



مجلة كلية التربية



Revealing Motivations and Challenges of Homeschooling in Egypt

By

Asmaa Abd El-Hafeez Mohamad Emara

Author and jolly phonics official trainer

Dr. El Sayed Mohamad Dadour

Professor of Curriculum and Instruction (TEFL)

College of Education

Former President of Damietta University

Dr. Enas Mohamed Farahat

Lecturer of Curriculum and Instruction (TEFL)

College of Education, Damietta University

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استكشاف الدوافع والتحديات التي تواجه التعليم المنزلي في مصر
بحث مستل من رسالة دكتوراه

أسماء عبد الحفيظ محمد عمارة
كاتبة أطفال ومدربة دولي لبرامج جولي فونكس

أ.د. السيد محمد دعور
أستاذ مناهج وطرق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية جامعة دمياط
رئيس جامعة دمياط السابق

د. إيناس محمد فرحات
مدرس مناهج وطرق التدريس اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية جامعة دمياط

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المستخلص

في الآونة الأخيرة، ظهر التعليم في المنزل كأسلوب بديل للتعليم التقليدي، محاولاً التفوق على الأخير بالعديد من المميزات. وعلى الرغم من أن التعليم في المنزل المنزلي يمكن أن يوفر تجربة تعليمية مرنة ومخصصة، إلا أنه يواجه تحديات وقيود عديدة. وتستهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف دوافع أولياء الأمور لتبني التعليم المنزلي بالإضافة إلى الكشف عن التحديات التي يواجهها المتعلمين منزلياً في مصر. لتحقيق هدف الدراسة، تم تطبيق استبيان على عينة تتكون من 405 من أولياء أمور الطلاب الذين قد سجلوا اسمائهم أسمائهم في المدارس النظامية، ولكنهم يتعلمون منزلياً، وذلك في محافظات مصر المختلفة، وتم التواصل مع أولياء أمور الأطفال يتلقون التعليم في المنزل المنزلي وتتراوح أعمارهم بين 3 و 8 سنوات، وتم استخدام التحليل الوصفي للبيانات التي تم جمعها، وأسفرت النتائج عن وجود تنوع في أسباب اختيار التعليم المنزلي. كما أوضحت أن التعليم المنزلي في مصر يواجه العديد من الصعوبات والتحديات وأظهرت الدراسة تنوع أسباب اختيار الأسر لتعليم أطفالهم تعليمياً منزلياً، وكان من بين هذه الأسباب: عدم الرضا عن التعليم التقليدي، ووجود مشاكل في البيئة المدرسية، واختلاف التوجهات الثقافية؛ وفي بعض الأحيان يكون الاختيار لهذا النوع من التعليم راجعاً إلى بعض المشكلات الصحية مثل أن يكون الطفل من ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة أو يعاني من صعوبات التعلم أو التركيز. ويعد غياب الخطة التدريسية أو التوجيه أثناء القيام بعملية التعليم وغياب التوجيهات الرسمية بالموافقة على التعليم المنزلي هي من أهم التحديات، حيث يضطر الأهل إلى تسجيل أبناءهم في مدارس لا يذهب إليها الأطفال إلا وقت الامتحانات الرسمية والتي قد تكون صورية في بعض الأحيان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعليم المنزلي، التعليم التقليدي، التعلم البديل

Revealing Motivations and Challenges of Homeschooling in Egypt

Abstract

In recent years, homeschooling has gained global recognition as an alternative approach to education, offering distinct advantages compared to traditional schooling. While homeschooling provides the opportunity for flexible and personalized learning experiences, it also presents unique challenges and limitations. This research focuses on exploring the motivations and challenges associated with homeschooling in Egypt. To achieve this objective, a questionnaire was administered to a sample of 405 parents whose children are simultaneously enrolled in schools but receive homeschooling in various governates of Egypt. The participants were parents of homeschooling children aged between 3 and 8 years. Through qualitative data analysis, the study identified diverse reasons behind the decision to homeschool. Additionally, the research revealed numerous difficulties and challenges encountered by homeschooling families in Egypt. The motives for homeschooling in Egypt encompass a range of factors, including dissatisfaction with traditional education, concerns about the school environment, cultural influences, and learning or attention difficulties. Notably, significant challenges face homeschoolers in Egypt are the absence of a comprehensive plan or guidance, as well as the lack of official legislation to accept homeschooling as a recognized educational approach.

Key words: homeschooling, traditional school, Alternative education

Introduction

The practice of homeschooling is gaining popularity as an educational approach. Consequently, a significant number of families have been seeking out communities and resources to support their involvement in this alternative form of education. As a result of the increased interest from parents, educators, and policymakers, research on homeschooling has grown significantly over the last decade. However, the homeschooling population in Arab countries presents a unique challenge for researchers; nevertheless, and the existing body of research is limited.

The number of homeschoolers increases every year either all over the world or in Egypt. El Gohary and Abdelkader (2020) assume that, there are no accurate statistics available for the number of homeschoolers in Egypt, while the percentage of those who have dropped out of education, from the age of 4 years and above, is about 7.3% of the total population, and the percentage of those who have dropped out of education due to lack of desire to learn is about 37.2%. Reasons for dropping out of education or unschooling are not clear yet. Number of homeschoolers who are registered in public schools with no real attending is not available accurately for many reasons.

Social and emotional factors also play a significant role in families' decisions with regard to homeschooling. Concerns about bullying, peer pressure, and negative social experiences in traditional school settings may be reasons for parents to seek a safer and more supportive educational environment for their children. According to Egypt schools' website (2021), homeschooling offers benefits such as a focus on knowledge rather than grades,

increased family bonding, time efficiency, and the ability to nurture individual talents. Moreover, homeschooling may provide increased parental and societal involvement. It could foster stronger family bonds and provides opportunities for children to develop social skills through interactions with a diverse range of individuals and communities outside school.

It is important to distinguish homeschooling from homebound education, which is a short-term alternative for children who cannot attend school due to medical reasons. In homebound education, a public school guarantees a teacher who visits the child's home to teach him/her (Ripperger-Suhler, 2016). The main difference between the two approaches, according to Guterman and Neuman (2018), is the extent to which the process is structured, in terms of the number of hours that are preplanned, structured, and devoted to teaching.

In light of the increasing prevalence of homeschooling, this research aims to explore factors and reasons that families consider when making the decision to homeschool their children. By examining the diverse motivations behind this educational choice, a deeper understanding of the homeschooling phenomenon and its implications for children, families, and society at large can be gained.

The present study, thus, explores the motives and factors influencing families' decision with regard to homeschooling. Hence, the study is an attempt to find out answers to the following two questions:

- 1- What are the motives that affect families' decision to homeschool their children?
- 2- What are the challenges underlying homeschooling in Egypt?

3- What is the suggested framework for having a solid and sound homeschooling in Egypt?

2. Review of Literature and Related Studies

Homeschooling is a rising trend in education. Research on homeschooling has increased in the past decade due to this growing interest of parents, educators, and policymakers concerning this phenomenon. However, homeschoolers, in Arab countries, are a challenging population to study, and much of the existing research is limited in terms of data and references. Homeschooling can be defined with the words “home” and “schooling”, which give the meaning of education or schooling that occurs at home. It is also a circumstance where parents make a conscious decision to provide an education for their child in place of that provided by schools, and where the parents are the main teachers or facilitators in the program of education (Yin et al., 2016). Thus, it can be assumed that a homeschool is a school in which parents teach their children an academic curriculum at home instead of sending them out to a public or private school (Kate & Pandhare, 2021). Furthermore, homeschooling, as reported in Davidson (2023), is a parent-led home-based education form that is the fastest-growing one in the United States from 13,000 students in the early 1970s to 2.4 million students. There is no definite rate in the Arab context, due to lack of registration and absence of documentation.

There are many definitions and explanations to homeschooling. As for Kaminski (2023), homeschooling is an informal (or semi-formal) system of education where parents educate their children at home instead of sending them to a conventional school. Parents may choose to

homeschool their kids for various reasons, such as personal educational philosophies, financial circumstances or health risks. Thus, according to Wanjari (2021), parents and students work around a flexible syllabus based on their motivation and circumstances.

Parents play the most important role in their children's education. Sainain et al. (2020) argue that parents' awareness of their children's development can significantly enhance a child's development process. However, some parents may lack knowledge of their children's language and social development, and may struggle to find reliable information. Parents, in some cases, are unaware of cognitive and psychological development of their children, so, they need more training and support from specialists. In other cases, parents may neglect teaching some subjects because they do not have sufficient knowledge of topics.

Families have varied reasons for choosing to homeschool their children. A desire to provide religious or moral instruction comes as a top reason to homeschool (Brian, 2017; Gaither, 2017; Ripperger-Suhler, 2016). Other reasons relate to concerns about school environment; such as dissatisfaction with academic instruction in other schools (Gaither, 2017) and issues related to parental employment, financial considerations, residential mobility, and the geographical proximity distance between residences and educational institutions (Rodgers& Kalyn, 2022). In addition, families are increasingly choosing homeschooling because of their child's physical or mental health problems (Rodgers & Kalyn, 2022; Wanjari, 2021). Parents often need an input or an approval from professionals and are often conflicted on homeschooling the child. Renzulli et al. (2020) confirm that racial

dynamics affect parental preferences. So, Reasons may vary from one place to another and from one family to another.

Parents report different motives behind their vote for homeschooling. Rodgers and Kalyn (2022) confirm that these motives include stopping bullying, introducing less homework and more flexibility, allowing more sleep, tailoring teaching to their child's interests and learning styles, or addressing special needs such as: learning or attention difficulties, autism, dyslexia. A survey conducted by Thomas (2016) reports that the reasons and motives of about 1000 homeschooling parents across the United States vary from one family to another; some of these reasons are the child's particular learning style, the parent's personal preference, the child's interests, community resources, experience or special needs. Another reason, according to Cahapay (2020), is that some parents are not satisfied with the mainstream educational opportunities. Consequently, homeschooling parents make educational decisions based on family reasons, faith, student goals, and/or special needs. Redford et al. (2017) report that the most common reason for selecting homeschooling is the concern with schools' environment, which includes factors such as "safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure" (91%). Other commonly reported reasons (Redford et al., 2017. p. 11), include a desire to provide moral instruction, dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools, and a desire to provide religious instruction.

Homeschooling is becoming more popular every day. There are about two million children currently learning at home all over the world (Shaw, 2020). Ultimately, international law places obligations to ensure

that children, as rights-holders, are able to enjoy their right to education, and the provision of that education must conform to certain aims and minimum standards. Right to Education Initiative (2018), stands against removing a child from a regulated school system to educate him/her in an unstructured environment. It adds that educating children in an unstructured environment, violates their full enjoyment of their right to education, and their opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.

Homeschooling is a broad term encompassing various educational concepts. According to Brian (2017), parent-led home-based education has been existing globally for many years. Homeschooling, as noted by Rodgers and Kalyn (2022) can take on different forms, but it generally involves parents assuming complete responsibility for their child's education. Prior to 2020, terms like homeschooling, unschooling, road schooling, remote learning, distance learning, and virtual learning were associated with a particular type of a family who chose to educate their children at home. However, with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 1.7 million students between the ages of 5 and 17 were being homeschooled. Homeschooling, as noted by Renzulli et al. (2020), is an aspect of school choice in the United States that has undergone significant policy reforms in courts and legislatures for decades.

The reasons for choosing homeschooling may vary across different contexts. Many parents believe that this system is not healthy for their children's future. Thus, according to Wanjari (2021), searching for a better choice is the reason most parents move towards homeschooling education rather than the traditional schooling system.

Home schooling can be chosen for compelling reasons as in COVID-19 pandemic situation. Another reason why homeschooling is demanding is that being educated at home removes a lot of stress of the normal classroom. Weale (2020) affirms that more than 60,000 children in England are home-educated, marking an increase in recent years, but the true figure is likely to be far higher as parents are not required to register home-educated children with their local authority.

Gaither (2017, pp. 116-124) assumes that reasons for homeschooling in the United States can be generalized to any community. Homeschooling became popular in the United States for several reasons. Firstly, some people believed in going against the norm and doing things differently. Secondly, more people were living in suburbs where they felt disconnected from the rest of society. This led some young people to start homeschooling as a way to challenge the system. Thirdly, many people believed that children should be treated differently and have more freedom than they were getting in traditional schools. Finally, public schools were becoming less personal and more bureaucratic, which made some families feel like they needed to look for other options. Homeschooling became more popular as people talked about it, tried it out, and formed groups to support each other.

Despite the growth of homeschooling in western countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, the increasing movement among some countries in Africa or Asia, like South Africa Malaysia and China is also notable. In Malaysia, according to Yin et al. (2016) a real figure of homeschooled students does not exist. Thus, the number of children being homeschooled is growing. In many areas, registration of a

home-schooled is not enforced. In other places, homeschool families simply neglect to register when they are required to do so.

To summarize, homeschooling is a wide-spreading option for many reasons. According to Kaminski (2023) many parents opt for homeschooling because it provides a safe learning environment for their children. Traditional schools may not be always safe, especially for children who are particularly vulnerable to bullying and harassment. Additionally, some children with special needs may not receive the necessary support in traditional schools. Moreover, homeschooling can offer higher academic quality than traditional schools.

In the context of conventional educational institutions, educators often encounter difficulties in accommodating the distinctive educational requirements of each student, primarily due to the presence of large student populations within classrooms. The substantial number of students poses challenges for teachers in providing personalized attention and addressing the unique needs of individual learners. Consequently, certain students may encounter difficulties in receiving the necessary support and guidance essential for achieving exceptional academic performance.

From the previous discussion, it is clear that homeschooling is widely applied all over the world, but in Egypt it is not regulated enough. The lack of data about reasons and motives behind homeschooling, and the factors that affect parents' decision are the core of the present research. This research aims at discovering the motives of parents to choose homeschooling. It also investigates factors influencing families' decisions to homeschool their children.

Hence, the present study seeks to find answers to the following question:

- 1- What are the motives behind the parental choice of homeschooling for their children?
- 2- What are the challenges that parents may face with their children?
- 3- What is the suggested framework for having a solid and sound homeschooling in Egypt?

3. Significance of the Research

The significance of this research lies in its benefits for pupils, parents and policy makers.

Significance for the pupils:

This research could be significant for children as the whole research is tackling their real needs.

Significance for parents of homeschoolers:

- The research sheds light on the reasons behind the homeschooling.

Significance for policy makers:

- The research aims to identify the challenges and motives of homeschooling and how to regulate homeschooling under the supervision and guidance of the Ministry of Education.
- The research highlights successful examples of homeschooling implementation in Western societies, which can serve as a valuable reference point for modifying homeschooling to fit the cultural and societal context of Egypt.

4. Method

The present research adopts the qualitative research as the following pages explain in details the field study.

4.1. Participants

The research is limited to a sample of parents of pupils who are enrolled at schools but still are homeschoolers at the same time in different governates of Egypt. The researcher contacted parents of homeschool children aged from 3-8 years old and sent them a questionnaire, to be filled out.

4.2. Research Instruments

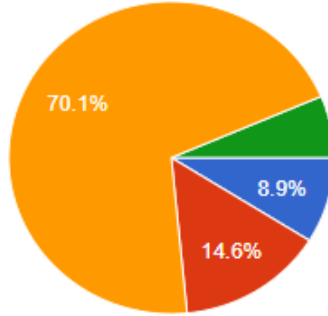
The researcher designed a questionnaire, it which consists of 15 items of three categories. They are divided as follows: what kind of education they choose, reasons for teaching at home, problems they face and needs they have. Each category has 4 items of a 5-point Multiple Choice Scale, and an open-ended question. The first part of it focuses on demographic information, and reasons for teaching at home. The second part investigates the educational resources. The third part investigated the challenges and obstacles that parents face within homeschooling.

5. Results and conclusion

According to the findings of the survey conducted in 2020, a significant proportion of participants, specifically 70% (248 responses), reported that they did not enroll their children aged 4-7 in schools due to various reasons.

Figure 1.

The type of schooling the parents chose for their children.

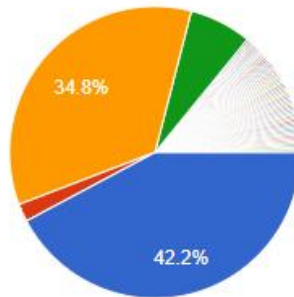


Source: Original

Figure 1 presents data which reveals that 8.9% of the participants (36 responses) send their children to schools less than twice a week, while also undertaking the responsibility of teaching their children at home. The reasons behind the decision not to send children to schools exhibit a wide range of factors, which are comprehensively depicted in the subsequent figure.

Figure 2.

The Reason for Homeschooling Children



Source: Original

Table 1.

The Reason for Homeschooling Children

The reason for homeschooling my children	My child has learning difficulties	We don't go school because of Covid lockdown	I believe in homeschooling	Others
Number (n)	28	171	141	65
Percentage %	6.9%	.42.2%	34.8%	16 %

Table 1 illustrates the findings of the survey, indicating that 42.2% of the participants (171 responses) chose not to send their children to schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 1 above illustrates the findings of the survey, indicating that 42.2% of the participants (171 responses) chose not to send their children to schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, 34.8% of the participants (141 responses) opted for homeschooling based on their personal beliefs. Furthermore, 6.9% of the participants (28 responses) attributed the reason for not sending their children to schools to learning difficulties requiring special care and intensive teaching. The majority of responses consistently revealed that the primary issue lies in the absence of a guide or resource for parents to assist them in teaching their children at home.

Table 2.

The challenges homeschoolers face

The challenges homeschoolers face	Can't find a plan or guide helping in homeschool my child	There are many books and resources and cannot choose the best one.	My child doesn't help me to teach him/her at home	Fast get nervous if the child missed the correct answer
Number (n)	234	208	102	97
Percentage %	60%	51.4%	25.2%	%24

Note: *. Parents are allowed to choose more than one choice.

Table 2 presents the findings of the survey, indicating that 60.3% of the participants (234 responses) agreed that the most significant challenge they faced is the lack of a homeschooling plan or guide to assist them in managing their children's education at home. Additionally, 51.4% of the participants (208 responses) expressed their struggle in choosing the best books and resources of the many available options. Furthermore, 25% of the participants (102 responses) reported that their children did not cooperate in the teaching process at home, while 4% (97 responses) stated that they were anxious when their children provided incorrect answers.

The survey results emphasized the importance of official registration for homeschoolers within the educational system, with varying regulations. Moreover, parents of homeschoolers highlighted the necessity for homeschoolers to have a systematic plan or guide to support them in teaching their children at home.

From the previous discussion, it is clear that homeschooling is widely used all over the world, but in Egypt and the Arab world it needs more systematic arrangements and regulations. The reasons behind homeschooling vary. Some reasons are related to parents, and some other reasons are concerned with the children themselves. Some parents expressed criticism of the educational method used in schools, and bad manners and bullying practiced against their children. In the same vein, the most common reasons behind homeschooling should be declared, and the challenges homeschoolers face need to be presented to policymakers and the ministry of education. Homeschooling presents various advantages over traditional schooling, including a shift in focus from grades to knowledge acquisition. Additionally,

homeschooling fosters stronger family bonds as parents spend more time with their children. Moreover, homeschooling proves to be time-efficient. This time-saving aspect empowers parents to educate and train their children effectively during study time, thereby affording the remainder of the day for engaging in enjoyable activities. Overall, homeschooling offers a comprehensive and personalized educational approach that emphasizes knowledge acquisition, strengthens family relationships, and develops individual talents.

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