



Perspectives of Parents on Homeschooling in Pakistan: Motivations, Challenges and Long-Term Impacts

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study focuses on the participation experiences of parents homeschooling in Pakistan, their motivations, challenges faced by them in this process, and management strategies regarding home education. A qualitative research design was used, and the data were gathered using semi-structured interviews with ten homeschooling parents selected through purposive sampling (to fit with different perspectives). Thematic analysis was utilized to find general patterns across homeschooling experiences following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The data revealed three types of engaging with homeschooling based on how long they had been homeschooling: The Newcomer, The Average Joe, and The Lifers, showing the sense of growing confidence and strategies that new families feel as they get going. The research also highlighted three significant barriers: social isolation, availability of quality education and extracurricular activities, and time/resource management. Even with these challenges, homeschooling parents said it had benefits like individualized education, flexibility and strong parent-child connections. During this time, digital solutions, like YouTube, Khan Academy and other online learning platforms were necessary to assist learning and fill the gap, though worries about screen time excess and reliance on technology were also raised. This research contributes to literature on the important role of home educating attendees in reconciling their understanding of home education with the need for equitable opportunities for those families who do wish to home educate. Following studies should investigate the academic, social and career successes of homeschooled children, to make sure that they are actually able to transition into higher education and the working world smoothly.



Introduction

Homeschool, an international alternative education system that allows parents to take control of the child's education, has expanded rapidly since the late 1970s (Gaither, 2017). This form of education is a flexible, child-centered method that is individually adapted in accordance with a family's unique educational, religious, or philosophical beliefs (Nusa, 2020). As a consequence, of parents' interest in preparing children for overcoming the problems present in an educational environment, such as materialism, cultism, and the

need for standardized education, the phenomenon of home-schooling is on the rise (Odak & Sijerčić, 2021). While the phenomenon of homeschooling has been researched and practiced in its Western nations such as United States, Canada, Australia, and United Kingdom, nuances and potential in South Asia have been less explored.

Formal schooling has always been the foremost choice of the people of Pakistan, however, with the transition to homeschooling a considerable amount of parents who are not satisfied with the prevailing schooling system are taking an interest in the concept of homeschooling (Shallwani, 2018). Revitalisation of homeschooling is arguably also due to other factors such as the high cost of private education and the perceived inflexibility of the typical curriculum, encouraging families to consider homeschooling as an alternative (Yusron & Nadlif, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the closure of many schools in an effort to combat the spread of the virus, driving many of these families to embrace homeschooling as an alternative means of education, though such circumstances had their own set of challenges (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2021).

Homeschooling really stands out for offering a personalized approach to education, encouraging such things as self-directed learning and the development of critical thinking skills. This new form of education differs greatly from the traditional classroom in that it focuses instead on personalized lesson plans designed to address the unique needs and strengths of each individual student (Gaither, 2017). Homeschooling creates environments in which students explore multiple disciplines rather than a “one size fits all curriculum”; no prescribed grade level rigidity here (LaRocque, 2013). This personalized method recognizes the distinct learning preferences, passions, and rates of individual students, enabling them to explore subjects more comprehensively and enthusiastically (Gaither, 2017). Because homeschooling works on the premise that no learning style is the same as another, diverse methods can be employed for teaching, such as project-based learning, hands-on and technology-enhanced instruction, allowing for a more holistic approach to education (Morris & Pannone, 2024).

Navigating the Challenges of Homeschooling in Pakistan

The phenomenon of homeschooling is gaining global acceptance but poses distinct challenges to the socio-cultural and educational milieu of Pakistan, where traditional schooling systems dominate. A major obstacle is the current perception in society that schooling formal is superior and therefore, the belief that schools are the best and only place to learn has brought skepticism and lack of acceptance of formal schooling as a viable alternative (Hameed et al., 2016). This skepticism is further exacerbated by the lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework pertaining to homeschooling, which renders ambiguities regarding accreditation, standardization, and quality of education rendered through this mode (Nusa, 2020).

This newfound interest in education leads to the conclusion that an alternative education system is ready to have a greater impact on the education system of Pakistan. The advent of such pedagogical tools powered by AI propelled by the rapid expansion of digital learning environments really drives home this shift towards more flexible learning styles (Nusa, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic that forced 1.57 billion students worldwide to study from home became a turning point that forced states, including Saudi Arabia, to adopt distance education policies (Alqraini & Alasim, 2021). For homeschooling initiatives to remain viable and effective in Pakistan, it is crucial to define homeschooling policies, enable accreditation systems, and establish support structures for families practicing homeschooling (Hasmira, 2021; Yusron & Nadlif, 2021).

Homeschooling, which had been the default education system for most of human history until the rise of public schooling (starting in the 16th century), has found its renewed popularity in modern society (Odak & Sijerčić, 2021). Essentially, homeschooling is not just traditional schooling in an at-home-space; it is a distinct pedagogy that focuses on personalized experiences for the student in their distinct interests and talents (Gaither, 2017).

Future research should also focus on the long-term effects of homeschooling on outcomes such as academic performance, career trajectories and equity in the distribution of educational resources. It is also crucial to understand the challenges that arose such as decreased support and feedback from teachers, potentially increasing the gap between high and low achievers (Mælan et al., 2021). Research is needed in Pakistan on the choice of learning environments and technology for preparing children for academic success (Sabol, 2018). In addition, these findings are also important in the context of the challenges ongoing with curriculum implementation, the gaps in technology infrastructure and remote learning for schools and parents.

Objectives

1. To examine the reasons and motivations of parents who homeschool children in Pakistan and what they expect from homeschooling?
2. To examine challenges with homeschooling, including socialization, quality of education, and access to the time/non-monetary resources needed.
3. To explore the role of digital learning tools with respect to homeschooling, both the good and the bad.
4. To explore the perception that people have about homeschooling in Pakistan, and to explore the external forces acting on homeschooling families.
5. To gain insight into how parents balance academics and other achievements in homeschooled children.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research design to investigate parental experiences of homeschooling in Pakistan.

Method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten parents who were active practitioners of homeschooling. Participants were selected through a purposive sampling strategy to ensure they had relevant experience and insights into homeschooling practices. Data were gained from semi-structured interviews, which allowed for depth of exploration around parenting motivations, challenges, and perspectives, but also flexibility to alter questions depending on participant responses. Interviews were all conducted and recorded with participants' permission and transcripts were manually coded for analysis. Thematic analysis of the collected data was performed according to Braun and Clarke (2006). Researchers can discover patterns, meanings and themes in qualitative data, this approach has been selected.

Thematic Analysis

Three key themes emerged from a thematic analysis of the participants' responses concerning how long they had been homeschooling: Recent Starters, Midway Milestones, and Long-Term Commitment. These themes reflect the various depths of engagement and commitment among those involved in homeschooling.

Thematic Analysis

Three key themes emerged from a thematic analysis of the participants' responses concerning how long they had been homeschooling:

1. Levels of Homeschooling Experience

1a. Newcomer

The first level, Recent Starters, are parents who only started homeschooling just on the last year or so. These are parents just beginning their journey "schooling" at home — their journey of figuring out curriculum, lessons and how to balance the responsibilities of school and home life. Their answers, such as "I started homeschooling this year," allude to the early roller coaster of excitement and fear that often characterizes the transition from being at a school to being homeschooled.

1b. The Average Joe

The second level, Midway Milestones, accounts for parents who are four to five years into homeschooling. These parents have created some stability and are getting more familiar with the art and science of homeschooling but are still honing how to educate their children. Within this demographic, there are lots of families looking for advanced homeschool state-of-the-art techniques for items such as review techniques, socialization opportunities and a build up to formal schooling should they want it. Their responses indicate growing confidence in their own ability to homeschool (which is awesome!) but again emphasized the need for institutional support and resources for learning.

1c. The Lifers

The third level, Long-Term Commitment, consists of experienced homeschoolers having experience of six or more years. These parents have embraced homeschooling, tailoring their teaching methods to their children's specific learning styles. Responses like "I have been homeschooling for seven years now and wouldn't want another way of learning" speak of deep satisfaction and conviction about their choice. These parents often mentor new homeschooling families and advocate for homeschooling as a legitimate educational alternative.

2. Homeschooling—Clearing the Hurdles

Homeschooling presents unique challenges, and three major themes stood out:

2a. Time and Resource Allocation

Homeschooling families struggle the most with managing their time and resources. Parents, and especially those homeschooling children, tend to play different parts — educator, caregiver and homemaker — in a single day. Parents find themselves struggling to help children manage their time and teach self-discipline without a structured school environment. Some parents say it is hard to stick to a fixed schedule, wrote one: “It’s not possible for us to maintain a fixed weekly schedule.” To overcome these issues, homeschooling parents devise efficient scheduling methods, establish appropriate routines and optimize freely accessible learning resources to boost their kids’ learning experience.

2b. Social Isolation

A common concern among homeschooling families is the lack of peer interaction for their children. Homeschooling allows for a customized educational experience with more flexible approaches and schedules, but it can diminish social opportunities, which can negatively affect children’s emotional and social growth. One parent wrote: “My child needs social interaction. This also applies to parents, who often feel alone with no scheduled socializing. But most families are not isolated; they combat social isolation by participating in homeschool co-ops, community events, playdates, online learning groups and extracurricular activities to help their kids flourish both academically and socially.

2c. Access to Quality Education and Extracurricular Activities

Ensuring children receive a well-rounded education, including both academic instruction, and extracurricular activities is another challenge parents have. Many parents do not know where to turn to find appropriate instructional materials, structured curricula, and opportunities for extracurricular participation in sports, music and science labs. Homeschooling families desire to have an enriched educational experience but face significant barriers when it comes to access to great content and instructors. Some parents are calling for more online courses and greater collaboration with formal schools to fill these gaps.

3. Relationship Dynamics: Parent-Child Bonds and External Criticism

3a. Strengthening Parent-Child Bonds

Homeschooling creates more teaching when parents understand their kids better, meet their needs and communicate with them. There was a bit of both, like one parent who stated: “I am able to understand better my child’s learning style because of Homeschooling.” Parents can cultivate a learning environment, establish trust, and adjust their instructional styles to the capacity of a child through increased time spent together. Another parent remarked, “it gives me better knowledge of how my child learns.”

3b. Facing External Criticism

Although there are several proven advantages to homeschooling, families may face skepticism from their extended family members, educators and society in general. Some family members assume homeschooled children can’t get what a school can give them,” some stated. Another parent stated, “depriving your child what others are getting.” This outward focus can also bring stress and self-doubt into families that are homeschooling. Homeschoolers on their end often use their peer support networks and homeschool communities to get reassurance and confidence-boosting.

4. Homeschooling Routines: Balancing Structure, Flexibility, and Activities

4a. Balancing Structure and Flexibility

In homeschooling it is important to maintain a balance between structured learning and child-led education. Parents make daily schedules which are quite flexible in nature and can be adjusted according to their child’s interests and progress. One parent reported, “We usually teach three subjects per day.” Another parent stated, “it depends upon the situation and I keep changing the number of subjects to be taught each day.” At the same time, unstructured learning is important to develop creativity and independent thought in children. “We do unstructured learning with a lot of play,” one parent stressed. Similarly, a mother said, “I do not burden my child with a planned teaching to be done sometimes through activities I teach her the concept.” This flexibility turns the experience into fun and engaging learning for the children!

4b. Integrating Experiential Learning and Activities

Many homeschooling families supplement their academics with activity-based learning for a little excitement. These activities don’t only mean regular classroom activities instead they also mean arts, crafts, outdoor experience, and hand-on projects in proper education. A mother reported, “I use her blocks to give concepts of maths.” Similarly, another mother added, “I make my son do things practically which makes learning easier and better.” This experiential learning develops ingenuity while also teaching the children’s practical skills beyond the subjects in their textbooks.

5. Fostering Learning: Encouragement, Motivation, and Positive Reinforcement

5a. Encouragement and Positive Reinforcement.

With homeschooling, parents can employ modern teaching strategies around positive reinforcement,

student ownership and intrinsic motivation. One parent wrote: “I always tell my child how impressed I am with her efforts.” A mother said, “my words and smile make my child do better next time.” Such affirmations help boost self-confidence as well as motivate academic success.

5b. Self-Motivation and Choice-Based Learning

At the same time, in homeschooling choice-based learning gives children ownership of their own education. It helps them in becoming independent thinkers and curious intellects. A parent was of the opinion that they never spoon feed them or make them memorize the content. Giving their child the opportunity to select their topics helps them to become more invested and motivated. A mother added, “we or sometimes I ask my child to decide what he wants to learn today.”

5c. Using Rewards to Enhance Learning

Many homeschooling parents like other parents use rewards to develop positive behavior and academic success in their children. These rewards can be of various types like verbal praise, special privileges, and concrete incentives such as books or toys, which help create a positive and encouraging learning environment. A parent said, “I encourage my child by buying is favorite toy.”

Discussion

This study brings insight into the multi-aspects of homeschooling, such as academic, social, and psychological implications. Homeschooling also has its pros and cons, despite its benefits of flexibility and personalized education. The findings corroborate global literature on home-based education, serving to improve academic achievement with the caveat that structured interventions and support systems are needed. Homeschooling, as an up-and-coming educational movement, has much work ahead in measuring the impact it has across the spectrum, such as if impacts on social structures, public schooling, economic costs, family relationships, child development (Murphy, 2014).

The main benefit identified in the study of homeschooling was its personalized element, allowing learning to fit the specific needs, pace and interests of a single child. This is consistent with recent research that the hybrid homeschool model is able to strike a balance between preserving academic accomplishment and facilitating life-skills (Abuzandah, 2020) Furthermore, homeschooled students score higher than their traditionally-schooled peers on standardized tests; the hybrid homeschool model has the ability to provide a more individualized education with more parental involvement and a custom-tailored curriculum (Abuzandah, 2020; Mælan et al., 2021)

However, there are notable concerns associated with homeschooling, most prominently the fact that there are few standardized assessment criteria to show whether homeschooled students achieve the same academic proficiency as those educated in schools (Murphy, 2014). Other studies suggest that homeschoolers do academically well, while more than a few indicate potential problems in specific subject areas, particularly those which might require advanced instruction or laboratory work (Mælan et al., 2021). Moreover, there is a range of homeschooling approaches where some parents utilize formal curricula similar to conventional schools, and others implement unstructured, child-led methods, contributing to differences in mastery of subjects (Xu et al., 2024). Research indicates that properly structured homeschooling programs that include standardized assessments and a curriculum that meets national benchmarks produced students that perform as well, and often better than those students studying in traditional schools (Soule, 2006).

Another important element of homeschooling is parental involvement. Although involvement by more active parents does enhance student success, it also requires substantial effort from parents, especially when they have a low educational background or work full time (Sharma, 2019). One of the biggest struggles reported by families who homeschool is the demand of wearing multiple hats, as parents are expected to double as teachers, caregivers, and home managers all at once. Several of the themes linked to the parent experience reflects a struggle with time management and burnout, which is an important finding aligned with literature that depicts homeschooling as an undertaking that demands detailed planning, discipline, and commitment (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2021). It was extra challenging for families to balance academic instruction with household responsibilities for those with multiple children, which added to stress and fatigue (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2021).

This study identified another challenge parents experienced in sustaining structured routines. This problem resonates with global homeschooling trends, whereby many parents are challenged to maintain consistency and discipline within a home-based learning environment (Major et al., 2023; Yan et al., 2021). Success with home education is often linked with structured daily routines, project-based learning and cooperative learning models which are said to reduce stress on parents and increase educational effectiveness (n.d. View of Parental Stress in Home Education; Villanueva-Jaminal, 2024).

Socialization is another major concern of homeschooling. Traditional school environments provide daily peer interactions, and homeschooling can contribute to social isolation and leave parents with little

opportunity to express emotion. The study noticed that many parents fear that their kids are missing structured engagement in classroom. These data also corroborate previous research showing the importance of interactions with peers in social and emotional skills development, teamwork behaviors and communication skills (Locchetta et al., 2019). To counter this issue, a large number of home school families join community activities, co-ops, and extracurricular programs to aid in socialization (Abuzandah, 2020). But these kinds of structured activities do not quite measure up the spontaneous and varied social experience offered by traditional schooling. Indeed, research indicates that community-based socialization strategies—such as homeschool networks or deliberate group learning activities—attenuate the social disadvantages of homeschooled children (Hamlin & Cheng, 2021). Still, providing steady and appropriate peer interactions continues to be a problem, especially in places with a low density of homeschooling families (Abuzandah, 2020).

The study also found that digital resources, including websites like YouTube, Khan Academy and educational apps, are playing a major role in the homeschooling experience. Implications of these results for digital home schooling were mostly consistent with findings of international studies (Norman et al., 2020) that show how technology is. Research indicates that digital tools give homeschooled students access to quality educational content, allow participation in online learning communities, and help develop digital literacy skills (Morris & Pannone, 2024). But parents also voiced fears about too much screen time, digital distractions and overdependence on technology. These include broader global research indicating that dependence on digital devices means less time getting hands-on experience or exposure to materials (Muppalla et al., 2023) and a reduction in the capability to learn along with low levels of physical activity. Finding the right balance between traditional learning approaches and digital technologies is key to maximizing learning benefits without sacrificing holistic child development (Sabol, 2018).

A significant finding of this research was how homeschooling families are negatively interpreted by outsiders concerned with academic validity and parental adequacy. Several participants perceived their extended family, friends, and society as responding negatively. One participant said, “Some family members view homeschooling as second-rate to traditional schooling.” Such experiences are consistent with published literature where concerns regarding academic credibility, limited socialization, and impact on future career prospects are often cited as reservations regarding homeschooling (Myers, 2022). Moreover, some researchers have raised concerns regarding the quality of academic performance data for homeschoolers, further fueling the controversy surrounding homeschooling’s effectiveness (Mælan et al., 2021).

However, research indicates that homeschooled students usually cultivate strong self-discipline, resilience, and independence, all of which are invaluable in higher education and the job market (Purwaningsih & Fauziah, 2020). Moreover, research shows that homeschooled graduates thrive in higher education and the workforce, as self-directed learning becomes a larger asset in the eyes of employers (Omoniyi, 2024).

Conclusion

This study denotes the possible advantages and disadvantages of homeschooling and the factors that seem to affect academic learning, social development, parental involvement, and the integration of technology. Inconsistent — but everything depends on your circumstances at home, the authors add — on the quality of education you can offer, how well you manage time and how well you balance educational needs with social ones, to give your child the experience of interacting with peers. Subsequent studies need to focus on the long-term academic trajectories of homeschooled students, such as performance in tertiary education, employment readiness, and global cognitive progress (Hughes & Martin, 2024). Moreover, as technological progressions change education delivery, researchers should explore the evolving digital platforms that may affect homeschooling methodologies. Education at home is becoming a viable alternative education model whilst traditional schooling still prevails. With increased families turning to this form of schooling, policymakers, educators, and researchers need to harmonize efforts to determine what is working, what the challenges are, and what best practices look like for Homeschooling success.

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