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PARENTS' LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF HOMESCHOOLING IN POST COVID ERA IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA

ESTHER PAMELA OMOROGIEVA
Department of Educational Foundations, University of Benin
esther.omorogieva@uniben.edu
07036589681

EVELYN OFURE OBOZOKHAE
Department of Educational Foundations, University of Benin
evelyn.obozokhae@uniben.edu
08026124155

Abstract

The study investigated parents' awareness of homeschooling in post-COVID era in Edo State, Nigeria. To guide this study, a question was formulated and answered. The study adopted the sequential explanatory mixed method research design which implied that data was collected using the quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. The quantitative aspect adopted the correlational survey research design while for the qualitative stage, a one on one interview was carried out to get in-depth information about the study. The population for this study comprised of parents across the 18 local government areas in the three senatorial districts of Edo State, Nigeria. The sample of this study was made up of 384 parents using the Crochan Formula for large population. The convenience sampling technique was used to select the parents across the three senatorial districts. A structured questionnaire (PAHQ) and an interview schedule were used to collect data. The validity of the instrument was established. Reliability coefficients of 0.84 was obtained for PAHQ which showed the instrument was reliable. The analysis was done using mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that the level of awareness among parents about homeschooling is high. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the Federal and State Ministries of Education should initiate discussions on reviewing the status of homeschooling in Nigeria.

Keywords: Parents, Parents' Awareness, Homeschooling, COVID-19 Pandemic, Post- COVID Era

Introduction

Homeschooling, also known as home education, 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. Though overshadowed by the emergence and rapid adoption of institutionalized education (school-based education system), formal homeschooling regained popularity 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, seemingly 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 (NPE) portrays the overall practice of the country's education system and has no provision for homeschooling making it alien to so many in Nigeria.

The shift toward homeschooling raises important questions regarding parental awareness. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, homeschooling was often viewed as an alternative or marginal educational approach, practiced mainly by families with specific religious, cultural, or pedagogical motivations. In many countries especially in developing contexts like Nigeria, public awareness of homeschooling as an educational option was limited due to low visibility, lack of policy frameworks, and the dominance of conventional schooling systems. However, the sudden closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted conventional education and compelled parents to assume greater responsibility for their children's learning at home. As schools shifted to online or hybrid models, many parents gained a clearer understanding of the logistics and challenges associated with home-based education. Research conducted during the pandemic by Parker (2021) found that a significant number of parents, particularly those who had never considered homeschooling before, became more aware of homeschooling as a viable option. The necessity of home-based education during lockdowns made parents realize that many elements of homeschooling were not as unfamiliar as they had previously thought, such as overseeing their children's learning, managing schedules, and engaging with educational content. This led to an increased awareness of the benefits and challenges of homeschooling.

According to Adeleke (2020), in the context of Nigeria, public awareness of homeschooling is on the increase and he attributed this increase to the Covid-19 lockdown. Although some families engaged in remote or emergency online schooling rather than formal homeschooling, the experience significantly increased exposure, curiosity, and informal awareness about the possibility of educating children outside conventional school settings. In the post-COVID era, homeschooling has become more visible through media coverage, online learning platforms, parent networks, and social discussions about safety, flexibility, and alternative schooling. Many parents encountered concepts such as parent-led teaching, curriculum choice, decentralized learning, and home-based instruction for the first time during the pandemic. This exposure has led to varying levels of awareness from basic recognition that homeschooling exists, to deeper understanding of its processes, legal conditions, and potential benefits or limitations. Despite this increased exposure, parental awareness differs, particularly in contexts where homeschooling is legally ambiguous, poorly regulated, or socially unfamiliar.

Adoga et al. (2021) carried out a study to investigate the level of awareness among Nigerian parents as well as to determine their attitude towards formal homeschooling as an alternative to school-based education. The findings showed a modest number of Nigerian parents are quite familiar with the concept, and practice of homeschooling. Given that the concept and practice of homeschooling was unknown to only about 10% and 12% respectively, it was concluded that the general level of awareness about homeschooling among Nigerian parents was relatively high. However, although previous research has reported relatively high awareness of homeschooling among Nigerian parents, existing evidence appears limited in scope and may not adequately reflect parents' current awareness in specific state contexts, particularly in Edo State and in the post-COVID period. This study therefore seeks to explore the awareness of parents about homeschooling in post COVID era in Edo State, Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

1. What is the level of awareness among parents about homeschooling in post COVID era in Edo State?

Methodology

This study adopted the sequential explanatory (quan-qual) mixed method research design which implies that in this study data was collected using the quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. Specifically for the quantitative, the study adopted the correlational survey research design. In the qualitative stage, this study employed a survey research design. Data was collected through a one on one interview with the respondents which enabled the researcher get in-depth information about the study under research. The target population for the study comprised of all parents of children at the basic education level (6 -15 years) across the eighteen (18) local government areas in the three (3) senatorial districts of Edo State. The sample size of the study was 384 parents. The Cochran Formula was used to get the sample size for this study. This is due to the fact that data on the population of this study is large and unknown. The sample size of the study was therefore 384 parents from six out of the eighteen Local Government Areas of Edo State. The convenience sampling technique was adopted for this study due to the fact that comprehensive data for the population of parents of children at basic education level was not available.

Two research instruments were used for this study. A structured questionnaire titled "Parents' Awareness about Homeschooling Questionnaire" (PAHQ) and an Interview Schedule was developed for the study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; A and B. Section A focused on the demographic data of the respondents. Section B was designed to collect data on parents' awareness of homeschooling. This part focused on participants' level of awareness or familiarity with the concept and practice of homeschooling. Accordingly, six items were developed to measure awareness level of the participants. This was done by asking participants to indicate their level of awareness along two extremes of familiarity continuum i.e. well-known to me and unknown to me. On the other hand, the interview schedule items were developed for parents to give an in-depth response on their awareness level about homeschooling. The interview schedule was divided into two sections; Sections A and B. Section A focused on the demographic data of the respondents. Section B on the other hand, was made up of open ended questions about parents' awareness about homeschooling.

The questionnaire and interview schedule items were given to five experts in the departments of Educational Foundations and Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology respectively to validate and their suggested corrections were incorporated accordingly before the final draft of the questionnaire was produced. Hence, face and content validity were adopted to ensure the validity of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered to 30 parents who did not form part of the respondents of the questionnaire for this study. Therefore the responses gotten from the 30 administered questionnaires were tested using the Cronbach's Alpha statistics to determine the coefficient of reliability. Parents' awareness of homeschooling scale which made up the Section B of the questionnaire had a value of 0.84. This showed that the instrument was reliable for this study. The interview schedule items on the other hand were not subjected to a reliability test. The research instruments were administered, retrieved and collated by the researcher and five research assistants. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviations for research question 1 which sought to investigate parents' level of awareness about homeschooling. Also, the qualitative data that were collected through the Interview Schedule were analyzed using the thematic data analysis process. The recorded contents were listened to, transcribed and initial codes generated from the data. Also, reports were written based on the major themes from the qualitative data.

Result

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness among parents about homeschooling in post COVID era?

Table 1: Level of Awareness among Parents about Homeschooling in Post Covid Era

S/N	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	I am familiar with the concept of homeschooling.	3.08	0.90	High
2	I am aware of the academic benefits of homeschooling for children.	3.00	0.90	High
3	I know other families who are homeschooling their children.	2.80	1.03	High
4	I got to learn about homeschooling via social media during the pandemic.	3.29	0.93	High
5	I got to learn about homeschooling through articles during the pandemic	3.25	0.92	High
6	During the COVID-19 pandemic, I gained more awareness about homeschooling as an alternative to conventional schooling.	3.46	0.79	High
	Grand Mean	3.15		High

Cut-off = 2.5, N = 384

Table 1 contains the descriptive data of the level of awareness among parents about homeschooling in post COVID era. The total number of respondents is 384 and the home schooling awareness scale contains six items. From their responses the mean score for each item is greater than the item mean of 2.50, also looking at the grand mean it is equally greater than 2.50. It could therefore be concluded that the level of awareness among parents about homeschooling in post COVID era is high among parents.

Interview Findings

For the interview, thirty (30) parents were interviewed after which their responses were transcribed and major themes were identified based on the content of the discussions held by each participant during the interview after the content was coded. These themes were manually generated from the data obtained from the interview questions on parents about their level of awareness and attitude towards homeschooling in post COVID era. The questions covered include:

i. Have you heard of homeschooling before this interview?
ii. If yes, what brought about your awareness of homeschooling?
iii. How familiar are you with homeschooling as an educational alternative? Very familiar? A bit familiar? Not familiar at all?

The major themes and subthemes identified with a summary of the participants' responses are as follows:

Parents' Awareness about Homeschooling

Awareness about Homeschooling

Twenty-three (23) participants responded in the affirmative that they had heard of homeschooling prior to the interview. Seven parents (7) responded that they have never heard of homeschooling before prior to the interview. This implied that majority of the participants were aware of the concept and practice of homeschooling.

Reason for the awareness of homeschooling

Among those parents that had heard of homeschooling, several of them responded that they became aware of homeschooling during the COVID 19 pandemic when schools were forced to shut down and they had to resort to teaching their children at home. One of the participants noted: *"I became aware of homeschooling during the pandemic where I had to teach my children using learning materials via online because schools were closed and leaning had to still continue"* (Participant 15). One of the participants responded that he got to know about homeschooling from his neighbors. In his words, *"I became aware of this homeschooling from 93 my neighbors. I heard them discussing about it a certain time but I know they don't homeschool their children"* (Participant 24). Two of the participants disclosed that they became aware of homeschooling through information they accessed in articles and on social media. One of the parents specifically said she mostly read about homeschooling in foreign countries like Canada where it is

practiced. Four of the participants said they became aware of homeschooling based on their personal encounter alongside their siblings and self- participation in the practice with their children. In their words, one of the participants stated "*I got familiar with homeschooling because I practiced it with my child by hiring a tutor to teach her basic reading and writing skills before I finally sent her to start off primary school"* (Participant 28).Another participant responded by saying "*I became aware of homeschooling because that is how I and my siblings were taught*" (Participant 24). This means that the COVID 19 pandemic was the major factor and incident that created awareness about homeschooling for parents.

Familiarity with Homeschooling

Seventeen (17) participants responded by saying that they are very familiar with homeschooling. Six (6) of the participants responded saying they are just a bit familiar with the concept and practice of homeschooling. Seven (7) participants responded that they are not familiar with homeschooling. From this, it implies that majority of the participants were very familiar with the concept and practice of homeschooling.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the level of awareness of parents about homeschooling in post covid era in Edo State. Findings from this study revealed that the level of awareness among parents about homeschooling as an alternative educational option is high among parents. Also from the thematic analysis of the interview, the awareness rate of parents about homeschooling appeared to be very high as 23 out of the 30 participants were aware of homeschooling as an alternative educational practice. This corroborates the assertion by Adeleke (2020) that the relatively high level of awareness with the concept of homeschooling among the parents could be due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Attributing the increase in public familiarity with homeschooling in Nigeria to the Covid-19 lockdown is quite logical because, due to the closure of schools, parents were forced to seek alternative means of educating their children while at home. As such, some parents must have researched and come to the knowledge of the concept of homeschooling during this period of lockdown. This finding is also in line with the research conducted during the pandemic by Parker (2021) who found that a significant number of parents, particularly those who had never considered homeschooling before, became more aware of homeschooling as a viable option. The necessity of home-based education during lockdowns made parents realize that many elements of homeschooling were not as unfamiliar as they had previously thought, such as overseeing their children's learning, managing schedules, and engaging with educational content. This led to an increased awareness of the benefits and challenges of homeschooling.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine parents' awareness about homeschooling in Edo State in the post-COVID era. The finding revealed that parental awareness of homeschooling is high, indicating that the COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst in familiarizing families with alternative educational arrangements.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn from the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Since the level of awareness of homeschooling is high, the Federal and State Ministries of Education should initiate discussions on reviewing the status of homeschooling. Rather than leaving it unregulated, clear policies can be developed to formally recognize homeschooling ensuring that children's rights to education are protected.
2. Parents should be included in education policy discussions. Their growing awareness of homeschooling signals a demand for more flexible, diverse, and personalized learning pathways. A participatory policy approach can help align parental needs with national educational goals.

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