A Case Study of the Caregiver Digital Literacy Self-Efficacy During Distance Learning

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ABSTRACT

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, distance learning became popularized throughout the country as various schools were forced to transition to an online platform unexpectedly. This case study explored caregivers' digital literacy self-efficacy and its connection to their academic involvement to primary grade students during distance learning in a public elementary school in the California's Inland Empire. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions conducted either in person or through Zoom. This study revealed that digital literacy self-efficacy of caregivers did not negatively affect the involvement they had in their students' distance learning. There was also an increase in involvement no matter the computer comfortability of the caregiver and the challenges they faced throughout distance learning. The results of the study help inform district and school personnel on how to provide clear communication to caregivers and offer training for digital tools used throughout distance learning. Additionally, it guides districts on how taking the time to plan and create structure can provide caregivers a sense of comfortability knowing schools have a plan in place.

Keywords: distance learning, COVID-19 pandemic, digital literacy self-efficacy, caregivers involvement

Distance learning is a method of teaching that allows students and teachers to communicate using technology (Saykili, 2018). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, distance learning became popularized throughout the country as various schools were forced to transition to an online platform unexpectedly (Dong et al., 2020). Understanding technology and successfully using it in an academic setting has become more evident because of distance learning (Schneider & Council, 2020). While research has been conducted concerning distance learning, one area of focus is caregivers' digital literacy and how it effects their ability to participate in their child's academic lessons and activities effectively (McDougall et al., 2018). In this study, a caregiver describes the parent, guardian, or person who assists and supports the student academically during distance learning.

Distance learning encompasses digital technology, which brings about the need for digital literacy skills. Caregiver digital literacy is important because of the impact caregiver school involvement has on the student's education. According to Glister (1997), digital literacy is the ability to understand and use information from multiple digital devices. This study addresses the basic digital skills and attitudes used to determine the digital literacy of caregivers. These basic skills include turning the computer on or off, restarting the computer, using word processing, retrieving information, downloading resources, and using videoconferencing communications platforms (Zhong, 2011). In a traditional academic setting, caregiver involvement in pre-K–fifth grade positively impacts the child's education in relation to increased academic achievement in various subjects and in-class behaviors (Anderson & Minke, 2007). By changing the instructional practice from an in-person to online platform, caregivers saw a different form of involvement with the increase of email communication and class websites (Alexiou-Ray et al., 2008). If caregivers have lower digital literacy skills, they will be limited in the support they can provide their child and develop a feeling of incompetence (Hiefield, 2020). To understand

this issue, this study examined caregivers' self-efficacy on their digital literacy skills and how it can influence their involvement in their student's education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Distance Learning

Distance learning can be defined as education that takes place when the teacher and student are separated by a physical distance (Harting & Erthal, 2005). One of the first documented examples of distance learning took place in 1728 when a man named Caleb Phillips used the postal service as a form of distance learning by mailing lessons to his students (Harting & Erthal, 2005). In the 1990s, when the internet was established, the first online course was offered and delivered as a form of distance learning (Harting & Erthal, 2005). The most modern form of distance learning uses communication and information technology that has been so successful that many institutions, organizations, and corporations have used it as an educational setting all around the world (Demiray, 2003).

There are two types of distance learning methodologies being used in modern day distance education. The first type is synchronous learning, which involves the teacher and student communicating with each other live using telecommunications (Ogbonna et al., 2019). Some examples of synchronous learning include videoconferencing, audioconferencing, or virtual classrooms (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States [FAO], 2021). The other type of distance learning method is asynchronous learning. In asynchronous learning, the instructor provides the necessary materials to participants and allows them to complete the course at their own pace (Ogbonna et al., 2019). In this method of instruction, students or participants are more independent and can access materials at any time. Examples of asynchronous learning include online discussion boards, email, recorded videos/presentations, and assignments.

COVID-19 School Closures

In January 2020, the COVID-19 virus was identified in the United States, and by March 2020, governors and state health officials enacted policies to help slow down the spread of the virus by closing schools, nonessential businesses, restaurants and bars, and gatherings of more than 10 people (Auger et al., 2020). At the height of the pandemic in 2020, about 1.6 billion learners were affected by school closures globally, and over 190 countries experienced closures collectively (UNESCO, 2021). In the United States alone, school closures lasted over 70 weeks (UNESCO, 2022). In order to continue providing instruction to students, schools offered various forms of distance learning to fulfill district mandates for teaching and learning (Hoang et al., 2020). The pandemic caused the closure of schools, which impacted students, teachers, caregivers, and others involved in education in various ways.

The COVID-19 school closures caused many caregivers to feel overwhelmed by suddenly transitioning to distance learning, and a significant issue they experienced was the balance of responsibilities (Garbe et al., 2020). School closures forced caregivers to find an equilibrium between providing financial security, keeping their families safe and healthy, and staying involved in their student's education (Adams & Todd, 2020). In addition, the form in which they supported their students in their education and academic success was impacted because they had to provide extra time and attention to assist them in distance learning (Putri et al., 2020). This was especially difficult for caregivers working from home because their workplaces closed due to the pandemic. Putri et al. (2020) found that caregivers of children in primary grades had a more difficult time assisting their students in online learning, such as troubleshooting the device for minor issues, especially when the caregivers themselves were technologically challenged. This was largely because it tested their digital literacy skills and ability to support their children in their online education.

Digital Literacies and Technologies

The use of technology is prominent in people's day-to-day lives, and digital literacy holds a significant role in understanding how to use technology effectively and efficiently. Digital literacy is a person's knowledge and ability to use digital technology and perform tasks effectively in an academic and digital environment (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2006). Digital literacy solely exists because of the creation of digital technologies, and as a result, online education has become more accessible for learners (Yu & Hu, 2016).

Analyzing caregivers' digital literacy is important because their skills can impact how they support their children in their distance learning education. Romero (2014) stated that caregivers are aware of the need for digital literacy skills; however, they are unsure how to approach the situation and feel overwhelmed with the idea of taking the lead on making

rules and monitoring what their children do while using technological devices. Furthermore, Verbist (2015) believed that although caregivers have the responsibility to teach their children how to use technology and media appropriately, they need to be trained on how to support their children at home. They also have the responsibility to work closely with their children to make sure they complete their assignments and submit them (O'Hanlon, 2012). A caregiver holds a major role and responsibility in their student's education because of the effects it can have in their student's learning outcomes.

A caregiver holds a major role and responsibility in their student's education because of the effects it can have in their student's learning outcomes. A study by McDougall et al. (2018) found a disconnect between the school's curriculum and the use of technology at home. Caregivers reported that their child would be given assignments, and the caregiver would often have to look online to understand what their child needed to do, and they often expressed difficulty completing that task (McDougall et al., 2018). There is a necessity for digital literacy training for parents and caregivers. Disney et al. (2017) reiterated the need for schools involving caregivers in their student's distance learning education by expressing how essential the communication between home and school is to enhance the student's digital literacy skills. By doing this, caregivers can increase the learning potential, thus allowing students to become digitally literate (Disney et al., 2017). Therefore, a connection needs to be made between caregivers and the school to be able to support the needs of the students. Digital literacy in caregivers, along with computer training, is vital in helping caregivers develop an understanding of technology and how to use it for learning.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura (1977) proposed the self-efficacy theory as an individual's perceived ability to execute and perform certain tasks successfully. The outcome of these tasks, whether successful or not, can be influenced by people's efficacy or beliefs on how they perform these tasks (Bandura, 1977). For example, if individuals have doubts in their abilities or skill level, it can affect the way they cope or react in certain situations (Bandura, 1977).

In addition, Bandura (1997) stated that people's beliefs in their own capabilities and skills towards a designated task can influence their motivations, behaviors, and ways they complete a task. Individuals' beliefs in their capabilities can also be influenced by their personal agency or the sense in which they have control over their own life (Bandura, 2006). The unexpectedness of school closures because of COVID-19 and the sudden transition to distance learning can be seen as a factor of lowered personal agency caused by people's sense of no control over the situation. In addition, the physiological and affective states of individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic may have changed because of increased stressors. These may have an impact on the digital literacy self-efficacy of caregivers.

METHODS

Qualitative research can be described as the "collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest" (Mills & Gay, 2019, p. 7). The qualitative case study research methodology was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to describe the caregivers' digital literacy self-efficacy and its influence on their participation in their student's distance-learning education.

Sample and Data Collection

The sample studied consisted of 10 caregivers of primary grade students enrolled at a Title 1 elementary school in California's Inland Empire. Purposeful sampling was utilized to allow the researcher to select participants who would provide relevant information regarding the purpose of the research and answer the research questions (Patton, 1990).

It was necessary that participants had students enrolled in the study site to honor the characteristic of a single-case study of a bounded place. In addition, caregivers and students must have participated in distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020–2021 school year. It was also necessary that the caregiver was physically present with the student while they were completing their distance-learning education because the study focused on how the caregivers' digital literacy self-efficacy influenced their involvement in their child's education. Last, a prescreening process occurred so the researcher could choose participants who identified themselves as being *familiar*, *unfamiliar*, or *little familiar* with computers. The potential participants filled out an interest form with a few screening questions, one of them asking how familiar they were with computers.

Data were collected from a sample of 10 caregivers of primary grade students in a Title 1 elementary school in the Inland Empire. The researcher created a flyer that was sent to teachers and then passed out to students to give to their caregivers. The flyer introduced the study and outlined the criteria for participation. The possible participants had to fill out

an online interest form using a quick response (QR) code and answer screening questions to be considered and selected. The researcher selected 13 participants and sent them emails to set up an appointment to discuss the study in more depth and the interview process. Ten of the thirteen caregivers responded with a willingness to participate. Once the ten participants were confirmed, interviews were scheduled for an agreed time and date. The interview took up to one hour and occurred between the researcher and the participant at an agreed-upon location. The interviews were face-to-face or through Zoom. The researcher took field notes and recorded the interview with a voice recording app on a smartphone.

Data Analysis

For this study, the researcher used Creswell's (2012) six-step process for analyzing and interpreting qualitative data for the data analysis process. The six steps are detailed below.

> *Step 1:* Preparing and organizing the data, the researcher reviewed the field notes and audio recordings and transcribed the interviews to engage with the data and refresh her memory from the interviews.
> *Step 2:* Exploring and coding the database, the researcher ensured she read through the data and began finding themes within the interviews and transcriptions.
> *Step 3:* Describing findings and forming themes, the researcher analyzed the themes and began highlighting key phrases from the transcriptions that were common among the participants. This step solidified the themes.
> *Step 4:* Representing and reporting findings, the researcher began categorizing the themes from the participants. The researcher also used axial coding to reveal themes that were related to the research.
> *Step 5:* Interpreting the meaning of the findings, the researcher described the themes in depth and created a narrative.
> *Step 6:* Validating the accuracy of the findings, the researcher interpreted the data, drew conclusions, and described the meaning of the results.

FINDINGS

This study explored caregivers' digital literacy self-efficacy and its connection to their academic involvement with their students during distance learning. The data analysis and coding process brought out several themes that connected to the research questions related to this study. Table 1 shows the four research questions, interview questions, and the themes generated from the 10 interviews.

Prior Experience and Comfortability

Six of the 10 participants stated that their prior experience using digital technologies allowed them to feel comfortable troubleshooting their own devices and using basic software or apps on their devices. This finding was consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy research because he stated that "efficacy beliefs are both products and constructors of experiences" (p. 82). For example, one participant said, "I would say I'm pretty comfortable [with using computers] just because I used to use computers back at my old job, and we would try to figure it out ourselves before calling IT."

Another participant highlighted the same sentiments by stating how comfortable she was with resolving issues on her digital devices:

> I feel like I'm pretty comfortable fixing stuff on either of the devices. Just cause I use it for work and when I was in college also and all that stuff, writing papers. And, so I'd say pretty good with computers.

New Technology and Uncertainty

Four of the ten participants mentioned that the implementation of new technology made them uncomfortable and unsure about how to use and fix it. Bandura (1986) stated that efficacy beliefs are impacted based on task difficulty and the current skills the individual has. One participant said this about her uncertainty with fixing digital devices because of her inexperience with the school-given laptops:

> I had little-to-no experience with computers growing up. I barely, and I say barely being 5, 6, years ago [laughs] but I barely got a smartphone and I still don't feel very comfortable using it. My kids can use it better than me; they're the ones who know how to facetime and call their cousins, but for me it's still hard. Once the kids got their computers for school it was hard for me to help them. I sat with him while he was in his classes, but I was right there learning with him. It was hard, really hard. I wouldn't say I'm great with computers or even good. I try.

Table 1

Organization of Research and Interview Questions and Corresponding Themes

Research question	Interview question	Theme	# of Participants
1. How do caregivers of primary grade students self-assess their digital literacy?	What devices do you own at home (i.e., laptops, phones, computers, tablets) and what do you mainly use them for? How comfortable are you with fixing devices if something goes wrong? Do you think you're good with computers?	Prior experience and comfortability New technology and uncertainty	6 of 10 4 of 10
2. What are the changes with caregiver involvement prior to COVID and post-COVID?	How involved were you in your student's learning before COVID when students were in-person? How involved were you in your student's learning during COVID and distance learning?	Increased involvement Forced lifestyle changes	10 of 10 4 of 10
3. How do caregivers perceive the impact of digital literacy self-efficacy on their involvement in their student's online education?	Do you think your computer skills effected the way you helped your student during distance learning? If this were to happen again, what would you do differently?	More skills, easier time Stepping up to the challenge	6 of 10 4 of 10
4. What supporting strategies are needed by caregivers during distance learning?	What help did you receive from the teachers, school, or district when you went through distance learning during COVID? If this were to happen again, what do you think the district, school, or teacher could have done differently to better support you? What outside sources could have better supported you during this time?	Communication Training and tools Community network Teacher preparation	6 of 10 6 of 10 3 of 10 2 of 10

Increased Involvement

All 10 participants expressed that they experienced an increased involvement when their students transitioned to distance learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant provided examples of how she was involved with her student's distance learning:

> A hundred percent [involved]. Setting up, turning it, turning on the laptop, getting him ready, feeding him before, and making sure that internet was working. Cause at times had, especially when it was really windy, we had our power would go off and that was a struggle. So that's how involved I was. And then during his breaks, making sure that he would finish his work to start his next lecture.

Another participant explained how her involvement included setting up baby monitors to watch her children while they worked and making sure they were on task and paying attention to their class sessions:

> I think I was really involved during distance learning. At the beginning it was a little difficult because the kids weren't too fluent with the devices, so I had to make sure I was there. Being techie, I set up cameras in both of their rooms, like the baby monitors. So, I used the monitor at my desk in my office, and I could toggle between each kid's room so I can hear. And then sometimes I could hear the teacher trying to get their attention so then I would run out and go correct whatever they were doing. Yeah, that's pretty much it. I'm like, oh wow, now I'm really remembering. Those days, they were tense.

Forced Lifestyle Changes

Four of the ten participants experienced lifestyle changes that were brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition to distance learning caused challenges to these families, which forced them to make changes to their work, home, or personal lives. One of the work changes was adapting their work schedule to be able to assist their students with their classes and logging them into their distance-learning sessions. Home changes involved their families and working or completing school from home, which made it difficult for everyone to work in a single enclosed space. One of the caregivers illustrated a change in their personal lives:

> I had to quit my job to be a hundred percent with them at the house. Every single task that they needed to have done. I was a dental assistant, and we still had to work because people still needed the dentist. But I was getting calls from my kids or my parents every 10 to 15 minutes. It was stressful. I knew I couldn't be at work with this happening. It was hard.

More Skills, Easier Time

Six of the ten participants believed their adequate computer skills and digital literacy allowed them to have an easier time navigating and helping their student participate in distance learning. This theme aligned with Bandura's (1997) belief that the higher sense of self-efficacy of some individuals allows them to anticipate and construct success scenarios that are used as positive guides for their behaviors and performance. The participants mentioned that if they did not have their current skills, they would have had a more difficult time. One participant mentioned,

> Yes, because, if, for example, if he needed to mute his mic, I was by his side to say, okay, push that button or unmute your mic, push this button. Whereas, because I was sitting next to him, I would see other parents in the camera view, and sometimes they didn't know they're in the camera view, cause I'm assuming they didn't know any better. Or the teacher at the time would explain to the parent how to let's say, mute their mic, for example. And if the parent couldn't do it, she would do it for them. So I don't think I need it as much assistance as other parents who are not comfortable with the technology.

Stepping Up to the Challenge

The next theme that developed was caregivers' ability to step up to the challenge. This theme was generated based on caregivers' ability to overcome the challenges of distance learning and be involved in their student's education, regardless of their digital literacy levels. Four of the ten participants indicated that they were learning alongside their students and that this was a learning experience for them as well. Participants adapted to an existing reality that was out of their control, and they tried to make the best of the situation, which lessoned their negative emotional impacts or feelings of defeat (Bandura, 1997). For example, one participant stated,

> I don't think my skills had an effect; I mean I had a tough time learning how to use the school's computers. But, like, I sat with my kids every day and picked up whatever I could. The teacher was really good at teaching us how to use the different features of Teams. My skills might not have been the best, but I was present and the main thing was making sure my kids were learning. That's all I cared about.

Communication

The theme of communication emerged from six of the ten participants. Communication is referred to as the contact between caregivers and the district, school, and teacher. Many of the participants reported that they would have liked more communication from the teacher to ensure that as caregivers, they were supporting their students in the correct way. They also wanted more communication on the progress of their student to make sure they were not falling behind on the coursework and curriculum. For example, when asked what support they would have liked, one participant reported,

The school, I do wish the school was a little bit more involved in kind of reaching out more early on to the parents as to, I know they did the surveys, but it was kind of after the fact, how it went and stuff. But if they did it earlier, they would have known what help we needed at that moment, not after.

An additional participant described that she was unaware of any school updates, and the teacher similarly added little input into the situation and progress of the student:

I think we as parents, we didn't know what really was going on with the school. We didn't know anything. I mean, we also had not much input from the teacher. With assignments, I organized everything for him to review after. And we received the papers, completed them, and that was it. We just had no, no feedback.

Training and Tools

Six of the ten participants reported that they would have liked more support and training regarding the programs being used during distance learning. The participants believed that the school or district could have provided training on how to use the digital tools needed for distance learning to ease the transition and make the experience easier for the students and for themselves. For example, one participant said,

I wish we had more training on the things we were supposed to be using. I feel like they expected us to know how to work everything. All of a sudden the school was like, here's your computer, you start in two days, good luck. Like, c'mon.

In addition, one participant described the need for training to ease the transition to distance learning:

It would have been nice if we were taught beforehand how to use everything. The teacher taught us how to use the different programs, but it would have been nice if the school or something showed us before school actually started. Like, it was hard enough being in a pandemic. If they just provided some type of like training, it would have made things a bit easier.

Community Network

Three of the ten participants mentioned they would have liked a caregiver support group to communicate with during distance learning to make their experiences slightly easier. Some of the participants stated that they felt isolated throughout this whole process, especially when a stay-at-home order was issued during the COVID-19 pandemic. They described the need for a community network that allowed them to share their experiences with other caregivers, ask for help or questions, and give advice to others. One participant reflected,

It would've been nice to have a network or a resource of the other parents within the class to have an open communication. Like, hey, my student this, what about yours? Or just having that interaction, because I know in person, especially parents that get to pick up or drop off their students regularly, they get to know the parents while we wait in lines. We chitchat like that. So that disconnect happened when it turned into distance learning. So that would've been nice to have had like, here parents, here's a group chat for the parents to help each other through all of it. And we maybe could problem solve together for issues that would just arise throughout the pandemic.

Teacher Preparation

Two of the ten participants believed that the limited digital and technology skills of the teachers made the experience of distance learning more difficult. The participants explained that the teachers did not seem prepared for distance learning or how to use the digital technology adequately. They believed the lack of digital skills of the teachers made the learning experience less enjoyable for the students and harder for the caregivers to navigate. For example, a participant stated,

You have a teacher that could be teaching for 15 plus years and never had to teach on a computer and now we're telling them, well you gotta teach on a computer. I understand that it's a big thing. So again, it was really tough cause I feel like the teacher was not very tech savvy. And again, we're having 15 small children and then a teacher trying to figure out how to work it, which made it really, really, hard.

DISCUSSION

Caregivers at this school site noted that their prior experience allowed them to feel comfortable using technology. This sense of digital literacy self-efficacy stemmed from their prior experience, which came from previous usage of digital tools at their work or their schooling. Caregivers who rated themselves as familiar with computers stated they were comfortable using computers and fixing technical issues. This aligned with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which states that efficacy is constructed based on prior experiences. Similarly, in addition to experience, efficacy is also constructed based on task difficulty (Bandura, 1986). For example, caregivers who were faced with the new technology and digital tools during

distance learning felt uncomfortable and had a sense of uncertainty. Ultimately, the way caregivers assessed their digital literacy self-efficacy was mainly influenced by their previous experiences and task difficulty.

Collectively, the participants of this study noted that they had an increase in involvement in distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic despite any technological limitations or challenges they faced. Participants stated they became 100% involved as students were learning from home. All the participants worked from home or were stay-at-home parents; therefore, they were present during distance learning. Their involvement significantly increased because they were physically present, assisting their students with logging into class sessions and completing their work. Along with the increased involvement, some participants faced significant changes in their lives, such as quitting their jobs to become stay-at-home parents or making special arrangements with their work to assist their students. The changes that occurred are examples of growth in the participation of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study participants with more digital literacy self-efficacy reported that they had an easier time participating in their student's online education. This finding was consistent with Bandura's (1997) belief that their higher sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their digital literacy allowed them to have a more positive attitude toward their performance in distance learning. On the other hand, the participants who reported little or no familiarity with computers and had a lower sense of digital literacy self-efficacy saw distance learning as a challenge and decided to rise to the challenge. These findings are explicitly tied to Bandura's (1997) research on self-efficacy, which states that individuals who adapt to situations that are out of their control and believe that talent is acquirable are more motivated to accomplish a task. So, despite the digital literacy self-efficacy of the participants, caregivers did not allow their skills to impact their academic involvement negatively.

Each of the 10 participants stated at least one way district or school personnel could have better supported them during distance learning. One of the supporting strategies caregivers would have liked to receive was increased communication between the district, school, and teacher. They would like to have been better informed about the COVID-19 situation, their student's progress, and the quality of their involvement. Also, the participants specified they needed training on the digital tools used throughout distance learning as well as technology support. Another form of support that could have improved their distance-learning experience was a community network that involved other caregivers. This would have allowed caregivers to communicate with one another, ask each other questions, and support each other throughout this difficult time. Lastly, some participants shared the need for teacher preparation. They explained that some teachers were not comfortable with technology and were not digitally literate, making it more difficult for caregivers to be involved. The lack of district and school personnel support generated a need for caregivers to receive these supporting strategies.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Caregivers were impacted in various ways and were overwhelmed with the balance of new responsibilities (Garbe et al., 2020). Distance learning caused an increase in involvement for caregivers, and they expressed their need for support during that time. District and school personnel can better support caregivers by being transparent with information and providing clear communication. The transparency will allow caregivers to feel better informed and more comfortable about the situation. This finding is related to Victor and Miller's (2021) idea that creating two-way communication channels and instant messaging platforms, along with offering office hours, can engage caregivers to participate and become more involved in their student's distance learning.

There were various digital technologies that were used throughout the participants' distance learning experience, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, virtual classrooms, recorded videos, and online programs. In addition, because six participants stated they would have liked more training on the digital tools and programs used during distance learning, it is evident there is a need for an adaptation of training for caregivers. This training can include how to use the online platform, what applications students would be using, and how to fix minor technical issues. By enhancing caregivers' digital literacy skills, the learning potential for students can be increased to become more digitally literate (Disney et al., 2017). Many minor issues can be eliminated by providing basic training to caregivers and increasing their confidence in their digital literacy self-efficacy.

Moreover, the district and school personnel are encouraged to provide more structure to the implementation of distance learning. With the sudden onset of distance learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was difficult for districts to create a plan, but using that as a learning experience, and based on the study's findings, creating a clear structure for schools and teachers can assist in the delivery of distance learning. By having school districts provide structure to their schools and teachers, the teachers can provide better structure to caregivers and students. Panigrahi et al. (2018) stated that the design of content and experience for online learning should be carefully considered for positive learning outcomes. If school

personnel take the time to create a plan and inform caregivers of the plan, it will have a better effect and give caregivers a sense of comfortability knowing that the schools have a handle on the situation.

Additionally, teacher preparation should be practiced by the district to enable teachers to be equipped to plan and execute lessons via distance learning. Bulfin et al. (2016) believed that teachers' digital literacy influences their confidence in using various digital technologies. If teachers do not have the adequate digital skills to begin with, then their skills set them back on their ability to effectively teach during distance learning. The caregivers in the study had a difficult experience with their involvement in distance learning because they felt that the teacher was not prepared. Providing adequate training to teachers on how to use the district's digital tools would educate them on the best practices for teaching distance learning to provide adequate support to caregivers.

Finally, it is beneficial for district and school personnel to understand caregivers' needs and struggles during distance learning to improve relationships with them. School districts should engage and communicate with families in a "proactive, accessible, and ongoing planning, implementation, and continuous improvement process" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., para. 15) to give caregivers the information and resources necessary to support their student's learning. In addition, because school districts experienced the strong impact that COVID-19 had on education and learning, they can use their new knowledge to create a risk management plan to deal with emergencies similar to COVID-19 that force schools to teach through distance learning. The risk management plan can include a risk analysis and treatment, which would include how the school district responds to the risk. Not only would school districts have to create this plan, but they also would properly introduce the plan to school administrators, teachers, caregivers, and other persons directly affected by the risk. By creating a detailed plan, they can be better prepared for future emergencies directly impacting student learning.

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