

## Homeschooling: Understanding the Nuances Through the Lens of Parents

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to explore and understand the concept of homeschooling as an alternative way to educate children from the perspective of parents who are currently practicing it. The data was collected from five mothers, residing in Delhi/NCR, India, who are currently practicing homeschooling using semi-structured interviewing method. The data was thematically analyzed. The findings of the present study reveal that homeschooling is an individualized educational program with learning at its core. The decision and practice of homeschooling is accompanied by various reactions of others as well as various emotions experienced by both the parents and homeschoolers. Further, socialization is not difficult for children when practicing homeschooling with them. However, the present study had certain limitations; firstly, it did not involve the perspective of the homeschoolers. Secondly, experience of only one of the parents i.e., mothers were studied. But the present study will help in increasing awareness and understanding about homeschooling in the Indian context. Moreover, the experiences shared by the participants may encourage other parents to consider homeschooling as an alternate form of teaching their children.

**Keywords:** *Homeschooling, Individualized Educational Program, Learning, Socialization, Semi- Structured Interviewing*

A child's first teacher is his/her parents, and this idea defines homeschooling. Homeschooling in simple terms means that the child is being taught at home by their parents. Homeschooling as an alternate way to educate children is being increasingly adopted by parents and families around the globe.

According to Block (2004), "The term 'homeschooling' is used while referring to parents who teach their children at home. Homeschooling is often compared to school-based education, the institution of teaching children at school. Homeschooling and school-based education can be seen as two extremes of a continuum. In an intermediate form, children would be taught in part by their parents, in part at school."

The origin of homeschooling can be traced back to ancient times (Knowles, Marlow & Muchmore, 1992) however, the contemporary emergence of homeschooling as an alternative

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method of teaching was observed as a result of the shortcomings or limitations of the public education system raised by educational reformers during the 1960s and early 1970s. Holt (1969) and Illich (1970) played the major role and had a major impact on matters relating to homeschooling.

Homeschooling can happen in a variety of forms such as a set curriculum which one can buy online, or through virtual classes and a mix of academic or drama or music classes. The way the content is delivered may vary such as the content to learn can be delivered to homeschoolers alone or as part of the cooperative learning groups (McReynolds, 2007). There is an increase in homeschool groups which is a type of homeschool learning where families practicing homeschooling in the same region form groups and their children come together to be taught by some parents (Gaither, 2009). Further the use of technology, more access to internet and the opportunity to become a part of and get involved in community and be able to interact with others have decreased the concern of homeschooler's social isolation (Setayesh & Lu, 2015).

Kaur (2018), described four types of homeschooling programs. First, is a traditional program where parents follow a structure like that in school. Secondly, homeschoolers can watch online programs which have pre-recorded videos. Third, blended learning program which involves learning through both online and traditional curriculum. Lastly, some may adopt unschooling. In unschooling, parents encourage their children to learn according to their personal interests and build experiences around those interests.

### ***Homeschooling in India***

In India, Manish Jain, a resident of Udaipur launched the Shikshantar Andolan in the 1990s. The aim was to rescue education from the "artificial and oppressive" formal schooling environment. Later on, in 2010, he co-founded Swaraj University, an institution which focuses on self-designed learning along with green entrepreneurship. In 2012, Claude Alvares and Urmila Samson founded the non-profit Indian Association of Homeschoolers. They were one of the first adopters of homeschooling. Also, homeschooling is more well-known and practiced in urban states in India, like, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, New Delhi and Pune. According to HSLDA, the estimate numbers of homeschoolers have been put between 500-1000 (Sinha, 2016).

Homeschooling is not a recent development in India. Its roots can be traced to ancient times, where children (Shishyas) were taught Gurus confirming to the tradition of Guru-Shishya. While some of the learning was provided by experts, some education was also provided by sages within the premises of the house. However, homeschooling presently in India is different.

According to Sinha (2016), there is an increase in number of parents who are moving away from rote method of teaching to opting for intuitions that involves alternate system of education like Montessori or Woldorf, or are even choosing to educate their children at home. In India, homeschooling does not require any registration, regulation or recognition by any agency or authority. It has been observed that most parents follow CBSE or state board syllabus. Students who are being homeschooled can give IGCSE exams as private candidates, or can give and write their 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> examinations of the National Institute of Open Learning (NOIS), through which students can acquire a degree or certificate and these exams are held at different centers across India. Further, some parents may also follow a liberal approach, where they design the curriculum by combining the syllabi from various boards.

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Moreover, they have the choice to decide whether they want to register with a board as well as to appear for examinations (TargetStudy, 2018).

Also, there are various supporting bodies in India which provide support to this kind of schooling. Some of them are, Indian Association of Homeschoolers (Swashikshan), Homeschooling Forum, Twitter of Homeschooling in India, Homeschooling in India Yahoo Group, Google Group of Indian Homeschooler's and FB of Homeschooler's, India. Further, Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) and International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), Pune Homeschooler's Group are some supporting organizations that work in favor of homeschooling in India, providing consultations or any other support activities (Target Study, 2018).

### ***A move towards homeschooling***

As discussed above, parent- led home-based education was the norm around the globe for many years. However, that changed drastically during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and home-based education nearly became extinct in developed nations. Researches have found technology and computer to support and facilitate homeschooling practices and activities (Andrade, 2008).

Studies have revealed that parents and youth choose homeschooling for various reasons. The most common reasons given by parents choosing to homeschool their child are to individualize the child's education, accomplish more academically, enhance family relations, safer learning environment, impart a particular set of values, beliefs to child, lack of choice in traditional school (Green& Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Murphy, 2012; Noel et al., 2013; Ray, 2015; Jolly, Matthews & Nester, 2013). Similarly, a study conducted by Andrade (2008) found dissatisfaction with options, policies, and practices adopted by conventional schools as major motivating factors underlying parent's decision to homeschool their children followed by other pedagogical and social factors like lack of individual program or negative influences from peers and religious motivations. However, the parents have reported that children face isolation due to homeschooling.

Further, research done by Setayesh and Lu (2015) found that special needs, providing better education, developing morality, strengthening the bond between family members, religious beliefs were major reasons for parents choosing to homeschool their child. Moreover, parents believed that flexibility, time for extracurricular activities, healthy eating habits, family bonding are major benefits whereas time management issue, missing on some school activities are major disadvantages. None of the parents believed that socialization was a disadvantage in homeschooling as both used various ways to keep their children socially active. Parents in India who are practicing homeschooling shared their experiences with various online sources. It was observed that their dissatisfaction with the prevalent school structure, the school's inability to respond to the individual needs and pace of the child, and specific learning needs of the child that the school fails to address were major reasons for choosing homeschooling (Ghosh, 2019).

Some scholars believed that elements of pedagogical practice, lifestyle, and philosophy of education that are generally systemic to home-based education might be causally related to higher academic achievement (Murphy, 2012; Ray, 2013). However, a study by Boulter (2017) observed no significant difference between the academic achievement of homeschooled children and students at public-school both the groups.

Numerous researches have also studied the social development and social skills of homeschooled students. For example, a study conducted by Medlin (2007) found that homeschooled children's social skills were consistently higher than those of public-school

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students. On the other hand, according to Bashman et al., (2007), homeschooled students are not adequately socialized and do not benefit from outside additional influences.

School is a formal institution which is designed to transmit knowledge and skills that children need to become productive members of society (Berk, 2017). Schools are a major medium of education over the past several decades. However, in recent times it has been observed that there is an increase in number of families who are shifting from formal institution of schooling to home-based education, also called homeschooling, for educating their children. Although, homeschooling movement originated in the United States, there is increasing evidence on homeschooling in India, suggesting that there is an increase in number of parents who are choosing to homeschool their children. Further, parents are responsible for providing education to their children; therefore, to understand the concept of homeschooling, it is important to study the perspective of parents who are homeschooling their children in to gain more insight into this concept. Moreover, most of the research on homeschooling are based on western context; therefore, the present study aims to understand the concept of homeschooling and its effects on the homeschool child through the perspective of parents practicing homeschooling, in the Indian context.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Research Questions*

- What is homeschooling and how is it different from mainstream schooling?
- What motivates a parent to choose homeschooling?
- Does homeschooling affect child's ability to socialize?
- Does homeschooling affect family unit and structure?

#### *Research Objectives*

- To understand the concept of homeschooling
- To gain an understanding of the difference between homeschooling and mainstream/traditional schooling
- To understand the reasons behind parents decision of homeschooling
- To understand the effect of homeschooling on the child's socialization process
- To understand the impact of homeschooling on the family practicing it

The questions of the interview were formed around the research questions and objectives.

#### *Preliminary Data*

**Table 1 Demographics of participants**

Participants (mothers)	Age	Job	Number of children	Number of siblings	Family structure	Age of the child	Number of years of homeschooling
1	38	Psychiatrist	1	None	Nuclear	5 years	1
2	44	Entrepreneur in social impact	1	None	Nuclear	16 years	5
3	35	Recruiter	2	1	Nuclear	Older child- 11 years Younger child- 7 years	2.5
4	35	Housewife	2	1	Joint	8 years	More than 2
5	38	Teaching	1	None	Joint	12 years	2-3

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### *Sample*

The sample of the present study involved families who are currently practicing homeschooling with their children who were earlier a part of mainstream schools. The sample consisted of 5 mothers from Delhi/ NCR. Purposive sampling was used in the present study because only those parents were chosen as participants who are practicing homeschooling (minimum 1 year to maximum 5 years).

### *Design*

The present study is qualitative on nature. For the present study, the data was collected using semi-structured interview method and it was analyzed using thematic analysis given by Braun and Clark (2006).

### *Analysis*

Since, the concept of homeschooling is recent in India and with very few researches in the Indian context, therefore thematic analysis was chosen to understand the perspective of parents on homeschooling and its effects on the child. The idea was to get a comprehensive and detailed understanding of homeschooling in India through the perspective of parents practicing it. Since, the data was in the form of interviews, therefore, the first step was to transcribe the interviews which aided the process of familiarization with the data. The next step was to code the data. Coding refers to highlighting sections of the text or data- usually done in the form of phrases and sentences. The aim is to come up with shorthand codes or labels to describe the content of the data set (Braun and Clark, 2006). In the present study, open coding was done and therefore, initial codes were generated. The similar codes were then grouped together to form themes. Next, the themes were reviewed and compared against the data set to ensure that it captures the data. Finally, the themes were named and defined. To ensure reliability of coding, the data was handled by two researchers.

### *Procedure*

Casual conversation was taken up to build rapport with the participant. Once, the participant was at ease and comfortable, they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses will remain confidential. Further, their consent was also taken to audio record the interview. When the participants gave their consent to participate in the study, their interview was started. At the end of the interview, they were thanked for giving their time and participation. This process was followed for other four interviews as well. Later, follow up interviews were also conducted to clarify and enhance the researcher's understanding of the concept of homeschooling. Later, the interviews which were in the form of audio were transcribed (both Hindi & English) and coded.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The present study aims to explore and understand the concept of homeschooling as an alternative way to educate children from the perspective of parents who are currently practicing it. The following are the themes that have been identified from the data.

### *Conception of Homeschooling*

This theme helps to understand the concept and idea of homeschooling. The response of participants suggested that learning is the basis of homeschooling. Further, thus learning takes place from various sources and is not just focused on teaching children from books. A variety of different learning sources like learning through environment, stories, activities, travelling etc were identified from the responses of participants. Every participant had a

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different way to teach their children. Moreover, some participants believed that homeschooling helps children to learn at their own pace.

*“So the (umm) the, for me it's learning at your own pace growing in the way that you are pursuing your special talents your interests you are learning to environment”*

*“It is not limited to books it's just you know you learn from anywhere and everywhere that is possible”*

*“Homeschooling according to me is basically letting the child be you know himself and herself for my case in my child he's basically a self learner”*

Further, it was also observed from the responses that homeschooling is not entirely unstructured in nature as participants reported that it involves following a curriculum and pattern.

*“So in home schooling basically there is a pattern that parents follows as far as education or curriculum is concerned”*

*“So, homeschooling is you can follow a certain curriculum”*

Therefore, it is observed that homeschooling have a structure but not as restricted as schools since it assumes certain flexibility according to the needs of the child.

### ***Essence of Homeschooling***

This theme helps to understand the basis of homeschooling and what makes it a unique way of teaching as compared to mainstream schools. A variety of factors have been identified from the responses of participants that helps in distinguishing the nature of homeschooling from mainstream schools. For a majority of participants, homeschooling is child-driven. The responses suggest that the child takes the ownership and initiative to learn. Further, unlike schools, children in homeschooling seek knowledge according to a majority of responses. This may mean that the children tend to put their efforts while learning and gaining knowledge.

*“It's just that it has to be (umm) child driven. It, I don't think we would like her to homeschool, it, it comes to the fact that she said 'I want to study at home and I think I'll do better at home and she said that give me a year and if don't do well then you can decide what to do and she did well and she lost 22kgs on her own just I think by doing nothing because of the baggage perhaps and she was studying better”*

Moreover, it was observed through the responses that the interests and choices of the child are priorities in homeschooling. Homeschooling allows the child to learn according to their interests along with doing things they enjoy.

*“So, that is the main difference because in school a child has to learn all the subjects or has to understand all the subjects but here in this case he doesn't need to. He will follow his own passion”*

Further, homeschooling in contrast to mainstream schools allows and help children to learn beyond academics. Most of the Participants reported that they teach a variety of skills like

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morality, family values etc to their children apart from teaching them the contents of studying material.

*“So, I show them that video and this is what I told them at home that you know, you should not be bullying anyone around you which you, you know are like these little things in life which you are not taught in school”*

*“..I have believed that you know, kindness is one of the most important thing that a child should be taught about”*

Also, the responses of some participants suggested that teaching at home does not mean that one has to necessarily adopt the environment of the school in order to teach their child.

*“So, the only thing was, we didn’t want her to study at home and then just like its as good as being in the school.”*

*“One point, that I wanted to talk about is that you know, parents who are thinking of homeschooling, they should let go of the idea that they have to stimulate that exact environment of the school at home.”*

### **Characteristics of Homeschooling**

This theme deals with understanding the features of homeschooling. Several features have been identified from the responses of participants that helps in making it distinctive from other ways of teaching. Flexibility is one on the core features of homeschooling. Majority of participants reported that there is no pressure experienced by them as well as their children as homeschooling does not involve finishing a task in specified period of time as compared to schools where a fixed schedule is followed.

*“Different that, that the homeschooling kids are actually not in hurry”*

*“One is you know, there is no set (thinking)there is lot of flexibility which is not there in the mainstream schooling”*

Mainstream Schools have been associated with rote learning rather than allowing the child to think on their own. However, homeschooling allows the child to think on their own first, therefore helps in stimulating their cognitive abilities. Most participants believed that homeschooling helps children t broaden their understanding and perspective.

*“In homeschooling it’s just that you know, we encourage them to use their own brain write what you feel, what you have understood, what you learn, just, just that.”*

Encouraging and cultivating creativity in the children were also observed as a major feature of home-based education. It can be concluded from the responses of participants that homeschooling allows children to explore their creative side and be as creative as they can be while doing things.

*“Homeschooling encourages kids to be more creative you know (umm) whatever is their mind, it comes out, when you homeschool because you are not told to do this whereas in school you are told to do certain things, that you should do this, this is how you write, this is the painting you have to draw, this is the answer that you have to write”*

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Other features that were identified that made homeschooling distinctive are that firstly, it gives child more freedom to explore their environment.

*“You can let your child be in the nature, there is a lot of freedom to explore”*

Secondly, homeschooling allows parents to develop an educational program that is tailored according to the needs of the child.

*“So, I was saying that for us homeschool is personalized education”*

*“So, it’s very individualistic which mainstream schools, although promise to be but they are not”*

Therefore, homeschooling is seen as a kind of personalized education.

### ***Pre-requisites to Homeschooling***

This theme addresses the conditions that are required before opting homeschooling as a method for educating children. Three major conditions that need to be considered before choosing homeschooling were identified from the responses of participants. Most participants believed that the parents need to focus on the abilities and needs of the child along with their own ability, before making the decision to homeschool a child.

*“I mean I don’t see a lot of kids who will be happy seeking out knowledge on their own, so, that of course depends”*

*“.. on the other hand, not every every parent can homeschool because it takes a lot of effort, a lot of time, a lot of attention (umm) for a child”*

Further, work life of parents was also found to be a major factor that needs to be considered while making a decision about going for homeschooling. It was observed from the responses that homeschooling may not be a viable option if both the parents have a full-time job.

The responses of participants suggested that one of the parents must always be present with the child for smooth functioning of homeschooling and mostly it was the mothers that stayed with the children. One of the participants was a housewife while the others were working mothers, but they reported that the flexibility in their working conditions and job helped them to practice homeschooling effectively with their children.

*“It’s for us it was easier because I work a lot from home and also the kind of work that I do which is in student’s foundation, so it’s easier to involve her in projects and have a learning through that also”*

*“I think if you are full time working it’s also very difficult because we are partly at home and I work from home a lot it’s easier to implement something like this”*

Similarly, it has been found that the responsibilities of homeschooling were more to be on a mother’s shoulder (Jolly, Matthews & Nester, 2013). In the present study, it was observed that all the mothers opted for it themselves but culture could have played a role in their decision since women are expected to be take care of their children more than men.

### ***Information about Homeschooling***

This theme refers to the ways and sources through which participants became aware about homeschooling. Homeschooling as an alternate way to educate children was known to some

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participants; however most of the participants came to know about the idea of homeschooling through various sources. Participants reported various sources like internet, news articles, relatives, that helped them to become aware about homeschooling.

*“So, just while exploring these questions I came across this homes.. concept of homeschooling and there was this particular lady’s number in that page which I found, so, then I called her up the next day and asked her for this concept about it and I clarified my doubts as well”*

*“I have relatives in other countries like America, Australia and where homeschooling is quite a common thing and I was since ever really into this that okay wow! This is one great concept but it was not in India”*

Some of the participants reported that they further, researched about home-based education, while one of participants interacted with parents practicing homeschooling to gain a broader understanding of the concept before taking the decision.

*“So, I got in touch with them, spoke to a lot of parents before I actually got them out of the school and that’s how we started”*

*“So, the concept started building there and then I dd lot of Google research n all”*

### **Process of Homeschooling**

This theme helps in understanding how homeschooling operates and what steps and process if followed by participants to teach their children. Most of the participants reported that no hard and fast rule is followed while planning the daily timetable of the child. It was found that a variety of sources are referred for teaching children. Most of the participants referred to online sources and books to teach their child.

*“We don't have a fixed routine or anything but yes, of course, starting from the books is a part of our daily routine”*

*“Actually, I am not, I don't plan it as of now “*

*“So, I just told you all right that there is online professors there is internet of course, khan whatever and then there are of course these reference books and there are a lot of things”*

However, all the participants were not following the same Academic curriculum. For example, some participants choose to follow CBSE with one following Woldorf curriculum and one following IGCSE. This suggests that homeschooling gave participants the flexibility in choosing the academic curriculum followed by choosing subjects that are of interests to the child. Moreover, it was observed from the responses of participants that there is no single way of teaching in homeschooling. For example, some participants taught through practical applications, while some engage in discussions with their children.

*“So in fact i get calendar invites from her that sociology Q/ A and then English some text analysis so I have to accept that and say ‘yeah’ that is our time”*

*“It can be applied everywhere, in kitchen as well so I bring that”*

Another common pattern found in the responses of the participants was that homeschooling gave their children the time and opportunity to participate in extra- curricular activities.

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*“So, yeah, like I said, filmmaking, is a.. short films she makes these short films”*

*“Extra curricular, he goes to the adda that is his passion basically”*

Seriousness is an important part of any process including learning and it emerged as an important component of homeschooling. Even though the child is being taught at home, being serious while studying is considered important in homeschooling. Responses of participants suggested that Every participant had their own way of maintaining seriousness while teaching their children.

*“If you are serious, it comes”*

*“It has become a part of our routine”*

### ***A Shift towards Homeschooling***

This theme addresses the reasons behind participant’s decision of shifting from mainstream schooling and choosing homeschooling for their children. One of the major reasons that were observed from the responses of participants was their dissatisfaction with the traditional schools. All the participants reported that they were dissatisfied and unhappy with the way the school system operates. Similar results have been found in existing studies. For example, a study conducted by Andrade (2008) found dissatisfaction with options, policies, and practices adopted by conventional schools as major motivating factors underlying parent’s decision to homeschool their children. Further, most of the participants mentioned that they were also unhappy with their child’s progress and development in the school.

*“We were not happy with the school system because (umm) you know, the kind teachers there are in the school nowadays they are only focusing on what is dead in the books you know, it's only, the focus is on cramming and not learning in school”*

*“Just because I was not satisfied with the way schools was working with the kids.”*

Moreover, the incapability of schools to handle their child’s needs and problems was also highlighted as a major reason for this shift.

*“The kids are not secured in school at all and that, really moved me”*

*“The other was of course she was very (umm)overweight at that time and there, there is a fair amount of isolation. I, I don’t think bullying is the right word because its very overused but you are somewhere not sort of accepted in the main popular clique set groups that you have and that wasn’t making her happy”*

### ***Social Agents in the Environment***

This theme addresses the perceptions, reactions and behavior of people who are part of participants social environment on their decision of choosing homeschooling. The decision of homeschooling was not appreciated and supported by families of most of the participants. For example, one of the participants reported that she had to convince her husband to adopt homeschooling for their child.

*“So, one of the, I think, the most difficult thing was to convince his father of the option”*

*“(umm) that time we had, I mean his grandfather was there. Now, he is expired. So, he was against it”*

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Further, as school is considered a norm and a formal institution for education, all participants reported that their decision led them to face negative reactions from their social environment and that people negatively perceived their decision. For example, some participants were constantly thrown with questions about their decision.

*“The only difficulty we faced (umm) was the society because in India, it is very difficult for people to accept that kids can learn and grow without going to school”*

*“Yes, because in this you don’t get a lot of cooperation from anywhere”*

However, it was also observed that one of the participants received support from her family which is interesting as most of the participants received negative reactions as discussed above

*“That ways I was lucky in a way that my mother told me ok, if like, I mean I think because she thinks from her own viewpoint from being in a small town like Bhagalpur”*

Further, most of the participants reported that with time, their families gradually accepted and became comfortable with homeschooling. The positive results of homeschooling were found to be one of the major reasons that led to this acceptance.

*“But if they see its result, they sometimes say that it is very”*

*“But gradually when he was also, you now, when he could see himself the progress in Harjas, so even he was like aap log jesa kare ho kardo”*

This suggests that people start accepting and understanding unconventional practices once they start to observe its positive outcomes.

### ***Emotional Experiences in the Family***

This theme deals with the emotions experienced by the participants and their children through their process of practicing homeschooling. Some of the participants reported that they experienced negative emotions like doubt, fear, and stress when they began the process of homeschooling. On the contrary, some participants reported that they were happy and positive from the beginning.

*“Difficulty, yes, emotionally, psychologically mentally, a lot of difficulties for me in particular..”*

*“I was happy to know that there are people who are homeschooling because it somehow spoke to my soul and spoke to my mind.....”*

However, over the course of practicing homeschooling with their children, most of the participants started experiencing positive emotions. Moreover, all the participants reported that they are happy with their decision. Although, homeschooling has its own challenges, the experience was found to be beautiful for all the participants.

A similar pattern of mixed emotions was also observed being experienced by homeschoolers. Majority of participants mentioned that not only them but their children were also happy being taught at home rather than studying at school. However, these positive emotions of homeschoolers were accompanied by some negative emotions as well. The most prevalent of them was that the homeschoolers missed their social groups.

*“They have been really happy since the day we decided to homeschool”*

*“He misses that peer group”*

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Therefore, the responses of participants suggest that the process of homeschooling involves an experience of positive as well as negative emotions experienced by both the parent and their children.

### ***Interchanging Parent- Teacher Roles***

This theme helps to understand how the participants play the role of being a teacher and a parent for their children. Some participants feel that they are not a teacher to their children; they are facilitators who are helping their child.

*“I am not a teacher (laughs). I don’t think I am a teacher. I am a facilitator”*

*“I am not a teacher to them. I am only parenting (laughs)”*

For some participants both these roles are similar in nature. However, one participant reported that she switches between these two roles accurately. She behaves like a teacher when she teaches the child and is a parent in the remaining period.

*“Actually, this is not much different. We have made it. It is very latest trend that we are making teacher and a mother very different thing, it is just one thing because a teacher can be a friend, can be a guide also, can be a parent also”*

There are individual differences in the approach of parents, while some are strictly adhere to both roles alternatively, some are more flexible.

### ***Social Relations of Homeschoolers***

As homeschooling is more individualized in its nature, it’s important to understand how it impacts the socialization process of homeschoolers. Therefore, this theme addresses the influence of homeschooling on the social relations that the homeschoolers have.

Some participants reported that the practice of homeschooling did not affect their child’s relations with others in a positive or a negative way. They shared the similar relationship with them which they had before they were part of homeschooling.

*No, not at all. not at all. I don’t think, there are two different thing. I don’t think it has affected in any manner”*

But it was observed from many of the responses that the practice of homeschooling had positive impacts on the relations of homeschoolers with various social agents in their environment. In homeschooling, child spends and interacts more with their parents. For most participants homeschooling helped in improving their relations with their child. Responses of majority of participants suggest that homeschooling helped them and their children to strengthen their bond and connection. This improved relationship may be attributed to the fact that they are able to spend time with each other and are able to talk with each other which they were not able to do when the child was going to school. Although participants mentioned that they have arguments with their children but they are healthy and constructive in nature.

*“I think the relationship with me only got better due to homeschooling”*

*“In terms of relationship, I would think its stronger because you are spending more time and you are also understanding the child, you know, strengths and challenges very closely”*

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Apart from parents, siblings, cousins, other family members and friends also are a major part of the child's social environment. The responses of most of the participants suggest that their children developed a growing and healthy relationship with their siblings, cousins and other family members as a result of homeschooling.

*“With his sibling, it's much more better because otherwise they never used to get so much time you know, with each other”*

*“They are very close to each other”*

This positive and improved relations of homeschoolers with their family is maybe because homeschooling gives the time and opportunity to kids to interact and spend time with their family as it is flexible in nature, whereas when the child is in school, he/ she is tied to a fixed schedule and may restrict them to spend good amount of time in interaction. Reavis and Zakrinski (2005) also found that children who were being homeschooled had more positive attitudes towards their teachers/ coaches, had more positive relationships with their parents and more positive interpersonal relationships in general and had a higher self-esteem than the other group.

Similarly, friends are an important part of one's social network. The homeschoolers have friends who are studying in regular schools indicating that the homeschoolers and their friends may have different schedules. Despite this, majority of participants reported that homeschooling helped their children to develop better connections with their friends. Their decision of homeschooling did not strain the friendships of their children.

*“So the only group he has is the kids in the apartment. So he looks forward to playing with them in the evening and he has become more cooperative also like he doesn't try to push his own agenda everytime like ok!fine. I have to play with them”*

*“In fact, her own school..the friends that she was not probably as close to in school have become far more closer because they have, they as..they have seen she has manage to do a lot while being at home”*

Similar to the findings of the present study, McKinley et al. (2007) found that the homeschooled children scored significantly lower on conflict as compared to the other groups and significantly higher on the feelings off closeness to best friends as compared to children attending public school. Moreover, Kerns (2016) found that playing with other children in their neighborhood acted as one of the opportunities for homeschooled children to socialize. However, one of the participants also mentions that her children's friendship was affected negatively due to homeschooling because the parents of the friends had negative perceptions about homeschooling and passed these viewpoints to their children which affected the friendships of her children in a negative way.

*“You know, how kids learn from their parents. So at times their , the kids maybe overhear their parents talk that ok! you know, this family doesn't send kids to school, you know, police will catch hold of them. Inko jail jojaegi, inke upar case hojaega and all those kinds of things because this is not (umm) according to them legal in India and then their friends would come and tell ki ok!you know, tumhare upar case hojaega”*

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Moreover, as homeschooling is still a newer method of teaching, some participants feel that it makes their child different from their peers whereas some believe that this alternate way of education is not making their child an odd-one out. However, all participants believe they do not need to compensate for this and as one participant mentioned that they should feel proud even if they are different.

*“Well yes, definitely yes, in a good manner and in a bad manner both.... If he is odd one out sahi its great”*

Lastly, it may be observed that the academic performance and learning of homeschoolers and their fellow peers who are going to school may differ because the process followed in both the institutions are different as discussed above. While comparing their children’s academic performance with their peers, some participants believed that their child might lack in some areas but excel in others. Some participants also reported that they feel that their child is at par with their peers when it comes to academics. However, there were some responses which suggested that some participants didn’t feel like comparing their kids with their friends.

*“I don’t know if they are at par with their (umm) friend circle but they are definitely not lagging behind also”*

*“That ways I can’t compare because there are lot of things he doesn’t do and there is a lot of things which he does above his grade”*

There have been mixed findings on academic performance of homeschoolers in the literature. For example, some studies have found higher academic achievement in homeschoolers (Murphy, 2012; Ray, 2013). However, Boulter (2017) observed no significant difference between the academic achievement of homeschooled children and students at public-school both the groups.

### ***Enhanced Social Skills***

This theme focuses on the influence of home-based education on the social skills of homeschoolers. According to Loannis and Efrosini (2008), social skills are defined as ,” a complicated collections of skills that include communication, solving problems, making decisions, assertiveness, interactions with peers and groups, and self management.”

All the participants described that homeschooling had a positive impact on the social skills of homeschoolers. The responses suggested that participants observed improvement in their child’s interpersonal and interaction skills because of homeschooling.

*“His interpersonal skills have only become better that is what I can say because he gets a lot of independent interactions”*

Although, one might believe that homeschooling might reduce the child’s interaction at one level i.e. school, however, it does not reduce their opportunity to interact with other people that makes their social environment. They can interact with them and communicate well with them.

### ***Accessibility***

This theme deals with the perception of participants on the accessibility to homeschooling. Different perspectives on accessibility to homeschooling were observed in the responses of

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participants. Some participants believed that homeschooling was accessible for everyone while others believed that homeschooling is not accessible to everyone.

*“It sure is accessible to everyone”*

*“It is, yes definitely it is accessible again because (umm) you are following your own passion and you don't want to go by the society's norm..”*

Although, some responses suggest that homeschooling is open for every child, however, some participants also believed that accessibility does not guarantee that homeschooling will be beneficial for every child as some children learn, develops, and performs better in a school environment

*“No, I don't think homeschooling is for every child but it is a good option to consider if your child is being overwhelmed by the school and if you are feeling the stress but there are kids who love going to school and who thrive within that environment and for those kids school is a good place to be”*

Homeschooling is accessible to everyone but most of the participants believe that if it becomes legal it encourages everyone to consider it as a method of education because legality gives social acceptance and a position in society. Homeschooling has been legally approved in India. Therefore, this might encourage other parents to consider it as a way of educating their children.

### **Outcomes of Homeschooling**

This theme helps in understanding the gains and challenges experienced in homeschooling. The practice of homeschooling yielded positive results and benefits at various levels for them as well as for the homeschoolers. Some of these benefits were common to all participants whereas some benefits were experienced individually by some participants. A significant portion of responses mentioned that homeschooling helped the children learn positive attitudes towards themselves and others, like being accepting and non-judgmental about others, positive beliefs towards oneself, increased confidence etc. Further, some participants also reported that they noticed a positive change in their children's behavior. For example, one of the participants mentioned that her child learnt to play on his own without depending on another person.

*“He has become more cooperative also like he doesn't try to push his own agenda every time like ok, fine I have to play with them”*

*“Then, I ask him to play on his own which now he has learnt to do”*

A major gain experienced in homeschooling by all the participants was its positive influence on their child's cognitive abilities. All the participants reported that homeschooling helped enhance various cognitive skills of homeschoolers like their learning ability, creativity, broader perception etc.

*“Learning process, now he think, understand things much faster and much easier because again it's a one to one thing”*

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*“So, because you are homeschooling, you are able to understand that no this is. life is.. are beyond these things and there is so much and her ability to grasp has become stronger”*

Similar results have been found by a study conducted by Elshap (2018). The study found that with homeschooling increases cognitive development through increased student achievement.

The responses of few participants also suggested that homeschooling positively impacted their family thinking and bonding.

*“So, the whole atmosphere of the home changed. We were having much more different conversations”*

Also, some participants believed that the process of homeschooling has been a journey of learning for them as well. However, benefits are always accompanied by some challenges which was also evident in the responses of participants.

*“Like right now when you are in age when you know everybody has boyfriends and you know parties and stuff that's when you miss it little and try and make your own way on that”*

Therefore, the responses of participants suggested that every parent had their own set of challenges that they faced and still are facing.

### ***Moving Forward with Homeschooling***

This theme addresses whether participants wish to continue the practice of homeschooling. Continuing with homeschooling to teach their children was a common response found in all responses. However, some participants expressed that this continuation with homeschooling will depend on their children. This suggests that the decision lies with the children or homeschoolers which stresses the point observed in the previous themes that homeschooling is child - driven and based on the choices and interests of child, the decision to continue with homeschooling also involves and is based on these features.

*“Yes, as of now yes. Now it depends because as I like told you it was his decision so we respected that. So, just in case in future if he wants to go back to school or because of his passion if he needs to go back to school, so then we will be thinking about it”*

Further, it was also observed that homeschoolers had different reactions on going back to their regular schools. Some responses suggested extreme reactions. For example, one of the homeschoolers expressed to go back to normal school while the other homeschoolers didn't. Some participants also reported that their children had mixed feelings when asked if they wished to join back normal schools. However it was observed that the major reason for expressing to go back was for peer and social groups of homeschoolers.

*“Yes, once. I think about 10-15 days back my elder one said that you know, I really want to go back to school because you know schools are fun, my friends who go to school keep telling me that school is fun but then on the other hand I don't want to go to school because there is a lot of pressure”*

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*“As far as he is concerned, he is such a young that he doesn't understand what is mainstream school or alter or anything but as far as going back to school, yes he has and as I have already told in the interview its mostly because he misses that peer group”*

After, analyzing the data of the present study, it can be observed that homeschooling is an individualized education program. The basis of it is learning while prioritizing the needs, choices and interests of the child. Homeschooling can be distinguished from the mainstream schools on the basis of various features like homeschooling is flexible, encourages creativity, stimulates cognitive abilities unlike regular schools which have a fixed time table and is often associated with rote learning. Dissatisfaction with the school system along with school's inability to handle child's problems as well as lack of satisfaction with their child's development in school were identified as major reasons that caused participants to shift to homeschooling. Homeschooling involves a process to be followed which again can be uniquely designed according to the children and their parents. However, following a curriculum is an important aspect of home-based education.

This journey was not easy for them because of the negative reactions they received from people around them on their decision. However, with time the positive results of homeschooling forced these social agents to change their opinions. The journey of homeschooling like any other journey involves one to experience a range of emotions. Although, people may believe that homeschooling may restrict the environment of child to just home, however this is not the case. Homeschooling allows the child to socialize with everyone in their environment and also enhances the child's social relations and social skills in most of the cases. Although, homeschooling is challenging, however, teaching at home has been found to be beneficial for their children by all the participants.

### **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of the present study was to explore and understand the concept of homeschooling as an alternative way to educate children from the perspective of parents who are currently practicing it. After analyzing the data, 15 themes were identified. The findings of the present study reveals that homeschooling is an individualized educational program with learning at its core. The decision and practice of homeschooling is accompanied by various reactions of others as well as various emotions experienced by both the parents and homeschoolers. Further, socialization is not difficult for children when practicing homeschooling with them.

### ***Implications, Limitations, And Future Directions***

As, there is limited research on homeschooling in the Indian context, the findings of present study will help provide an understanding of this concept in the Indian context. The experiences shared by the participants can help and encourage other parents to consider homeschooling as a way of teaching their child.

However, the present study has certain limitations. Firstly, the present study only involved the perspective of parents and not the homeschoolers. Secondly, experience of only one of the parent i.e. mothers were studied. Therefore, future studies can explore and study the experiences of both the homeschoolers and their fathers as well. Also, future researches can conduct a comparative study between children studying in regular or conventional schools and children studying at home.

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