Original Research Article

The Socialization Conundrum: Comparing Social Learning Outcomes of Homeschooled and Traditionally Schooled Children in Kenya

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Abstract

This article compares social learning outcomes of homeschooled and traditionally schooled children under the Accelerated Christian Education Curriculum (ACE). The comparison is done by looking at the social skills constructs of persistence, self–control and social competences. This study adopted the comparative research design, targeting children under the Accelerated Christian Education. 426 children were sampled, with 272 participating Questionnaires were used to collect data on the three constructs. From the computation of children Independent sample t-test, it was revealed that there were no significant differences between the homeschooled and traditionally schooled children as perceived by the children, parents and teachers on the three Social constructs. Consequently it was noted children, parents and teachers received home schooling as effective in developing children persistence, self-control and social competence learning outcomes. It was also demonstrated that acquiring these social skills was independent of home and traditional schooling. Hence it meant home school was equally effective in nurturing the social skills required for children to fit well in society. Though further studies needed to be done to test the robustness of these findings when other variable are added to the model.
Keywords: Social skills outcomes, homeschooling, Traditional schooling, persistence, self-control, social competence, (ACE) Curriculum.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The homeschooling concept continues to permeate most education systems worldwide, demonstrating the appeal of the approach. Homeschooling proponents advocate for deregulation and further expansion of this educational approach (Lubienski, Puckett & Brewere, 2013). Among the positive attributes associated with homeschooling includes enjoyment in life, improved academic success, and postsecondary attainment at a reduced cost (Cheng & Donnelly, 2019; Neuman & Guterman, 2016; Ray, 2015, Ray, 2017). The significance of homeschooling as a viable form of schooling is further justified by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has disrupted normal functioning in traditional schools in most countries and has increased the appeal for alternative forms of learning such as homeschooling (Musaddiq *et al.*, 2021).

Although homeschooling is gaining popularity in Kenyan households, especially among parents who perceive the regular education system to be very competitive and strenuous, the primary concern is that the government of Kenya seems reluctant to legalize it (School Search, 2021). The Homeschooling Defence Association (HAD), for instance, argues that the lawfulness of homeschooling is not addressed explicitly by the Basic Education Act (No. 14 of 2013) (Gathure, 2018). Yet by recognizing non-formal education, the Alternative Education Policy implicitly recognizes homeschooling (Waweru *et al.*, 2020).

Critics of the homeschooling approach to learning raise several reasons, including decreasing

social efficacy with time among the homeschooled group (Pearlman–Avnion & Grayersky, 2019). However, research on homeschooling and social development remains inconclusive. For instance, Kunzman and Gaither (2020) reported limitations such as drawing on a volunteer sample of homeschoolers, relying on homeschoolers and their educators' self-reports, and treating school attendance as a binary potential as sources of the contradictory findings on homeschooling and socialization. Such inconclusiveness and contradictory results, coupled with a scarcity of studies in the Kenyan context focusing on homeschooling and social developments, motivated us to investigate the socialization conundrum of homeschooled and traditionally schooled children in Kenya.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Homeschooling

Homeschooling, home-based parent-led education, is growing fast in the United States, France, Canada, Australia, Japan, Hungary, Thailand, South Korea, and the United Kingdom (Ray, 2015). In these contexts, homeschooling is an alternative form of child-friendly education and develops children's potential (Fitriana, Utaya & Budijanto, 2016). Homeschooling targets outcomes like academic excellence, community consciousness, and good character.

As an educational model, homeschooling was founded in 1960 in the US on the views of John Caldwell Holt (Purwaningsih & Fauziah, 2020). According to Holt, humans are primarily learning creatures who enjoy learning. Consequently, people who try to control, regulate or interrupt learning end up killing the pleasure derived from it. Such thoughts spurred education stakeholders and families to reflect on education and school more. The argument advanced was that homeschooling allows individuals to gain a natural experience while interacting with one another (Purwarungsih & Fauziah, 2020).

Therefore, proponents of homeschooling argue that implementing the homeschooling practice regard parents as the educators most responsible for children's education. These proponents of homeschooling build on the capacity of the homeschooling model to give autonomy to children to choose whatever they want to learn under the guidance of tutors and parents (Apple, 2020; Blockhius, 2010, Brewer & Lubienski, 2017). Such autonomy makes homeschooling grow in popularity in Kenya, with parents seeking to be at the centre of when and what the child learns. In this way, parents control the curriculum that children pursue (Mutuku, 2020). Besides, parents perceive homeschooling as efficient learning that enjoys a low student-teacher ratio and enables a child to discover hidden talents (Mutuku, 2020).

Several providers of homeschooling services have propped up in Kenya. They include sunrise homeschooling, home school 254, Nairobi Home school, Accelus centre, Skyward tuition centre, Home school Africa, Preswin Home Tuition, Shrines Home Schooling and Tuition centre, outstanding outcomes Home Tuition, and Joy Home School, among others (Abuyeka, 2021). Most of these homeschooling service providers concentrate on the British and American Curriculums. and the Kenyan Curriculum. Their curriculums include IGCSE, Edxel American, ACE, 8-4-4, and 2-6-3-2. This study focuses on the Accelerated Christian Education Curriculum (ACE) facilitated by the ACE centres in Kenya.

2.2 The Concept of Socialization

Socialization is a process that enables a child to acquire the social skills needed to conform to societal behaviours and norms (Manata et al., 2016). Therefore, children must learn whatever form imparts social fluency to interact and form relationships, face diverse social situations, and work cooperatively. According to the Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE, 2022), socialization is also a process through which children develop skills of tolerance and acceptance of the diversity in cultures within the society by interacting with peers from diverse backgrounds. Besides, through socialization, children can develop persistence, self-control, and social competence.

From a cultural perspective, socialization relates to the transmission of culture across generations, requiring that children learn behaviour patterns, ideals, values, and skills needed to function in society competently (Ajayi & Owumi, 2013). Therefore, it is incumbent upon parents to instil cultural competence and continuity in children. However, socialization under the guidance of parents does not always result in positive social values. According to Kuczynski and De Mol (2015), poor home environments and harsh parental practices can lead to antisocial behaviour and poor achievement. Such contradicting social outcomes at the hands of parents raise questions as to whether homeschooling is suitable for social development in children.

2.3 Homeschooling and Socialization

Several scholars have waded into the discourse surrounding homeschooling and social development among homeschooled children. Medlin (2013), for instance, revisited the question of homeschooling and socialization and rejected the alarmist view of homeschooling. According to Medlin, homeschooled children elicited better parental relationships and higher quality friendships than peers in conventional schools. Moreover, they showed optimism and satisfaction with their lives and were more morally sound and unselfish. Additionally, homeschooled adolescents exhibited less emotional instability and a high sense of social

responsibility than their conventional school peers (Medlin, 2013).

Kunzman (2016) highlighted the contradictory nature of the views towards homeschooling and socialization that elicit unclear questions and answers. Kunzman argued that socialization in homeschooling literature revolves around normative and often highly contested claims and assumptions. Proponents of homeschooling point to an array of cooperatives and extracurricular activities accessible to homeschoolers and raise opportunities for social interaction (Apple, 2020; Brewer & Lubienski, 2017). However, Kunzman (2016) noted that outside observers and media stereotypes often perceive homeschoolers as socially isolated and lack exposure to formative public interactions and peer groups.

Pearlman-Avnion and Gravevsky (2019) used qualitative and quantitative methods to compare social self-efficacy among homeschooled youth and their traditional school-educated peers. They found no significant differences in social self-efficacy between the two groups. However, the homeschooling group experienced decreased self-efficacy with increased years of homeschooling, indicating that extended homeschooling could be detrimental to social self-efficacy.

Mincu and Sarbu (2018) used the Romanian context to explore homeschooling and social abilities development. They were motivated because, despite homeschooling developing in Romania since 2016, controversy has surrounded the viability of homeschooling to nurture and develop social abilities given possible isolation. Their findings showed no evidence of claims about homeschooling's inadequacy to develop social skills.

Because of such scholarly evidence that remains inconclusive about homeschooling and socialization, we join this conundrum by questioning whether similar findings can be replicated in Kenya. We seek answers by comparing social learning outcomes among homeschooled and traditionally schooled children pursuing the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum. We recognize the scarcity of studies probing the socialization constructs of persistence, self-control, and social competence. Therefore, this paper reports a comparison of homeschooled and traditionally schooled children in the three constructs.

3.0 METHODOLOGY
3.1 Study Design
The study employed an ex-post-factor design that incorporated quantitative techniques. This research design investigates an issue after the fact has occurred without manipulation by the researcher. The study targeted children enrolled in the ACE programme in Kenya and collected data from ACE teachers, tutors, and parents. Consequently, structured questionnaires collected data from children, teachers, and parents.

3.2 Study Sample
The study utilized 2085 individuals consisting of 1788 children, 175 teachers, and 122 parents. This study population was compiled from records at ACE centres in Kenya. Stratified sampling sampled 426 children (213 from traditional schools and 213 homeschoolers). Forty parents and forty teachers were sampled using the rule of thumb (Hogg & Tams, 2005).

3.3 Variable Measurements
The teacher's and parent's questionnaires contained three similar variables measuring social learning outcomes. The persistence skill scale was a Likert scale with three Likert-like items focusing on children's persistence in performing tasks. The self-control scale was also a Likert scale probing on children's self-control. It had three Likert-like items. Similarly, the social competence scale was a Likert scale with six items probing children's social competence. Children were compared on two social learning outcomes. The self-control scale had five Likert-like items probing children's self-control views. Meanwhile, the persistence scale had three items examining children's persistence rating.

3.4 Data Analysis
Data were analyzed using independent samples t-test. Under the independent samples t-test, the three components of social learning outcomes were treated as the test variables while homeschools and traditional schools were grouping variables. Hypotheses were tested at the 5 percent significance level. Data were screened and cleaned for missing values and outliers, after which 352 individuals, including 272 children, 40 parents, and 40 teachers, were retained for analyses.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
4.1 Comparing Social Learning Outcomes
4.1.1 Persistence Learning Outcomes
Persistence was the first social learning outcome of interest in this study. Respondents were asked to comment on children's show of persistence in undertaking tasks. Results shown in Table 1 indicate that children elicited high levels of persistence, especially in working hard to complete school work (72.0%) and trying to improve on poor performance in previous problems (54.1%). Similarly, parents believed that children were either most of the time focused on tasks until they were finished (55.0%) or did it all the time (42.5%). Meanwhile, parents indicated that most of the time, children ensured that they worked on tasks until completion (85.0%). Most of the time, they also persistently kept working on difficult activities (64.5%).

On the question of children's persistence, teachers echoed parents' views by stating that most of

the time (67.5%) or all of the time (22.5%) children focused on tasks until completion and all the time working on tasks until they were finished (50.0%). Moreover, the teachers indicated that children kept working on difficult activities most of the time (47.5%). However, a large proportion did that all the time (45.0%).

Table 1: Perceived persistence levels among children pursuing the ACE curriculum

Children	A little like me		Somewhat like me		A lot like me			
If I solve a problem wrong the first time, i keep trying until i get it right.	5	1.9%	119	44.1%	146	54.1%		
when I do badly on a test, I work harder the next time	7	2.6%	122	44.9%	143	52.6%		
I always work hard to complete my school work	2	0.7%	74	27.3%	195	72.0%		
Parents	None of the time		A little of the time		Most of the time		All of the time	
worked on tasks until they were finished	3	7.5%	3	7.5%	34	85.0%	3	7.5%
kept working on an activity that was difficult	3	7.5%	3	7.5%	25	62.5%	12	30.0%
Focused on tasks until they were finished	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	22	55.0%	17	42.5%
Teachers								
worked on tasks until they were finished	0	0.0%	4	10.0%	27	67.5%	9	22.5%
kept working on an activity that was difficult	0	0.0%	3	7.5%	19	47.5%	18	45.0%
Focused on tasks until they were finished	2	5.0%	1	2.5%	17	42.5%	20	50.0%

A comparison of persistence on tasks across children, parents and ACE teachers and home tutors revealed non-significant mean difference among children, mean difference = 0.04337, p=0.772; parents maen difference = -0.218, p=0.327, and teachers and tutors mean difference = 0.0275, p=0.957 (Table 2).

Table 2: Comparing homeschooled and traditionally schooled children's persistence in tasks

Persistence	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Children	.291	267	.772	.04337
Parents	-.992	38	.327	-.21805
Teachers	.054	38	.957	.02747

These results confirm that childrens' persistence in tasks was independent of the learning mode. Consequently, the findings of this study indicate that homeschooling can nurture children's persistent social skills, contrary to studies that argue against homeschooling based on the development of social skills.

4.1.2 Self-control learning outcomes

The second social learning outcome of interest in this study was self-control. Respondents were asked to comment on self-control among homeschooled and traditionally schooled children when performing tasks.

From the responses shown in Table 3, children indicated that they were more likely to calm down easily when excited (51.3%), sit still when asked to (49.4%), wait for their turn in class (47.4%), and calm down quickly when upset (47.2%). Similarly, commenting on children's self-control, parents indicated that most of the time, children waited in line patiently (70.0%), sat still when required (72.5%), and waited patiently for whatever they wanted (55.0%). These views by parents were also echoed by teachers and tutors who noted that most of the time, children waited in line patiently (55.0%), sat still when supposed to (67.5%), and waited for whatever they wanted (60.0%).

Table 3: Perceptions of self-control levels among children pursuing the ACE curriculum

Self-control	A little like me		Somewhat like me		A lot like me	
Children						
I can wait in line patiently	7	2.6%	177	65.1%	88	32.4%
Sit still when you are supposed to	8	3.0%	129	47.6%	134	49.4%
I can wait for my turn to talk in class	6	2.2%	137	50.4%	129	47.4%
I can easily calm down when excited	5	1.8%	127	46.9%	139	51.3%
I calm down quickly when I get upset	3	1.1%	140	51.7%	128	47.2%

Parents	None of the time		A little of the time		Most of the time		All of the time	
waited in line patiently	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	28	70.0%	12	30.0%
sat still when supposed to	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	29	72.5%	11	27.5%
waited for what he/she wanted	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	22	55.0%	18	45.0%
Teachers								
waited in line patiently	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	22	55.0%	18	45.0%
sat still when she was supposed to	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	27	67.5%	13	32.5%
waited for what he/she wanted	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	24	60.0%	15	37.5%

Results of comparing homeschooled and traditionally schooled children's self-control (Table 4) confirmed that there were no significant differences as perceived by children (mean difference = 0.106, p=0.599), parents (mean difference = 0.0476, p=0.758), and teachers (mean difference = -0.191, p=0.570).

Table 4: Comparing homeschooled and traditionally schooled children's self-control in tasks

Self-control	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Children	.526	268	.599	.10644
Parents	.310	38	.758	.04762
Teachers	-.573	38	.570	-.19143

4.1.3 Social Competence

The third dimension of social learning outcomes examined in this study was social competence. Parents and teachers were asked how children exhibited social competence while undertaking tasks. Results in Table 5 confirm that both parents and teachers indicated that children pursuing the ACE curriculum exuded high levels of social competence in resolving problems with peers, understanding peers' feelings, cooperating with peers, and thoughtfulness towards peers.

Table 5: Perceptions of social competence among children pursuing the ACE curriculum

Social competence	None of the time		A little of the time		Most of the time		All of the time	
Parents								
Worked well with peers	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	21	52.5%	18	45.0%
Resolved problems with peers without becoming aggressive	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	27	67.5%	13	32.5%
Was thoughtful of the feelings of her/his peers	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	19	47.5%	21	52.5%
Cooperated with peers without prompting	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	27	67.5%	12	30.0%
Understood the feelings of her/his peers	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	23	57.5%	17	42.5%
Resolved problems with peers on her/his own	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	19	47.5%	20	50.0%
Teachers								
Worked well with peers	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	21	52.5%	18	45.0%
Resolved problems with peers without becoming aggressive	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	27	67.5%	13	32.5%
Was thoughtful of the feelings of her/his peers	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	19	47.5%	21	52.5%
Cooperated with peers without prompting	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	27	67.5%	12	30.0%
Understood the feelings of her/his peers	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	23	57.5%	17	42.5%
Resolved problems with peers on her/his own	0	0.0%	1	2.5%	19	47.5%	20	50.0%

The subsequent results of comparing parents' and teachers' perceptions regarding homeschooled and traditionally schooled children's social competence revealed non-significant mean differences among parents (mean difference = -0.045, p = 0.869) and among ACE teachers and home tutors (mean difference = 0.953, p =0.058) (Table 6).

Table 6: Comparing homeschooled and traditionally schooled children's self-control in tasks

Social competence	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Parents	-.166	38	.869	-.04511
Teachers	1.952	38	.058	.95285

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The study confirms that children, parents, and teachers perceive homeschooling as effective in developing children's persistence, self-control, and social competence learning outcomes. Moreover, the study demonstrated that acquiring these social skills was independent of homeschooling and traditional schooling. This finding indicates that homeschooling is equally effective in nurturing the social competencies required for children to fit well in society. Consequently, the finding helps to address the homeschooling socialization puzzle by showing that homeschooling impacts children's academic learning outcomes and values their social development.

The finding that homeschooled children's social skills did not differ significantly from their traditionally schooled counterparts was consistent with previously reported results. For instance, Murphy (2014) posited that judging whether homeschooling works should take cognizance of goals that focus on nurturing value. Murphy argued that homeschooled children become socially successful members of society. Amayeye (2016), on the other hand, highlighted homeschooled children's development of social skills by noting that they get opportunities to participate in social events such as conventions that enable them to develop social skills.

Although homeschooling may not solve problems bedeviling the education sector in Kenya, it is a viable alternative form of learning that enhances children's academic learning outcomes and nurtures their social competence, self-control, and persistence on tasks. With such evidence, policies aimed at streamlining education in Kenya, such as the 100 percent transition rate, should consider the interests of parents wishing to homeschool their children. Besides, questions about homeschooling and children's socialization should not arise since they only demonize homeschooling favoring traditional schooling, yet, the two forms of education develop children's social skills equally well. However, future studies can lend credence to homeschool socialization by testing the robustness of the findings when other covariates in the school and home contexts are added to the models.

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