



## Impact and Challenges of Homeschooling on the Socialization of Primary School-Aged Children in Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This paper examined the impact and challenges of homeschooling on the socialization of primary school-aged children in Nigeria. The purpose of this paper was to explore the impact and key challenges of homeschooling on the socialization of primary school-aged children in the Nigerian context. The paper acknowledged that homeschooling while offering a range of educational benefits such as the ability to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of the child and the potential for one-on-one attention, has its unique challenges for the social skills development of primary school children which include limited peer interaction, parental oversight and involvement, sociocultural factors among others. These challenges result to potential consequences on the socialization of the child such as social and emotional challenges which in turn affects the mental health and well-being of the child, academic and professional implications and so on. The paper also suggested strategies to enhance socialization in homeschooling such as promoting structured social opportunities, fostering peer interaction through technology, developing mentor relationships, encouraging extracurricular engagement amongst others. It was concluded that the success of these strategies could showcase how beneficial homeschooling can be, particularly during emergencies that tend to halt school attendance abruptly. This can even prompt advocating for the legalization of homeschooling practice in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Homeschooling, Socialization, Primary school-aged children.

### 1. Introduction

Homeschooling, the practice of educating children at home rather than in a conventional school setting, has been a topic of much debate and discussion in recent years. According to Abdulrahman (2020),

homeschooling is a contemporary educational practice which is unpopular in many countries, not because the government is unaware of it, but as a result of their peculiarities and existing laws on compulsory education, technically prohibiting the adoption or subscription to its practice in these countries, Nigeria inclusive. Following the UBE Act of 2004, it is clear that the objectives dwell extensively on formal schooling. There is no mention of any waiver or alternative in form of homeschooling. Also, the Nigerian National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) portrays the overall practice of the country's education system and has no provision for homeschooling making it alien to so many in Nigeria (Abdulrahman, 2020). Despite the stance of these laws, it has become imperative to look at the issue of homeschooling, particularly as it became apparent as a result of the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic in 2020. It has also become popular as a result of insecurity and vulnerability in certain parts of the country. Parents also have come to perceive the importance of homeschooling and its influence on the performance and standard of schools in catering to the educational needs of their children.

While proponents of homeschooling argue that it provides a more personalized and tailored education, critics often raise concerns about its potential impact on the social development of children. This is particularly relevant in the context of Nigeria, where homeschooling is becoming increasingly popular particularly after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the country's educational system and social norms may differ significantly from those in Western nations where much of the existing researches on homeschooling have been conducted. While homeschooling offers certain academic and scheduling benefits, there are also important questions around the impact it may have on the social

development and integration of the child. Socializing with peers, learning to navigate group dynamics, and being exposed to diverse perspectives are all critical aspects of a child's formative years that can be affected by their homeschooling experience.

Socialization, the process by which individuals acquire the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to function effectively in society, is a fundamental aspect of child development (Corsaro, 2017). During the primary school years, typically between the ages of 6 and 12, children undergo a crucial phase of social and emotional maturation, marked by significant cognitive, physical, and behavioral changes (Eccles, 1999), hence the focus on primary-school aged children in this paper. In this stage, children's social circles expand beyond the family unit, and peer interactions become increasingly important for the development of essential social skills, such as communication, cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution (Rubin, Bukowski and Parker, 2006). Participating in group activities, navigating social hierarchies, and learning to navigate interpersonal relationships are all crucial experiences that contribute to a child's overall socialization (Ladd, 2005).

Research has consistently demonstrated the positive impact of social interactions on children's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development. For example, studies have shown that children who engage in frequent peer interactions tend to exhibit higher levels of social competence, self-regulation, and academic achievement compared to their more socially isolated counterparts (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Rubin et al., 2006). Ray (2013) explained that homeschooling parents refer to this as the "S" question because nearly all homeschoolers encounter the "what about socialization?" question throughout and after their homeschooling experience. Haugh (2014) wrote that the question, "How will your kids make friends?" (a reference to the social activity focus) is often a follow-up question. Another follow-up question is "How will your kids learn proper behaviour?" (a reference to social influence) and "How will your kids learn about different people and how to get along in society?" (a reference to social exposure). These questions are inevitable given that the institutionalization of educating children aged 6–12 years has been the societal norm for multiple generations (Ray, 2013).

While the benefits of homeschooling, such as the ability to tailor the curriculum to the child's needs and the potential for one-on-one attention are well considered, the impact on a child's social development is also a crucial consideration, especially for primary school-aged children. This paper will explore the

impact and key challenges of homeschooling on the socialization of primary school-aged children in the Nigerian context. It will examine the potential pros and cons, drawing on research, expert insights, and real-world experiences to provide a balanced analysis of this important issue. The goal is to shed light on how homeschooling may shape a child's social skills, peer relationships, and broader integration into Nigerian society.

## 2. Concept of Socialization

The concept of socialization is one of the central concepts in Sociology. It is a learning process by which an individual develops into a social being and is able to function in society. Child rearing, formal education, acculturation and role learning are all socializing processes that help to mould individuals to the ways of their society and culture. Socialization begins almost at birth and continues throughout life. The Encyclopedia of Infant and Early Childhood Development (2008), defined Socialization as the process whereby an individual's standards, skills, motives, attitudes and behaviour change to conform to those regarded as desirable and appropriate for his or her present and future role in any particular society.

Socialization also refers to the process which transforms a quite helpless human infant into a self-aware, knowledgeable person who is skilled in the ways of their society's culture (Giddens, 2014). Worsley (1972), on the other hand, defines socialization as the transmission of culture, the process whereby men learn the rules and practices of social groups. Socialization is an aspect of all activities within all human societies. During the process of socialization, children learn about their family traditions from their elders, preserve and pass them on to the next generation as they grow older. It helps children to learn and perform the different roles and responsibilities which they have learnt from their elders (Giddens, 2006).

Since socialization is an important matter for society, it is not desirable that the child's socialization should be left to mere accident but should be controlled through institutional channels. What a child is going to be is more important than what he is. It is socialization which turns the child into a useful member of the society and gives him social maturity. Therefore, it is of paramount need to know as to who socializes the child. There are two sources of a child's socialization; the first includes those who have authority over him; the second are those who are equal in authority to him. The first category may include parents, teachers and elderly persons. The second one includes the

playmates, the friends and the fellows in the club. In one category, is the relationship of constraint, in the other is that of co-operation.

#### Concept of Homeschooling

Homeschooling basically refers to a form of private education programme that is home-based and usually parent-led (Ray, 2015). In other words, it is a practice of teaching a child at home guided by the formal school curriculum either by the parent or a tutor as an alternative to school-based education. The home has been mankind's earliest and most essential 'school'. The idea of homeschooling (i.e. home-based education or home education) is an ancient practice which began ages before school-based education system was conceived (Ballmann, 1995). However, the advent of school-based education (formal schooling system) eclipsed the idea and practice of homeschooling. This was due to several advantages that the former was portrayed to have over the latter. For example, the formal school system had professionally trained teachers, an organized curriculum, formal learning environment, organized form of administration and it seem to provide a better platform for intellectual and social development for the learners. Though overshadowed by the emergence and rapid adoption of institutionalized education (school-based education system), formal homeschooling is regaining popularity in recent years (Ray, 2020; Adeleke, 2020). In the context of Nigeria, Adeleke (2020) posits that public awareness of homeschooling is on the increase and he attributed this increase to the Covid-19 lockdown.

### 3. Renaissance of Homeschooling in Nigeria

Following [the COVID-19](#) pandemic, which caused severe disturbances in the formal educational system across the globe, homeschooling saw modest expansion in Nigeria. Numerous schools were closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak including Nigeria. Parents and guardians had to look into alternate educational choices to ensure their children continued learning as schools temporarily closed to stop the virus' spread. In particular, in packed or poorly ventilated classrooms, some parents might have been apprehensive about taking their kids to school during the pandemic. Homeschooling offered a way to minimize viral exposure while preserving academic continuity. The epidemic pushed the use of educational technologies and online learning. As a result of this change, families could contemplate homeschooling because they had access to digital tools and venues for learning. The timing and learning rate can be flexible when children are homeschooled. Parents with flexible schedules and those who worked

from home during the pandemic could change their daily routines to accommodate homeschooling. Some parents may have considered continuing homeschooling even after schools reopened since they discovered that online educational tools and platforms provided a high-quality educational experience.

One of the key drivers of the rise in homeschooling in Nigeria is the perceived inadequacy of the public education system. Many parents, particularly those in urban areas, are dissatisfied with the overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and poor quality of instruction in public schools (Adebayo, 2019). This has led some families to seek alternative educational options, such as private schools or homeschooling, in an effort to provide their children with a better education.

Another significant factor that may likely contribute to the growth of homeschooling in Nigeria is the issue of insecurity. In recent years, Nigeria has faced a number of high-profile incidents of violence and unrest in schools, including kidnappings, terrorist attacks, and student riots (Odufowokan, 2022). This has led some parents to withdraw their children and wards from school. An alternative therefore is for them to embrace homeschooling as a way of protecting their children from these threats and provide a safer learning environment.

### 4. The Influence of Homeschooling on the Social Development of Children in Nigeria

One of the primary concerns commonly raised about homeschooling is its potential impact on the social development of children. The argument is that by removing children from the traditional school environment, they may miss out on important opportunities for socialization, peer interaction, and the development of critical social skills (Merry & Karsten, 2010).

In the context of Nigeria, this concern may be particularly salient, as the country's cultural and social norms place a strong emphasis on community, family, and social connection. Nigerian society is often characterized as collectivist, with a strong emphasis on group identity, social hierarchies, and the importance of interpersonal relationships (Okafor, 2017). In this context, the potential isolation and lack of social interaction experienced by homeschooled children may be seen as problematic. However, the existing research on the social development of homeschooled children in Nigeria is limited, and the findings are somewhat mixed. A 2018 study by the Centre for Learning and Childhood Development (CLCD) found

that homeschooled children in Nigeria scored lower on measures of social skills and peer relationships compared to their counterparts in conventional schools (CLCD, 2018). The study suggested that the lack of exposure to diverse social environments and the limited opportunities for unsupervised peer interaction in homeschooling may hinder the development of important social skills, such as conflict resolution, communication, and empathy.

On the other hand, a 2021 survey by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) found that many homeschooling parents in Nigeria were actively engaged in providing their children with opportunities for social interaction and community involvement (NERDC, 2021). This included organizing regular group activities, field trips, and play-dates, as well as encouraging their children to participate in extracurricular activities and community events. Some parents also reported that they used online platforms and virtual communications to facilitate social interaction and engagement for their homeschooled children.

These findings suggest that the impact of homeschooling on the social development of children in Nigeria may be more complex than the trivial narrative would suggest. While some homeschooled children may face challenges in developing social skills and peer relationships, many more may thrive in more personalized and intentional social environments created by their homeschooling parents.

Moreover, it is important to consider the unique cultural and societal context of Nigeria when examining the social development of homeschooled children. In a collectivist society like Nigeria, the role of the family and the broader community in supporting the social and emotional development of children may be more pronounced than in more individualistic Western societies (Okafor, 2017). Homeschooling parents in Nigeria may be able to leverage these strong social networks and community ties to provide their children with opportunities for socialization and social skill development that are not necessarily available in traditional school settings.

### **5. Homeschooling and Socialization: Potential Challenges**

The homeschooling environment, while offering a range of educational benefits, may present unique challenges for the socialization and social skills development of primary school children in Nigeria. Several factors associated with homeschooling can

potentially influence a child's social experiences and outcomes.

**Limited Peer Interaction:** One of the primary concerns regarding homeschooling and socialization is the potential for reduced peer interaction and exposure to diverse social environments. Traditional school settings provide children with opportunities to engage with a wide range of peers from different backgrounds, fostering the development of essential social skills (Allen & Huff, 2014). In contrast, homeschooled children may have fewer opportunities for regular, sustained interaction with their peers, which can hinder the development of critical social competencies (Kaczmarek, 2006). Researchers have found that homeschooled children may experience social isolation, as they often have fewer opportunities to participate in structured social activities, such as team sports, clubs, or extracurricular programs (Duvall et al., 2004). This limited peer interaction can lead to difficulties in navigating social situations, understanding social cues, and developing interpersonal skills (Jolly & Matthews, 2020).

**Parental Oversight and Involvement:** Homeschooling is characterized by a high level of parental involvement and oversight in the educational process. While this can have benefits, such as providing a more tailored learning environment, it can also lead to an overreliance on parental guidance and a potential lack of independent social development (Murphy, 2014). In the Nigerian context, where traditional family structures and strong parental authority are culturally prevalent, the homeschooling environment may amplify the influence of parents on their children's social interactions and learning (Aluede, 2006). This can result to lack of opportunities for children to navigate social situations independently, experiment with different social roles, and develop their own social identity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**Sociocultural Factors in the Nigerian Context:** The sociocultural landscape of Nigeria, with its diverse ethnic groups, religious affiliations and socioeconomic disparities, can also influence the homeschooling experience and its impact on children's socialization (Aluede, 2006). For example, families from different socioeconomic backgrounds may have varying access to resources and support networks that facilitate social interactions for homeschooled children. High income earning families would be more financially capable of accessing these resources and educational tools that facilitates social interaction than the low-income earning families.

Additionally, the cultural emphasis on family and community in Nigeria may lead some homeschooling families to prioritize the preservation of traditional values and customs over exposure to diverse social environments (Nwachuku, 2002). This can limit the opportunities for homeschooled children to engage with individuals from different backgrounds, potentially hampering their ability to develop cross-cultural understanding and adaptability.

**Lack of Structured Social Opportunities:**

Conventional school settings often provide structured frameworks for social interaction, with designated recess periods, group activities, and extracurricular programmes. These structured social opportunities can play a crucial role in facilitating the development of social skills, such as communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution (Pellegrini & Bohn, 2005). In the homeschooling context, the lack of such structured social opportunities may pose challenges for children's socialization. Homeschooling parents may need to proactively seek out and organize social activities for their children, which can be time-consuming and may not always align with the family's schedules or resources (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010).

**6. Potential Consequences of Inadequate Socialization**

The potential consequences of inadequate socialization for homeschooled primary school children in Nigeria can be far-reaching, affecting various aspects of their development and future well-being. They are but not limited to;

**Social and Emotional Challenges:** Insufficient peer interaction and limited opportunities for independent social exploration can lead to difficulties in developing essential social skills, such as empathy, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation (Duvall et al., 2004). Homeschooled children may struggle to form and maintain meaningful friendships, which can contribute to feelings of social isolation, anxiety, and loneliness (Jolly & Matthews, 2020).

**Academic and Professional Implications:** Social competence and interpersonal skills are closely linked to academic achievement and future career success (Ladd, 2005). Homeschooled children who lack opportunities for social interaction and skill development may face challenges in adapting to university or the workplace, where they are required to navigate complex social environments and collaborate effectively with peers (Murphy, 2014).

**Mental Health and Well-being:** The social and emotional challenges associated with inadequate socialization can also have a significant impact on the mental health and overall well-being of homeschooled

children. Studies have shown that socially isolated children are at a higher risk of developing mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Bagwell, Newcomb & Bukowski, 1998).

**7. Strategies to Enhance Socialization in Homeschooling**

To address the potential challenges of socialization for homeschooled children in Nigeria, a multifaceted approach involving various stakeholders, including parents, homeschooling communities, and educational policymakers, is necessary.

**Promoting Structured Social Opportunities:**

Homeschooling parents can actively seek out and organize structured social opportunities for their children, such as participation in local homeschooling co-ops, community-based clubs, sports teams, or supervised playdates. These structured activities can provide homeschooled children with regular opportunities for peer interaction, collaborative learning, and the development of essential social skills (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010).

**Encouraging Extracurricular Engagement:**

Homeschooling parents can also encourage their children to participate in extracurricular activities, such as music, art, or drama classes, which can expose them to diverse social environments and facilitate the development of social skills (Duvall et al., 2004). These activities can help homeschooled children build confidence, learn to work in groups, and navigate social situations outside the home setting.

**Fostering Peer Interaction through Technology:**

In the modern digital age, technology can play a vital role in facilitating social interaction and collaboration among homeschooled children. Online platforms, virtual field trips, and video conferencing can provide opportunities for homeschooled children to connect with peers, collaborate on projects, and engage in shared learning experiences (Kaczmarek, 2006).

**Developing Mentor Relationships:**

Establishing mentor relationships with trusted adults, such as community leaders, religious figures, or experienced homeschooling parents, can also support the social development of homeschooled children. These mentors can serve as role models, provide guidance on social skills, and facilitate the creation of support networks within the homeschooling community (Murphy, 2014).

**Collaborating with Local Educational Authorities:**

Homeschooling parents and communities can work closely with local educational authorities to explore opportunities for collaboration and the integration of homeschooled children into the broader educational ecosystem. This could include access to school-based

co-curricular activities, shared learning resources, or joint social events, allowing homeschooled children to engage with a wider range of peers and social environments (Allen & Huff, 2014).

**Promoting Sociocultural Diversity and Inclusivity:** Homeschooling communities in Nigeria can proactively foster an environment that celebrates diversity, encourages cross-cultural understanding, and promotes inclusive social interactions. This can involve organizing events, field trips, or shared learning experiences that expose homeschooled children to diverse cultures, traditions, and perspectives (Nwachuku, 2002).

## 8. Conclusion

This paper explored the key implications of homeschooling, examining the potential pros and cons on the socialization of primary school-aged children in the Nigerian context. The goal of this paper was to shed light on how homeschooling may shape a child's social skills, peer relationships, and broader integration into Nigerian society.

The implication of homeschooling on the socialization of primary school children in Nigeria is a complex and multifaceted issue. By addressing the socialization needs of homeschooled children and providing them with diverse social experiences, parents can help ensure that their children develop the necessary interpersonal skills to thrive in their personal and academic lives.

While there are valid concerns about the potential limitations of the homeschooling environment in terms of social exposure and opportunities, homeschooling families can also demonstrate innovative approaches to supporting their children's social development. Ultimately, the success of socialization for homeschooled children in Nigeria may depend on the specific strategies and resources employed by individual families, as well as the broader social and educational support systems available to them. The success of these strategies could showcase how beneficial homeschooling can be, particularly during emergencies that tend to halt school attendance abruptly. This can even prompt advocating for the legalization of homeschooling practice in Nigeria.

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