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Parental Involvement of African Migrants in Multicultural Israeli Education Settings

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Abstract: This study aimed to examine the cultivation of mutual and beneficial relationships between educators and African asylum-seeker parents, focusing on the first level of Hoover-Dempsey's parental involvement model, in Tel Aviv, Israel. This qualitative–phenomenological research allows the personal and authentic voices of fifteen educators and twenty parents to be heard. The findings indicate, on the one hand, differences between educators and parents when it comes to the meanings and roles of parental involvement. However, this involvement depends mainly on educators overcoming a feeling of racial–national superiority. Despite parents' wishes to cooperate, their involvement is limited because involvement requires financial resources, free time, and the ability to communicate in the dominant language.

Keywords: parental involvement; migrant parents; social integration; intercultural competence

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1. Introduction

This study focuses on the population of African asylum-seeker parents, mainly from Eritrea and Sudan, who entered Israel between 2006 and 2013. According to the Population and Immigration Authority data [1], about 50,000 asylum seekers live in Israel, and about 8000 children study in educational settings throughout the country. At the declarative level, the State of Israel has moved from an ethos of melting pot and cultural uniformity to socio-cultural pluralism. In practice, under the guise of a pluralistic discourse, the dominant cultural practice in Israel is an assimilationist requirement [2,3]. In such a reality, the encounters of the African families with new cultural and behavioral patterns created confusion because they were expected to reshape their identity and cultivate a sense of belonging to the Israeli group [4]. The transition forced them to deal with language barriers, and the lack of communication in Hebrew increased their alienation and negatively affected their sense of belonging [5].

African asylum seekers face difficult experiences of hostility and racism in public from a young age: comments on skin color, curses, spitting, insults, and graffiti on walls in residential neighborhoods and schools [6]. The sociological definition of race, according to which race is not biological but a social, cultural, and political construction, illustrates that their physical racial appearance betrays them as strangers that do not belong and strengthens difficulties and barriers [7]. Asylum seekers are aware of the power relations and the supremacy of the white Israeli-Jewish population who belong to the dominant majority group. These emotional difficulties and their dark skin color have increased social differentiation, the feeling of not belonging, and social rejection [8].

Researchers [9–11] agree that the Israeli government adopts a theoretical policy and does not take responsibility for non-Jewish foreigners, refugees, or asylum seekers. The vast majority are not recognized as refugees. Moreover, State institutions treat them as temporary stayers and give them "temporary collective protection", which provides them with temporary protection from deportation but does not confer rights on health, social benefits, or the right to work.

The Ministry of the Interior, responsible for examining asylum applications, explained the policy of "temporary protection" or "non-removal", in that, in any case, it is impossible to deport asylum seekers to their country of origin. Therefore, the role of the policy is to help deport people and not to grant rights granted by refugee status to those who cannot be deported and are staying in Israel, according to the Population and Immigration Authority [1]. Moreover, in recent years, the Israeli government has made various attempts to reduce the number of asylum seekers and make their lives difficult: relocating them to open detention facilities, providing financial assistance for voluntary return, resettlement in third countries, and more [12]. In such a reality, municipal entities have had to take on the direct care of the new residents, allocating funds from the municipal budget for this purpose. The municipalities decided to separate the children of the asylum seekers and the children of Israeli citizens in kindergartens and state schools. Often, children from asylum-seeker families study in separate settings where children of Israeli citizens are not placed.

1.1. Multiculturalism and Intercultural Competence

Samuha [13] distinguishes between two meanings of "multiculturalism": describing a given situation (descriptive), and referring to the desired reality (normative). In his opinion, the problem in Israeli society is a contradiction between these two meanings. In Israel, a reality of multiculturalism is reflected, but in practice, there is no realization of an ideology that supports the existence of different cultures. Multiculturalism was imposed on Israel and was never part of its vision. Indeed, the cultures in Israel are not equal in status and do not respect each other.

In Israel, in the given situation, multiculturalism is a technical–demographic concept whose primary expression is the legitimate existence of a society that has several cultures that reflect a pluralism of lifestyles. Still, it cannot testify to the existence of a community in a normative reality in which there is much equality between cultures. In Israel, life in society is saturated with intercultural tensions between dominant, familiar, similar, and comfortable cultures, and the discomfort created by unfamiliar and minority cultures deemed as unacceptable [14,15].

A society deserves to be defined as "multicultural" if it treats its cultural–social mosaic respectfully and positively and maintains a dialogue between different groups. To create such a dialogue, the education system is required to express multicultural educational concepts [15]. Reingold [16] found changes in the academic discourse in Israel, which changed from discourse emphasizing ethnocentric education, mono-cultural policy, and a homogeneous society, to multicultural discourse expressing concepts of inclusion, integration, and mutual respect between cultures. These demographic–cultural changes are also being exposed in educational frameworks. Almost every school in Israel has immigrant, new, or veteran child migrants who belong to diverse ethnolinguistic groups. Teter [3] examined teachers' attitudes towards integration and inclusion and found that, on the one hand, they hold pluralistic perceptions and believe that foreign children should be allowed to express their cultural uniqueness. On the other hand, when the teachers treat the students professionally, they reveal a perception that all foreign children are similar to Israelis. From this, it can be learned that at the declarative level, the State of Israel has moved from an ethos of a melting pot to social and cultural pluralism, where the students may benefit from a greater degree of openness and tolerance towards the ethnic traditions and customs they represent. But on a practical level, under the cloak of pluralistic discourse hides a rather assimilative demand. This gap prevents teachers from treating the ethnic traditions and customs different from what they are familiar with with openness and tolerance.

Multicultural education encourages educators not to pursue a policy of cultural assimilation as the only option, but to be open to allowing different options for integration into Israeli society and creating more than one ideal Israeli identity. Such a reality can enrich Israeli society and change it from a society where people of different cultures live side by side to a society that recognizes the differences between cultures, considers the interests

of all groups in society, and enables the preservation of values, beliefs, and traditions of various cultures. In such a society, even Jewish children born in Israel can examine the characteristics of their parent's country of origin and recognize their relevance as part of their identity [3].

In the contemporary global era, demographic changes are taking place, and the phenomenon of migration is expanding. At the same time, ethnic–racial inequality based on cultural differences and differences in skin color is increasing. In such a reality, some groups or individuals will try to enhance their mobility and strive to present themselves as belonging to the majority group—white [17]. Africans in Israel have no chance of such mobility because their identity and foreignness are evident in the color of their skin. And yet, not all schools in Israel adopt multicultural pedagogy and only partially recognize the value of various cultures in Israeli society. A change is required that will challenge the hegemonic discourse that denies racial diversity and makes room mainly for Jews who have a shared religious and cultural history. Zur [18] indicated that Israeli society discriminates based on race, and skin color has significance in determining the life course of the country's citizens. In such a reality, educators are required to hold open discussions accompanied by a theoretical reference to the terms of ethnicity, origin, skin color, and power relations—all of these will also be reflected in the cultivation of intercultural competence as a service that will enable the beginning of an anti-racist change.

Cultivating intercultural competence is the first step because it includes knowledge, skills, attitudes, and policies that professionals develop in continuous learning processes to understand cultural frameworks different from their own, participate in them, and communicate content. This ability includes the development of linguistic skills and the inner desire to acquire knowledge about other cultures, to know and get to know the other. Even then, we cannot guarantee with certainty that they will not also rely on racial thinking [19–21]. Educators who lack intercultural competence are not aware of the behaviors, beliefs, values, and heritage of a student's country of origin. Therefore, in the case of a conflict between the country of origin and the receiving society, teachers may express stereotypical perceptions and think that the source of the conflict is cultural differences or differences in appearance, such as in cases involving a child with dark skin color [22].

Out of a desire to enrich the theoretical knowledge about the involvement of African parents, we chose to focus on the emerging relationships between parents and educators based on the view that it is the responsibility of educators to develop a climate of integration between new and old groups in society and to encourage their involvement in the educational process.

It is interesting whether migrant families, a vulnerable minority group traditionally met with alienation and exclusion, are welcomed by educational staff and invited to cooperate with the school their children attend. This study aims to examine the factors at the parental and educator levels that influence the involvement of parents who are asylum seekers, i.e., members of a minority group with a different cultural background in a multicultural school.

1.2. Parental Involvement

In the professional literature, great importance is attributed to parental involvement in children's education among all sections of the population. This literature shows that parents who maintain contact with the school are involved, volunteer, attend meetings with educators, and assist or positively impact their children's education. This involvement is even more critical when it comes to children and adolescents from a minority culture that has a low socioeconomic status and is on the social fringes, such as migrant parents who lack knowledge in areas such as language, law, or employment, and lack social support to deal with the difficulties posed by the receiving society [23–27].

The purpose of promoting involvement is to build knowledge in the school about the child and understanding among the parents about the educational, social, and cultural

possibilities for the child. With continuous communication, educators can inform and share with the parents everything related to the child's progress: difficulties, improvement in achievements, exposure to computerized knowledge systems, and more. Moreover, in the case of parents from the community of asylum seekers for whom the language of the school is not the mother tongue, the purpose of communication with the educators is also to mediate the school's language and norms of the receiving society, which may be the key to student advancement and achievement [28].

The study provides a critical point of view on parental involvement, focusing on the basic-level analysis of the impact model of parental involvement developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler [29,30]. This model was chosen because it assumes that parental involvement is an ongoing process that begins with the parent's decision to be involved and ends with the impact of this involvement on the child's academic achievements. This model offers a conceptual framework for understanding all factors related to parental involvement and has some degree of empirical support. Several studies examined different aspects of the model, although they did not examine the model in its entirety [31,32]. Furthermore, the model presents a hierarchical structure, which makes it possible to understand the influence of each level on the one above it. The first level refers to the factors that influence a parent to be involved. It allows an analysis of African migrant parents' relationships with educational staff to isolate the factors that influence their degree of motivation for involvement and the type of involvement, to identify the key to understanding the obstacles and levers to encourage their involvement, and accordingly to foster a basis for action in the educational framework.

The basic level of the model includes three factors that influence the involvement level of parents from a minority group: (1) Personal motives regarding parents' abilities to influence the child's achievements. (2) Contextual motives about the "honesty" of the school's invitation to be a partner. (3) Family variables—the various aspects of life that affect the way the parents are involved in the actual lives of their children. These three aspects are closely related to examining the characteristics of African parents' interactions with schools. Research on race, social class, and parental involvement may indicate that parents' actions stem directly from low social class or racial background. It is known [33,34] that race and social class are related to children's educational achievements in school, and one of the ways to influence these achievements is through parental involvement. Furthermore, parents' academic orientation is based on the resources of time, skills, personal experiences, knowledge, and the ability to manage the relationship with the school [35].

There is an argument among researchers about the roles of culture and race. Lareau [36] indicated that culture is the driving force behind parental involvement. Parents of different skin colors of the same socioeconomic status adopt similar parenting strategies. Thus, social class, not race, is the central factor that shapes parents' socialization methods. On the other hand, Chin and Phillips [37] and Gershoff, Aber, and Raver [38] found that social-class differences are reflected in the quality and quantity of children's activities and largely stem from parents' differential access to a wide range of resources, and to human, cultural, and social capital. This research may extend and enrich previous knowledge about social status and parental involvement in white-majority African minority communities.

There are three aspects to the point of view of the educators who encourage parental involvement: (1) personal motives—educators' beliefs and their perceptions of self-efficacy concerning the relationships they must maintain with the student's parents; (2) contextual motives—the educators' perceptions of the support and resources they receive at school; (3) contextual effects—(a) knowledge and skills, (b) time and power, and (c) culture, i.e., the perception of the essence of the teaching profession and school culture [30].

The role of the teacher in the school, similar to the parent, is to create an environment that will allow the student to prepare themself for life as an independent adult in society and the community. School should be where students can develop the necessary cognitive, technical, and social skills. These skills will allow them to have tools that will enable them to integrate into adult society. Moreover, teachers are expected to maintain contact with

parents, involve them in the educational process, and make decisions concerning their children. The most significant parental involvement occurs when teachers express positive attitudes about parental involvement, maintain continuous and open communication, and principals try and support the educational team [29].

A study [39] that examined the Israeli context found that the public education system in Israel has not yet succeeded in building a real partnership with migrant parents. In addition, the Ministry of Education policy is not clear and detailed enough, and teachers do not know what the recommended educational methods in the multicultural educational setting are: Should the teacher engage with the holidays of students from other cultures in the classroom? Should they explain diverse cultural heritage and respect the languages of the children's countries of origin? The study suggests that receiving education will allow each migrant to preserve their customs and culture and simultaneously acquire belonging to the Israeli society. It also emphasizes the intelligent use of the strengths of their culture to build their sense of belonging. One must learn to accept the other who stands out because of the color of their skin and create an education system that sanctifies the values of equality and human dignity.

Additionally, Sever [40] described a complex picture regarding the relationship between migrant mothers and teachers in Israel, involving both good and encouraging connections and associations with hurt and insult. Moreover, other studies [41] have reported that migrant parents perceive the educational setting as a system that does not understand them, does not attempt to study their cultural norms, and does not help them. Therefore, they do not attend personal meetings with educators to avoid feelings of anger, alienation, and a lack of cooperation. Such a reality may create frustration among parents and a conflict between teachers' views and parents' expectations.

On the one hand, migrant parents have doubts about their ability to be involved because they do not have the knowledge, self-ability, or the time to try to build their role as parents while responding to teacher mediation processes [31]. On the other hand, middle-class white principals and educators do not always understand that parental involvement may be based on cultural values and experiences [42]. Moreover, the fact that parents from minority groups rarely contact the educational framework [12] is interpreted from a deficit perspective. Educators think parents do not care about their children's education or conclude that it is a waste of time trying to involve parents [43].

1.3. Actions to Promote Parental Involvement

Studies examining the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement [24,26,43–45] demonstrate that there is a positive relationship between the two. Consequently, the development of parent involvement programs is expanding and experiencing extensive activity. Moreover, researchers [46,47] identify that parental involvement is significant for low-income African American families with young children. Parental involvement can be expressed in various ways: questions about the school agenda, help with homework, participation in school activities, and emotional support [48,49]. Thus, the question arises as to whether and how parental involvement can be promoted among minority communities.

Epstein [50,51] presented a model defining six categories of appropriate and desirable actions to promote parental involvement: (1) parenting: cultivating parenting skills through training and workshops; (2) communication: creating a two-way and direct communication system between parents and educators; (3) parental school support: creating opportunities for participation in school events; (4) learning at home: creating opportunities for family involvement in learning; (5) decision making: parental involvement in school decision making and parental leadership development; (6) cooperation with the community: coordination between community resources for the needs of the school and the families of the students.

One criticism of Epstein's model is that the recommendations to encourage the involvement of refugee parents are presented as a universal model without a clear understanding of the social and institutional contexts in which they operate. Refugee parents are at a partic-

ular disadvantage when it comes to offering their children support during their entry into a new educational system. Therefore, the possibility of applying these recommendations in intercultural contexts is partial [25].

2. Materials and Methods

This study chose a qualitative research paradigm based on the premise that social reality is the product of interpretive processes influenced by personal and social structures such as gender, nationality, and culture. Qualitative research helps to reveal individuals' interpretations of social reality while referring to personal and social structures.

The researchers who engage in qualitative research seek to examine phenomena in their natural state while trying to derive meaning and interpretation regarding the human experience. This method is based on verbal and written subjective expressions whose meanings are given by the participants, and are windows into the inner life of the person.

This method is suitable for research because it allows us to locate and present the personal and authentic voices of educators and parents who have first-hand knowledge of the relationship between them [52]. In this way, we can better understand how parents from asylum-seeking families are involved and how schools provide a pedagogical and social response to diversity in a multilingual and multicultural society [53].

Fifteen educators (three kindergarten teachers, four male teachers, eight female teachers) and twenty parents (eight women, twelve men) whose children attend multicultural kindergartens and elementary schools in the country's center participated in the study. We chose to focus on pre-primary and primary education frameworks because, during this age period, there is ongoing interaction, parent–child dependence in the home, and a closer relationship between home and school. Educators in these settings also spend most of their time after the school day communicating with the parents to support the young children and promote their achievements.

The educators were selected using the snowball method. The first two educators are known to the researcher, and she recommended additional educators. The educators helped in creating the connection with the parents. The objectives of the interview were explained to each participant, full confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed, and they signed a consent form.

All educators had at least five years of experience in kindergartens or schools where children from asylum-seeking families studied. The parents were chosen on the recommendation of the teachers. All parents came from Eritrea or Sudan to Israel eight years ago or more. Some came as married couples, and some met and married in Israel. The men are mainly employed in restaurants, supermarkets, garages, and educational institutions, and the women work in the household. The communication language between the researcher and the parents was English. All the parents who participated in the study spoke fluent English. They could express their opinion and share their experiences. English is an official language in Sudan and one of the dominant languages in Eritrea. It is used as the business language and the language of study at school, so parents can communicate in English.

The research tool was an interview that focused on the subjective perceptions of teachers and parents regarding parental involvement in schools. The interviews took place in educational settings, taking about an hour for each participant. The interviews were conducted in Hebrew with the teachers and in Hebrew and English with the parents. The interview began with a presentation of the purpose of the study, and all interviewees signed an informed consent form (in English and Hebrew).

Next, the interviewees answered guiding questions regarding their perceptions of parental involvement. I asked teachers and parents to respond to three motives related to the underlying level of Hoover-Dempsey's parental involvement model [19,30]. Regarding parents, I asked them if they were ready to act to increase cooperation with the school and to tell me about a case where they were involved or tried to get involved and failed, and what they did when contacting the teacher. I asked about the impact of such events and their reactions. Similar questions were presented to the teachers: I asked them to tell me

about a case where parents were involved or a point where they tried to promote parental involvement. I asked about the impact of such events and the parents' reactions. I also asked if the school culture encourages parental involvement, in what ways, and how it has affected their perception and sense of responsibility for the issue.

Data processing is based on content analysis that allows a look into the inner experiences of perceptions, actions, feelings, and knowledge. Moreover, it enables a description of the data and the drawing of valid conclusions in their broad context. During the analysis, I read the contents and re-read them while marking the categories that emerged from the interviews (Krippendorff (2004)). In the next stage, I sorted and organized the sections according to categories based on the theoretical framework of this study, namely the impact model of parental involvement [30]. Next, I examined the texts to conclude patterns, relationships, or differences between them.

In this study, I adopted an ethic of concern and justice and maintained the confidentiality of the participants and the place. Before the interview, I provided participants with information about the research and details related to the research objective and data collection methods. Also, all identifying data in the study have been completely removed from any publication. They will be kept confidential and unavailable to anyone other than the researcher. The Ethics Committee approved this study of the Levinsky-Wingate Academic Center. Approval number 2019110701.

3. Finding and Discussion

The research findings revealed the parents' and teachers' points of view in three content categories: (1) Personal motives—parents' points of view: low sense of self-efficacy; teachers' points of view: maintaining a personal relationship with parents. (2) Contextual motives—parents' points of view: teachers as language, society, and culture mediators; teachers' points of view: lack of organizational support. (3) Context variables—parents' points of view: language challenges, limited time and energy resources, educational–social issues; teachers' points of view: communication challenges, feeling of workload and exhaustion, responsibility and professionalism.

3.1. Personal Motives

3.1.1. Parents' Points of View

Low Sense of Self-Efficacy

Parents revealed their perceptions and beliefs about their ability to help their children in the learning process and help them improve their academic achievement:

> It is important for me to know what is going on at school. I ask the child what he learned in school because I think my child's studies are important for me and him [. . .] I have a hard time with that, and I also have a hard time learning the Hebrew language. I want my child to succeed. When the teacher invites us, I come, or my wife comes. It is important to us. The teacher gives information in Hebrew and explains, but I do not always understand Hebrew well. At first, it was difficult. The teacher looks at me and explains, and I do not understand. Now I get along, and I ask the teacher in Hebrew or English. I still cannot help my child with homework (Z).

Migrant parents know that despite the segregated educational setting and their children attending homogenous schools designed exclusively for migrants, school is an important and central place in their lives.

Z. attached great importance to the children's education at school, but his involvement is not reflected in practice. Z's words illustrate the gap between parents' perceptions and ambitions and their abilities. On the one hand, this reveals a positive perception that school is an essential and central place in children's lives and may fulfill the dream that their children will have a better life. His words, "I want my child to succeed", prove that he believes that a good learning process may also affect children's futures in the receiving

society. On the other hand, a parent's ability to be involved depends on the social and economic conditions expressed in the family's education, the student's characteristics, the educational institution's characteristics, and more. Z seems to represent parents of low social status who do not have hegemonic cultural capital and whose ability to be involved is limited [54]. This is because involvement requires considerable financial resources, free time, a good command of the language of instruction, and familiarity with the study content. These parents may have ambitions that will lead children to achievements that enable social mobility among lower-class members of society without changing their intergenerational status.

Similar findings were found in studies that reported that parents' perceptions and aspirations regarding their children's education predict educational achievements and children's educational success [55,56], and among researchers [57,58] who studied parents from minority groups and systematically documented the racial, ethnic, and cultural factors that influence their level of involvement. One of the explanations for these findings is that the limitations of language, transportation, education, and the differences between minority parents and the dominant majority prevent minority parents from being involved, especially in formal activities, and shape a perception that they cannot meet expectations.

3.1.2. Teachers' Points of View

Maintaining Personal Relationships with Parents

Teachers discussed their role and the perception of their ability to maintain relationships with parents:

> As an educational concept, we cannot promote the students' achievements and improve their lives if we do not cooperate with the parents. Many volunteers want to hug the children but do not care for the home systems. I cannot help them with work or getting a visa, but I can keep the parents updated all the time, keep in touch, and invite them for a conversation (F).

From F's point of view, parental involvement is essential for improving student achievement and fostering mental well-being. It is implied that the school's policy and the teachers' actions, such as developing communication channels, giving attention, and maintaining personal contact, may influence parents' decision to be involved and cooperate. It seems that the perception reflected in the words of V is related to the work of López et al. [59], who suggest that teachers believe that the parental involvement of minority families in learning is built through a personal bond of attention and general interest between teachers and parents.

From a critical point of view, teacher F may pre-perceive African parents as having a low status in the social hierarchy, an excluded group, discriminated against, and in need of help with work or bureaucratic matters. That is why feelings of pity and empathy for them arise in her. These are ambivalent feelings that imply superiority and paternalism. An educator who labels a minority group as inferior, even if accompanied by positive feelings, reinforces the positive image of the dominant majority group and perpetuates racial discrimination.

Another example illustrates parental involvement as a negative experience:

> Involved parents do not always promote their children. It very much depends on their culture. They may not help but cause harm. For example, in a conversation with a parent, I said the child does not do homework, and the mother just slapped the child (S).

The mother in S's report wants to promote the child's achievements and success but does not always know how to undertake this effectively. The mother may lack educational resources or knowledge and exposure to the school world. Therefore, the teacher is expected to strengthen the parent's function as a promoter and helper at home. However, the teacher claims that the socio-cultural differences that are also reflected in the norms of behavior are an inhibiting factor. The teacher's words may express discrimination and racism and

confirm the negative stereotype of African asylum seekers. Teacher S speaks in the plural and generalizes about parents from a minority group whose culture is different, as parents who may cause harm to children. That is, she does not treat the mother as an individual and measures her according to her skills and actions, attributing her strict automatic stereotypes of backwardness and primitiveness to her African origin and the color of her skin, all of which reflect dehumanization in Israeli society [60]. Such a situation may make the mother feel unwelcome at school, make her feel insecure, and cause her to lack communication with the teacher, all of which will reduce her involvement.

Studies dealing with parental involvement from minority groups [61] suggest that socio-cultural and political factors may reduce parental involvement. The conflicts between teachers from the majority group and parents from the ethnic minority group reflect differences in power, status, and inequality. Most interactions with parents will involve an attempt by teachers, especially those who are not culturally competent, to impose dominant cultural norms and frameworks of reference.

3.2. Contextual Motives

3.2.1. Parents' Points of View

Teachers as Language, Society, and Culture Mediators

The parents talked about the sincerity of the invitation from the teacher and the personal relationship with the teacher:

> The teacher calls and sends us voice messages in Hebrew and English with smiling pictures so we can understand what she is saying. She invited us to the children's birthday party in class, and we came even though we lost a day's work. The teacher has plans for the parents; for example, I organized the Christmas party in the classroom (G).

The teacher considers the cultural capital the parents may have, their technological ability, and the shared linguistic skills required to communicate with parents. Migrant parents have smartphone access, so most digital communication is via WhatsApp, not email. The communication between the teacher and the parents is one-way and mainly includes reports and pictures from the teacher about what is happening in the classroom or keeping the parents informed about the events that will take place. It seems that digital communication expands opportunities for making connections.

Through the pictures, the teacher tries to make the parents feel partnered and calm while creating a positive atmosphere of accessibility and acceptance. The response and coming to the party indicate that migrant families want a sense of belonging and recognition. It seems that the parents' arrival at the party, despite the economic price—a day's work—is linked to the term "emotional capital", and emphasizes the emotional support of the parents for their children out of a desire to contribute to their well-being and success. Stefansen and Aarseth [62] claim that in order to understand the way in which the emotional dimension becomes a type of capital, one must look closely at the relationship between a parent and a child and examine how digital media affects this relationship, e.g., via the intimacy of sharing what is happening in the classroom, while the teacher assumes the role of a mediator who cultivates these relationships.

Another parent said:

> She patiently explained to me that the child had problems, she took scissors and demonstrated to me what the problem was, why my child could not cut with scissors. I took him to the doctor, I let him practice cutting at home and the teacher also checks how he is progressing. The teacher helps us with other matters, she explains letters we receive from the municipality (K).

African asylum seekers are one of the weakest groups in Israel in that they are excluded from medical services. Many children suffer from significant gaps and delays in learning, and the schools' ability to provide a comprehensive and effective response is limited. In such a reality, the Israeli education system expects the staff to bear educational responsibility and

lead all students to meet the required achievements and standards. Thus, the educational staff at the school initiate actions on their own to find appropriate solutions to learning disabilities, communication problems, developmental delays, and the special needs of children while mediating knowledge to parents [63].

Parent K met face to face with the teacher to respond to the child's personal needs—the difficulty of cutting with scissors. She guides the parent and, at the same time, puts the child in the center and encourages the parents to cooperate and give the child the necessary support. The meeting is described as a personal, intimate, relaxed, and respectful point of contact. In the report, we hear an assumption about a particularly emotional relationship created between K and the teacher. For African parents, the intimate encounter with the teacher is part of the emotional capital they invest in the child's education, advancement, and caring for their needs.

Similar findings were revealed in studies that examined the support and involvement of parents among disadvantaged groups [64], in which it was found that parental involvement is a necessary resource for the growth of a sense of well-being and satisfaction of children, parents, and educational staff [65]. When teachers leverage parents' help, it turns out that involvement becomes a significant resource in academic achievements and even affects the parents' and their children's overall well-being [66].

Another example shows a parent's frustration due to a lack of cooperation and involvement:

> I am sad because my child cannot go to school and study for a month. The teacher did not explain what the child did, she did not even give me a note. I came to school; I waited outside it was very hot. I was prohibited from entering, and no one agreed to talk to me. I also asked the municipality and turned to my friend to help me. Now the child is at school, and no one talks to me (L).

L reveals a frustrating and humiliating situation of a lack of contact and communication between him and the teacher despite his desire to be a partner and understand why the child cannot enter the school. He chose to be active, arrived at the school, stood outside the gate, and waited, but no one agreed to talk to him. It is possible that the words "they did not even give me a note" reveal negative feelings of disrespect, a lack of consideration, or maybe even the teacher's sense of contempt for the parent's ability to understand the situation and help the child. Studies show that interactions of ethnic minority groups with other races may cause anxiety and stress. As an African asylum seeker, L fears that he will not be treated fairly and that his child's case will not be handled properly. He is aware that he may be perceived stereotypically [67,68]. The bureaucratic reality has taught him how to work through the system, so he decided on his own initiative to turn to the municipality for help. It is possible that experience may have taught him that a personal meeting would help him find a solution for the school situation. According to the findings of Adams and Kirova [69], parents exhibit an attitude of being spurned and question teachers' sincerity and work when they perceive teachers' actions as inappropriate, abusive, or condescending. Other studies examining the involvement of migrant parents in schools [70,71] found that parents valued teachers' efforts and cooperated with them, perceiving educators as responsible, authoritative, empathetic, and communicative figures.

3.2.2. Teachers' Points of View

Lack of Organizational Support

Educators talked about their perception of the support and resources they receive at the systemic and school levels to encourage parental involvement. For example, D said:

> It seems to me that the prevailing opinion in the school is that the parents work 24 h a day, so the school administration does not try in the first place. The perception is that we will let the parents be because they are just working hard, and we will take care of the children ourselves. In other words, my school does not support or assist me in promoting and working for parental involvement.

D's perception indicates that the school's policy does not consider parents' background or economic–occupational situation. The school does not trust the parents and has made no effort to share with them or involve them authentically. Furthermore, the school does not consider the heterogeneity of the student population. They do not allow migrant parents to express their opinion to influence their children's education, even if this requires initiative, educational activism, investment of dedicated resources, etc. The words of D illustrate the opposite: how social status affects the relationship between educators and parents to the point of ignoring and postponing the negotiation of their relationship.

School management perceives migrant parents as non-dominant, incompetent, or vulnerable, unable to be partners in their children's education due to economic–existential problems. This creates racial inequality from the moment of migration. The teachers and the school management are aware of the parents' obstacles and mainly emphasize their lack of time due to other commitments, reducing their involvement in advance. This finding is consistent with the claim of Fan, William, and Wolters [72] that teachers limit migrant families' participation due to time and money obstacles or the cultural barriers that parents face. Furthermore, schools seem to reflect an educational policy that advocates white supremacy that subordinates the foreign, non-white minority group to it. As a result, statements about increasing diversity, promoting equality, and reducing disparities are paid lip service. In practice, educators maintain shallow relationships with parents, avoiding action and broader struggles for equality and promoting partnership with parents.

3.3. Context Variables

3.3.1. Parents' Points of View

Language Challenges

In examining the parents' skills and knowledge, we found that language was the main type of knowledge that the parents reported as a barrier to their involvement in school:

> I have a problem: I do not speak Hebrew correctly. I do not have time to go to study. I learned the language from life, from my work. That's why I cannot help my child with homework. My child loses out. When the teacher speaks Hebrew, it is hard for me to understand, that's why I send my wife when there is an invitation from the teacher (B).
>
> Another parent said:
>
> It is impossible to live in Israel without knowing Hebrew. If we need to talk to the teacher or the principal, we need to know Hebrew. It is a tool for life in Israel. Thanks to the fact that I know how to speak Hebrew, I have communication with the teacher and politeness (A).

Both reports show that the school policy represents the hegemonic culture of the dominant and controlling groups in society. The educational staff reveal concepts of these groups, and there is an expectation that the parents will adopt the shared values and act according to them, i.e., know the dominant language and maintain a dialogue using it. School is reflected as a closed setting, unavailable and inaccessible to parents who are not from the dominant group and who probably do not feel comfortable. This concept has implications for the relationships forged between teachers and parents. Here is the place to ask, do children from migrant families enjoy the benefits of parental involvement? It seems not. After all, parents do not benefit from the same accessibility, opportunities, or the same relationships with teachers and schools. They have less knowledge of the local language, less ability to talk with the teachers and contribute to the children's well-being, and less familiarity with the system and the curriculum.

Despite this, migrant parents, an ethnic and low-status minority group, demonstrate knowledge regarding what they are required to do concerning the teachers and school, express great importance to their involvement in their children's education, and try to face the challenges that arise. For example, B asks his wife to meet the teacher because she

speaks Hebrew: "It is hard for me to understand; that is why I send my wife when there is an invitation from the teacher."

A school that fosters suitable conditions for establishing effective relationships may be more successful in encouraging migrant parents' involvement in the school, for example, allowing parents easy, pleasant, and convenient access to the educational staff, using cultural mediators and translators, or expanding their knowledge about the curriculum. In Israel, it is customary in schools that include children whose parents do not speak Hebrew to invite cultural mediators or translators to educational staff meetings with the parents. This is not a permanent solution, but temporary according to the educators' discretion.

This finding is in line with other studies [73,74], which found that linguistic gaps and incompatibility between the culture of the parents and the culture of the school may lead to misunderstanding, to conflicting expectations towards the children, and hence also to issues in maximizing students' potential. Moreover, the cultural–linguistic gap makes it difficult for schools to have an effective relationship with parents from non-dominant groups and has consequences for the attitude of the education system towards the parents and the parents towards the school [75]. Hill and colleagues [12,26] demonstrated a close relationship between the linguistic literacy skills and the social background of parents from minority groups, their involvement in the educational process of their children, and their socio-economic status. They found that meetings between schools and students from different cultural groups could lead to conflict, a lack of understanding, confusion, and chaos.

Limited Time and Energy Resources

Upon examining parents' perceptions of the amount of time and effort they are required to invest in fostering their involvement in school, it was found that all parents, women and men alike, are engaged in constant daily survival, with most working from morning to late evening, living in severe poverty, and having difficulty contacting schools:

> We are tired, we work hard from morning to night. For example, I work 13–14 h every day. After that, I take a bath. I cannot deal with the child; I go to sleep. If you are tired, you are nervous and you do not have the strength to talk to the child and ask about homework (M).

Another parent said:

> I work for hours and very hard. The teacher knows how hard I work. She records my child's reading in class and sends it to me on WhatsApp. So, I hear my child read in Hebrew, and it makes me happy and feel good. I sent her a thank you message on WhatsApp (T).

The parents' words reflect the reality of life: a busy, tiring day of many hours of work and preoccupation with existential problems. It is possible that such a reality does not leave them with the energy, time, or patience to keep in touch with the teachers, keep up to date with what is happening at school, help the children in class, or share experiences with the school. The words "hard" and "tired" that are repeated in the parents' words are laden with negative connotations of Sisyphean, abrasive, and continuous work that consumes all the parents' time and energy.

Moreover, these examples illustrate that even low-income, well-intentioned parents seeking to increase school involvement cannot fulfill teachers' invitations due to daily financial pressures [76].

These findings are consistent with other studies around the world that focused on the labor market of the migrant community [77] and indicated that long working hours are of economic and social importance for migrants; they earn lower wages, and they use their professional skills to a lesser extent [78]. There are marked differences between the migrant population and their non-immigrant counterparts in the same country, and migrants face ethnic discrimination from employers [79].

Educational–Social Challenges

The parents' reports indicate that they are aware of the socio-cultural gap between the educational framework in which they were educated and the schools in Israel attended by their children. Some are willing to learn to bridge the gaps and become better acquainted with the socio-cultural norms accepted in the absorbing society, and others object to school involvement.

Here are examples of avoiding collaboration:

> The teacher asked to take pictures of letters at home with the child. I do not understand why I should sit with him to study. Is that not the teacher's job? (B).

The teacher asked me to bring a cake for the girl's birthday. I brought the cake and went to work quickly. The teacher asked me to stay, but I think the girl is getting along and the teacher will take care of her (A).

The teacher invited me to see my child appear in a play at school. He told me it was important and would make me happy. I do not understand; it's the school's business. I did not come (L).

The reports of the African migrant parents reflect their educational perceptions. Perceptions, expectations, and the division of roles are different: the parents are responsible for the home space, and the teachers, the education experts, are responsible for the school space. This perception can explain their resistance to increasing involvement in school activities: parent meetings, class celebrations, or action in the parents' committee. Another explanation may be that the lack of familiarity with educational policies, difficulty navigating the educational setting, and an awareness of these gaps prevent them from revealing themselves to the teacher and reduce their involvement and cooperation. This may cause teachers to perceive parents as "uninvolved", intensifying distrust, discrimination, and marginalization.

This is not the only case in Israel where a cultural subgroup reveals the belief of a clear separation between the role of teachers and the role of parents. For example, this is also found among new immigrants from France. From a cultural point of view, in France, there is a complete separation between home and school, and they hardly maintain mutual relations on a daily level: the parents send the child to the school gates, and there they are under the authority of their teachers and administrators. This concept is immanently different from the Israeli concept, which is based on the close relationship between the home and the school, the concept of the school as a 'home', and the concept of teachers who maintain a relationship of closeness and belonging with the children.

Here is an example of parents who responded positively to an invitation to cooperate:

> The teacher invited me and talked about the rules in class and explained that my children do not listen or behave appropriately. I always come when the teacher calls. That's why I go to Abugida, where I also learn to be polite and speak quietly (H).

Abugida is an example of a deliberate initiative by the leaders of the African community in Israel to improve the individual and collective abilities of community members to respond effectively to social, economic, and cultural changes that may affect the community's future. Abugida is an informal community–educational organization that operates in the afternoons, where children and adults from African families learn various fields of knowledge such as Hebrew, English, mathematics, heritage, language, and history of the country of origin.

H's words may sense a racist problem on the part of the teacher, indicating a clear preference for the norms of the dominant culture while framing the accepted rules of behavior more positively, so much so that he had to seek help and learn to bridge the gaps. In this report, it is possible to identify assimilation processes manifested in adopting practices derived from the values and norms accepted in the Jewish space and in the desire to succeed in adopting the cultural–behavioral capital of the Jewish space. The parent sharpens the goal, which is to represent an African asylum seeker that does not coincide

with the prejudices about him. This finding may indicate that the school's educational staff probably plays the role of cultural mediator, recognizes differences, and shows tolerance for parents from other ethnic backgrounds, all in order to help them deal with areas of tension and conflict and promote their socio-cultural integration. In practice, it conveys a clear message to parents that the norms of the host society are desired.

Furthermore, I did not find a single example where the parents initiated cooperation. Therefore, the parents seem to perceive the school as a separate and different entity from the home–family framework. They find it challenging to find a connection between how they educate their children at home and the school's educational vision. They feel that their ability to ensure their children's academic well-being is limited. They do not initiate contact with the school but play a passive role and wait for the teacher's initiative to schedule a meeting.

These finding echo those of Rodríguez-Brown [80] and Denessen et al. [81], according to which the involvement of immigrant families in general school activities is low and limited; they tend to seek personal contact with the teacher in the classroom, mainly regarding aspects of behavior, and less for matters of studies and achievements. Furthermore, studies in the field of race and education [82,83] indicate that issues surrounding race are not reflected from the perspective of minority groups in the educational setting. And, it seems that educators who deal with social–racial issues do not have altruistic motives, but aim to promote the interests of the dominant white in Israel.

3.3.2. Teachers' Points of View

Communication Challenges

Here is a teacher's report on a mutual communication system between teachers and parents:

> The truth is it's something personal for me. I am Ethiopian and speak the language of my parents from Eritrea. I talk to them. I started a WhatsApp group, and they respond. Sometimes they bother [me] and try to keep in touch. I send a book home, ask the child to read, and the parents hear the story. We are proud of the children, and it encourages the children (H).

H describes a process of mutual connection. The teacher attributes her success to the fact that they have a common language, which allows her to build trust, bring the parents closer, and share with them what is going on in the classroom and at school, and the parents are indeed interested in it. In addition, she recognizes the importance of parental involvement in the children's learning process, despite using the description of "bothering", knowing that the parents have not mastered the dominant language and are unfamiliar with the ways of learning of the receiving society. Like Ikpeze [84], when it comes to cross-cultural pedagogy, it can be argued that despite her advanced actions, the teacher is not sufficiently aware of the literacy gaps, and that the parents' linguistic ability in Hebrew is low and they may not understand the messages. Hence, her actions can be interpreted as differentiating between the parents and children to the point that the children speak Hebrew fluently and clearly, compared to the parents.

Here is an example of failure in contacting parents:

> I do not know how to contact the parents, because they do not speak Hebrew. Everyone says how important it is, but I have no idea what I should do and what I should say. I am quite confused and sometimes I am afraid of the parents (A).

A has no prior knowledge or other skills for contacting the parents; therefore, there is a disconnect and even feelings of confusion and fear. Diamond and Gomez [33] believe that when parents feel a communication disconnect with the teacher, they become angry, isolated, and critical. The findings demonstrate that teachers' linguistic abilities may increase or decrease the involvement of migrant parents who do not have a good command of the school language. When teachers do not speak the language of the parents, they are overwhelmed by feelings of confusion and helplessness, which may cause a disconnect

between the parents and the teacher due to language barriers. From a critical point of view, discrimination based on origin or skin color is a reality and might prevent contact and communication. Studies show that educators with racist ethnic beliefs and attitudes will express different conscious and unconscious behaviors toward children from ethnic groups [85], especially those with dark skin color, because black individuals are perceived in dehumanized ways as threatening and less in need of protection [86,87].

A Feeling of Workload and Exhaustion

> It's important for me to get in touch with the parents, but I need to invest a lot of time and energy in encouraging their involvement. They are busy, and I do not always have time. This is a complex reality (B).

> To get parents to cooperate requires a lot of strength and I feel exhausted. I have a feeling they do not understand how much work needs to be done to mobilize the parents. Sometimes, this is an impossible task (N).

Both examples show that teachers are aware of the importance of encouraging parental involvement; however, they say this task takes up valuable time, so they often refrain from acting to establish trust and strengthen the relationship. It is not an easy process, they say, and the reality of poverty, family instability, and the long working hours of parents make the process difficult. It is possible that there is a hidden layer of prejudice towards African parents as non-collaborators, with the stereotypical belief that they place work rather than the educational process of their children at the top of their priorities, and therefore it is difficult to increase their involvement in the school space.

N's words "lots of energy", "exhausted", and "impossible task" indicate the difficulties she is required to deal with in mobilizing parents to get involved in the education of their children. N even adds her future perception that she does not believe they can cooperate and that the end is known in advance as an "impossible task", despite her efforts. B's and N's perceptions are in line with the findings of Walker-Dalhous and Dalhouse [88], i.e., that parents will be perceived as unable to be involved in their children's education. The patronizing policy reflected in the teachers' reports has far-reaching consequences for the sense of legitimacy and belonging of students from disadvantaged groups, which makes them believe that they are not equal, their talent is not expressed [89], and the personal–family context is separate from the classroom.

Responsibility and Professionalism

School culture influences teachers' perceptions of responsibility in fostering and supporting parental involvement:

> At school it is accepted that the responsibility lies with the educator, the parents should feel that I go the whole nine yards. It is important to me that they trust me, that there is trust between us. I tell them that I will not offer them anything I would not offer my child (A).

A school's perception of the role of educators as responsible for making contact and maintaining it with parents affects the educators. These schools show responsibility, and welcome and recognize the unique needs of the migrant parents. Such a perception seems to be the key to parents becoming part of the school. Findings indicate that teachers work to recruit parents for school involvement from a paternalistic point of view towards asylum seeker's families because they avoid deliberately and consciously referring to the cultural assets of the family as a significant part of the education of children [90].

Moreover, teachers attest to their choice to be supportive, mentoring, listening, and caring educators while filling in gaps that children lack in their parents' homes. Thus, teachers also serve as mothers or social workers for these children [91]. The teachers' words demonstrate that factors that depend on the school culture may influence the degree of their motivation and responsibility for promoting parental involvement. The teachers' actions are carried out within the school to promote the children's achievements. Notably,

this study did not find that parents requested any action beyond the school walls, such as home visits, to encourage parental involvement. Studies [92,93] have shown that a proactive approach to contacting families and understanding their background, heritage, and migration experiences can facilitate the integration of children in the classroom.

4. Summary

Education policymakers, school administrators, and educators worldwide are becoming more aware of the importance of strengthening the collaboration between educators and migrant parents and encouraging a dialogue that meets the needs of teachers, parents, and children. The education systems in Israel and many other countries fundamentally have a lot of social and cultural diversity. Therefore, it is necessary to consider this diversity in the relationship between schools and parents. This study voices the personal voices of immigrant educators and parents. It reveals thoughts, experiences, interpretations, and beliefs regarding parental involvement in multicultural, ethnic, religious, national, and multicultural educational settings.

Research findings prove that cultural gaps, communication difficulties, and parents' lack of knowledge about their rights and duties may lead to tension and conflicts with schools, and teachers perceiving the families as uninvolved or problematic. The tension is mutual: On the one hand, some parents sometimes feel discrimination, a lack of appreciation, understanding, and mistrust, and as a result, they feel excluded from their children's education. These feelings make it difficult for them to be involved in school. On the other hand, some teachers fail to bridge the gap between school and home culture and do not try to get to know the parents and their heritage better. These teachers are captive to hegemonic concepts that make it difficult to invite parents to cooperate. The distance and sometimes the disconnection of parents from school are likely harmful to children from migrant families, mainly because, for them, success in school is the primary channel that will enable them to move socially in the future.

Teachers' worldviews seem to differ from parents' views, but sometimes they include overlapping elements. Both parties report an inclination and desire to be involved; however, this tendency depends on the context between the parent and the educator, the sincerity of the actions, and direct and personal proactive efforts [92,93], and also in the efforts invested in dealing with emotional, social, and cultural challenges and difficulties such as language barriers, long working hours, differences in educational concepts, and more.

The findings related to parents' motivations to be involved indicate that, on the one hand, they hold the perception and belief that school is an essential and central place that may shape their children's futures and influence them positively. On the other hand, challenges, difficulties, and weaknesses are revealed: a low sense of ability, language limitations, frustration with humiliating living conditions, and general ignorance of the receiving society's education system. All make parents doubt their ability to be involved and oblige them to leave the responsibility for their children's learning process to professional educators from the dominant majority group. Studies on the involvement of migrant and asylum-seeker families in the schools that their children attend have found that most families are not knowledgeable about the education policies of the host country [93] and are aware of the socio-cultural gaps. Therefore, they will avoid exposure to the school staff issues related to family and community life, reducing their involvement.

It was also found that the most significant factor affecting parental motivation is the teacher's initiative in establishing contact and school norms that support parental involvement. Thanks to the opportunity for direct communication, the parents become more involved; they trust the educators, consult them, face the challenge, and cooperate. Involved parents have enriched their knowledge and understanding of what children need to know and are required to do in school. They acquire new knowledge about education policies, educational programs, and behavioral norms in the receiving society. They assist in their children's academic and social progress and in promoting the school's goals [30].

However, it is essential to emphasize that in educational settings that promote parents' involvement while emphasizing personal relationships, they do not reduce the responsibility of the parents for the children and their educational process. Parents are also expected to invest efforts and time resources and foster the relationship with the school. There must be effort on both sides: the educational staff and the parents must internalize and adopt the educational concepts and the common goals of the student's well-being and success in their studies.

Findings related to teachers' motivations reveal diverse perceptions: some teachers reported the importance of parental involvement and solid and reliable personal relationships of trust, despite the precious time this task consumes. These teachers managed to make the parents feel welcome and strengthened their authority. On the other hand, it became clear that some teachers show concerns about parental involvement because of the conflicts that destabilize and introduce great uncertainty to their work. These teachers even claimed that parental involvement could harm the learning process. In their opinion, teachers are the only experts in children's education. As a result, the parents feel silenced, weakened, and unwanted, and do not cooperate. This accords with Putnam's claim [94] that educators believe they are the only ones who determine education and are not interested in the involvement of any play on "Bowling Alone". Such perceptions reflect power, status, and inequality differences, and complicate integrating migrants.

From the global perspective of a world characterized by migration processes laden with anxieties about strangers, expressions of violence, and feelings of alienation, educators are required to understand that their teaching activities and interactions with students occur in a family–cultural context and are not neutral or accidental.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of expanding the educational dialogue so that, in the training process, education students will conduct a direct dialogue with parents from minority groups and with other social–educational activists in their communities. These encounters will expose students to socio-cultural knowledge, help them develop an understanding and empathy for the plight of these families, and help them formulate skills for conducting a collaborative discourse that avoids expressions of racism, exclusion, and power.

In other words, a deeper layer of history and cultural capital is revealed through a direct and authentic dialogue between children and parents. Teachers who encourage parental involvement and meet with them can expand their global knowledge of home culture. These teachers succeed in encouraging parents who belong to marginalized minority groups. They take a less paternalistic approach and can also understand the student's inner world. They can adapt, change, and invent differential pedagogic methods appropriate to their students' cultural and linguistic differences, and give students an opportunity for progress that does not depend on race, nationality, or skin color.

Such a training process will shape future educators' perceptions so that parental involvement in school is viewed as an essential and central strategy for improving teaching–learning processes and will enable them to respond personally to immigrant parents from different cultures who do not recognize their involvement as a significant factor in promoting achievement and social integration.

Moreover, studies on parental involvement [24,26,44,45,95] show that increased parental involvement is positively associated with improved quality of teaching and with enhanced children's achievements, self-image, learning motivations, and a reduction in discipline problems.

Creating a collaborative learning environment will allow for an open dialogue about family tradition, heritage, history, and life experience without fear of paternalism. It will enhance the parents' sense of ability and thus strengthen their involvement, promote children academically and socially, and reduce the gap between home and school.

This article sheds new light on the involvement of parents from a minority group of African asylum seekers in Israel. The main limitation of the study is that the study was contextual within Israeli society and culture, which is characterized as a relatively closed

national religious group. Also, the research was conducted in the center of the State of Israel with a small number of participants. Therefore, there is a limitation in generalizing the findings to other areas, such as peripheral social, cultural, religious, or other political areas.

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