). For instance, Hortas (2013) found that the rate of school failure/dropout of immigrant children aged 6-10 in Portugal was 8% in the first cycle. More so, the study found that in the second cycle i.e., children aged 10-12 years, were 13% whereas 12% was recorded in secondary school dropout. Lack of proficiency in school language among immigrant parents has also been linked to low academic performance of immigrant children as it limits parents' level of involvement in schoolwork and other mainstream social activities of their children (Koblinsky, 2009; Ismail, 2019; Poza et al. 2014). Previous studies relating to the experiences of immigrant parents in the integration of children in Portugal (Araújo 2013; Dahal, 2016; Grassi & Vivet; Koroluis, 2017; Wall et al. 2005) explored perspectives of immigrant parents from Nepal, Russia, Angola, and other Portuguese speaking African countries. Aside from Okello's (2019) unpublished MSc thesis, there is a dearth of literature exploring the perspective of Nigerian immigrant parents in Portugal on issues related to the language and educational integration of children. The current study hopes to fill this important gap and will explore the strategies adopted by Nigerian immigrant parents in navigating the language and educational integration of children in Portugal.

## 1.4 Research objectives

The main objective of this study is to analyse the strategies of immigrant parents concerning the school language and educational integration of their children. To achieve the main objective of this study, the following sub-objectives will also be explored.

1. To characterise the strategies adopted by Nigerian immigrant parents in navigating the school language of their children.
2. To characterise the Nigerian immigrant parents' strategies in relation to the educational integration of their children.
3. To explore how Nigerian immigrant parents' language transmission strategies influence their children in the acquisition of proficiency in the school language.
4. To outline the social support available to Nigerian immigrant parents in the integration of children into Portuguese schools.

## 1.5 Research questions

The main research question to guide this study is “what are the strategies adopted by Nigerian immigrant parents in navigating the school language and educational achievement of their children? The specific research questions will include:

1. How do Nigerian immigrant parents navigate the school language of their children in Portuguese schools?
2. What are the strategies explored by Nigerian immigrant parents in enhancing the academic achievement of their children?
3. In what ways do Nigerian immigrant parents’ language transmission strategies influence their children in the acquisition of proficiency in the school language?
4. What are the social supports available to Nigerian immigrant parents in the social integration of children in Portuguese schools?

## 1.6 Rational for the study

With the growing population of Nigerian immigrants in Portugal which according to SEF (2021) stood at 900 migrants, this study hopes to generate insights into the effectiveness of school language policies implemented in Portuguese schools and as well establish information regarding the needs of immigrant children and parents that remained unsolved in Portuguese schools. The study hopes to make valuable contribution to the body of knowledge to the growing scholarly attention to the school language and educational achievement of immigrant children. Central to the importance of this study is the fact that there is a dearth of literature exploring the perspectives of Nigerian immigrant parents in Portugal on the educational integration of children. As school language may not usually be the family language in most immigrant family contexts and the fact that proficiency in school language has been linked to higher educational achievement among immigrant children (Cummins 2001; Cummins 2011, 2013), this present study hopes to analyse the strategies adopted by Nigerian immigrant parents in being involved in the schooling of their children such as relating with teachers and school authorities. It also hopes to examine the strategies immigrant parents adopted at home toward improving educational achievement such as assisting their children in doing homework, using extra educational materials, and gaining more proficiency in the school language. Insights from this study will also be relevant to policymakers and school administrators in Portugal regarding

the impacts of educational language policies implemented in Portuguese schools especially as it relates to immigrant children.

## 1.7 Relationship with social work with families and children

At the core mandates of social work as espoused in its global definition is the protection of human rights and the promotion of diversities (IFSW, 2014). The recognition of diversities by the global definition of social work has become more relevant amid growing multicultural, multilingualistic, and multi-ethnic populations occasioned by an unprecedented rise in global migrations. As noted by UNHCR (2016), education stands out as one of the basic and fundamental rights of immigrant and refugee children needed in order to thrive in the host countries. Social work is therefore committed to ensuring that the rights of children and families in immigration contexts are protected. As it relates to the integration of children in schools, social workers play vital roles in engaging with families, schoolteachers, and school administrators at both micro, meso, and macro levels in conducting needs assessment and developing intervention plans on issues such as behaviour problems and learning difficulties (Duman, 2000; Duman & Snoubar, 2016; Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2014). This study, therefore, has significant relevance to social work with families and children as it hopes to generate insights that could be useful to social workers and other helping professionals working in schools and other domains of integration of immigrant children.

## 1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem, the rationale for the study, and relationship with social work with families and children. Chapter two presents a literature review on the growing global immigration inflow, especially across Europe, and the multiplication of multilingual and multi-ethnic populations. Chapter two further presents a literature review on issues concerning the educational integration of immigrant children and specifically in areas such as factors that influence parental involvement in the language and educational integration of children. Chapter three presents the theoretical framework and key concepts of integration of immigrant children such as the theory of social capital, ecological systems theory and the concept of children immersion language. Chapter four presents the methodological approaches employed in the study such as the research design, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. Chapter five presents the findings and discussion of the study whereas chapter six presents the conclusion of the study as well as recommendations and suggestions for future study.

# 2 CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents review of literature aimed at establishing the existing body of knowledge on the issues relating to the language and educational integration of immigrant children in Portugal. The chapter discusses the context of immigration to Portugal identifying various waves of immigration and Portuguese integration policies that have underpinned these waves. In order to present an elaborate and conceptual understanding of this research, I reviewed and discussed relevant literature relating to factors that influence immigrant parents' involvement in school as well the impact of the Portuguese language on the education of immigrant children. Lastly, the chapter presents discusses the impacts of educational language policy and diversity in Nigeria. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Nigeria's global emigration trend and the Nigerian immigrants in Portugal.

## 2.2 The context of immigration in Portugal

Portugal has been on the front line of European countries with immigration-friendly policies which has characterised its migration waves (Casquilho-Martins et al. 2020; Padilla & Ortiz, 2012; Peixoto 2007). As reported by Immigration, Borders and Asylum Report (2020), Portugal has witnessed a large inflow of immigrants in recent years as a result of its seemingly economic recovery. For instance, a 22.9% increase in migrant flows was recorded from 2018 to 2019 with countries such as Brazil Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Cape Verde topping the list of countries with the highest number of immigrant countries (SEF 2020). The history of the influx of immigrant population arriving in Portugal from Portuguese African-speaking countries (PALOP) dates back to 1970 when the famous Portuguese dictatorship and decolonisation regime officially ended (Casquilho-Martins et al. 2020; Padilla & Ortiz, 2012).

The Portuguese post-colonial era ignited an unprecedented migration flow as a result of increased demand for low-skilled labour, post-colonial dependency, and family unification. The post-colonial migration trend was also characterised by social vulnerability, illegality, and precariousness (European Commission, 2021; Peixoto et al. 2011). The immigration trend in Portugal has witnessed four notable waves. The Carnation Revolution of 1974 ushered in the first wave which lasted between 1975 to 1980 and witnessed a large inflow of Portuguese returnees and other accompanying immigrants from the collapsed Portuguese former colonies (Matias & Pinto 2020; Peixoto & Iorio 2011). Portugal's official joining of the European Economic Community in 1986 EEC, later changed to European Union) intensified its migration

flows and represented its second migration wave. The second wave of immigration witnessed immigrants arriving in Portugal majorly from Germany, Austria, France, Brazil and PALOP.

Unlike the second wave, the Portuguese third migration wave witnessed a large inflow of migrants from eastern Europe such as Kazakhstan, Russia, Moldova, and Ukraine who shared no linguistic, historical, or cultural links with Portugal until the late 1990s (Peixoto et al. 2009). The inflow of migrants into Portugal during the third wave was reinforced by the economic crisis occasioned by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and an unprecedented fall in GDP in the majority of the East European countries. This period also witnessed the diversification of migration flow characterised majorly by asylum seekers and refugees from South and Central America, Africa, and Asia (Baganha, 2005; Peixoto et al., 2009; Padilla & Ortiz, 2012; Solovova 2019). The deterioration of the economic crisis in eastern European countries brought by the disbandment of the Warsaw Pact also made Portugal and other Western European countries with welcoming immigration policies the choice relocation zone for the immigrants escaping the economic downturn. The fourth wave of immigration in Portugal has also been linked to a growing humanitarian crisis, especially in the Middle East and Africa. For instance, a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2015) noted that migrants from Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Pakistan, Syria, Iran, and Afghanistan made up the greater percentage of immigrants flowing into the Portuguese fourth wave of migration flows.

The population of immigrants in Portugal has continued to grow and is comprised of diverse immigrant communities. A report by the Borders and Asylum Report RIFA (2019) documented an increase in the population of registered immigrants in Portugal from 480,300 in (2018) to 590,348 in 2019. The latest statistics of immigrants in Portugal according to SEF (2021), show an increase of 8.3% and a total number of 698,887 registered migrants in Portugal. Of this population, Brazil maintained the highest population with a total number of 233,134 registered migrants and 13% of the entire population. Other populations according to SEF (2022) include The United Kingdom (36,639), Cape Verde (35,444), India (34,232), Italy (33,707), Angola (30,417), France (27,614), Ukraine (26,898), Romania (23,967) and Nepal (23,441). More so according to RIFA (2019), the number of Portuguese-speaking migrants in Portugal stood at 81,389 and includes mainly immigrants from Sao Tome and Principe, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Guinea, and Angola.

Other African population statistics in Portugal identified by RIFA (2019) include 3,525 from French-speaking countries such as Senegal and Guinea as well as 2,935 migrants from English-speaking countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana. Nigeria also among countries with the lowest number of registered immigrants in SEF portal. According to SEF (2021) the number of registered Nigerian immigrants stood at 866. It is pertinent to highlight here that these figures do state the exact number of Nigerian migrants owing to the growing cases of immigrants in irregular situations. Many migrants in Portugal do not have legal stay permits and do remain invisible to SEF statistics.

### **2.2.1 Portuguese immigrant integration policies**

Portugal has witnessed progressive development in its integration policies and debates on immigration-related policies have been pronounced and highly contested (Lopes et al. 2014). There have been policy implementations at institutional levels geared toward welcoming and integrating immigrants. One such of policies is the Decree-Law 251/2002,22/11 Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Minorias Étnicas (ACIME) otherwise called the High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities which was officially launched in 2002. The ACIME integration policy is considered a great turning point in Portuguese policy-making development as it concerns immigration and the integration of immigrants (Marques, 2006).

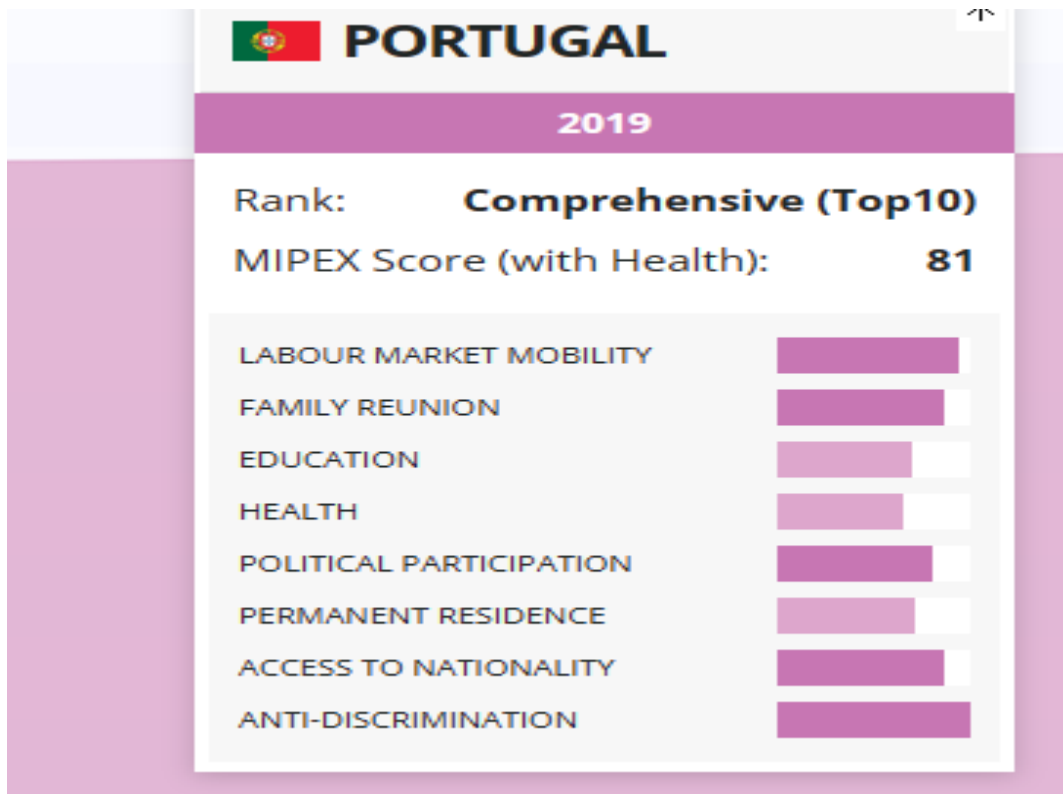
The ACIME integration policy was formulated and implemented to promote the employment, education, and housing needs of immigrants, the protection of political and social rights of ethnic and immigrant populations as well as a legal framework to fight against xenophobia, discrimination, and racism. In 2007, the Portuguese government introduced another integration policy; Decree-Law 167/2007, 22/11 Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural – ACIDI otherwise known as High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue which came as a result of institutional reshuffling of integration services in Portugal (Peixoto et al. 2009). ACIDI policy integrated existing integration policies such as the Religions Dialogue Mission, the Entreculturas Secretariat, Project Escolhas, and ACIME (Lopes et al.2014). The central theme of ACIDI was ‘More Humanity, More Diversity’ and had the mandate of promoting inter-religious dialogue and intercultural relations as well as protecting ethnic minorities and the immigrant population in Portugal. ACIDI was also later changed to High Commission for Migration (Alto Comissariado para as Migrações ACM) and geared towards promoting religions, ethnic and cultural diversities in Portugal. Within the framework of ACM, other integration policies such the National Support Centres for the



Integration of Migrants (CNAIM) and local Support Centres for the Integration of Migrants Network (CLAIM Network) have been implemented (ACM, 2023).

The success of these policy frameworks has positioned Portugal among the countries with the most immigrant-friendly policies among Southern European countries that share related economic and social developmental indices. Other immigrant integration policies that followed ACIDI have also reinforced the promotion of equal opportunities and rights; facilitated positive and consensus relationships, interaction, and acceptance between Portuguese natives and immigrant communities. Other key integration domains that have been covered by policies include the development of local-based interventions targeted at ensuring easy access to services needed by migrants in their daily lives (Huddleston et al. 2011). A report by MIPEX (2020) ranked Portugal among the top ten countries with successful immigrant integration policies. For instance, in the implementation of health policies for immigrants, MIPEX ranked Portugal as 2<sup>nd</sup> with 81% behind Finland 1<sup>st</sup> with 85% and Canada 3<sup>rd</sup> with 80%. Portugal also ranked 94% in labour market mobility of immigrants, 100% in anti-discrimination policies, 87% in family reunion, 71% in permanent residence, and 69% in the education of immigrants (Solano & Huddleston 2020). These figures clearly indicate that the implementation rate of Portuguese integration policies is above average and similar to what is obtainable in the leading countries in the Nordics such as Norway. This is also a pointer to the increasing inflow of migrants into Portugal.

Figure 2:1 2020 MIPEx Indicators for Portugal



Source: MIPEx 2020

As can be observed from figure 2.2 above, Portugal's integration policies have been successful in key areas of the integration process such as labour market mobility, family reunion, education access to nationality, and anti-discrimination among others. This is corroborated by Malheiros and Hortas (2008) who noted that Portugal's integration policies have recorded significant development such as granting long-term residence permits (Law 23/2007, 04/07), implementing active anti-discrimination laws, granting citizenship and family reunion requests, guaranteeing inclusive education, employment, and political opportunities for immigrants. The effectiveness of Portuguese integration policies has impacted positively on the existence of associations and corporate organisations promoting the welfare of immigrants. For instance, Zincone et al. (2011) noted that despite the growing pro-assimilationist policies, anti-immigrant sentiments, and xenophobic and social tensions in many European and western states, Portugal has remained resolute on its commitment to the acceptance and integration of immigrants.

Furthermore, one of the characteristics of Portuguese integration policies is their flexibility to accommodate humanitarian situations. For instance, to protect children whose parents are

undocumented, the integration policy has made it possible for such parents to be regularised in the system through the status of their children who have a legal residence permit (de Queiroz, 2006). The flexibility has resulted in constant modification of regularization procedures to accommodate the dynamic nature of immigrant situations. A study by Peixoto et al. (2009) identified the 2007 regularisation law captured in Article 88 clause 2 which introduced the system of attending interviews with SEF and receiving decisions afterward. This made the resident permit application more accessible to immigrants. The 2007 modification of regularisation law further established a legal framework that gave undocumented migrants the opportunity to regularise their stay by showing evidence of valid employment contracts and evidence of at least one year of tax payment in Portugal.

To accommodate other emerging concerns, the 2007 immigration was amended in 2011 captured in Article 1238. According to OECD (2017), the amendment of the 2007 immigration Act is considered the turning point in the Portuguese government's commitment to the regularisation of irregular immigrants. This amendment was significant because it allowed irregular migrants who do not have valid entry documents or those who were in irregular situations to be captured in the SEF system upon fulfilment of certain conditions. Undocumented migrants who were in this category were granted a residence permit if they could show evidence of tax payment for at least a year.

## 2.3 Portuguese language and education policies for immigrant children

The emergence of multicultural and multilingual migrant populations in Portugal has made the school environment a major integration platform for immigrant children. Portuguese schools have become an avenue for the crystallization of democratic, institutional, and political stakes (Madeira, 2015; Martins et al. 2019). With the growing population of immigrant and refugee children from cultural and linguistic diversities, several debates and themes have been raised in studies and among policymakers (Martins et al. 2019). Some of the key debates focus on school drop-out and failure among immigrant children, the right to education, intercultural and plurilingual education, the effects of school and residential segregation, the impact of religion and culture as it concerns access and inclusive education, late access to school among immigrant and refugee children, host country language requirement in Portuguese schools and migrant children early entry into labour market (DGE-MEC, 2015; Hortas, 2013; Reis & Gomes, 2016; Ribas Mateos, 2004). The debates on the inclusion and blending of immigrants'

heritage language host language (PL) in teaching and learning have also been on the front burner.

Critics have maintained that the growing inflow of migrants and the population of immigrant children in Portuguese schools call for the recognition of immigrant native languages as a step towards ensuring the smooth integration of immigrant children in schools (Pinto & Araújo, 2013). As Menken and Garcia (2010) put it, the diversity of immigrant and ethnic minority populations in Portuguese schools presents the need for multidimensional linguistics education policies. It is worthy of note here that despite the wide recognition of immigrant children's right to teaching and learning the host country's language, the recognition of culture and heritage language has not been given a concrete policy framework. The growing multilingual populations and heterogeneity have continued to pose a challenge to the implicit implementation of the Portuguese language as the key education language policy in the integration of immigrant children in schools (Pinto, 2012; Pinto & Araújo 2013; Pinto & Araújo 2016). However, as will be discussed in the following sections, the successive government of Portugal has been conscious of these concerns and has developed a series of policies to accommodate language diversity and eliminate language barriers affecting children in schools.

In order to address language issues affecting immigrant children, the Portuguese ministry of education in 2001, developed guidelines incorporating language education policies and recognising the Portuguese language as a non-mother tongue (PLNM). The guidelines stipulated that for children from cultural and linguistic minorities, the Portuguese language should be taken as a language of choice. In practicality, the guidelines mandated all Portuguese public schools to recognise and teach in the official language of reception and to provide the necessary support and activities to assist immigrant children in learning the Portuguese language (Faneca et al. 2016).

The PLNM was established as a full discipline and included in the basic education national curriculum (primary and secondary). More so, to ensure its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, an operational guideline was introduced in 2007 which aligns with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). To ensure its functionality, the PLNM was in 2008, certified and regulated by the Ministry of Employment, Vocational Training, and public institutions. There also exists a bilingual education introduced by the Ministry of education delivered using adapted materials in selected schools specifically for

Portuguese native children whose parents immigrated and Cape Verdean immigrant children. Other relevant policy considerations that have been developed to assist immigrant children in schools include the National Plan for the Integration of Students of Linguistic Minorities and the National Program of Action for Inclusion (PNAI 2008). These measures according to DGE-MEC (2015), have to a great extent culminated in school drop-out reduction and improvement of academic success among immigrant children and ethnic minorities.

Academic excellence and achievement among immigrant children and the minority population is another important discussion that has generated several perspectives in studies and reports. For instance, according to MIPEx (2020), despite the fact that Portugal has greatly improved in its multicultural education, recognition of diversity in schools, and equal opportunities for all children, issues related to developing comprehensive educational curriculum for immigrant children still persist. Previous surveys such as the OECD (2010) further noted that having a migrant background is a key indicator to measure academic performance both at Portuguese basic and secondary levels. Several factors have been identified as possible reasons why immigrant children recorded lower academic performance because of challenges with the Portuguese language. In this regard, the socio-economic status of immigrant families stands out among possible explanations. A study by Faneca et.al (2016) argued that low economic resources among immigrant families limit their capacity to provide the linguistic materials needed to improve the communicative and linguistic abilities of their children. From another perspective, the low performance of immigrant children in Portuguese schools could be attributed to the difficulty in grasping academic contents, connecting expressions and concepts between PL and mother tongue, and poor reading skills, especially among the emergent bilinguals which are newly arrived immigrant pupils (Garcia & Klieffgen, 2010; Toth, 2006).

### **2.3.1 The concept of School language and academic achievement among immigrant children**

There has been growing scholarly attention to the crucial role school language play in the educational achievement of immigrant children and other linguistic minorities. As noted by Moore and Schleppegrell (2014), the language in which teaching and learning in school are accomplished refers to the school language. In the contexts of immigrant families, the school language in some cases is not the family language hence children from such families are constantly confronted with the challenge of navigating between the family and school language. The complexities of school language tend to position immigrant children in disadvantaged academic situations. For instance, children excluded or marginalised from social

and educational opportunities; children whose school language of instruction is different from home language LI and children from low socio-economic backgrounds have been identified as being disadvantaged and have a likelihood of having low academic achievement (DeVillar et al. 2013; OECD, 2010a). The situation appears more critical in situations where immigrant children are further limited by low school language proficiency by parents who should have provided the seed capital towards gaining proficiency in school language

This underscores the crucial role school language play in the educational integration of immigrant children. As Cummins (2001) and Gandara (2013) puts it, the home-school language switch disadvantage for immigrant children is further complicated in situations where there is no effective school language support. Scholars have also postulated perspectives on how school language should be structured in order to assist promote the academic achievement of immigrant children and other minority linguistic minorities. For instance, Cummins (2011, 2013) noted that school language should affirm students' identities in the context of academic work, connect instruction to children's lives, scaffold children's comprehension, and maximize literacy engagement. Cummins's perspective points to the importance of recognising and acknowledging children's language repertoires which in most cases are embedded in their L1. It can also be argued that Cummins's perspective highlights the importance of flexibility in school language as it relates to enabling children to use both L1 and L2 in showcasing their literacy skills and achievements.

Thus, contemporary scholarly perspectives on the ideals of school languages have been pointing towards developing school language into a pedagogical orientation that empowers children through the use of language. According to Haneda (2014), children have a higher tendency to gain proficiency in school language if the pedagogical instructions and strategies connect to children's lives. For instance, the use of semiotic tools such as images, diagrams, and graphs can assist children to construct meaning embedded in school language through their L1 repertoires. This is further corroborated by Gebhard et al. (2014) who noted that school curriculum should incorporate children's linguistic and cultural repertoires which will provide them with a semiotic foothold of the school language. In other words, pedagogical materials should be structured in such a way that children could easily relate or construct meaning from it using their L1 language repertoires.

Studies such as Cummins (2009) and Cummins et al. (2007) also noted that developing critical literacies and co-constructing knowledge between teachers and children remain an ideal

strategy for integrating children into the school language. Here, the pedagogical strategy points toward enabling children to deconstruct texts and consequently construct their own understanding. This tends to help children to easily grasp meanings embedded in any pedagogical materials, gain more proficiency in school language, and improve academic achievement. In the context of Portugal where Portuguese classes are not just compulsory but a critical tool geared toward developing linguistic reflection and academic literacy (Buescu et al. 2015), it becomes very crucial to structure pedagogical materials in such a way that it can promote the academic achievement of immigrant children and other minority linguistic populations.

### **2.3.2 Factors that influence parents' involvement in the educational integration of children**

The level of academic success and social integration of immigrant children to a great extent tends to be influenced by the level of parents' active involvement in such processes. However, parents' involvement in the educational and language integration of children tends to be affected by factors such as the level of educational attainment of parents, the family's economic and material resources, parents' linguistic background and skills, and the navigating paid job and school involvement.

#### *Level of educational attainment*

Parent level of educational attainment plays a vital role as it relates to the language educational integration of children. As noted by Benner et al. (2016) and Jabar et al (2021), there tends to be a greater understanding of the importance and value of education which shapes parents' expectations, behaviour, and attitude toward children's language and educational needs. as Lee and Bowen (2006), puts it, parents who have a higher level of educational attainment often have vision, prospects, and as well long-term educational benefits and as such strive to inspire and instil the value system in their children. Lee and Bowen (2006) further opined that parents with higher levels of educational attainment have greater chances of providing adequate support, setting a high standard, encouraging academic achievement, and providing needed resources that could improve children's educational outcomes. More so, parents present themselves as a role model to their children as they acquire more educational achievements and this serves as a powerful inspiration for children (Assari, 2018; Asari & Caldwell, 2019; Cook & Tseng, 2019; Dijkstra et al. 2004).

By implication, in contexts where children witness their parent's educational achievements, there is a higher probability that they will perceive education as a top priority in life and this could spur their ambition, strong commitment, and increased motivation to achieve success in educational goals and language proficiency skills (Jabar et al. 2021; Rothon et al., 2012). Additionally, Parents with a high level of education have also been found to supervise and monitor their children's activities both in school and at home. Previous studies documented that parents who have higher education are able to keep track of their children's academic progress and as such can detect when their grade drops (Hoffman et al. 2020; Ngai et al. 2012; You & Nguyen, 2011).

### *Social networks*

Parental networks which encompass relationships and social connections of parents have been found as an important social indicator that can have an immense impact and influence on the language and educational integration of children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). This is because the level of parents' social network could assist them to obtain useful information regarding school programmes, educational opportunities, community supports, and school programmes (Dijkstra et al. 2004; Li & Fischer, 201). Accessing information could equip parents with resources on how best to integrate their children into schools. More so, Sheldon (2002), noted parents who have large social work with other parents and teachers are likely to actively participate in the activities organised in the schools of their children such as parent-teacher meetings. Additionally, parents with large social networks are able to obtain more balanced information which can empower them to make informed decisions on how to navigate the integration of their children (Sheldon 2002; Horvat et al. 2003)

Furthermore, through parental social networks, parents are able to network and connect with other parents. Parents' social networks in school help them to connect with other parents who may share similar experiences, successes, and challenges in the integration of children into the school (Anderson et al. 2010; Anderson et al. 2015). Through social networks in school, parents could also obtain strategies, guidance, and insights on how to navigate the school system and implement approaches that could result in more active involvement in the schools of their children and consequently result in better educational outcomes of children (Blank et al. 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Studies have also documented those parental social networks through parents-teachers meetings could reinforce advocacy in schools whereby parents come together to blend their voices in championing the welfare of their children in



school (Dijkstra et al. 2004). Through such advocacy, parents could engage the school authorities to improve educational policies, ensure that school policies constantly meet the educational needs and challenges of children, and ensure children have a supportive environment in school (Sheldon, 2002).

### *Material and economic resources*

The relevance of parents' material and economic resources in the educational integration of children has continued to generate scholarly attention. Studies have found that material and economic resources tend to be a decisive factor in the educational integration of children because it determine to a great extent how parents provide their children with educational materials and opportunities (Altzinger et al. 2015; Duncan et al. 2007; Sirin, 2005). More so, previous studies suggest that children from parents and families with high income tend to have more access to information and knowledge capable of addressing educational challenges and achieving their set goals (Balarin & Cueto, 2007; Frewen et al. 2015). This is as a result of the fact that parents with high income are likely to procure innovative educational materials such as stationery, textbooks, and electronic gadgets to support their children both at home and in school (Cooper 2010; Cooper & Stewart, 2013; Van Otter 2014). Parents with higher income are also likely to procure computers and provide internet access to their children which facilitates online learning, the development of digital literacy skills, and access to educational platforms which can help enhance children academic performance and improve their linguistic skills (Björklund & Salvanes. 2011; Li & Oiu 2018; Ren et al. 2021).

Additionally, studies have found that parents with higher material and economic resources have the propensity to invest in their children in the form of paying for extra tutorials and hiring private lesson teachers (Ahmar & Anwar 2013; Gobena, 2018). Ahmar & Anwar 2013 further noted that they are likely to explore private teachers who have the right expertise and skills to provide personalised services based on their perceived subject areas and courses where their children may be having challenges. Parents who have more economic and material wealth also have the possibility of engaging their children in outdoor educational activities which could enhance their academic performance. According to Behrman et al. (2017) and Broer et al. (2019), the availability of economic and material resources makes it possible for parents to register their children in educative extracurricular programmes such as art classes, sports teams, music lessons, dance classes, debate clubs and volunteer or community service works which

can enhance children's holistic development, educational integration and increased social network (Björklund & Salvanes, 2011).

### *Linguistic background and skills*

Immigrant parent's linguistic background and skills plays a crucial role in facilitating the educational integration of children. A study by Poza et al. (2014) found that parents who have strong linguistic backgrounds and skills have greater chances of having effective communication and collaboration with schoolteachers thereby staying abreast with information on their children's academic challenges, achievements and progress. This goes without saying that poor language skills and lack of knowledge of the host country's educational system and curriculum limit parents' ability to provide support to their children both in school and doing homework. These categories of immigrant parents tend to have limited contact with schoolteachers because they could barely communicate and share their concerns with the teachers in the host country language (Ji, & Koblinsky, 2009; Ismail, 2019).

Additionally, parents with strong linguistic skill and background are likely to influence their children to acquire proficiency in school language because they have the skills to create expose their children to a wide range of vocabulary, engage children in conversations in the target language, create learning environment at home and expose children to books that improve their language proficiency (Poza et al. 2014). More so when parents are well-versed in both host country language and other languages, it could influence their children to develop passion for multilinguistic skills and respect for diversities (Cha & Goldenberg, 2015; Dixon & Wu, 2014). Parents linguistic background and skills is therefore very essential and a decisive factor in the language and educational integration of children.

### *Combining paid jobs and school involvement.*

Studies have also documented parents' commitment to paid jobs as a barrier to active involvement in their children's education. From the perspective of León-Pérez et al. (2021), the situation is more complicated for immigrant mothers who in addition to combining work and family roles also face emotional and physical strains emanating from putting up with the traditional childbearing expectations, legal status barriers, low-wage employment opportunities and poverty in the host country. A similar perspective by Zong and Batalova (2018), pointed out that immigrant mothers barely have time to be active in their children's education because they tend to be constantly faced with other challenges such as doing jobs that are physically demanding yet with low upward mobility, low pay, and low status. This is typical of Asian and

African immigrant parents who in some cases may also be undocumented and have limited access to formal social support in Portugal.

Furthermore, Nomaguchi and Johnson (2016) found that immigrant parents often struggle with meeting up with their parenting roles including active engagement in the schooling of their children because the demands of parenting roles confronting them exceed the resources at their disposal. Low-status and unskilled low-pay jobs which many immigrant parents engage in for family sustenance also create uncertainties and family instability which could have a direct impact on the academic performance of children. For instance, immigrant families with high physical demanding jobs have been found to experience family conflict, insufficient caregiving responsibilities, limited time for family roles, difficulty in meeting up with the family routine, and recurring involvement with child protection services due to child abuse and negligence (Sandstrom & Chaudry, 2012). This could happen because some low-pay jobs usually come with irregular, unstable, and tight schedules. To buttress this point, Prickett (2018), found that parents who work morning shifts (8 a.m.-6 pm) provided more emotional and cognitive support to their children compared to parents who worked the night shifts.

## 2.4 Educational language policy and diversity in Nigeria

Nigeria is considered the most populated country in Africa with an estimated 219 million people (Worldometer, 2023). Nigeria is also a multicultural, pluralistic, multilingual, and multi-ethnic country with Atheism, Traditional African religion, Christianity, and Islam as its major religions. According to Pate (2021), Nigeria has a total of 526 ethnic groups and 450 dialects. Diversity in Nigeria is thus manifested in how these ethnic and language groups coexist and thrive. Among the 526 languages, 44 are dying, 348 are vigorous, 74 are developing, and 19 are institutional (Ethnologue in Pate, 2021). More so, 10 of these languages are nonindigenous while 509 are indigenous. Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba are the only languages recognised as the national languages which are considered the three dominant languages in Nigerian and have been favoured more by the National policy on education.

Figure 2.2. Map of Nigeria showing language diversity



Source: Ibrahim and Gwandu, 2016

As can be observed from the map in figure 2.3 above, the geographical location of different regions in Nigeria clearly shows language diversities. In the northern part, Hausa is widely spoken and the dominant language. Other minority languages which are spoken in the Northern part of Nigeria include *Nupe*, *Kamberi*, *Kanuri*, *Borim* and *Margi*. In the Western part of Nigeria, the *Yoruba* language is the dominant language. The *Igbo* language is the dominant language in the southern part of Nigeria with other minority languages such as *Igbira*, *Itsekri*, *Ijaw*, and *Ibibio*. The implementation of the Nigerian language policy has been highly contested by scholars owing to the agitation for recognition of other minority languages. For instance, Oudraogo (2000), asserted that the multi-lingual and multi-ethnic diversities in Nigeria have been an issue of concern to educational planners and educators. Issues such as ambiguity in the policy framework, ethnic sentiments, lack of curriculum materials, and poor teacher training have been identified as issues affecting the implementation of language policies in Nigeria.

Language is considered an important tool that promotes culture, national cohesion, and social integration. The recognition of the importance of language by the Nigerian government led to the development of a comprehensive education language policy in 1977. To meet up with the realities of ethnic and language agitations in Nigeria, the educational language policy has been revised in 1981, 1998, and 2004 (Ogunbiyi, 2008). According to the provisions of the policy, preschools in Nigeria should teach children within the first three years of children's education

using indigenous languages whereas the English language should be offered as a compulsory subject. To ensure national cohesion and unity, the policy stipulated that children must be taught at least one out of the three national languages. This is well captured in the following quotation:

*The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and the language of the immediate environment and French shall be taught as a subject (NPE, 2004, p. 2).*

The multilingual nature of Nigeria has also promoted the dominance of the English language. The reason for English language dominance in Nigeria points to the fact that it provides a medium of communication and understanding among the greater population of Nigerians regardless of their native language diversities. As Oladejo (1991) puts it, the only language of communication understood by all Nigerians remains the English language hence its continued dominance. There have been some observable issues in the implementation of the NPE relating to the use of native languages and the English language. For instance, in the local villages where people with low income mainly reside, children do not usually start school at the stipulated 3-year pre-school where they are supposed to be educated in their native language. Instead, children from local villages start school at the primary school level where teachers mostly use the English language leading to the early immersion of children in the English language.

On the other hand, in urban cities where preschool education is functional, it is usually the children of the elite who were already immersed in the English language that attend preschool classes (Adegbija, 2004). The implication is that children in Nigeria are integrated into the English language right from their first contact in school. Cases also abound where children especially those in urban cities cannot speak their native because they were immersed in the English language at a very early age. According to Adegbija, (2003), the National Policy on Education is poorly implemented to the point that the majority of preschools do not follow the guidelines of the policy. Some critics have also blamed parents and school proprietors for the poor implementation of the guidelines of NPE. In this context, some elite parents prefer their children to speak English which they perceive as a show of their affluence whereas some school

proprietors prefer children to speak the English language in their schools in order to promote the standard of the school.

#### **2.4.1 The Nigeria global emigration trend**

Over the past decades, Nigeria has witnessed an unprecedented rise in emigration, especially among its youth population. The situation has continued to worsen owing to its economic downturn and the rising unemployment rate among graduates. According to a survey by African Center for Strategic Studies (2021), the population of Nigerians who emigrated rose from 446,753 in 1990 to 1,670,455 in 2020. The global migration trend in Nigeria has greatly been influenced by factors such as trade liberalization, bilateral agreements, educational collaboration, and free border movement between nations. These factors have continued to influence and increase the propensity of emigration among Nigerians by facilitating production and trade relations, cultural exchange, educational and job opportunities, student exchange programmes, and foreign international investment platforms. The realities of the mass emigration trend among Nigerians especially among the youth and young adults have been analysed from both positive and negative viewpoints. For instance, Oreofe and Eyitayo (2022), argued that the mass emigration of youth has resulted in the loss of human capital through the drain. The situation seems to be more complicated among the highly skilled professionals in the medical, technology, and engineering fields. This also brings to bear the push factor which has been attributed to growing unemployment, underemployment, and poor welfare scheme for workers in Nigeria (Kekena, 2018).

The emigration trend in Nigeria prior to the nation's independence in 1960 was explicitly influenced by the quest to acquire foreign education. A reverse migration emerged between 1980 and 1990 after the political and economic crises which brought untold hardship forcing many people to migrate in large numbers to Europe and other parts of the world (Black et al. 2004). Due to the deteriorating standard of education, insecurity, and political instability, Nigerian elites who have the resources prefer to send their children to study in Europe and America rather than send them to Nigerian schools. As further highlighted by Black et al. (2004), these youth who migrated to foreign countries to study often refused to return to Nigeria upon graduation because the unemployment crisis has worsened. A survey conducted by Reynolds (2002) found that the number of academics in the United States exceeded the number who resided in Nigeria. For instance, according to U.S Census Bureau (2008), Nigerian immigrants were found to be well educated representing 60.5% of those with bachelor's

degrees and other higher qualifications compared to 27.8% of U.S. native citizens and 27.1% of other nationals.

In Europe especially in the UK, Germany, and Spain, the economic attractiveness, post-colonial relationship, and scholarship opportunities have made the countries the choice emigration countries for most Nigerians. For instance, the mass recruitment of Nigerian medical and healthcare professionals by the UK government contributed to the high population of Nigerian medical professionals in the UK. According to a report by Eurostat (2016), the population of Nigerian-born migrants in the UK stood at 201,185. The recent migration trend has tripled the figure owing to the persistent economic hardship and insecurity in Nigeria. In 2011, the population of Nigerian immigrants in Germany stood at 17,340 (Eurostat, 2016; Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). The report further noted that in Germany, many Nigerian migrants are employed and working in jobs that are lower than their professional skills and qualifications.

Nigerians have also been found to maintain strong ties among themselves in foreign countries. This is made possible and facilitated through the establishment of kinship and community associations that meets regularly to share cultural values and celebrate important events such as the new yam festival, Independence Day or in some cases pull resources together for humanitarian projects in Nigeria (Baffoe, 2010; Reynolds, 2009; Ukaoma, 2011). These associations and periodic meetings also provide a platform for the integration of children into cultural norms and values especially learning native languages. During such meetings, Nigerian migrants wear their traditional or native attire, cook native dishes, play and dance native songs and local languages are used as the medium of communication. It is believed that by being part of the gathering and observing the cultural activities being displaced, children are initiated into their cultural identity and heritage.

Nigerians who live abroad are also held in high regard in back in Nigeria, especially those who have acquired wealth and show off their affluence through exotic cars and mansions in their communities. The show of affluence by immigrant returnees has inspired more youth to migrate thereby worsening the emigration trend. It is also worthy of note here that the desperation to migrate especially among the Nigerian youth has increased the number of Nigerian immigrants in irregular situations in Europe, the U.S., and other parts of the world. A survey conducted by International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2016) found that 4% of Nigerians migrated to Oceania, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia; North America (26%),

Europe (34%), Middle Africa (42%), and West Africa (46%). With the help of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which allows visa-free entry for member states, many Nigerians have migrated to Togo, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, and Ghana. IOM (2016) further highlighted that other choice emigration countries outside the African borders for Nigerians include China, Ireland, Dubai, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

#### **2.4.2 Nigerian immigrants in Portugal**

According to SEF (2021), there are a total of 866 Nigerian migrants currently residing in Portugal as legal residents composed of 591 men and 275 females. Despite the figure, there is evidence to show that more Nigerian are arriving in Portugal and thus, the immigrant population is consistently on the rise. For instance, according to SEF (2020) report, the population of Nigerian immigrants in Portugal was 758 composed of 510 men and 248 females. This goes without saying that the rise in the population of Nigerian migrants in Portugal has been consistent. The flexible Portuguese family unification policy is a key factor in the increasing number of Nigerians arriving in Portugal to join family members or start academic programmes. There is strong evidence to show that the figure captured in the SEF portal may not be the actual population of Nigerians in Portugal. For instance, the current war in Ukraine has forced more Nigerians, especially students who were initially residing in Ukraine to move to Portugal. It can be argued that these new arrivals may not have gotten all the required documentation and hence may not be captured in the SEF portal. Nigerian immigrants in Portugal keep strong ties among themselves through kinship and community networks spread across major cities such as Lisbon and Amadora. Religious places such as Catholic and Pentecostal churches are also important meeting places for where they worship and commune together. According to Instituto Nacional de Estatística (2023), Nigerian immigrants in Portugal have higher educational qualifications with the majority having acquired bachelor's and master's degrees.



Figure 2.3 *Educational qualification of Nigerians in Portugal between 2011 and 2021*

Census Resident population, with Nigerian nationality, by highest level of education completed		
Level of education	YEAR	
	2011	2021
	No.	No.
<b>Total</b>	284	510
None	53	91
Basic education 1st cycle	31	30
Basic education 2nd cycle	31	27
Basic education 3rd cycle	36	62
High school	82	158
post secondary education	9	5
bachelor's degree	7	14
Graduation	29	61
Master's degree	5	50
Doctorate	1	12

**Source:** Instituto Nacional de Estatística (2023)

## 3 CHAPTER THREE- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the theoretical framework in which this study is anchored. The theoretical framework of this study builds from the theory of social capital which identifies material, economic, social, and human capital resources utilised by immigrant parents in being involved in the education of children. According to the theory of social capital, the socioeconomic status of immigrant families such as the educational level of parents, financial capabilities, and proficiency in the dominant language stands as decisive factors in the educational integration and achievement of immigrant children. The study also builds from the ecological systems theory which highlights resources within different layers of systems (micro, meso, and macro) that influence parents' involvement in the language and education integration of children. More so, the chapter presents the theoretical underpinnings of children's immersion in the language as it relates to school integration processes. These analyses will provide insight into understanding the strategies adopted by Nigerian immigrant parents in navigating the school language and educational integration of children in Portugal.

### 3.2 Theory of social capital

The theory of social capital as popularised by Bourdieu (1993) and used by Coleman (1988) to understudy family resources posits that parent-child relationships, as well as material resources and time, represent family social capital that parents make available to children. The family social capital according to Coleman exists in forms such as cultural, social, material, human and economic. In the context of immigrant families and the educational integration of children, this theory presents insights into various issues that affect how immigrant parents explore family resources in not only being involved in the language and educational integration of their children but also improving their educational achievement. For instance, human capital possessed by immigrant parents such as proficiency in host country language and knowledge of the host country's educational system are vital family resources needed to help parents to be actively involved in the schooling of their children (Calhoun et al. 1993; Dijkstra et al. 2004).

The theory of social capital attempts to contextualise parental involvement in the educational integration of children in terms of the quality of communication between families and school, parental supervision of children's schoolwork and behaviours, family social support to children, and the extent of social networks possessed by family (Hoffman et al. 2020; Rothon

et al. 2012; Ngai et al. 2012). It embodies the quality of the parent-child relationship which harnesses and moderates both parent-school and parent-child academic and behavioural expectations (Gamoran, 2019; Hoffman et al. 2020). In other words, the quality of family social capital influences and empowers children to measure up to the academic expectations of parents and schools. For instance, Areepattamannil (2010) and Waters et al. (2019) noted that parents often know their children's major strength and utilizes such strength to encourage and build their children's perseverance and resilience which results in improved grades in school. More so, You and Nguyen (2011) found that children who develop a locus of control and stronger self-concept tend to be children who have responsive parental affection and school monitoring. Based on the foregoing, a study by Jabar et al. (2021), associated improved children's educational achievement with resourceful parenting strategies such as rewarding children's success in schoolwork, encouraging children to perform well in school, and regulating children's study and playtime.

Further, the theory of social capital posited that the family's material and economic capital such as having the financial resources to provide pedagogical materials and support to children represents an integral part of parents' involvement in the educational integration of children (Benner et al., 2016; Cooper, 2010). Immigrant children from parents with low socioeconomic status (SES) in Portugal according to the tenets of the theory of social capital are considered as being in a disadvantaged position and at risk of underperformance in education (Björklund & Salvanes. 2011; Li & Oiu 2018). This gives insights into the current study's rationale to understand what strategies Nigerian parents adopted in navigating these challenges particularly as it relates to assisting children in gaining proficiency in school language and improving their educational achievement.

Parental involvement in the educational integration of children is at the core of family social capital according to the social capital theory which increases a child's self-efficacy, improves children's self-regulation skills, and enhances children's resilience which by implication culminates in higher educational achievement of children (Thomas et al. 2019). For instance, acquiring proficiency in the school language and adjusting to a new school environment often appear as daunting tasks for immigrant children especially the newly arrived (Cummins, 2014). As such, active parental involvement could boost children's resilience and determination to put in efforts toward learning the language (Epstein, 2001). Under such conditions, family human capital such as the educational level of immigrant parents and language skills stands out as key indicators of immigrant children's educational achievement in school.

The insights of the theory of social capital are of much relevance to the current study's interest in understanding how immigrant parents' language transmission behaviours and skills affect their children in gaining proficiency in the school language. As Benner et al. (2016) noted, immigrant parents with a higher level of education and speakers of the school language are more likely to be involved in school-organized activities often in the school language. This could provide them with insights into the nature of language and other academic challenges faced by their children. Having such knowledge tends to position them much better to develop creative strategies in assisting children to gain more proficiency and improve in schoolwork. Lee and Bowen (2006) also argued that parents with a lower level of education often lack knowledge of the school system and have less confidence in engaging with teachers and school authorities. However, parents with a lower level of education tend to also improvise and inspire their children through family resilience and using informal learning strategies to promote the educational achievement of their children (Hayes, 2012).

Social networks as part of family social capital have also been identified by the theory of social capital as a predictive factor of parental involvement in children's language and educational integration. Social networks in this context entail the level of parents' involvement in parents-teachers associations. According to Sheldon (2002), parents who are active members of parents-teachers association tend to have large networks and connections with other parents and school authorities. More so, Li and Fischer (2017) found that parents who have large social networks are more likely to engage and actively participate in school activities such as parents-teachers meetings. The implication is that through such networks, parents tend to share experiences and learn new ideas from each other on issues related to the educational integration of children. This also implies that children whose parents have strong social networks have greater chances of having better educational outcomes. A typical example is the organisation of the Nigerian immigrant community in Lisbon. Religious organisations such as the Redeem Christian Church of God in Lisbon present a unique platform where the majority of Nigerian immigrant parents meet and network on issues of concern such as the language and educational integration of children. Parents share vital information and ideas among themselves which has proven to be effective. The theory of social capital is therefore very relevant in gaining insights into the strategies and resources explored by Nigerian immigrants in navigating the educational and language integration of children.

### 3.3 Ecological systems theory

The language and educational integration of immigrant children is such a complex process that demands an understanding of the cultural, economic, social, and institutional influences which directly and indirectly affect children and parents (Cox & Paley, 2003). This is to say that the efforts of immigrant parents in the educational and language integration of children are influenced by a series of systems and factors (Massey, 2012). The ecological systems theory, therefore, stands out as a veritable tool capable of establishing the relationship of factors connected to the family as it relates to the language and educational integration of children. The ecological systems theory as postulated by Bronfenbrenner (1979) identifies five layers of systems such as micro, meso, exo, macro, and chronosystems as interwoven systems that affect the family.

#### *Microsystems*

According to the ecological systems theory, the microsystems represent the interactional systems that have a direct influence on children. The microsystem represents immigrant children's family environment and support systems which shape their immediate socialisation and day-to-day experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Family is instrumental in how immigrant children develop coping strategies needed to navigate and adapt to the dominant language in schools. As the family is the primary agent of socialisation for children, the level of educational achievement of children to a great extent depends on the type of family support, relationships, values, and network (Cox & Paley, 2003; Portes & Zhou, 1993). In this regard, positive psychological adjustment and social functioning of immigrant children in schools have been linked to responsive, and supportive child-parent relationships (Cox & Paley, 2003). In other words, when immigrant parents are supportive of children by providing language support and educational materials, it provides children with language seed capital which propels them into gaining more proficiency in the school language (Lareau, 2003).

Further, as noted by Guryan et al. 2008 and Kowaleski-Jones (2000), other family characteristics such as family capital and structure contribute to the educational outcome of children. For instance, Lareau (2002) found that immigrant families with limited financial resources are less likely to provide the necessary educational and language integration needs to their children. Parental supervision of children's educational activities both at home and in school is also an important aspect of the microsystem that shapes children's educational outcomes ([Harper & McLanahan, 2004](#); Lareau, 2003). The active involvement of parents in

the education of children through supervision not only creates an active learning environment for children at home but provides teachers with useful information on the peculiar learning needs of children (Paat, 2013).

According to Massey and Sanchez (2010), immigrant parents have a way of spurring their children to success by expressing optimism and consistently motivating their children by establishing and maintaining home study routines. The implication is that the active involvement of immigrant parents in the microsystem through the provision of support and enhancement of opportunities promotes the educational outcomes of children (Titzmann et al. 2008; Waters et al., 2010). Bronfenbrenner also noted that children are likely to subdue disruptive school integration when they have a supportive and familial relationship. More so, Lareau (2003) found that immigrant children from families with social capital such as having educated parents tend to have better outcomes because educated parents are more likely to assist their children both in school and at home. Immigrant children from families where both parents are present are according to this theory more likely to have active parental control and supervision and consequently result in children's probability of higher educational achievements.

### *Mesosystem*

According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the interconnections between one or more microsystems such as schools where children are active participants represent the mesosystem. Here, immigrant children navigate interactions and transactions between their peers, schoolteachers, and the family environment. For instance, the relationships children establish in school with their peers and teachers provide support and facilitate the acquisition of proficiency in the school language. As Waters (1994), puts it, immigrant children's relationship with teachers and peers reinforces and strengthens their resilience and school adjustment (Parcel & Dufer, 2001). On the flip side, immigrant children's coping capacities are likely to be limited in contexts where teachers and peers are not supportive or discriminative (Peguero, 2008; Paat, 2013).

Further, language proficiency among immigrant parents is also another factor that affects the integration of immigrant children within the mesosystem. In this regard, Paat (2013) argues that immigrant parents' low proficiency in school language stands out as a risk factor for low pace in school integration of immigrant children. The implication is that immigrant parents who have low proficiency in the host country's language are likely to have low knowledge of the school system and as such have lower chances of connecting with teachers (Rodríguez et

al. 2009). Low proficiency in school language among immigrant parents also affects children's attitude toward the language and consequently lowers the pace of gaining proficiency (Ji, & Koblinsky, 2009; Ismail, 2019). This is because children tend to learn things faster especially traits or behaviours they observed from parents or other family members. In this sense, parents who are grounded in the host country's language are likely to influence their children into gaining more proficiency in the language (Poza et al. 2014).

### *Macrosystem*

The macro system here represents the political, economic, and social structures that affect the language and educational integration of children and parents. The macro system appears distant from the family but exerts huge impacts and determines to a great extent the family's level of adjustment and stability to the mainstream society. For instance, the contents and structure of educational and language policies affect immigrant children's integration pace in schools (Portes & Hao, 2002; Portes & Zhou, 1993). The macro system as postulated in ecological system theory represents the language and educational policies, laws customs, and cultural values that shape the integration of children (Berk, 2000). In this case, the nature of educational policies and support programmes available in schools affect both immigrant parents and children's ability to adjust to the school language. More so, the nature of pedagogical strategies in schools such as the use of L1 and L2 and the structure of the educational curriculum influences the educational achievement of immigrant children and the level of immigrant parents' involvement in schools.

## **3.4 Language immersion in immigrant children**

Language immersion is an innovative strategy for learning and mastering a second language (L2) while also learning and mastering a native language (L1). Language immersion classes are structured in such a way that students acquire language skills incidentally while studying courses such as science, mathematics, and other structured activities in school (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Cummins, 1978; Cummins, 1989). Language immersion has been found to be a useful tool in the integration of immigrant children as it promotes the development of language proficiency as well as the social, cognitive, and academic development of children. In dual language immersion classes, children from immigrant background and native speakers of school dominant languages are made to learn together in the same class and basically, the pedagogical materials are structured in both dominant and other languages. This pattern has produced positive results across various contexts. For example, Calderón and Minaya-Rowe,

(2003), found that dual language immersion among immigrant children in the U.S. resulted in sociocultural growth, academic achievement, and reading skills. Immigrant children who are immersed in dual language tend to have a better understanding and experience of language diversity and such as thrive better in the educational integration processes. Dual language immersion has also been associated with increased upward economic mobility opportunities for immigrant children as such children tend to show intercultural and linguistic competence which broadens their job opportunities.

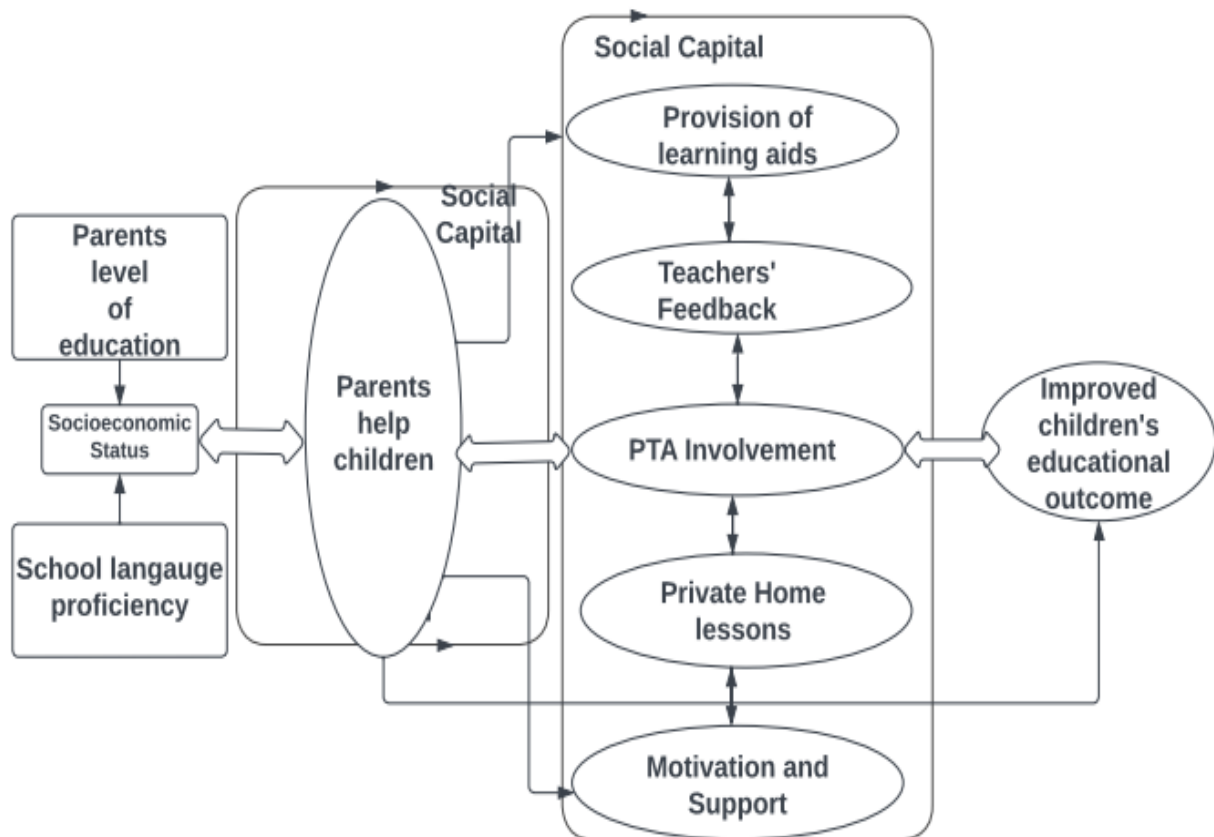
Scholars have differed in their perspectives regarding the impact of dual language immersion on the maintenance of L1 among immigrant children. For instance, studies such as Björklund and Mård-Miettinen (2011) and Bostwick (2001) found that dual language immersion promotes the maintenance of LI language among immigrant children. However, other studies tend to disagree with the above perspective and noted that when immigrant children are immersed in L2, they tend to gradually lose proficiency in L1. This is because when immigrant children are immersed deeply in L2 to the point of achieving high proficiency, it may destabilize the psycholinguistic or the fundamental aspect of L1 ([Baus et al., 2013](#); [Linck et al., 2009](#)). Situations such as this could consequently lead to suppression of L1 because immigrant children appear to be more comfortable in using L2 which facilitates closer ties with mainstream peers and in navigating school environments. In between these two perspectives lies an obvious relevance and importance of language immersion for children in school. This situation could be more complicated for English-speaking immigrant children in Portugal where L2 is supposedly the Portuguese language. For instance, there is a high probability of Nigerian immigrant children in Portugal losing proficiency in L1 as they also need to learn another prominent language L3 which is the English Language. The reality here is that Nigerian immigrant children need to acquire proficiency in L2 (Portuguese language) as well as L3 (English language) thereby narrowing the chances of mastering L1 (Native Nigerian Language).

Studies have also documented the instrumental role of immigrant parents in promoting language immersion as a useful tool for the educational integration of children. Parents tend to perceive the language immersion of their children as a form of social capital that could have positive outcomes on their educational achievements. Notable prospects that compel immigrant parents to support language immersion in schools include developing high cognitive abilities and wider networks (Gerena 2011; Parkes, 2008). Immigrant parents have also been found to support language immersion with the belief that L2 proficiency in their children will



be useful for the family, especially in a context where children translate for the family and play roles as language brokers. This perception is basically more relevant to immigrant parents with low proficiency in L2. As language immersion increases the cognitive ability of immigrant children in acquiring both L1 and L2, immigrant parents also support language immersion because they believe it could promote native culture and ethnic identity in their children. More so, parents believe that language immersion could help their children to build positive personalities and become open-minded which could be achieved through interaction with other linguistic, ethnic, and racial groups (Schmidt, 2007).

*Figure: 3.1 Theoretical framework of the theory of social capital and parents' involvement in school*



*Source: Field work*

As can be observed from figure 3.1, social capital in the family such as the level of educational attainment of parents, language skills and socio-economic status provided parents with the needed resources to provide children with learning aids, home lessons, motivation and support.

The level of parents involvement in parents-teachers meetings and level of communication with teachers also has direct relationship with family social capital.

# CHAPTER FOUR - METHODOLOGY

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological approaches adopted in this study. The chapter commences with a discussion on the research design as well as the rationale behind the choice of the research design adopted. Next, the chapter presents the sampling procedure providing detailed information regarding the steps adopted in recruiting participants and the characteristic of the study participants. Discussions on the data collection and data analysis are presented next. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations as well as the challenges and limitations of the study.

## 4.2 Research design

This study adopted a cross-sectional design and qualitative approach in analysing the research questions as it relates to strategies adopted by Nigerian Immigrant parents in navigating the school language and educational integration of children in Portugal. Qualitative research was considered most appropriate for the study because it is cheap, saves time and best suited in exploring in-depth understanding, experiences, ideas, and views of study participants (Bryman, 2016; Bryman 2012; Edward & Holland, 2013; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Considering the short timeframe for this thesis (5 months) I considered the cross-sectional design best suited for this study because best suited for research that involves analysing data collected from a subset of the population within a short period of time compared to longitudinal and ethnographic designs that take longer time (Bryman, 2016). In this case, my study setting was limited to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area of Portugal and included immigrant parents with children aged 5 -18 years. More so, according to Mason (2002), the flexible nature of qualitative research makes it more useful in studying human behaviour which is dynamic, and evolving.

Contemporary social research has greatly embraced qualitative research because it wholistically examines social phenomenon by recognizing the cultural, social, and institutional contexts of study participants, creating an intimate researcher-participant relationship, and giving the participants the liberty to speak from the lens of their own stories (Clandini & Caine, 2008; Creswell, 2018). This is particularly relevant to this research because Nigerian Immigrant parents (the study participants) are living in a new culture and are faced with social and institutional issues related to the integration of their children. Research into their unique experiences will require a flexible data creation approach such as a qualitative approach, unlike

the quantitative approach which is parochially structured and rigid. In this case, an in-depth interview was used for the primary data collection.

### 4.3 Sampling procedure

This study adopted a purposive and snowball sampling procedure. The researcher adopted the purposive sampling method because it has the capacity to select study participants with similar characteristics, situations, and traits as it relates to the problem under study (Bryman, 2016). More so, considering the limited number of potential study participants and the difficulty in locating them, the researcher also used a snowball sampling procedure which entails connecting and recruiting participants through the referrals made by participants who already participated (Bryman, 2012). The inclusion criteria for the study participants included being a Nigerian immigrant parent and having lived in Portugal from 6 months to 18 years. The researcher chose 6 months to accommodate newly arrived participants, especially those who recently relocated from Ukraine to Portugal, and 18 years to accommodate participants who have stayed longer in Portugal.

The researcher also recruited participants based on the age of the children. In this case, the researcher recruited parents whose children were aged 5 to 18 years. The rationale behind choosing a minimum of five years was to include children who have started school in line with Portuguese policy for the age of children starting preschool. More so, the maximum of 18 years was chosen to include children who are in the last level of mandatory level of education. The researcher included both genders of parents (father and mother) due to the limited number of study participants. Participants were sampled from the Lisbon Metropolitan Area which according to SEF (2021) has an estimated 70% of the entire population of Nigerian immigrants in Portugal. The researcher recruited the participants from the Redeem Christian Church of God, a predominantly Nigerian church in Lisbon. More so, the existence of weekly Sunday school for children in the church allowed the researcher to identify parents who also accepted to participate in the study. It was basically through the referral of participants recruited from the church that the researcher was able to connect and recruit a few other participants who were not members of the church.

## 4.4 Data collection methods

Primary data for this study was collected through in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview was considered most fitted to this study because it gives the researcher the flexibility to ask probing questions to study participants; through such interactive discussion, participants are given the opportunity to express themselves and present answers from their own point of view leading to generation of rich data (Bryman, 2012; Hammersley & Atkinson, [2007](#), Kvale, 1996). The researcher conducted a total of 8 interviews at locations best suited and convenient for the participants within the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. The interview lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour and was conducted in the English language which was preferred by the participants. The researcher allowed the participants to express themselves in English because they were confident in using English rather than the Nigerian native languages I anticipated. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder device in addition to notes jotted during the interviews to complement the recordings.

## 4.5 Data Analysis

Data collected for this study were transcribed verbatim and analysed through thematic analysis. I chose thematic analysis because of its flexibility and ability to break large data into smaller and related concepts which are subsequently organised into themes (Cavanagh, 1997). More so according to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis helps researchers to discover, interpret and report patterns of meanings and common themes embedded in a data set. The data was also analysed in relation to the objectives and theoretical underpinnings of the study. Based on the foregoing, I will spent quality time reading and rereading the transcribed data which will helped me to be immersed in the texts in the transcribed data. Through the thorough proofreading of the transcribed data, it was possible to identify and read meanings into words that were commonly used by the study participants in sharing their views on strategies they adopted in navigating school language and the educational integration of children in Portugal.

I coded the transcribed data using Nvivo 12 software. In order to construct a clear structure of what the participants narrated regarding language and educational integration of children, I analysed the data into central themes and sub-themes by identifying the differences and similarities as well as related views expressed by the study participants. In this case, I used labels to sort out and categorise related or different views under a particular subject that represent central or subthemes. More so, I selected suitable quotes from the transcribed data and place them under the categories.

## 4.6 Ethical Considerations

The sensitivity of ethical issues in qualitative research calls for absolute caution. As such, Bryman (2012) identified confidentiality, informed consent, and harm to participants as ethical issues in social research that must be taken into consideration while conducting research. I ensured that participation in the study was voluntary and at a time that was convenient for the participants. It is essential to obtain informed consent from all research participants before collecting any data. I provided participants with information about the study, including the purpose of the research, what would be involved, and information on the absence of any potential risks and financial benefits. I also ensured that participants understand their rights as research participants and that they have the option to withdraw from the study at any time (Bryman, 2016). The protection of privacy and confidentiality is a crucial aspect of qualitative data collection. It is important to ensure that the information provided by research participants is kept confidential and that their privacy is protected (Creswell, 2018; Hammersley et al. 2007). I ensured that the identities of participants were protected by removing any identifying information from the data that could link the participant to the responses. This was done by replacing participants' names with pseudonyms. The data collected was also protected data in a secure location, such as a password-protected computer as well as a cloud storage system with strong security features.

Parenting especially in a foreign culture can be challenging and sometimes traumatising and as such, I ensured that interview questions do not subject participants to emotional distress in situations where I observed that participants were feeling emotional, I requested if they could take a break or if they wish to stop the interview. In the positive limelight, this study also strengthened and empowered the participants who felt heard. Lastly in the absence of a standardised reliability and validity tool for qualitative studies (Morrow, 2005), the study embraced trustworthiness. Trustworthiness in qualitative research ensures that the findings are credible, dependable, conformable, and transferable (Morrow, 2005). This was achieved with the use of high-quality methodology, a detailed and thorough literature review, ensuring voluntary participation of study participants, avoiding predetermined research outcomes, and maintaining a reflexive and reflective attitude throughout the study.

## 4.7 Challenges and Limitations

One of the challenges I encountered during the data collection was interviewing participants I had some level of familiarity. The familiarity I had with some participants made them feel like the interview session was just like our usual informal conversation. Participants in this category

were occasionally having digressions and unnecessary side talks. However, I was able to handle this challenge by constantly redirecting such participants to the focus of the interview. This was also to ensure that their responses reflect their true opinions and are not influenced by personal biases or what they think are the right or correct answers. Another major challenge I encountered was the difficulty in recruiting participants that met the study selection criteria. I had to attend different churches where Nigerians in Lisbon worship on Sundays in order to get their contact.

More so, it was difficult to schedule interviews with the participants at a time that was convenient for them. This was because of their tight schedule as all the participants were working full time from Monday till Saturday which made it difficult for them to give me an appointment for the interviews. The lowest moment for me during the data collection was the moment one of the participants who relocated from Ukraine to Portugal broke down emotionally during the interview while recounting the traumatic experiences her family faced especially disruptions in her children's schooling while escaping war in Ukraine. I had to pause the interview and allowed her enough time to stabilise. The short period of time (5 months) I had to do this study was a major limitation because it limited the scope of my study and subjected me to pressure and working extra time to meet up with the deadline. The limited number of cases of the study also stands out as its major limitations which the generalisation of the study findings impossible.

# 5 CHAPTER FIVE – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the strategies adopted by eight Nigerian immigrant parents in the language and educational integration of children in Lisbon, Portugal. The chapter begins with the socio-demographic characterisation of the study participants (parents) and their children. This is followed by the presentation of the participant's profile. The chapter further presents findings and a discussion of excerpts from the interviews of the study participants. In the process of analysing the data, five themes emerged which include: Parents' early school linguistic experiences in the English language, ways of navigating school language and relating with teachers, ways of enhancing language and academic performance at home, forms and impacts of available children's language support in schools and ways of improving language support in Portugal.

More specifically, the following sub-chapters focus on the presentation and discussion of findings in the themes that emerged in connection with the theoretical framework as well as the research questions that guided the study. The findings seek to address the main research question of the study which is exploring the strategies of immigrant parents concerning the school language and educational integration of their children. The findings also answered the sub-research questions which include the following: how do Nigerian immigrant parents navigate the school language of their children in Portuguese schools? What are the strategies explored by Nigerian immigrant parents in enhancing the academic achievement of their children? In what ways do Nigerian immigrant parents' language transmission strategies influence their children in the acquisition of proficiency in the school language? What are the social supports available to Nigerian immigrant parents in the social integration of children in Portuguese schools? The themes that emerged include Parents' early school linguistic experiences in the English language, ways of navigating the school language and relating with teachers, ways of enhancing language and academic performance at home, and available language support for children and parents in Portugal.



## 5.2 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

This section presents information on the study participants as well as their children and focuses particularly on their sex, level of education marital status, and age. It also highlights the participants' occupations both in Nigeria and in Portugal, the number of children as well as the number of years lived in Portugal. The participants were six males aged between 32 and 56 years and two females aged between 27 to 35 years. Five participants from the total 8, had master's degree qualifications whereas three participants had bachelor's degrees. All the participants were working in Portugal and had previous jobs in Nigeria. The number of children of participants ranges from 1 to 4, who were all in Portuguese schools. More so, the number of years lived in Portugal for participants ranged from 1 year to 6 years. Majority of the participants had high educational qualification. However, majority are also underemployed.

Table 5.1: Socio-demographic characteristics of study participants (Parents)

Name (Pseudo)	Sex	Level of education	Marital status	Age	Occupation in Nigeria	Occupation in Portugal	Number of children	Number of years lived in Portugal
Abdul	Male	Master's in civil engineering	Married	56	Civil engineer	Construction engineer	4	6
Olawale	Male	Bachelor's in Sociology	Married	36	Uber driver	Back store supervisor (McDonald's)	2	3
Carol	Female	Bachelor's in Psychology	Married	32	Trader	Factory worker	3	5
Fred	Male	Master's Civil engineering	Married	41	Construction worker	Building Construction worker	2	4
Hassan	Male	Master's Business Administration	Married	37	Banker	IT	2	2
Janet	Female	Bachelor's in business administration	De facto union.	27	Hairstylist	Hairstylist	1	5
Johnson	Male	Master's degree in Computer science.	Married	46	IT	Customer Support Representative	3	1
Tosin	Male	Master's in sports management and nutrition	Married	35	Sports management	Professional athlete trainer	2	7months

The table below presents information on the socio-demographic characteristics of participants' children highlighting their age, sex, place of birth as well as their level of education of children. The table also presents information on the parents' reported language proficiency of their children both in Portuguese and other languages. All the children have high proficiency in English and only one father reported high proficiency of his children in Portuguese. Most of the children are in primary school.

Table 5.2: Socio-demographics of participants' children

Parent's name (Pseudo)	Number of children	Sex and age	Place of birth		School attendance	Reported language Proficiency (Portuguese)	Reported language proficiency (Other languages)
			Nigeria	Portugal			
Abdul	4	3 boys (17, 14, 10) 1 girl (19)	2	2	3 boys (High school) Female (University)	High proficiency	High Proficiency in Yoruba and English
Olawale	2	1 boy (7) Girl (5)	0	2	1 (Primary school) 1 Preschool	Low proficiency	High in proficiency English
Carol	2	2 boys (8, 5)	1	1	1 (Primary school) 1 (Preschool)	Low proficiency	High proficiency in Igbo and English
Fred	2	1 girl (9) 1 boy (7)	2	0	Primary education	1 (Low proficiency) 1 (High proficiency)	High proficiency in Igbo and English
Hassan	2	2 girls (7, 4)	2	0	1 (Primary school) 1 (Preschool)	Low proficiency	High proficiency in English
Janet	1	1 boy (5)	0	1	Preschool	Low proficiency	High proficiency in English
Johnson	3	2 girls (10, 7) 1 Boy (5)	0	2	3 (Primary school) 1 (Preschool)	Low proficiency	High proficiency in Igbo and English
Tosin	2	1 boy (8) 1 Girl (6)	2	0	Primary education	Low proficiency	High proficiency in English, Ukraine and Russian

### 5.2.1 Profile of interviewed study participants

Abdul is a 56-year-old male from the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria who came to Portugal in 1998 and has been living in Portugal for 20 years. This means that Portugal was his first migration experience. He had his bachelor's degree in Nigerian and got his master's degree in Portugal. He has a master's degree in civil engineering and prior to migration was working as a civil engineer in Nigeria but currently works as a construction engineer in Portugal. He lives with his wife here in Portugal, a software engineer working remotely with a company based outside Portugal. He has four children aged 19, 17, 14, and 10 who also live with him here in Portugal. He had two children back in Nigeria and two here in Portugal. His children attend school in Portugal. Abdul and his family have Yoruba as their mother tongue and English as their second language. Abdul and his wife speak a bit of Portuguese and admitted experiencing difficulties

communicating and relating with his children's teachers and school. However, due to exposure in school, his children speak Portuguese better than Abdul and his wife. Abdul and his wife are currently enrolled in a Portuguese language course as part of their effort to overcome the language challenges they experienced in being actively involved in the schooling of their children.

Olawale is a 36-year-old male from the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria. He first migrated to Ghana in 2014 and later migrated to Dubai, Oman, and South Africa. He could not secure decent jobs in most of these countries and through information from a friend, he relocated to Portugal in 2019. Olawale has a bachelor's degree in Nigeria and was working as an Uber driver before his migration journey and currently works in Portugal as a back store supervisor at McDonald's. He lives with his wife here in Portugal who also has a bachelor's degree and works as a customer representative support with a real estate company in Portugal. Olawale has two children aged seven and five who attend Portuguese schools and were all born in Portugal. Olawale and his family speak Yoruba as a mother tongue and English as a second language. However, both Olawale and his wife have low proficiency in Portuguese and have encountered challenges ranging from difficulties in communicating with children's teachers to assisting children do homework that is in Portuguese. His children also struggle with the Portuguese language though speak better than both parents. Olawale is currently enrolled in a Portuguese language course.

Carol is a 32-year-old female from the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. In 2018, she joined her husband two years after he migrated to Portugal for his master's and has been living in Portugal with her husband for 5 years. She has a bachelor's degree which she acquired in Nigeria before migrating and she is currently a factory worker here in Lisbon. Carol's husband holds a master's degree in Engineering and also is a factory worker in Lisbon. She has two children; a boy and a girl aged 8 and 5 years. She had her first two children in Nigeria and the last child in Portugal. Her two children attend Portuguese school. Both Carol and her husband speak Igbo as their mother tongue and English as a second language and a little bit of Portuguese. Carol's first child who was born in Nigeria and came to Portugal with his parents has low proficiency in Portuguese, unlike the last child who was born in Portugal and speaks Portuguese fluently.

Fred is a 41-year-old male from the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. He has a master's degree in civil engineering and works in Portugal as a building construction worker. He has been living in Portugal for the past 4 years with his wife and three children. His wife who is a health worker

in Portugal has a bachelor's in nursing from Nigeria and currently pursuing her master's in public health. Fred has two children aged 9 and 7 years old who attend Portuguese schools. His two children were born in Nigeria and started attending Portuguese school when they arrived in Portugal in 2019. His children speak English as a second language and have made appreciable progress in learning Portuguese. Fred and his wife speak English as a second language and a little Portuguese. This makes it very difficult for the family to communicate with the schoolteachers.

Tosin is a 35-year-old male from the Hausa tribe of Nigeria. He migrated from Nigeria to Ukraine in 2012 and lived there until 2022 when the war broke out. He escaped the war with his family and relocated to Portugal in March 2022. He has a master's degree in sports management and nutrition and works as a professional athlete trainer in Portugal. He is married to a Ukrainian woman who is a medical doctor and currently undergoing language courses in Portugal so that she can practice as a medical doctor in Portugal. Tosin narrated the difficulties his family experienced while escaping the war such as losing most of his properties and money in the bank. He has two children who attend Portuguese school. He speaks Hausa as his mother tongue as well as English, Ukraine, and Russian as a second language. His wife also speaks Ukraine as her mother tongue and Russian and English as her second language. His children speak English, Ukraine, and Russian. Tosin, his wife, and his children do not speak Portuguese, and navigating the school of his children has been very challenging since they arrived in Portugal.

Johnson is a 46-year-old male from the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. He has a degree in computer science and worked as an IT staff in a company back in Nigeria. He initially migrated to the United States of America with his wife in 2019 and lived for two years before relocating to Portugal in 2022. Johnson currently works as a customer representative in Portugal. He lives with his wife who has a bachelor's degree and works as human resources staff to a company in Portugal. He has three children aged 10, seven, and 5 years who were all born in Nigeria but currently attend Portuguese school. Johnson and his wife speak English as a second language but do not speak Portuguese. His children are beginning to learn a few words and sentences in Portuguese since they resumed school. Due to language issues, Johnson and his wife are finding it difficult to relate with their children's schoolteachers.

Janet is a 26-year-old female from the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. She has a master's degree in business administration which she got back in Nigeria before migrating. She works in Portugal

as a hairstylist. She is currently living in a de facto union with her partner here in Portugal. Her partner also has a master's degree and works as a filmmaker in Portugal. She migrated with her partner to Germany in 2018 before relocating to Portugal in 2019. She has one child aged 5 years who attend Portuguese school. Janet and her husband speak English as a second language and speak Portuguese at A2 level whereas her husband speaks a little Portuguese. Due to her Portuguese language skills, she has been more actively involved in the school of her child.

Hassan is a 37-year-old male from the Hausa tribe of Nigeria. He has a master's degree and works as an IT specialist in Portugal. He migrated to Portugal in 2020 and has been living in Portugal for three years. He lives with his wife who is currently pursuing her Ph.D. programme in Portugal. He has two children aged 7 and 4 years who are currently attending Portuguese schools. Hassan and his wife speak Hausa as their mother tongue and English as a second language. He also speaks a little Portuguese and is currently enrolled in a Portuguese language course. His wife also speaks Portuguese a little. According to Hassan, his first son was supposed to be in grade 2 when they arrived in Portugal but was brought to grade one due to language. However, his children are making progress in learning Portugal.

### 5.3 Parents' early school linguistic experiences in the English Language

This theme focuses on establishing parents' early linguistic experiences and background in school which has implications on how they perceived the language challenges faced by their children in Portuguese schools. Parents' early linguistics experiences in English in Nigeria resonate with the reported experiences of language and educational integration of children in Portugal. This is because like Portuguese being the most dominant language in Portuguese schools, the English language dominates schools in Nigeria. Participants recounted their experiences regarding navigating the English language in early school which influences how they view the language challenges faced by their children in Portuguese schools. This relates to the insights from the theoretical framework on parents' linguistic capital which is greatly influenced by their home country's early school linguistic background and experiences (Nauck et al. 1998). The theme provides answers to the study's research question on how parents navigate the school language of their children.

### **5.3.1 Reasons for English language preference in early schooling in Nigeria**

According to the Nigerian Policy on Education (2004), native languages should be the medium of instruction for children in preschool (the first three years of early school). However, participants narrated that the policy has never been implemented as schools introduce children to the English language from the first year of early schooling. According to Oladejo (1991) and Adegbija (2004), the English language dominates other languages in Nigerian schools and remains the only language that is projected in schools at all levels. Participants shared varied opinions on why there is a high preference for the English language by both parents and teachers, especially at the early stage of school for children. Some participants stated that English is preferred because it is a projection of class and prestige by parents and schools. Participants narrated that parents usually send their children to schools that speak English with the mindset that their children will acquire proficiency in English from such schools much faster. This category of parents as narrated by participants are usually parents with higher socioeconomic status and wish to project their economic by the classic English spoken by their children. The views of the participants are reflected in the excerpts below.

Uh... for me, I think parents always want to show off with their children more like a class thing...you know in Nigeria when children come out and they're speaking good English, people assume that their parents are training them in standard school. It is more like everyone is trying to protect their prestige and class... Nigerians do not joke with the show of class and wealth you know. Those days when we were in primary schools as I could recall, children who spoke good English are usually children from rich homes and who were driven to school in expensive cars by their parents (Abdul, Male, 56).

Well, you know there is this erroneous mindset about our people in Nigeria regarding the English language. I remember when I was in primary three, my father once dashed me some coins to go buy my favourite sweets just because I was able to recite a particular rhyme in the English language. So, you see... most parents in Nigeria believe that their children are smart and intelligent just because they can speak the English language...Some parents especially the educated ones speak only English to their children at home (Carol, Female, 32).

For some participants, the preference and dominance of the English language in Nigeria are promoted by teachers and schools as a way of projecting the standard of the school and seeking more patronage, especially among privately owned schools. As noted by Adegbija, (2003), the National Policy on Education is poorly implemented to the point that the majority of preschools

do not follow the guidelines outlined by the policy framework such as the adoption of native language as the language of instruction in the first three years of early school for children. Participants noted that teachers project English to convince parents especially those from high economic status to register children in their schools. Teachers and schools are aware that parents view schools that speak English as high quality and as such take advantage of such mindset to promote their business.

You know that schools that speak English are considered to be the best schools in the country...In my community during my time in primary and secondary school, it was majorly poor parents that used to send their children to public schools where of course native languages were widely spoken (Tosin, Male, 35).

I attended one of the best and most expensive schools in my city those days because my parents could afford it...I can tell you that there was never a time teachers use native or local language in teaching us. Apart from that, I was taught in the English language from the very beginning of my schooling till the end...Umm... In fact, my teachers used to have rules in the class that sets out penalties for speaking vernacular (native language) in the class when it was not time for an Igbo course (Carol, Female, 32).

Other participants however disagreed with the above perspectives and stated that the English language is preferred in Nigeria by both teachers and parents because it increases the opportunities for children in the future. Participants in this category believed that being exposed to the English language early in school prepared them to thrive better, especially on the international level. This affirms the previous studies which documented the instrumental role of parents in promoting multilingualism in children as a useful tool in advancing children's prospects (Parkes, 2008). The promotion of multilingualism in children also forms part of family social capital as demonstrated by the theoretical framework of this study which parents believe can enhance children's educational achievements and in expanding their social networks (Gerena 2011; Schmidt, 2007). Participants stated that being exposed to multilinguistic contexts early in life prepared enhanced their linguistics repertoires both in English and other languages.

I can say that it was very difficult for me to cope when I started primary school because my parents were peasant farmers, and we literally did not speak English in my family. When I resumed school, it was difficult for me to express myself or even answer questions in class. Umm... somehow it also turned out to be a big advantage for me



because I had to learn English much earlier and by the time I entered college, Umm...honestly, I can easily relate to my children's language issues in Portugal because of a similar experience. I try to assist them now as much as I can because I know how challenging these things can be (Olawale, Male, 36).

I... I...was attending primary school in the village until my family relocated to the city. I had to start school in the city, but I had serious challenges with English. Uh...In my village, it was common to speak our local dialect in schools even in class with teachers. when I started primary three in the city, everyone spoke English and I had to face the challenge and learn it... Umm...I remember that my father bought us lots of basic grammar books which we used to learn English at home. It didn't take long before I became perfect at speaking English... As I earlier told you, I can speak Ukraine, Russia, English, and Hausa and before long, I will learn Portuguese. I want my children to develop this type of language skills because it will help them so much in the future (Tosin, Male, 35).

The above views further highlight the relevance of parents' linguistic background and experiences as key to the language and educational integration of children. This goes without saying that parents who have experienced language challenges and acquired language skills earlier in life tend to be better equipped to assist their children in navigating language challenges in schools. According to Yagmur and van de Vijver (2022) immigrant parents who have language skills have a way of motivating and inspiring their children to achieve success in gaining proficiency in the host country's language. More so, parents believe that language immersion could help their children to build positive personalities and become open-minded which could be achieved through interaction with other linguistic, ethnic, and racial groups (Schmidt, 2007). Participants shared their views on how having a background in other languages has helped them to be open-minded and receptive to other cultures and as such developed wider social networks. Participants are making efforts to transmit these values to their children. A 35-year-old participant stated.

You know if you can speak many languages, it opens many opportunities for you... here in Portugal I easily connect with people because of the languages I speak...My first son is gradually taking after me because he can speak both Russian and Ukraine (Tosin, Male, 35).

### **5.3.2 Perceived Impacts of English Preference in Early Schools in Nigeria**

Participants narrated what they perceived as the impacts of English language preference in early school in Nigeria. For some participants, children who were not proficient in English were profiled as dull students and to some extent victimised. Participants narrated that there were cases where children who couldn't speak English were punished by teachers and sometimes humiliated by their fellow children who spoke English fluently. Participants narrated that the punishment faced by children for speaking the local language in the class includes being flogged by the class teachers and sweeping the classroom. This type of situation as narrated by the resulted in children developing low esteem among their peers because they find it difficult to express themselves in English. Three participants recounted their experiences below.

I think, um, it's... it's all about societal perception... Because they set the standard as the ability to speak English determines how intelligent you are. During our days in primary school, if you can't speak English, you are in big trouble because everyone will mock you...Laughs... Yeah, it was that serious you know... I know this very well because it affected me too. I hardly speak in class or express myself because of fear of being laughed at or even sometimes punished by the teacher...And everyone wants to appear intelligent (Janet, Female, 27).

Those days... laughs...our class captain used to write the names of students to be punished by the teacher because they spoke local languages during class hours. Sometimes you will even be given portions of a book to read as punishment...Just because you spoke your own language...Laughs...Um...sometimes, the class may ridicule and label you as being unintelligent or backward (Fred, Male, 41).

Well for me I think the use of English affects children in Nigeria... the reason is that in those days, children who could not speak English language were tagged as dull children and sometimes discriminated against...Their fellow children make jest of them when they make wrong sentences in the English language. Umm... from my experience, these set of children may be intelligent but because they couldn't speak the English language, everyone looks at them as being dull... to the extent that such children became introverted and find it difficult to express their feelings in class (Carol, Female, 32).

The views expressed by the participants in the excerpts above underscore the importance of language in building child resilience and confidence in the school environment. As noted by

Koosha et al. (2011), language is a vital tool for communication and social interaction. As such, children who struggle with English proficiency may find it challenging to engage with their peers and teachers, leading to feelings of isolation and exclusion. Children with low proficiency in English may be excluded from conversations, group activities, and friendships. Social isolation can impact their self-esteem and make them less likely to participate in classroom activities or seek help when needed (Al-Hebaish, 2012). As further noted by Koosha et al. (2011), it can also erode children's self-esteem, and decrease resilience, and social withdrawal. The most outstanding here is the fact that participants were able to connect their English language old memories to the present language challenges faced by their children in Portuguese schools.

Participants also expressed their views on how the preference for the English language in early school in Nigeria impacted their academic performance. Some participants recounted that the pressure of learning English was much that it affected their self-confidence as they struggled to understand instructions and grasp the subject matter. Participants admitted that this affected their grades in their first and second school years. The situation was more complicated for children who came from homes without a background in spoken English and only met in English the first time they resumed school. The views of participants are reflected in the following excerpts.

My village is in the interior part of my town so most children from my village who attended school in town had big challenges in coping with English...This was because umm...at that level, most of them spoke mainly native languages in their homes...as we struggled to adjust to the new language in school, it affected our classroom participation and academic performance. I am sure that this is very common and affects children in most remote villages in Nigeria not just my village (Hassan, Male, 37).

My brother and I repeated classes twice in primary one and two because our grades were very poor. The issue I guess was basically because we didn't have any background in English... My parents were traders in our local market...it was difficult for us to read most of the books in English. One major thing I can remember was that we started getting better after repeating class twice because it gave us more time to adjust (Johnson, Male, 46).

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that participants' immersion in the English language in early school in Nigeria played a key role in developing strong linguistic background and

skills. It can also be seen from the participants' experiences that their linguistic background in English has been an invaluable family social capital which assisted the participants to easily relate and understand the nature of children's language challenges in school and how best to assist them. As earlier established by the theoretical framework of this study, the strong linguistic skill in the English language among the participants can be considered an integral part of the family social capital at the micro level of the family's ecological system (Bourdieu, 1993; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

## 5.4 Ways of Communicating with Portuguese School Teachers

This theme focuses on findings regarding ways and strategies identified by the participants in communicating with schoolteachers and being actively involved in their children's schools. It provides answers to research question one which focuses on identifying the strategies adopted by parents in navigating the school language of their children in Portuguese schools. Strategies identified by the participants include constant visitation to school, monitoring, and feedback; the use of children's school apps, parents-teachers meetings, and teacher's skills. These strategies were aimed at ensuring that participants maintained active involvement in the children's activities in school. Participants noted that employing the above-mentioned strategies allowed them to establish mutual relationships with schoolteachers and also have a better understanding of the language challenges faced by their children in schools.

These strategies according to the participants also assisted their children in developing the resilience and motivation to cope with language challenges in school which culminated in improved academic performances. This aligns with Epstein (2001) who argued that the active involvement of immigrant parents in the educational integration of children could boost children's resilience and determination to put in efforts toward learning the school language and having better educational outcomes.

### 5.4.1 Visitation, Monitoring, and Feedback

Participants indicated that constantly visiting the schools of their children, monitoring their academic activities, and making use of feedback from teachers have helped assist children to integrate into schools. Constantly monitoring the children according to the participant created a close bond and responsive parent-child relationship which is an essential element of the

family social capital as highlighted in the theoretical framework of this study (Coleman, 1988; Gamoran, 2019; Hoffman et al. 2020). Participants noted that monitoring their children helps them to easily observe children's educational and language challenges and promptly provide them with assistance to overcome such challenges. The views of the participants are reflected in the interview excerpts below.

My husband and I believe that being present for our children in school gives them lots of motivation and support to improve their schoolwork...So apart from taking them to school and picking them up after school every day, we sometimes visit the school in between school hours to physically monitor their activities. This has really improved their grades because we usually identify subjects they need more help with or the progress they are making in learning Portuguese (Carol, Female, 32).

Well, um... I constantly follow up on things I observed about my children and the information I usually get from the teachers...I always um, act on them. So being present in the school has made me realize the nature of language and other challenges my children are going through in school. Sometimes when I go there, I stay in the class...There was a particular situation my child was going through, the teacher allowed me to stay in the class and observe... Together with the teacher, we developed some measures in school and at home to handle it (Fred, Male, 41).

As I told you, I monitor my children's schoolwork...when they come back from school, I need to know what they have learned in school every day. That it's one of the things they tell me when they come back. Um...even if I don't open their book to check it, they must tell me what you've learned...I'll ask them questions based on what they had answered and also crosscheck their workbook (Johnson, Male, 56).

The interview analysis above highlights the importance of parental supervision of children's schoolwork. The views expressed by the participants resonate with previous studies which documented that children develop strong locus of control and self-concept as well as improved academic outcomes when parents show strong affection, monitor and supervise children's activities in school and inspire children's academic expectations (Hoffman et al. 2020; Ngai et al. 2012; You & Nguyen, 2011). According to Waters et al. (2019), parents often build their children's perseverance and resilience as they are aware of their children's strengths. More so, Watkins and Howard (2015), parental responsiveness and warmth inspire active involvement in their schooling activities and influence children's academic performance

Participants also indicated that feedback from teachers also played a key role in being actively involved in the educational integration of their children. According to participants, being constantly in touch with the teachers gave them the opportunity to obtain useful information about their children's performance in classwork and behavioural attitude in school. The essence of the feedback was to know where the children have specific problems and how best to assist them. Some participants noted that they requested a meeting when they observed that their children had low grades in some subjects. It was in the course of the meeting that the teachers provided feedback on where the children are having challenges and needed improvement. The views of the participants are reflected in the following excerpts.

Well, I rely heavily on feedback from teachers concerning my children's grades... you know such suggestions can be helpful if you put them into use. So basically, I visit the school regularly and teachers intimate me of things they observe about my children. And umm...I act on such information...Connecting with the school system basically to make sure that everything is working well for my children and making myself available to the school has been very helpful... teachers can easily call me because they have my contact too (Fred, Male, 41).

I go to my son's school often to make inquiries about his challenges and class performance. I used the information to know how best to help him. I also try to inform the teachers about some basic things regarding his behaviour and how well they can assist him. For instance, my child likes being petty and when you scream at him, he becomes quiet for some time. Within that period, he can't talk or respond to you. So, these are things I tried to explain to his teachers to be patient with him...It really helps improve his composure in class and even his grades (Janet, Female, 27).

My wife and I have a close relationship with our children's schoolteachers, and we always meet to discuss issues concerning their studies...sometimes when umm...the teachers observe some issues with the children, they also invite us. So, we keep this communication running especially when something that needs urgent attention happens (Olawale, Male, 36).

The views of participants in the interview excerpts above underscore the relevance of parents' educational attainment in the educational integration of children. As highlighted in the theory of social capital, the higher the parents' educational attainment, the greater their chances of being actively involved in the education of their children and setting the pace for the improved

educational outcomes of children (Benner et al., 2016; Jabar et al. 2021; Ji & Koblinsky 2009; Rothon et al., 2012; Jabar et al. (2021). A study by Lee and Bowen (2006) further noted that parents who have low levels of education tend to have low knowledge of the school system of their children and as such are likely to have less confidence in communicating and engaging with schoolteachers. The higher educational qualification among the current study participants further affirms this viewpoint as most of them showed active involvement and engagement with teachers. The level of participants' relationship with teachers and reported active involvement in school activities as can be observed from the interview excerpts above corroborate previous studies which noted that parents who have higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to be knowledgeable about the school system and as such tend to be actively involved in the schools of their children (Assari, 2018; Asari & Caldwell, 2019; Cook & Tseng, 2019; Dijkstra et al. 2004).

#### **5.4.2 Parent's-Teachers Meetings**

Participants indicated that attending parents-teachers meetings was one of the important ways of being actively involved in the education of their children in Portuguese schools. Some participants noted that attending parents-teachers meetings helped them to connect with other parents in the school who share similar issues and challenges associated with the educational integration of children. Participants noted that during the meetings, parents blend their voices and negotiate with the school authority which has yielded prompt and positive results in most cases. Two participants who shared similar views stated:

Of course...we attend the meetings because that is where you get to hear most of the things that they are doing in school or the things they plan to do, or even understand some of the things that the children are going through in school. You can also learn from the experiences of other fellow parents and benefit from the opinions they share. You may think that you're the only one going through some of the challenges of training children in Portuguese schools but through the interaction with other parents, you will be encouraged to put more effort (Abdul, Male, 56).

Umm... through the meeting I've been able to, you know, at least connect with other parents who share similar challenges that my wife and I are going through with the children. So, it has been very helpful. You know, uh, sometimes we the parents put our heads together and speak louder voices on things we want the school to do. So, we kind of put our heads together and we agree that this is what the majority of us parents are

experiencing in the school. So by the time we present them to the school, it often receives positive consideration (Hassan, Male, 37).

The views of the participants in the interview excerpts underscore the relevance of parents' social networks as highlighted in the theory of social capital; the theoretical framework of this study. This also highlights the interconnection between parents' level of educational attainment, social networks and the level of involvement in the schools of their children. Previous studies noted that the higher the level of parents' social network, the higher the possibility of being actively involved with the schools of their children (Dijkstra et al. 2004; Li & Fischer, 201). More so, according to Sheldon (2002), parents who have large social work are more likely to connect with other parents and teachers and have greater chances of participating actively in the activities organised in the schools of their children such as parent-teacher meetings. In this sense, the meetings provide the opportunity for parents to network with other parents to not only share experiences but to collectively engage with the school authority to solve some of the challenges faced by their children in the school.

For some participants, the meeting presented an opportunity to connect more with teachers but the language barrier made it difficult to express their opinion during the meetings. For this category of participants, they had to rely on other parents who were proficient in the Portuguese language to express their views. This means that they had to first speak to their fellow parents in English who translated their opinion in Portuguese to the teachers during the meetings. From the narratives of participants, there is a strong indication of their willingness and disposition to be active participants in such meetings despite the language barrier. The following interview excerpts captured participants' views:

Yeah...parents-teachers meeting is a very lovely forum. It's a good forum. The major challenge is the barrier in communication...for example, at the last meeting I attended, we were only two that could speak English...That day, I complained that my son was not doing well based on the report...but it was difficult to communicate with the group. So, it was one of the other parents who luckily can speak both English and Portuguese that helped me to translate and convey my concerns in Portuguese to the teachers. Umm...another challenge here is that someone helping you to convey your opinion to the group may not really understand correctly what you exactly wanted to say (Johnson, Male, 46).



I'm laughing because usually, it's overwhelming for me. Like, I've been to the meetings like twice... Though I speak Portuguese, but you know, native Portuguese speak quite faster... I find it difficult to flow with the discussions during the meetings (Janet, Female, 27).

Well, my wife attends the meetings mostly because she prefers using such avenues to complain about issues she observed in the school and generally express her opinion... But, uh, the language also has always been the issue though she has a friend ... a parent too... that speaks both Portuguese and English... So most times, her friend does the translation so that she can understand and also ask a question and contribute. From what my wife told me, it was through the suggestions made in one of the meetings that they brought a new teacher that speaks and understands a little bit of English and has been quite helpful to the children (Olawale, Male, 36).

The outstanding commitment of participants in order to be part of the school activities of their children despite the language barriers as shown above is an indication of parents' value for education and willingness to inspire and motivate children toward improving their academic performance. At the meso level of family resources, as highlighted by ecological systems theory, the quality of relationships between parents and teachers as well as peers reinforces and strengthens children's resilience and school adjustment (Gamoran, 2019; Parcel & Dufer, 2001; Waters, 1994). The active involvement of parents in the schools of their children also strengthens the quality of the parent-child relationship which is an outstanding family social capital (Coleman, 1988). Through active participation in parent-teacher meetings, parents cultivate the importance and value of education in their children which in some cases translates into improved educational outcomes (Anderson et al. 2010; Anderson et al. 2015; Dijkstra et al. 2004).

### **5.4.3 Children's school app**

Participants indicated that the children's school app was instrumental in facilitating communication with teachers and in keeping track of children's academic activities in school. The school app is an online app which according to the participants is used by most Portuguese schools to upload children's school work especially assignments, and homework. Teachers also upload in the app, information regarding the needs of children for parents. The app keeps track of the daily activities of children in school which parents can interface when their children come home from school. According to the participants, the app has been useful as parents could

monitor their children's academic performance easily when they start backsliding on their grades. The app also helps parents to identify subjects where children need more assistance and guidance.

You know... I must say that the school has a good method of teaching and carrying parents along. I say this because they have an app where you can track or monitor your child's progress...when they give them an assignment, whatever grade they achieved will be uploaded on the app. You can also assess feedback regarding their conduct with the app...It makes the work of supervising my children's schoolwork much easier for me (Olawale, Male, 36).

I basically use the app to track my children's activities in school, especially the progress they make in their classwork...umm... the app is very helpful, especially for parents who are usually busy at work and may not have the time to meet teachers regularly...Every day that I go to pick them up at school, I open the app to check updates and any relevant information from their teachers... the app is very effective because it feels like you are communicating with teachers directly (Carol, Female, 32).

When we arrived here, it was very difficult to obtain from my children's teachers because I could not speak or understand Portuguese. The only remedy we had was the school app where they record children's schoolwork. This app has really helped my wife and I because the information we need is usually there and the teachers are very active in updating new information when the need arises (Fred, Male, 41).

From the views of the participants, there is substantial evidence to show the usefulness of the school app. The reported effectiveness of the app stands out as an invaluable resource and support in the family's macro system as highlighted by the ecological systems theory. According to Dryden-Peterson (2016) and Tudge and Rosa (2020), macro-level resources within the school system are crucial in facilitating communication between parents and schools. This resonates with participants' experiences as they indicated that the school app helped them to communicate directly with teachers and stay informed about school activities as playing an active role in the education of their children.

Participants also indicated that despite the usefulness of the app, it has been very challenging to use the app because it is configured in Portuguese and has no English version. According to participants, they had to rely on Google Translate most of the time to translate information on the app.

Participants noted that language challenges sometimes limit their comprehension of the information on the app because the actual intent of some of the information uploaded by the teachers on the app for parents can be lost after being translated using google translate. This can also bring about misinterpretation of information especially as it concerns how parents understand the contents of homework and assignments teachers upload on the app for their children. The interview excerpts below reflected participants' views.

Though I must say that the school app is quite helpful, it is also a big challenge for some of the parents who do not speak or understand Portuguese well... what I am saying is that the app is configured in Portuguese and has no English version. So I have to copy most things from the app to google translate before I can understand anything... I have to also be more careful and spend more time reading through my children's homework so that I can understand what their teachers actually want them to do (Carol, Female, 32)

Well, I can say that the app is quite good but unfortunately, they don't have an English version... it can be very difficult to read messages on the app because I have to copy and paste on google translate before I can understand what teachers updated on the app (Johnson, Male, 46).

The app helps my wife and I a lot, but the major challenge is the language as it is only in Portuguese...During one of the parents-teachers meetings, some of the parents suggested that the school consider introducing an English version of the app but it has not been implemented till now. If they could do it, it will be more useful. Otherwise, I think the only solution is to learn the Portuguese language (Tosin, Male, 35).

The importance of this app as it relates to how parent access information underscores the importance of support in school. Despite the fact the app is in Portuguese, the efforts of the parents in navigating the app through google translate could be clearly seen in the excerpts of the interview. This further underscores the importance of meso and macro-level support in the language and educational integration of children. The overarching importance of this app points to the fact that if expanded to an English version, it will go a long way in assisting immigrant parents in Portugal especially the newly arrived to have more responsive communication with teachers.

#### **5.4.4 Teacher's Skills and Approach**

Participants identified teachers' skills and approaches as useful resources that helped to facilitate communication between parents and teachers and in helping children to adjust in the class. Participants noted that language challenges are not always the reason why there is limited communication between teachers, children and parents. Instead, participants indicated that the relationship between teachers and children in class depends largely on the skills of the teachers in teaching children with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Participants noted that some teachers are patient, creative and take into consideration the linguistic background of children in their respective classes. Teachers with such skills according to the participants are often mindful of the pace at which they teach children and always devise creative approaches to make children easily relate to what they are being taught in class. This resonates with Cummins (2011, 2013) who noted that school language should affirm students' identities in the context of academic work, connect instruction to children's lives, scaffold children's comprehension, and maximize literacy engagement. Participants noted that their children had better grades in some classes, and it was obvious that the teacher's skills brought out the best in the children.

Last year my second son's performance dropped because he was always complaining about the teacher not spending more time explaining things he didn't understand in class. I complained to the school authority and requested a meeting with the teacher. After reviewing my son's grade and the complaints, the teacher became more thorough in her teaching style and the next term result my son got was much better...So, you can see that teachers who are more patient because of the individual learning needs of children in the class always produce better results for children (Carol, Female, 32).

I have observed that teachers have different approaches as to how they handle children and it really matters..., because why I'm saying this is some teachers appear to be smarter and more patient. Some of them know that there are some children who are not good with the language...And it happened to my first son when he was in grade two when we arrived here, he was struggling with everything, but the teacher was very patient and helped him to learn at his pace... So, for me, I would say language may not only be the major issue of why a child does not perform well but how the teacher handles the situation (Fred, Male, 41).

My son Joshua is naturally a very smart and intelligent child...In his previous classes when we were still in Nigeria, he performed so well. But now, he is struggling to

understand what the teacher is saying. Given that his model language or background is English, so he's struggling to understand what they are teaching him, and it could mean that maybe what they're teaching is very simple, but because he is not understanding...like the first term when we arrived here, he had a lot of struggles. We approached the teacher and made her understand the nature of what the boy is going through, and I must tell you that we started seeing a positive change in his performance (Hassan, Male, 37).

The interview analysis above exemplifies the role of teachers at the meso level of integration of children in school. The ability of teachers to relate classroom teaching to children's understanding remains crucial especially as it concerns the language challenges faced by parents and their children. According to Haneda (2014), children have a higher tendency to gain proficiency in school language if the pedagogical instructions connect to children's lives. This is further corroborated by Gebhard et al. (2014) who noted that school curriculum should incorporate children's linguistic and cultural repertoires which will provide them with a semiotic foothold of the school language. In other words, pedagogical materials should be structured in such a way that children could easily relate or construct meaning from it using their L1 language repertoires.

Some participants also noted that the skills of their children's teachers were instrumental in helping children to adjust native Nigerian cultural orientations. One such cultural value and orientation is the principle of Ubuntu which emphasizes and promotes interconnectedness, kindness, communal support, compassion, and generosity (Mba et al. 2017; Nnama-Okechukwu et al. 2018; Okunola, 2002). Participants whose children were born in Nigeria before migrating to Portugal noted that such children were already immersed in the Ubuntu values. Participants noted that such children had conflicting values in relating with other children in Portuguese schools. It took the effort and skills of the teachers to help the children adjust to the cultural realities of their new environment in Portuguese schools.

My second daughter has a special way of relating with people. Umm...she always wants to help you even without your permission. This is part of our cultural orientation and values as Africans and Nigerians... We look out for ourselves and help people as much as we can even when we are not invited... So, my daughter has been integrated into that value system before we left Nigeria... Initially, when she started school, she was misunderstood by her fellow children and teacher. Sometimes, she wants to give

her cookies, chocolate, or even food to other children and insists they have to take it. So, the teacher had to invite me at some point, and I explained to her that it is part of our native value system to always give and help people. It was from that point that the teacher understood my daughter and gradually helped her to adjust to the new environment and culture. It helped my daughter to blend faster into the class which I believe also helped improved her grades subsequently. So that is why I say that the approach of a teacher really matters... (Johnson, Male, 46).

When my son started basic school when we arrived in Portugal, he had problems with other children in his class because he always wanted to share his food and snacks with other children and when they refuse to take the food he gave them, he starts crying. It was his normal way of giving out his things to other children in Nigeria...it really affected him how children here in Portugal refused to accept his kind gesture. The teacher invited me when it became too much to handle and I was able to explain to the teachers that it was my son's cultural orientation... the information helped the teacher to know how best to help my son cope with other children (Abdul, Male, 56).

From the foregoing, teachers occupy an important position in helping children to adjust to the cultural realities in the school setting which could interfere with their educational outcomes. This also aligns with Cummins (2009) and Cummins et al. (2007) who noted that developing critical literacies and co-constructing knowledge between teachers and children remain an ideal strategy for integrating children into the school language.

## 5.5 Strategies for enhancing language and academic performance at Home

This theme focuses on identifying the strategies parents adopted at home geared toward helping their children gain proficiency in school language and in improving their academic performance. It, therefore, provided the answer to research question two of this study which aimed to find out the strategies explored by Nigerian immigrant parents in enhancing the academic achievement of their children. Participants identified various strategies which include buying additional educational materials for children, enrolling children on online classes and private language classes at home, setting rules that regulated the time children spend studying and playing as well as rules that regulated the use of language at home. Other strategies adopted by participants included joint family Portuguese learning efforts which according to participants helped the family to develop a common vocabulary in Portuguese and to help each

other learn much faster. An outstanding part of the theme is the significance and impact of family social capital (family resources) at the micro level which were instrumental in assisting children to gain more proficiency in school language and improve their academics. As documented by previous studies, the family is the primary agent of socialisation and integration of children and as such, the level of educational achievement of children to a great extent depends on the type of family support, relationships, values, and network (Cox & Paley, 2003; Portes Zhou, 1993). The findings presented in this theme align with assumptions of both the theory of social capital and ecological systems theory on the importance of family resources in the language and educational integration of children.

### **5.5.1 Additional educational materials, home lessons, and online classes**

To complement educational materials provided to children in schools and to further increase the opportunity for children to learn and enhance language proficiency, participants narrated that they provided additional educational materials to their children and arranged for private Portuguese language instructors. Participants identified additional educational materials they acquired for their children such as cartoon videos, rhyme books, tablets, and online classes. The views of the participants were reflected in the following excerpts.

Well, I bought tablets for them and installed many educational programmes on them...like the majority in Portuguese and some in English...umm, when they come home from school, they watch Portuguese comic videos and cartoons... Videos that are in Portuguese help them to learn the language faster and master some of their subjects in school. I also buy rhyme books, novels, science textbooks, and art materials which they must read...laughs... For instance, my son paintings and drawing so we always make sure he has all the materials he needs at home (Tosin, Male, 35).

My first son who is 17 and in high school has a strong passion for science subjects like mathematics and physics and recently started developing an interest in tech-related courses. I had to enroll him in online tech courses which he is doing very well. The online course he is offering has also helped him to perform better in courses taught in his school because he is always working ahead of his syllable (Abdul, Male, 56).

One strategy that has been quite effective for my children is lessons in video format...Because, you know, kids like watching movies, cartoons...I intentionally configured the iPad in Portuguese so that they will be able to learn more Portuguese while studying (Olawale, Male, 36).

The excerpts from the interview above show how parents can use financial resources to provide educative materials for their children and the impact it has on their educational outcomes. The educational materials were procured with the family income, underscoring the relevance of family resources as highlighted by the study's theoretical framework. The theory of social capital posited that the family's material and economic capital such as having the financial resources to provide pedagogical materials and support to children represents an integral part of parents' involvement in the educational integration of children (Benner et al., 2016; Cooper, 2010). More so, previous studies suggest that children from parents and families with high income tend to have more access to information and knowledge capable of addressing educational challenges and achieving their set goals (Balarin & Cueto, 2007; Frewen et al. 2015). The additional educational materials according to the participants have helped children to not only perform better in academics and acquire proficiency in school language but also have self-development. From the socio-demographics of the study participants, it can be observed that the majority of them have professional jobs which is an indication of high-income status.

Participants also indicated that they hired private Portuguese language instructors to help their children develop more proficiency in the Portuguese language. The essence of hiring a private language teacher according to the participants was also to complement the Portuguese lessons and exposure their children are acquiring in schools. Outstanding characteristics of private Portuguese lesson teachers according to participants is the fact that the teachers are creative in developing teaching methods and materials which are tailored towards meeting children's specific language needs. To achieve this, the private lesson teachers initially assess the level of children's language proficiency and thereafter use such information to develop personalised lesson plans which have proven to be very effective. The teaching method is also child-friendly oriented and structured with children's language learning pace and proficiency level. Participants noted that the extra language lessons at home yielded positive results by boosting children's academic performance in various subjects in school.

I had to hire a private Portuguese language teacher for my children because their grades dropped badly at some point last year. I noticed that the language classes they have in school were not enough so I had to take extra measures... though it is a bit expensive to hire a private language teacher here in Portugal but umm... I think it is worth the money...these private language teachers have special skills from my own experience



because since my children enrolled for the classes, there has been much improvement (Carol, Female, 32).

It was my wife that suggested that we bring in a private language teacher to help the children... initially, I didn't want it because of the cost but I eventually agreed with my wife after having a meeting with one of the teachers I eventually hired one. My children loved the idea right from the start and I guess that could be part of the reason why the teachers have made appreciable progress so far. In fact, my children are currently the ones teaching my wife and I Portuguese...laughs (Hassan, Male, 37).

Well, the truth is that you cannot rely on the language classes children have in school if the parents really want them to improve their Portuguese skills. I realised that the language classes they have in school are not consistent and have not been meeting my children's language challenges. You know we recently arrived here so employing a private language teacher was very necessary...if they continue the way they are going with the class, I am quite hopeful that it won't be long before they will master the language. Umm... the good news is that their grade is also getting better (Tosin, Male, 35).

A critical examination of the participants' views shows a strong determination to invest in their children's education despite the high cost of hiring a private language teacher. This signals an indication of high value for knowledge and education among parents and the willingness to provide support to children. These are an integral part of family social capital which according to the theoretical frame of this study influences to a large extent the level of parental support and involvement in their children's education.

### **5.5.2 Joint Family Portuguese Learning Efforts**

Participants identified joint family learning effort as one of the useful strategies they adopted at home in order to learn Portuguese as a family. This strategy according to the participants involved creating a specific time for the time family to sit together and learn the Portuguese language. This strategy as identified by some participants has been quite helpful because it creates opportunities for the family members to develop a common vocabulary and as well support each other to gain more proficiency. Three participants who shared a similar opinion stated.

So basically, we create time to learn new things in Portuguese during weekends... My wife and I and the children all try to share any new word or sentence we learnt during

the week. For instance, my wife and I try to learn some new words from our workplace and my children also learn in school...So when we sit together to learn, everyone has something to share or teach...My family has been making much progress in learning Portuguese since we started this because we try to make the sessions fun and interesting (Olawale, Male, 36).

Somehow, we agree to learn this language thing together at home...laughs... because it was obvious that my wife and children were much better than myself in terms of the level at which they speak Portuguese... so learning it together at home helped us to assist each other...my wife, in particular, has a very creative way of teaching people something... we all take turn to teach whatever we learned individually and it really works (Hassan. Male, 37).

From the interview analysis above, it can be observed that family relationships and companionship are invaluable resources in language acquisition efforts at the micro level of the immigrant family system. This is consistent with previous studies such as Cha and Goldenberg (2015) which noted that it is often very challenging for immigrant families to learn the host country's language and as such, a combined effort between parents and their children at home could be a source of motivation and support. More so, Dixton and Wu (2014) noted that when parents and their children learn language together in a home setting, it help them to develop resilience to face the stress and difficulties of learning new language and as well celebrate their success. This resonates with the views of some participants who stated that learning the language together as a family has proven to be effective, especially in developing a common vocabulary.

For some participants, their children spearheaded the joint family Portuguese learning sessions because the exposure and language learning opportunities they have in school help them gain more proficiency in Portuguese. the following excerpts reflected participants' views:

My children are learning the language quite fast and because you know they have an advantage over us because of the school environment...we made it a point of duty to sit together and try to learn Portuguese mostly on Saturdays...umm... well, my children end up teaching my wife and I...Laughs (Johnson, Male, 46).

These children are gifted in learning things... I know how much I have tried to learn this Portuguese, but it is not easy... but look at my children, they speak better than my

husband and I. That is why I try to make them teach us because they learn this language thing very easily in school (Carol, Female, 32).

My children are basically good at correcting me when I speak Portuguese wrongly, especially in the use of words... Laughs... Yes, they correct me because they now speak better than myself... Sometimes when I even want to use some words in Portuguese, but I can't remember the exact word, I normally ask them... I have actually learned a lot from them through this means... I am also proud of them because it means that they are doing well in school and my efforts are not in vain (Fred, Male, 41).

Similar to the views of the participants, previous studies have also found that children are more likely to learn a language faster than their parents because they could easily absorb and mimic new languages due to the flexible and adaptable nature of their brains (Moskal, 2018). Studies have also found that children are likely to learn a language faster than adults because they spend quality time in school and receive lessons in the host country's language, interact with native peers (Collins et al. 2014; Collins et al. 2011). Participants noted their children provide most of the teachings during home language sessions. From the analysis of the interview, it can be deduced that the experiences of participants in creating responsive and healthy relationships with their children as well as creating a conducive learning environment at home underscore the importance of parent-child relationships at the micro level of family social capital (Cox & Paley, 2003). This also aligns with the findings of Lareau (2003) who found that when immigrant parents are supportive of their children by creating language acquisition opportunities, it provides children with the motivation that could propel them into gaining more proficiency in the school language and improving their academic performance.

### **5.5.3 Family rules and attitude of parents**

Participants noted that setting up family rules helped them to improve and regulate their children's activities at home. They stated that they created timetables and rules to regulate the time children spend in playing and studying. Participants noted that the rules helped the children to stick to their study routines at home and precisely in following their home study timetable. The family rules also helped to regulate how their children used to watch television and video play games. Participants admitted that without making this kind of rule and fully implementing it, it will be difficult to help children to stay focused on their studies at home and as they would rather choose to play most of the time. The following interview excerpts captured participants' views.

Um...you know, children nowadays have a lot of distractions. They have a lot of things that can easily distract them. So generally, uh, there is... can I put it like I have rules? Um...number one is that, uh, I don't allow them to play games until they have done all their assignments. There is a particular time they must read their books. I do this because this video game is a very serious problem for children if you don't regulate the way they use it (Abdul, Male, 56).

Well because I am not too good with the Portuguese language, I have kind of developed measures to make sure I am providing all the support they need from us the parents... I have developed a timetable for all their assignments at home. They also have time to play outside, time to watch cartoons and time for their homework. Following that routine is my way of encouraging them to perform better in school and improve their grades (Carol, Female, 32).

So basically, from Monday to Friday, they are not allowed to watch tv. I allow them to watch from Friday till Sunday afternoon... From Monday, If there are assignments or projects that you are given to them in school, they have to do them when you come back. We have a study room where they can go to study and do crafts or sometimes design projects given to them school in school. I am very strict about making them to follow their daily activities and sometimes reward them with gifts after doing their homework or projects (Johnson, Male, 36).

The views of the participants highlight the importance of parental monitoring and supervision at the micro level. Previous studies have found that children are likely to improve their self-development when actively monitored and supervised by their parents (Ngai et al. 2012; You & Nguyen, 2011). The participants not only monitored their children's activities at home but ensured that they maintained their study timetable which resulted in better improvement of their academic grades.

For some participants, setting up family rules also regulated the use of language at home. In order to help their children improve in Portuguese language proficiency, participants noted that they created a schedule that determines the language children speak during weekdays and on the weekends. According to the participants, the confusion their children experienced on the choice of language to speak at home also necessitated the idea of setting up language use rules at home as a guide to help children know which language to speak at every point in time. For instance, some participants stated that they made rules which allow their children to speak

Portuguese during weekdays to help them consolidate the Portuguese language they learn in school during weekdays. The views of the participants are reflected in the following excerpts.

So, my wife and I kind of set up some schedules to help our children know when to speak a particular language at home. For instance, they speak Portuguese at home with my wife. I speak any other language with them. Usually, my wife tries to speak more Portuguese with them during the weekdays to ensure that they maintain the language they speak in school. During weekends, they can speak any language they wish or at least we do not try to restrict them (Fred, Male, 41).

I try to set a distinction that in our home, we speak English to my son...When he goes to school, he speaks Portuguese. So, while taking him to school in the morning, I speak Portuguese with him...I try to speak Portuguese with him once we are in school just to put him in the mood. I just want him to get the basics of English as well. Because once we leave Portugal, he will need the English. I try to balance the two for him (Janet, Female, 27).

Um...well we are very intentional about it because, I want my children to also speak, my native language ...Yoruba because I know one day we will go back to my country. But, uh, we also try not to force them because we know that the Portuguese language will help them in school and in the future as adults. So, we kind of made a rule that my wife speaks more Portuguese to them while I Yoruba to them, and we all speak English. We try to, umm...make it flexible for them (Abdul, Male, 56).

From the analysis of the interview, it can be seen that family rules concerning children's play and study time are crucial factors in promoting children's language and educational success. These findings resonate with previous studies which identified restrictive mediation (family rules) and monitoring as key strategies parents adopt in regulating children's use of electronic gadgets and online presence (Chaudron, 2015; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Through these measures, parents create a regulated and structured family environment that helps to develop time management skills and as well instils discipline in children (Livingstone et al., 2011). More so, Dürager and Sonck (2014) found when parents regulate children's use of electronic devices at home, it helps to improve their productivity by prioritising their academics and staying focused. Additionally, regulating children's play time also help them to develop social skills, explore their interest and refresh their minds which could also lead to increased proactive in educational success (Nikken & Schols, 2015; Dürager & Sonck, 2014).). Monitoring and

regulating children's use of electronic gadgets through family rules as narrated by participants stands out as outstanding functional strategies in assisting children to improve their academics at home.

## 5.6 Language Support for Parents and Children

This theme presents findings on language support for children and parents in Portuguese schools. It presents findings on the forms and impacts of support available to children and their parents. It also presents findings on the challenges of the language support programme for parents and children as well as the ways of improving the support programmes. The theme, therefore, answers the study's research question four on the social supports available to Nigerian immigrant parents in the language and educational integration of children in Portuguese schools.

### 5.6.1 Forms of support language available for Children in Portuguese Schools

Participants noted that part of the language support available to their children includes individualised and child-specific language support. Participants noted that the schools have special support programmes where they provide support which is structured to meet child-specific language needs in school. Though not available in all Portuguese schools according to the participants, this form of support has been quite helpful, especially for the newly arrived parents whose children may need extra help in adjusting to the new school environment. The views of the participants are reflected below.

Um... few months when my child started school here, the teacher observed that my child was having difficulty pronouncing some words both in English and Portuguese, they invited me and asked if we could get a speech therapist to help him. Because he's still not speaking the way a child of his age is supposed to speak...The school made recommendations on the needs of my child and a medical doctor was involved too. The school is taking care of the bills and has been very supportive (Janet, Female, 27).

Well from my son's experience, I can say the school has a way of finding out which children have problems with language, and they will try to assist the child according to the child's specific needs. sometime last year, I was invited by the teacher because according to the teacher, my son was not making any progress in the Portuguese language in school... from the suggestion of the teacher, he was given extra language

sessions twice a week which made it possible for him to start picking some words gradually and eventually (Fred, Male, 41).

The views of the participants highlight the importance and relevance of support in the macro system in the family resources in the language and educational integration of children. According to Portes and Hao (2002) and Portes & Zhou (1993), the adjustment of children to the school environment depends on the structure of the educational support in schools. A study by Beck (2000) further identified the effectiveness of support programmes and educational policies as key facilitators of the educational integration of children. This resonates with some participants who noted that it was through the individualised language support that their children have speech-related challenges which was affecting the rate at which their children were learning Portuguese in school.

Some participants also stated that their children were given consideration by the school authority by bringing teachers that speak English. The participant noted that the school deemed it necessary to bring in an English teacher when it became unbearable for the child to cope in the class because the teacher do not speak English and their children did not also speak Portuguese. The English teachers helped the children to understand their subjects in English while gradually learning Portuguese. According to the participants, the school also considered bringing the English teacher because their children were consistently recording low grades due to Portuguese language low proficiency in the Portuguese language. Two participants who shared similar opinions stated.

My son had serious confusion initially when he started school because in class, he was always speaking English in class and the teacher doesn't understand English. It was difficult for the teacher to teach him anything in class...So when it became a problem, we had a meeting with the teacher and the headmistress and a new teacher that speaks a bit of English was brought in to assist him. So yeah, the school really listens to the needs of the children and tries to help as much as they can (Hassan, Male, 37).

You know it is very hard to find any of the teachers in Portuguese primary schools who can speak English... this has been the issue we always discuss in our parents-teachers meetings asking the school to consider introducing teachers that speak English... It was recently that they brought in two teachers who at least can interact with you in English and they have been helpful to my children, especially my last child who does not speak Portuguese at all.

The concerns raised about the inability of most Portuguese primary school teachers to speak English are consistent with previous studies. According to Menken and Garcia (2010), the diversity of immigrant and ethnic minority populations in Portuguese schools presents the need for multidimensional linguistics education policies. According to Faneca et al. (2016), the growing multilingual populations and heterogeneity have continued to pose a challenge to the implicit implementation of the Portuguese language as the key education language policy in the integration of immigrant children in schools. In a study by Pinto et al. (2019), the presence of children with immigrant backgrounds in Portuguese schools has made the implementation of plurilingual policies on the use of English, Spanish, French, German, and Mandarin complicated. The presence of children with an immigrant background has also continued to reinforce the call for the internalisation of Portuguese educational policy through the more elaborate recognition of the English language and continuous review of the Portuguese monolingual language policy (Pinto, 2012; Pinto & Araújo 2013; Pinto & Araújo 2016). Participants also attested to the fact that the growing population of immigrants in Portugal and the challenges faced by parents in the integration of children in Portuguese schools calls for more attention to be given to the English language.

You know...It still baffles me how a country like Portugal which has become well known globally as a tourist country still has not been able to implement policies that fully recognize English in their primary schools...In my children's school, I can tell you that there is just one teacher who can attempt to speak English which is the only person who can assist my children in interpreting for other teachers sometimes (Olawale, Male, 36).

Well, the truth is that English is a serious issue in most Portuguese primary schools. The teachers understand English and it is really a challenge for the parents and the children...Umm...I must also say that my children have really benefited from the language support in the school because whenever there is a need for an English teacher to help them, the school always assists by bringing someone that speaks English (Tosin, Male, 35).

Participants also noted that the schools also provide general Portuguese language support for all children which is offered as a subject. The Portuguese class according to the participants is a subject that is structured to provide support to children in assisting them gain proficiency in the Portuguese language. In some schools, the Portuguese language subject is taken twice a



week whereas in other schools, it is taken once a week and sometimes once in two weeks. The views of the participants are reflected below.

Umm... where my children attend school, they have some specific time dedicated to the learning Portuguese language and it is compulsory for every child in the school. The classes are usually once or twice a week depending on the level of the child's proficiency level. They also provide instructional materials and books to the children. For me, I can say that it is somehow effective because the teachers are skilled and give special attention to non-native Portuguese children (Johnson, Male, 46).

There are classes for Portuguese lessons in my children's school but from the much I know; they give more priority to newly arrived children who need more help. Such children can get it twice a week or even more depending on the issues at hand. When my children started picking up, the frequency declined to once a week or once in two weeks (Carol, Female, 32).

Well, the truth is that the school has been very supportive because immediately they see that the kids are not from Portugal, they focus more attention on the children and provide language support classes. They do these things so the children can meet up with other students. So aside, from their usual classes, they have Portuguese language classes. I think the section is one hour (Fred, Male, 41).

From the analysis of the interview, it can be observed that the existence of Portuguese language support for children as stated by the participants is consistent with the study by Solano and Huddleston (2020) which reported that Portugal ranked 69% in the educational integration of immigrant children according to 2020 MIPEx. A study by Reis and Gomes (2016) and Hortas (2013) has also highlighted the provision of Portuguese classes for immigrant children as a key policy issue in recent Portuguese educational language policies. The Portuguese language classes according to the participants have provided the children with the opportunity to gradually learn and improve in Portuguese language proficiency.

### **5.6.2 Challenges of Language Support Programme for Parents**

Participants admitted that despite the availability of language support programmes for parents in Portugal, accessing such language support programmes has also been very challenging due to various reasons. The challenges mentioned by participants include waiting time after registration, structure and organisation of the language classes, low financial incentives and lack of English language proficiency among the teachers.

### **5.6.2.1 Waiting time after registration**

One of the major challenges associated with assessing language support for parents as highlighted by some participants is the waiting time for acceptance after registration. The participants noted that it usually takes a long time to be notified after registration which sometimes can take up to two months or more. Participants further noted that in some cases, the applicant might have lost interest and enthusiasm in the programme by the time he or she is notified after waiting for a long time. Most of the participants stated the reason for the long waiting time was due to the fact that the programme language course is free hence the long queue in the number of people waiting to be accepted in the programme. The following excerpts captured participants' views.

Well, I can share my wife's experience regarding the challenges with the language class...Can you believe that before my wife was accepted for the language class, it took two months after she had registered? In fact, we were already considering contacting a private language teacher before she was notified. Sometimes, this long waiting time can make you lose interest (Carol, Female, 32).

From my experience, it is very difficult to get accepted into the language class...you know because it is free, a lot of people are registering. I tried the first time but was not accepted so I had to register again in early January this year and luckily, I got accepted (Fred, Male, 41).

For me, I waited so long and had to go to their office to confirm if they had forgotten me...Laughs... I discovered it was a big issue because the day I went to their office to check, I met other people who also came to complain about waiting for so long without any feedback (Hassan, Male, 37).

From the interview analysis above the challenges associated with accessing language support in Portugal have been consistent as demonstrated by previous studies. According to de Matos (2019), and Alto Commissariado para as Migrações (ACM) (2017), Portuguese language classes (Português para Todos) are free for all immigrants, but accessibility has remained a major challenge. The delay in acceptance as indicated by the participants has huge implications for the integration of parents both as it concerns the integration of their children in Portuguese schools and the mainstream labour integration. For instance, some participants further noted that the delay they experienced in being accepted in the language classes has affected the pace

at which they are learning Portuguese and their level of proficiency. Participants further noted that it has also affected their level of social networks and opportunities for jobs. This is because according to the participants, they could not get some of the professional jobs they are applying for because of low proficiency in Portuguese. Two participants shared similar views below.

Umm...as I told you when we started this interview, I am a professional civil engineer and to be very honest, I have missed so many job openings because of the Portuguese language. That is why I feel somehow frustrated with the delay in this language course (Fred, Male, 41).

Well, I am sure that I could have made much progress in learning the language if I was accepted the first time, I applied...my major concern now is the fact that it denying me many job opportunities because most of these employers won't accept you if you don't speak the language well (Olawale, Male, 36).

#### **5.6.2.2 Structure and Organisation of the language classes**

Some participants also noted that the challenges they encountered with the Portuguese language support classes is the organisation and the structure of the programme. The major challenge with the structure of the programme according to the participants was the fact that learners from different academic levels are combined making it one class. Participants noted that this pattern can be challenging because it affects the level of comprehension and pace of learning. In other words, participants observed that combining people learners with higher educational qualifications with learners who have no lower or no formal educational qualification makes it difficult they both groups to flow with the lectures. According to the participants, the teachers often wrongly assume that everyone in the class has the same level of comprehension which is not always the case because those who have higher levels of education usually make more progress in the language courses. This is reflected in the excerpts below.

One of the challenges I have experienced in the Portuguese language courses was that they join everyone together in one class, people who have first degrees, master's, and those who don't have any formal education. This set of people will not have the same learning pace you know... Some people drop out of the programme because they could not cope with the course (Johnson, Male, 46)

I think there is a general problem with the way the language classes are organised because the teachers don't bother about the level of education of the learners...like they

just combined the class which for me does not help because it makes it difficult for the teachers to detect people who may be finding it difficult to follow the lectures (Carol, Female, 32).

Well, I think the structure of the language class affects mostly people with lower education because they struggle to follow up. Though it didn't affect me but my friend who is from Senegal quit at some point because the teachers were not keen on identifying his challenges (Hassan, Male, 37).

The challenges faced by Portuguese learners due to the composition and structure of the programme highlight the need to review the Portuguese language programmes. This is consistent with previous studies such as Matias et al. (2016), which found that immigrants who have low educational qualifications do not receive adequate consideration in the language programme. This further justifies the relevance of the educational attainment of parents highlighted in the theoretical framework of this study as key family social capital in the educational integration of children (Benner et al. 2016; Jabar et al. 2021). This is to say that the inability of parents to enrol in the language courses due to their level of education indirectly affects their level of involvement in the educational integration of their children due to language barriers.

Additionally, some participants noted that part of the challenges with the structure of the language classes is the fact that the majority of Portuguese language instructors do not speak English. Participants noted that lack of English proficiency among the Portuguese language instructors was a big challenge because it affected not only the level of communication and relationship with the instructors but reduced the level of comprehension of the courses. In this sense, participants stressed the need for the Portuguese language instructors to at least hear or speak basic English because many things will make more sense to the learners if the teachers can explain them in English during the classes. For instance, the participants noted that the language classes will be more effective if the teachers can explain some Portuguese vocabulary and grammar in English as the learners could easily relate to and memorise them. The following excerpts captured participants' views.

I have observed that most of the Portuguese instructors don't speak English. I don't know if it is normal, but I think they should speak a bit of English...umm, basically when you start the program, some things need to be explained to you in English...it was very frustrating to me when initially when I started and it affected me...I was

always using google translate to check some things while in class which disconnects me from the lectures (Fred, Male, 41).

The first language course I attended was at Amadora but I couldn't cope because I was not understanding anything because none of the instructors could speak English. I had to drop out and reapply at another centre...though it was almost the same.

From the analysis of the interview, low proficiency in English among the Portuguese language instructors constitutes challenges to parents as it concerns the level of acquisition of proficiency in the Portuguese language. The inability of the teachers to speak English could affect low comprehension as indicated by the participants who noted that they had to rely on google translate to understand some of the course contents. This may also result in misinterpretation of lessons being delivered by the teachers, especially for beginners. This further reinforces the need to review the structure of the Portuguese language programme for immigrants (Liebowitz, et al. 2018; Matos, 2019).

### **5.6.2.3 Low financial incentive**

Participants noted that the financial support given to Portuguese learners by the Portuguese government is very low and somehow affected their motivation to enrol in the programme. Participants noted that due to the low financial support for the Portuguese language, they had found it difficult to quite reduce their work shift in order to be more available to take the classes. Some participants noted that they could have allocated more time to learn the language if the government could increase the financial incentives. Most of the participants insisted that they had to combine the language classes with their work in order to provide for their family's upkeep and sometimes missed attending the classes due to tight work shifts.

First, let me say that the Portuguese government is trying but they need to do more...I believe that more immigrants in Portugal will make an effort to enrol in the language classes in the government can increase the money they pay. The money they pay currently is so small and people have to go to work in order to provide for their families (Olawale, Male, 36).

For me I think the money is very small...it doesn't motivate people at all...For instance, I am currently attending an evening language class which I attend most times when I

come back from a stressful day job...I know how days I missed the class because I didn't just have the drive (Johnson, Male, 46).

Some participants also noted that they had to spend their money to hire private language instructors which is usually very expensive. According to the participants, it became necessary to hire private language instructors because the support they got was insufficient in terms of the effectiveness of the general language programme and the low financial incentives. Participants also noted that they had also hired private language instructors because of the need to be actively involved in the schools of their children. This is reflected in the excerpts below:

Umm... to be honest with you, if you really want to take learning the Portuguese language seriously, you may not have to wait for government support or money... I need this language very much because of getting a good job and for my children's school so I had to just spend my money hiring a Portuguese private teacher (Hassan, Male, 37).

My wife and I are not actually relying on the public language classes because we really want to learn this language...we are paying big money to someone who is teaching us at home...you know this general support thing is free so you shouldn't expect so much from it because so many people are also interested (Tosin, Male, 35).

## 5.7 Recommendations for improving educational and language support for parents and their children in Portugal

This section will present various measures identified by participants in order to improve the language and educational support for parents and their children in Portugal. Measures identified by the participants include employing more Portuguese/English-speaking teachers, following up on children's language needs, prioritizing parents of school-age children in language courses, school-based language classes for parents of school-aged children, grouping Portuguese language classes, and increasing financial incentives for Portuguese language learners.

### 5.7.1 Employing more Portuguese/English-speaking teachers

The majority of the participants suggested stressed the need for the Portuguese government to consider employing teachers who can speak both English and Portuguese both in preschool, primary school, high school and in Portuguese language classes. Employing more teachers that speak both English and Portuguese according to the participants will reduce the challenges faced by parents in the educational integration of their children in Portugal. According to the

participants, teachers who have proficiency in both English and Portuguese will collaborate more with parents in helping children to adjust in school. For instance, participants noted that teachers who can speak English are likely to have closer relationships and responsive communication with parents which could facilitate active home-school contact between parents and teachers. Most participants were of the view that they are more likely to constantly visit schools to discuss issues affecting their children if there is a robust communication channel with teachers. The views of the participants are reflected in the excerpts below.

Basically, the school should try as much as possible to, umm... and try to employ their teachers or to train their teachers to at least cater to this group of people who are not native Portuguese speakers...having more Portuguese teachers that speak English well will help children to integrate properly in the class (Hassan, Male, 37).

I think Portugal should consider English more in primary schools. This can be possible by bringing in more teachers who can speak English fluently. Umm...For me, I think they will perform better if they can help children to both English and Portuguese faster (Janet, Female, 27).

Well, I feel the lack of English issue is even more complicated in the language classes and that is where I would even suggest for the government to urgently make some changes. They need to either train or hire instructors who can speak English (Olawale, Male, 36).

The need to consider employing more teachers who are proficient in the English language in Portuguese schools as highlighted in the interview excerpts above reinforces the need to review the Portuguese language policy in the face of its growing multicultural population. This insight aligns with previous studies such as Madeira (2015), and Martins et al (2019), which found that most Portuguese teachers in pre and primary schools lack training in L2. With the growing linguistics diversity and nationalities in Portuguese schools which is estimated at 170 nationalities, there is an urgent need to implement multilingual language policies in Portuguese schools (Madeira, 2015; Oliveira, 2014).

For some participants, the need for the Portuguese government to employ more teachers that can speak both English and Portuguese is basically to assist the newly arrived parents. Participants who shared these views pointed out that when parents who arrived new in Portugal find it very challenging to enrol their children in school due to the language barrier. According to the participant, Portuguese teachers who are fluent in English can help newly arrived parents

with information about curriculum expectations, how the school system works, and their role in schools as parents. Teachers can also help newly arrived parents with information on various resources in the school which could facilitate the integration of their children into schools. The views of the participants are reflected in the excerpts below.

It will be better if the government could maybe employ English-speaking teachers to also help parents at least when they are new in the country and their children just started school. The schools should also make minutes of meetings available to parents after meetings so that they can translate them and understand better what is expected of them (Abdul, Male, 56).

I remember the first day I took my son to his school for registration... it was very difficult for me because I couldn't communicate with the headmistress and the teachers...I know that this may be the same experience with other parents who are new in the country...government needs to make things easier for parents by considering employing teachers who can really communicate in English (Carol, Female, 32).

The interview analysis above highlights the frustration faced by parents due to the lack of English proficiency among Portuguese school teachers especially among the newly arrived. It therefore emphasizes how language can facilitate effective communication between parents and the school and as such calls for the government to consider multilingual skills among Portuguese teachers. This is consistent with previous studies which stressed the need for a multilingual Portuguese language policy framework (Liebowitz, et al. 2018; Matos, 2019; Oliveira, 2014). However, Matos (2019) also highlighted possible challenges to this proposal such as the additional resources need to train teachers and recruit more and the possible impact on existing teachers who do not speak English. A study by Pereira, (2006) argued that the implementation of multilingual policies in Portuguese schools could pose a threat to the sustainability of Portuguese language and culture. Nevertheless, the implementation of multilingual policies in Portugal has remained sacrosanct putting the growing multilingual and multi-ethnic population into perspective (Baganha, 2005; Peixoto et al., 2009; Padilla & Ortiz, 2012; Solovova 2019). This also highlights the impacts of educational policies at the macro level of family resources according to ecological systems theory (Berk, 2000; Ismail, 2019). Berk (2000) further noted that the availability of support in schools facilitates access to educational resources and enhance-school partnerships for parents.



### **5.7.2 Prioritising Parents of school-age children in Portuguese language courses**

Participants suggested that considering the crucial role of parents in the educational and language integration of children, parents should be given prioritised in the language in the language class admission. Most of the participants admitted that parents who have children of school age should be given more attention to language class registration. Participants noted that parents should not be made to wait too long to be accepted in the language classes after registration because it will indirectly affect their level of involvement in the schools of their children. Prompt acceptance of parents in language classes will help fast-track the acquisition of proficiency in the Portuguese language. According to the participants, parents need to be promptly accepted in Portuguese language classes upon their arrival in Portugal because acquiring Portuguese language skills will not only make them active participants in the school of their children but also help them to secure good jobs which is an essential element of family social capital needed in the educational and language integration of children. The views of the participants are reflected in the excerpts below.

From my own experience...parents should be given some, you know maybe specific consideration in terms of the way they're treated in being considered a place in the Portuguese language class registration process and even financial support...I say this because um...if things go wrong with parents, it also affects the academic performance of children even their mental stability as well (Johnson, Male, 46).

I strongly believe that parents should be given support in any area they need support, like in aspects of jobs, language class and so on. I suggest that parents should be interviewed and ask them where they will need support more so that they can easily meet up with the educational needs of their children (Olawale, Male, 36).

Well, it will be very helpful if the Portuguese government can increase the allowance, they pay to parents throughout the language learning period... I also think that government should make Portuguese language courses mandatory for all parents because of the importance of language in training children in school in Portugal (Tosin, Male, 35).

From the perspectives of the participants, there is strong evidence to show that parents belong to a group of immigrant populations that need extra support and empowerment. This is a result of the crucial role they play in the educational integration of children. From the interview

analysis, there appears to be substantial evidence to justify the need for the government to prioritise support for parents. The concerns raised by the participants on the need to give more consideration to immigrants in the language support raise the argument on the effectiveness of Portuguese immigrant integration policies such as the Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural (ACIDI) and Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Minorias Étnicas (ACIME) which are implemented to support ethnic minorities and the immigrant population in Portugal. (Lopes et al.2014; Peixoto et al. 2009). It is therefore imperative for the Portuguese government to acknowledge the contemporary needs of the immigrant population through a robust review of the integration policies.

Some participants further noted that to make language support more effective for parents, language programmes or classes for parents should be situated in the same school where their children attend. School. According to the participants, this will allow parents to connect more with teachers in the school and as well more about the school system. The language class can be in the form of routine round table tea meetings between the parents and teachers in learning the Portuguese language and sharing ideas about the school system. The views of the participants are reflected in the excerpts below.

I think that if there could be programs that are specific to parents of school-age children, it will make a big difference...Uh, especially in the schools of each child. It can be called a parents' language support program... It would help parents to find more time to engage in school activities and it doesn't have to be formal...maybe once a week or once a month...it will help parents to also learn some values in the schools of their children (Tosin, Male, 35).

Well if it's possible, the government should create a language programme for parents separately or make it part of the school language programme so that parents can have their language class in the same school their children are attending...they will learn a lot of things about how things work and be able to relate more with the teachers (Carol, Female, 32).

### **5.7.3 Grouping language classes**

Participants noted that to make the language classes more effective, there is a need to restructure the composition of the classes. Specifically, participants suggested that the classes should be organised based on the educational level of the learners. For instance, participants

suggested that those who have higher educational levels such as bachelor's, master's and other higher academic degrees should be made to learn together in the same class whereas those with lower education or no formal education can be made to learn together as a class. This according to the participants will the learners to learn at the same pace and also help teachers easily detect the progress level of each learner. Grouping the learners according to their educational level will also eliminate status differences which could bring about feelings of inferiority complex and low self-esteem among people with lower educational qualifications and as such lower their learning pace. The views of the participants are reflected in the excerpts below.

For me, the classes should be organised based on the educational level of participants, so that the teachers can know the pace to teach. It will also help teachers to know the specific nature of the language needs of the people they are teaching... I say this because from what I noticed, some people feel intimidated and don't ask questions even when they are not following or making progress with the courses (Hassan, Male, 37).

When I had the first Portuguese class, there were people in the class who couldn't read one line of Portuguese sentence after what we had done after 150 hours of class...umm, the teacher was quite disappointed, so to avoid disappointment on the part of the teacher and the students failing, I think they should group students according to their level of education. So that those who have not been to school or have little education can have specific sessions (Janet, Female, 27).

Some participants stated that they observed that people with higher levels of education usually dominate class discussions and interactions thereby limiting the active participation of those with low or no formal education during class sessions. The dominance of the classes by those who have higher educational levels also reduces peer interaction as well as collaboration. This means that when learners are grouped according to their educational level and learning pace, it can facilitate constructive feedback, meaningful discussions, motivation as well as confidence among the learners. Participants further highlighted that restructuring the classes according to the educational level of the learners will make the language programme more attractive to the learners and motivate more people to enrol thereby promoting the overall acquisition of the Portuguese language among immigrants in Portugal.

If you check very well in most of these Portuguese classes, at least from my experience, you will notice that there are some sets of people that dominate discussions in the

classes, and I think it may be affecting some people negatively...some people feel so intimidated that they cannot even ask questions in the class.

Some people don't like attending Portuguese classes not because they don't want to learn the language but of the way they structure the classes...there are a lot of things they need to address especially the way they pack everyone in the same class.

## 5.8 Synthesis of Findings

This chapter presented the findings and analysis of data collected from an in-depth interview conducted with eight participants and discussed in connection with the theoretical framework and previous studies. The chapter presented the findings from the views of Nigerian immigrant parents on the strategies they adopted in the language and educational integration of children in Lisbon, Portugal. It was found that parents' linguistic background and experiences in the language and educational integration of children. More concretely, the parents who have acquired language skills earlier in life tend to be better prepared to assist their children in dealing language challenges in schools. It was found the impact of parents' linguistic background and experiences in the language and educational integration of children. More concretely, the parents who have acquired language skills earlier in life tend to be better prepared to assist their children in dealing language challenges in schools. experiences that their linguistic background in English has been an invaluable family social capital which assisted the participants to easily relate and understand the nature of children's language challenges in school and how best to assist them. As earlier established by the theoretical framework of this study, the strong linguistic skill in the English language among the participants can be considered an integral part of the family social capital at the micro level of the family's ecological system (Bourdieu, 1993; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The study also found connection between participants level of educational attainment, material and economic resources and involvement in schools. For instance, participants showed much value for education through active communication with schoolteachers and the provision of educational materials to children. This is consistent with the postulations of social capital theory which highlights the relationship between family social capital and parental involvement in the educational integration of children (Colman, 1988) as earlier established in the theoretical framework of study.

## 6 CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of this study which explored the strategies adopted by Nigerian immigrants in the language and educational integration of children in Lisbon, Portugal. The study adopted a qualitative approach and data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight Nigerian immigrant parents (six males and 2 females). The study was anchored on the theory of social capital and ecological systems theory to understand how resources within the disposal of the family environment can facilitate the parent's involvement in the language and educational integration of children in Portugal.

### 6.2 Main Findings

Available statistics according to the findings of this study show that Nigeria belongs to the category of countries whose immigration to Portugal is still recent. According to SEF (2017), Nigerian immigration to Portugal became more pronounced in 2008 and has been consistently growing. The population of Nigerian immigrants in Portugal as captured in the SEF portal has remained relatively low. According to SEF (2021), there are a total of 866 Nigerian migrants currently residing in Portugal as legal residents composed of 591 men and 275 females. However, the current study found that there is substantial evidence to show that more Nigerian are arriving in Portugal and thus, the immigrant population is consistently on the rise. For instance, according to SEF (2020) report, the population of Nigerian immigrants in Portugal was 758 composed of 510 men and 248 females. The present study also found that Nigerian immigrants in Portugal have higher educational qualifications with the majority having acquired bachelor's and master's degrees (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2023). However, the findings also show that most Nigerian immigrants in Portugal are underemployed despite their high educational qualifications.

The empirical findings of the study show that Nigerian immigrant parents in Portugal have a strong linguistic background in the English language which was developed from their early school days in Nigeria. The study sound that there is a similarity between Portugal and Nigerian in terms of language emersion because as children are immersed in Portuguese in Portugal so also children are immersed in English early in school in Nigeria. The study, therefore, found that the early emersion of Nigerian immigrant parents in English stands out as their linguistic background and skills. The linguistics skills according to the theoretical framework of this

study are an integral part of the family social capital both at the micro, meso, and macro level (Bourdieu, 1993; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Coleman, 1988). The linguistic background and skills of parents were found to be their strong strength and resources because the Portuguese language challenges faced by children in Portuguese schools resonate with Nigerian immigrants' early school challenges of acquiring proficiency in English as such, they could relate and devise strategies to assist their children to mitigate the challenges. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Gerena 2011; Nauck et al. 1998; Parkes, 2008; Schmidt, 2007; Yagmur & van de Vijver 2022) which documented the role of linguistic skills and background of immigrant parents in assisting children to gain proficiency in host country language.

Furthermore, the study found that parents were keen about their children's education in Portugal despite the Portuguese language barriers which were common among the parents. As a result, the study found that parents adopted various strategies in order to be actively involved in the schools of their children and in maintaining cordial relationships with the school teachers. for instance, the study found that adopted strategies such as constant visits to schools, monitoring children's activities in school and making use of feedback from teachers. other strategies include being active in parents-teachers meetings, making use of children's school apps and relying on teachers' teaching skills. One of the most significant attributes of parents' active involvement in the schools of their children according to the findings of this study is the role of their educational attainment and social networks. This is consistent with the assumptions of the theory of social capital as highlighted in the theoretical framework of this study as well as previous studies which posited that parent's educational attainment plays a key role in facilitating the educational integration of children (Benner et al., 2016; Jabar et al. 2021; Hayes, 2012; Ji & Koblinsky 2009; Rothon et al., 2012). Through social networks, parents also connected with other parents and teachers through parents-teachers meetings which strengthened their active involvement and participation in the schools of their children. This is consistent with parents who have large social work with other parents and teachers are likely to actively participate in the activities organised in the schools of their children (Dijkstra et al. 2004; Li & Fischer, 2011; Sheldon, 2002).

Additionally, the study also found that parents adopted various strategies at home geared toward enhancing the academic performance of their children as well as gaining proficiency in the school language. The study found that the strategies adopted by parents at home included buying additional educational materials, hiring private Portuguese language instructors for home lessons, and registering children for online courses. Other strategies included setting

family rules that regulate the time children play and study as well as how to use language at home and joint family learning efforts in Portuguese. A critical examination of the strategies adopted by parents shows that material and economic resources stand out as key factors. As highlighted in the theoretical framework of this study, the economic and material resources of the family influence parent's efforts in the educational integration of children (Coleman, 1988). This is well reflected in the findings of this study because parents were able to acquire additional educational materials, register their children in online courses and hire private Portuguese language instructors because they had more financial resources. This aligns with previous studies which found that parents with high income are likely to procure innovative educational materials to support their children both at home and in school (Cooper, 2010; Cooper & Stewart, 2013; Van Otter, 2014). Previous studies also documented that parents with higher material and economic resources have the propensity to invest in their children in the form of paying for extra tutorials and hiring private lesson teachers (Ahmar & Anwar, 2013; Gobena, 2018).

Finally, the study found that there is outstanding language support for parents and children in Portugal. For the children, the study found that Portuguese schools have child-specific language support where they assist children based on the challenges they are having in class. For instance, the study found that in some Portuguese schools, there is language therapy for children who are having challenges with word pronunciation both in English and in Portuguese. In some schools, the study also found that there are English support teachers who specifically help immigrant children who are not proficient in Portuguese. In addition, the study also found that there are general Portuguese language classes for children geared toward making them gain proficiency in the Portuguese language. This aligns with previous studies which highlighted the importance of language support for immigrant children (Portes & Hao 2002; Portes & Zhou, 1993). The adjustment of immigrant children in school depends greatly on the structure of the educational and language support in schools (Beck, 2000).

For parents, the study also found that there are language classes which are free for all legal immigrants in Portugal. However, despite the existence of language support for parents and children, challenges such as lack of English language proficiency among the Portuguese language instructors and schoolteachers, long waiting times after registration in language courses, and the issue of joining both people with high and low educational level in one class and low financial incentive. These findings are consistent with previous studies which highlighted the challenges of Portuguese language courses; *Português para Todos (PPT)* (Alto

Commissariado para as Migrações (ACM), 2017; Matias et al.; 2016; Matos, 2019). The study found that the growing population of immigrants in Portugal characterised by multilingual and multiethnic backgrounds calls for a more comprehensive review of the seemingly monolingual Portuguese language policy (Liebowitz, et al. 2018; Matos, 2019).

### 6.3 Implications for Policy and Practice

The empirical findings of this study hold strong implications for Portuguese educational and language policymakers, educators and school counsellors. To address the challenges faced by parents and their children in Portugal, the study made policy recommendations such as employing schoolteachers and Portuguese language instructors who are proficient in both Portuguese and English, prioritising parents of school-age children in the language course registration processes and restructuring the composition of Portuguese language classes according to the educational qualification of the learners. The study also strongly recommends policies that will make language support more accessible to parents such as creating language courses for parents in the same school where their children attend school. The study also recommends the increase of financial incentives to parents during the period of learning the Portuguese language. The above-mentioned policy suggestions if implemented by the Portuguese educational and language policy makers as well as other practitioners such as school counsellors tackle some of the challenges encountered by parents in the language and educational integration of children in Portugal. Putting into perspective the growing linguistics diversity and nationalities in Portuguese schools which is estimated at 170 nationalities (Madeira, 2015; Oliveira, 2014), the development and implementation of the policy framework as highlighted in this study remains imperative and crucial.

### 6.4 Implication for social work

The findings of the study also hold implications for social workers in Portugal. For instance, social workers could work with parents and their children at the micro level to identify the family-specific educational and language needs of parents and their children and work towards developing interventions that could address the challenges. At the meso level, social workers mediate between parents and the schoolwork toward identifying challenges faced by parents in school in educational integration (Duman, 2000; Duman & Snoubar, 2016; Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2014). Based on the findings of the study regarding language barriers, social workers should be at the forefront of championing the implementation of supportive educational and language policies at the macro level of intervention. In this sense, social



workers could work as advocates for the implementation of supportive policies for parents and children in Portuguese schools.

## 6.5 Future Research

One of the outstanding features of the strategies adopted by parents at home in enhancing the academic performance and language proficiency of their children is family companionship and mutual relationship. This was well reflected in the way the family encouraged each other in learning the Portuguese language as well as the family rules adopted to regulate the use of language at home. The current study, therefore, recommends future research on the impact of family language policy on the language and educational integration of immigrant children among Nigerian immigrant parents in Portugal. Future research could also carry out more extensive research on the impact of early immersion in English on the acquisition of proficiency in Portuguese language among Nigerian immigrants in Portugal.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I

### Consent Form

**Project title: Strategies adopted by immigrant parents in language and education integration of children: The case of Nigerians in Lisbon, Portugal**

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I give my permission for the information I am about to give/have given to be used for research purposes only (including research publications and reports) with strict preservation of anonymity.

I give my permission for the images collected during fieldwork to be used for research purposes only (including research publications and reports) with strict preservation of anonymity.

Signed respondent.....Date.....

Address.....

Signed Researcher..... Date.....

## Appendix II

### Interview Guide

Date of Interview:

Duration of interview:

Time of Interview:

Demographic characteristics:

Sex:

Occupation:

Age:

Number of years lived in Portugal:

Level of Education:

#### Family information

How many children do you have?

What is the age and gender of your children?

Do you have any of children living in Nigeria?

How many of them are living with you here in Portugal?

Which language(s) do each of your children speak? What is their mother tongue, second language or others?

How well do your children speak Portuguese?

Between school language and family language, which one do your children prefer to speak?

Do your children attend school in Portugal?

What level of education are your children attending?

Do you have a spouse/partner?

Which language(s) does your spouse/partner speak? Which is his/her mother tongue, second language, or others?

Do your spouse/partner speak Portuguese?

How well do your spouse/partner speak Portuguese?

What is the occupation of your spouse/partner? (in Nigeria, somewhere else, in Portugal)

What is the educational qualification of your spouse/partner (In Nigeria, somewhere, in Portugal)

#### Migration trajectory

When did you travel outside Nigeria the first time?

Was Portugal your first destination or did you travel to other countries?

Did you travel with spouse/partner and children?

How long was your stay in such place? Did you and spouse work there?

Did you and your spouse/partner learn the language of that country?

Did your children start school in that country?

#### Linguistic background

Which language (s) do you speak?

Which is your mother tongue, second language, or others?

Do you speak Portuguese?

How well do you speak Portuguese?

Does preschool exist in your community during your childhood? If yes,



At what level do schools use the native language in teaching children in your community?

At what age or level do schools use the English language in primary schools in your community?

Is there a preference for the English language by teachers and parents a child start schooling? If yes,

Why do you think schools prefer English to the native language from the time a child starts schooling?

Do you think that the use of language affects the academic performance of children when they start schooling in your community?

In what ways do you think the use of language in school affects children in learning native languages?

What will you suggest in the use of language in preschool and primary school in Nigeria?

### **Parents school experience**

Where did you have your preschool/primary school

Did you encounter any language issue during your schooling? If yes, how did you overcome such challenges

Did language affect your academic performance at any point during your schooling? If yes, in what aspect? How did you improve in your academic in such situations?

Did your parents play any role in assisting you to resolve the challenges? If yes, what role did they play?

### **Navigating school language (Portuguese)**

How do you communicate with your children's teachers? Do you have close relationship with the teachers?

How do you keep correspondence with the school authorities? (administrators, headmistress, principal, school management board)

Do you attend parent-teacher meetings? If yes, what have you benefitted from such meetings or networks?

Do your level of proficiency in school language affect the way you contact your children's school? In what aspect does your level of proficiency in school language affect your level of involvement with your children's school?

Do you work in Portugal? If yes, how do you combine work with your children's school involvement?

What method do you use in following up with your children's activities in school?

In what ways do your involvement in your children's schooling helped in improving their academic Performance?

How do you perceive the attitudes of schoolteachers towards the use of school language?

Do you think the attitudes of schoolteachers have effects on the academic performance of children?

### **Enhancement of academic achievement**

How do you alternate your children's use of the native language and school language at home?

What strategies do you employ to make them gain proficiency in the school language?

Do your children have school language lessons at home?

Do you think that the way you speak Portuguese at home influences your children in acquiring proficiency in the school language?

How do you do homework for your children?

Which methods do you adopt at home to improve the academic performance of your children?

### **Children's integration support in Portugal**

Do your children have language support in school? If yes,

How do you perceive the effectiveness of the support programmes?

How frequently do they assess the language support?

In what ways do you think parents should be supported in order to be actively involved in the education of their children?

Are there any efforts you are making towards gaining more proficiency in the Portuguese language?

Do you know any language support programme for parents in Portugal? If yes, have you attended any of such programme?

How effective are the language supports? What challenges did you encounter while attending the programme?

What would you suggest in making the language support more effective?

Do you have any other questions or concerns you think we did not discuss?

## Appendix III

### Codebook

Name (Themes)	Description
	prioritizing parents of school-age children in language courses registration, and grouping language classes according to levels of education
Parents' Early school linguistic experiences in the English Language	Early school experiences of parents in the English language relate to their early linguistic background in school in Nigeria which shapes how they perceive the language challenges faced by their children in Portuguese schools.
Early immersion and preference for English Language	Participants admitted to having early immersion in the English language. Most participants stated that they were introduced to the English language from their very first day in preschool
Impacts of English language preference on children	Children who are not proficient in the English language are victimised by both teachers and other children and are somehow tagged as dull children regardless of their academic skills and native language repertoires
Preference of English preference	Participants stated that most parents prefer their children to speak English early in school as a projection of their class. Schools also prefer English as a projection of the standard of the school
Ways of navigating school language and relating with teachers	The Portuguese language barrier among parents limits the rate at which they communicate with their children's teachers. However, they have also developed strategies such as using kin networks and support from co-immigrant parents
Children's school app	Portuguese Primary schools have an app that records all children's activities in school such as assignments, classwork, and behavioural conduct. The app helps parents to keep track of their children's daily activities in school
Kins networks and Parent's-teachers' meetings	Parents who are not proficient in the Portuguese language admitted utilising the help of immigrant kin networks and other parents during <u>parents</u> teacher meetings in communicating with their children's teachers

## Codebook

Name (Themes)	Description
Enhancement of language and academic performance at home	In order to gain more proficiency in school language and improve the academic performance of their children, participants admitted adopting some strategies at home
Additional home lessons and educational materials	To complement classroom lessons and boost children's language proficiency and academic performance, parents provided additional educational materials such as tablets configured in Portuguese, books, cartoon videos, and online courses.
Family rules and attitude of parents	Family rules and study timetables are strategies parents adopt at home to help allocate time for playing and studying. Family rules here involved setting rules that regulate the time children spend on their studies and playtime.
Joint family learning efforts of Portuguese	Participants admitted having combined Portuguese language efforts which makes it possible for the family to speak, learn, and teach each other at home thereby improving and increasing their pace of learning
Forms and Impacts of available children's language support in Schools	Language support in school has been very helpful for immigrant children especially the newly arrived in coping with classroom learning and integration into the new school environment
Challenges of language support programme	Parents identified challenges militating against language support programmes such as the length of waiting time after registration, low financial incentives, and the structure of language classes
Parents' language support needs	Parents who are not proficient in the Portuguese language and have children of school age require special language support and assistance
Ways of improving language support	Participants suggested ways to make language support more effective and accessible for both parents and children such as increasing financial aid, employing more English teachers in Portuguese schools,

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Name (Themes)	Description
Teacher's skills and approach key to academic performance	Participants believed that teachers' approach and skills contributed more to children's grade improvement rather than just learning the language
Visitation, monitoring, and feedback from teachers	Constant visitation to school and feedback from teachers have helped parents to understand the nature of challenges faced by their children and developed strategies to improve their academic work

