



Research Article

# Uncovering Homeschooling in Lebanon: A Qualitative-Phenomenological Exploration of Homeschooling Realities from Parental and Educational Sector Stakeholders Perspectives

التعليم المنزلي في لبنان: دراسة ظواهرية لواقع التعليم المنزلي من وجهة نظر الأطراف المعنية  
في قطاع الأهل والتعليم

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## Abstract

Despite the global trend toward the legalization of homeschooling, it remains illegal in Lebanon. This study aims to explore the multifaceted realities of homeschooling in Lebanon and the motives driving its adoption according to homeschooled children's parents, and the perspectives of educational stakeholders in Lebanon on homeschooling. The study participants included 10 parents homeschooling their children and three public-sector education experts. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with parents, and document analysis. For the homeschooling experience and its motives from parental perspectives, seven key themes were identified: (1) Factors to consider in homeschooling, (2) Motives behind homeschooling, (3) Effects of homeschooling, (4) Curriculum selection, (5) Child's interaction with the homeschooling experience, (6) Homeschooling outcomes, and (7) Parents' agreement on homeschooling their child. Four themes emerged from the discussions with the stakeholders: (1) The legal status of homeschooling in Lebanon, (2) The lack of studies or reports on homeschooling in Lebanon, (3) The stakeholders' approach to homeschooling, and (4) The eventual legislation of homeschooling in Lebanon. The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for legal frameworks that accommodate homeschooling, suggesting its potential to diversify and enrich Lebanon's educational landscape.

## الملخص

بالرغم من الاتجاه العالمي لتشريع التعليم المنزلي، إلا أنه لا يزال غير قانوني في لبنان، رغم وجوده. وقد هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على واقع التعليم المنزلي في لبنان ودوافع تبنيه من وجهة نظر الأهالي والمعنيين في القطاع التربوي. وقد شملت الدراسة 10 أهالي يمارسون التعليم المنزلي وثلاث معنيين في القطاع التربوي. جمعت البيانات باستخدام تقنية التناول في الأدوات من خلال إجراء: المقابلات الفردية شبه مفتوحة، المقابلات الجماعية، إضافةً إلى جمع الوثائق الموجودة لدى الأهل. وبعد تحليل البيانات النوعية وفقاً للطريقة الاستقرائية، أشارت النتائج في المدف الأول - الذي هو التعرف على الواقع التعليم المنزلي في لبنان وكيفية إجرائه من قبل الأهل - إلى: (1) سبعة إرشادات يجب على الآباء الاتباع إليها من أجل ممارسة التعليم المنزلي (2) أربعة أسباب للتعليم المنزلي (أكاديمي، مالي...) (3) ٣٠ إيجابية وسلبية، داخلية وخارجية، لممارسة التعليم المنزلي (4) هيمنة المنهج اللبناني الانتقائي في التربية المنزلية من بين أربعه مناهج (5) عمق التفاعل الإيجابي للطفل في التعليم المنزلي (6) نتائج أكاديمية ونفسية جيدة جداً حققها أطفال المشاركين (7) تعميق المواقف الخذلة لدى الشركاء تجاه التعليم المنزلي. أما بالنسبة إلى المدف الثاني الذي هو الإلقاء على مقاربة المعنيين بالقطاع التربوي في لبنان حول التعليم المنزلي، فقد تم تصنيف البيانات الناتجة عن المقابلات التي أجريت مع المعنيين إلى أربعة مواضيع رئيسية. وهي: (1) عدم وجود تشريع للتعليم المنزلي في لبنان (2) لا يوجد أي دراسات أو تقارير عن التعليم المنزلي في لبنان (3) تفاوت المعنيين في قراءة وتقدير تجربة التعليم المنزلي (4) شرح واقتراح أدوات آمنة وهيكلاة لتشريع التعليم المنزلي في لبنان. ختاماً، مثبتت هذه الدراسة تأسيساً أولياً للأبحاث القادمة حول التعليم المنزلي في العالم العربي عموماً ولبنان خصوصاً، وقد خلصت الدراسة إلى عدد من التوصيات والاقتراحات الأساسية في مجال التعليم المنزلي.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: التعليم المنزلي -- المدرسية -- لبنان -- الأهل -- التعليم.

## 1. Introduction

Learning is an integral daily process through which individuals gain knowledge. This acquisition can occur organically through interpersonal interactions, environmental engagement, or vocational activities. Despite being simple, scientifically defining “learning” remains a matter of debate; a common trend among scientists, which is to discuss around definitions of various terms and concepts. Broadly speaking, learning – in its essence – refers to a deliberate process that engenders beneficial behavioral modifications by imparting information, skills, and knowledge in various forms (Victoria, 2018). Historically, teaching used to be conducted by parents or by religious institutions, especially before the sixteenth century, when the expanding importance of literacy became a significant issue (Grendler, 1984; Murphy, 1968). Since then, education has gradually been handed over to the government as it is in a position to enable the authority to enforce compulsory education (Glenn, 2011). Today, after several years of compulsory education, it is estimated that 95% of the countries in the world enforce compulsory education for children between the ages of four and thirteen years, although the specifics vary by country (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2008). As a result, learning has been associated with the school, as an institution, in its geographical dimension as a definitive place for educational instruction. Beyond teaching, schools fulfill a multitude of societal roles, including cultural transmission, educational advancement, and fostering environments conducive to cognitive, physical, emotional, and social growth (Boulayan, 2009). Notwithstanding the structured support schools provide for education and instruction, a significant number of parents are increasingly interested in homeschooling their children (Ray, 2016). In fact, the number of students studying at home in the United States of America (USA) doubled from 850,000 (1.7% of students) in 1999 to 1,690,000 (3.3% of students) in 2016 (Wang et al., 2019). According to a Gallup public opinion poll conducted in 2002, more than half of the respondents (53%) support the legal right for parents to homeschool their children, underscoring the increasing endorsement of homeschooling as a viable educational choice (Linda & Gary, 2002).

## 2. Literature Review

The motivations behind parents’ decisions to homeschool have been extensively explored in scholarly research. Collom’s study summarizes three principal factors behind the homeschooling increasing trend in the USA, namely, (1) dissatisfaction with public

schools particularly because of their educational policies and curricula; (2) academic and pedagogic considerations, encompassing distractions and competitive aspects unrelated to educational content, such as the prevalence of status symbols among students; and (3) a desire to preserve religious or moral values, amidst an ongoing trend toward secularism, leading to the erosion of these values among students (Collom, 2005). In another study, Hertzel (1997) identified seven factors that influence the choice to homeschool, including academic and curricular concerns, safety concerns, social concerns, comfort concerns, health and disability considerations, and moral or ethical concerns.

In Britain, studies have indicated that the trend toward homeschooling is due to two reasons. First, Evangelical Christians oppose public education due to the inclusion of lessons about subjects such as Darwin's theory of evolution. Nonetheless, this religious stance is not predominant. Dr. Paula Rothermel, a British educational psychologist specializing in homeschooling, found that only about 4% of the 412 homeschooling families in her study considered religion as their primary incentive (Koons, 2010). Second some sociologists, psychologists, and educational institutions, including Ivan Illich, John Holt, and Charles Raymond, raised concerns over the potential negative impacts of formal schooling on children's mental and emotional well-being (Gaither, 2017).

The effectiveness of homeschooling remains a debated subject, especially when assessing its impact on students academically and socially. A study by Murphy (2012) revealed two prevailing opinions regarding the academic outcomes of school students based on a review of hundreds of studies on this topic: the first suggests that homeschooling has a neutral effect on academic performance, while the other posits potential academic advantages for homeschooled students.

Despite the controversy about homeschooling's effectiveness, many parents rely on international rights to conduct homeschooling due to the illegal status of homeschooling in their own countries – historically in America and Britain, and currently in Germany (Aschmutat, 2015; Erin, 2020; Home School Legal Defense Association, 2019). Article 26, Part 3 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021). Similarly, Article 2 of the 1950 Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms affirms that "In the exercise of any function which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions." (European Court of Human Rights, 2022). The International Covenant on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights also states in Article 13 that “The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents [...] to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities” but in a manner that “conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State” (OHCHR, 1966).

With the boom in Internet usage in 1999, homeschooling spread throughout the world reaching countries such as Australia, Canada, France, Hungary, and Japan that have explicitly or implicitly recognized the family’s right to decide how the education of their children is conducted (Ray, 2016).

Based on the studies of Kunzman and Gaither (2013; 2020), seven salient themes summarize the discourse on homeschooling: (1) home education curricula and policies; (2) socialization, including the cultivation of social skills and broader values; (3) the transition of homeschooled children to higher education; (4) post-education trajectories of homeschooled students; (5) demographic analyses and motivations for homeschooling; (6) evaluations of academic accomplishments; and (7) legislative considerations surrounding homeschooling. This paper will critically examine themes 1, 5, 6, and 7 with an emphasis on the situation in Lebanon.

## **2.1. Homeschooling in the Arab world**

The phenomenon of homeschooling within the Arab region remains underexamined, with a conspicuous scarcity of formal research addressing its practicality and potential advantages. Furthermore, as far as legislation is concerned, homeschooling was lately legalized in some countries, catalyzed by the coronavirus pandemic. Countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have recently recognized homeschooling within their legal frameworks, indicating a shift and a rising interest toward alternative educational models (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2023; UAE Government, 2021). However, other Arab states, such as Jordan, still do not have formal laws acknowledging homeschooling (Ministry of Education, 2022).

In Lebanon, the situation is particularly complex. There is currently no legislation regulating homeschooling, leaving those who practice this educational approach without any officially recognized certificate for their homeschool-acquired education (Zalzali, 2020). As a matter of fact, the Lebanese educational system does not provide exceptions to education methods allowing accommodations in teaching methods for people with special needs or disabilities (Zalzali, 2020).

### 3. The Current Reality and the Issue

The origins of Lebanon's formal education system can be traced back to the early eighteenth century, especially following the Louaize Council in 1736 (Lebanese Educational Center Research and Development, 2004). This pioneer conference called for compulsory and free education for all children in Lebanon (Lebanese Educational Center Research and Development, 2004). Following this council, a significant number of schools were gradually established across Lebanon (Lebanese Educational Center Research and Development, 2004).

The structure of the educational system was primarily organized under the French mandate, including institutions, central administration, and curricula (Lebanese Educational Center Research and Development, 2004). After Lebanon gained independence in 1943 (Haugbolle, 2007), the Lebanese government continued to work on refining curricula and improving programs, although in a faltering manner, in 1968 and 1997 (Lebanese Educational Center Research and Development, 2004). The 1997 curriculum remains in effect today across the various types and levels of education available in the country, including general, vocational, and technical education (Lebanese Educational Center Research and Development, 2004).

The public education system in Lebanon consists of two stages (Zalzali, 2020):

1. The elementary stage spans the first nine years of schooling, comprising the primary and intermediate years, which are mandatory for all Lebanese children. Upon completion, students receive the "Official Intermediate Certificate."
2. The secondary stage refers to the three years following the elementary stage. During the second year of this stage, students choose between the scientific and literary tracks. In the third year, students choose one out of four possible tracks: Arts and Humanities; General Sciences; Life Sciences; and Economics and Sociology. Success in the official examinations administered by the Ministry of Education earns them the "Official Secondary Certificate."

The Lebanese Constitution, particularly Article 10, sanctions the coexistence of private and public education sectors. The private sector boasts long-established educational institutions, while the public sector's expansion began pre-independence and has since diversified across various types and levels. This dual-sector system enriches educational opportunities in Lebanon, presenting parents with options regarding the mode of education for their children, whether through public or private institutions. Nevertheless, this does not seem to be enough for parents, as some are opting for

homeschooling, an option not yet sanctioned by Lebanese law (Lebanese Educational Center for Research and Development, 2004).

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to delve into the homeschooling landscape in Lebanon, seeking to comprehend its causation and implementation.

This research will address the following sub-questions:

- From the perspective of Lebanese parents, how is homeschooling conducted?
- What are the driving factors behind the parents' choice to homeschool?
- How do three key educational stakeholders in Lebanon perceive homeschooling and the prospect of its legalization?

## 4. The Relevance of the Study

This study holds significant relevance for several reasons:

1. It illuminates a largely undocumented area of the educational landscape in Lebanon, that is homeschooling, through a systematic documentation and analysis of experiences and their outcomes, a topic on which there is a lack of data currently.
2. It contributes to finding solutions for educational challenges especially those that have notably been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, besides Lebanon's ongoing crises, including issues in electricity availability, transportation, fuel, and the ongoing war.
3. It lays the groundwork for subsequent research about homeschooling in the Arab world in general and Lebanon in particular, thus enriching the regional educational discourse and potentially guiding policy and practice.
4. The study aspires to inform and influence policymakers, encouraging the development of legislative frameworks that formally recognize and regulate homeschooling in Lebanon, ensuring educational integrity and the well-being of all students.

## 5. Method

The research objectives were pursued using a qualitative phenomenological framework and an interpretive paradigm. This approach was selected for its efficacy in elucidating the intricate dynamics of the phenomenon under investigation, particularly given the uncontrolled variables inherent in human subjects' interactions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

## 6. Research Population and Participants

The study population was defined as parents of homeschooled children in Lebanon who do not hold the nationality of another country, as a foreign citizenship might grant them the right to practice homeschooling and recognition of this home-acquired education. Due to the absence of data about the study population in Lebanon (homeschooling population), purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants. Potential participants were reached through informal networks such as private social media groups and by employing the snowball technique. Ten parents of homeschooled children agreed to participate in this study. The characteristics of these participants are detailed in Table 1. Additionally, interviews were conducted with three education experts who hold high official positions in the educational sector to gain further insight into the context of homeschooling in Lebanon.

\*The majority of parents involved in the study were well-acquainted with the concept of homeschooling, having participated in educational workshops, seminars, or dialogues. According to their own accounts, many were high-performing students in their academic past. The economic status of these families varied, encompassing a spectrum from financially disadvantaged to middle-income brackets.

## 7. Study Tools

Triangulation of sources was employed to fortify the research findings and enhance their reliability (Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003). Thus, three tools were used: (1) semi-structured interviews with parents and stakeholders in the educational sector, (2) focus group discussions, and (3) document analysis.

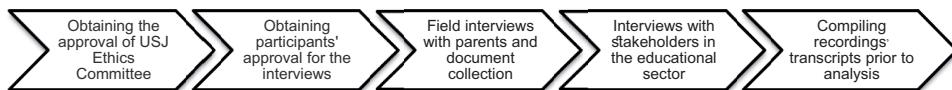
## 8. Data Collection Mechanism

Following the Saint Joseph University of Beirut Ethics Committee's endorsement, an authorization letter, inclusive of a consent form, was disseminated to all prospective participants. Each participant provided written consent prior to the participation in the study. Next, data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and focus group sessions involving the parents. In parallel, relevant documentation such as worksheets, exams, books, education games, and photos were also collected. The education experts were interviewed thereafter. Except for one instance, all interviews

**Table 1***Main characteristics of homeschooling participants in Lebanon\**

<b>Family</b>	<b>Teaching responsibility</b>	<b>Teaching parent's occupation status</b>	<b>Teacher educational degree</b>	<b>Number of homeschooled children</b>	<b>Sex of homeschooled student</b>	<b>Education stage</b>	<b>Homeschooling period (yr)</b>
1	Mother, Teacher	Employed mother	Bachelor, Masters	1	Male	Elementary	4
2	Mother, Father	Both are employed	PhD	3	Male	Elementary	2
					Male	Preschool	3
					Female	Elementary	2
3	Mother	Unemployed	Bachelor	2	Male	Preschool	3
					Female	Preschool	3
4	Mother	Unemployed	Bachelor	1	Male	Preschool	3
5	Mother	Unemployed	Bachelor	3	Male	Preschool, elementary, & secondary	12
					Male	Preschool & elementary	5
					Female	Preschool, elementary, & secondary	12
6	Mother	Unemployed	Bachelor	1	Male	Preschool	3
7	Mother	Unemployed	Bachelor	1	Male	Elementary	5
8	Mother	Unemployed	Bachelor	2	Male	Preschool	3
					Female	Preschool	3
9	Mother	Employed	PhD	3	Male	Preschool, elementary, & secondary	12
					Female	Preschool & elementary	9
					Male	Preschool & elementary	6
10	Mother, Father	Both are employed	Masters	2	Male	Elementary	4
					Female	Elementary & secondary	4

were audio-recorded and transcribed to facilitate thorough data analysis. The process is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1***Data collection process.***Figure 2***Data analysis process.*

## 9. Data Analysis

Data interpretation was conducted using an inductive approach, which includes the extraction of codes directly from the interview transcripts. The extracted codes were then organized into thematic categories, which were then organized into distinct subjects that corresponded to the research questions. The data analysis process is illustrated in Figure 2.

## 10. Results

This study aimed to uncover, on the one hand, the realities of homeschooling in Lebanon and the motives driving its adoption according to homeschooled children's parents (research questions one and two), and the perspectives of educational stakeholders in Lebanon on homeschooling, on the other. Through the analysis of the collected data, seven key themes were identified for the first two research questions (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Themes about the realities of homeschooling in Lebanon and the motives driving its adoption according to homeschooled children's parents*

Theme 1	Factors to be considered by parents for homeschooling
Theme 2	Motives behind homeschooling choice
Theme 3	Effects of homeschooling (advantages and challenges)
Theme 4	Curriculum and pedagogical characteristics
Theme 5	Child's interaction with the homeschooling experience
Theme 6	Homeschooling outcomes
Theme 7	Parents' agreement

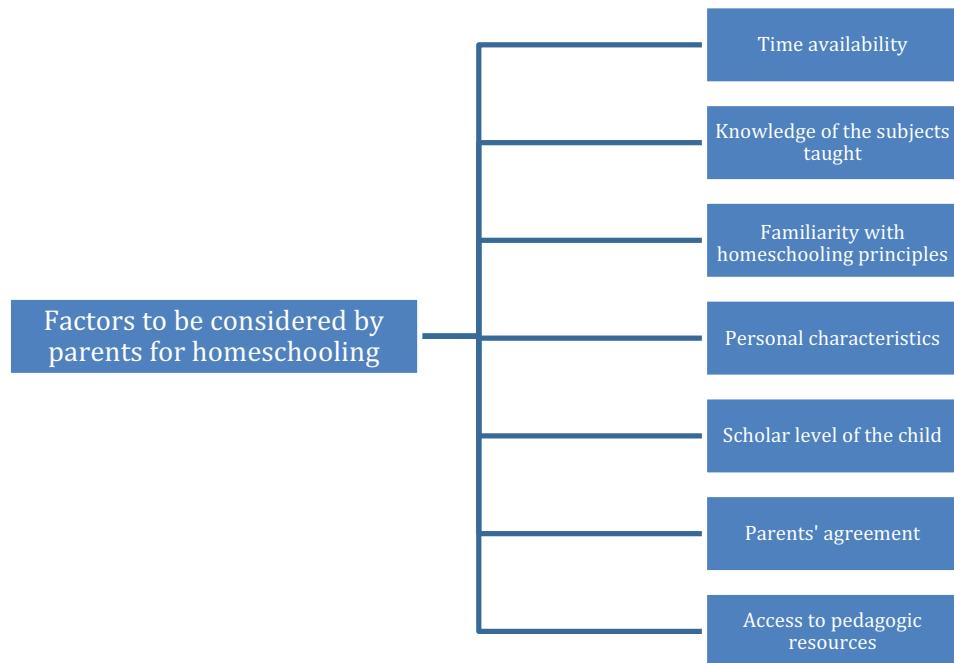
The first theme concerns essential factors to be considered by parents practicing homeschooling in order to optimize the homeschooling experience (Figure 3). First, parents emphasized the importance of parents' time availability to pursue homeschooling their children. In fact, most of the interviewed families stressed the importance of the unemployed status of one of the parents to ensure time availability, which was the case of most of the interviewed families (Table 1). Second, although all the interviewed parents had – at least – achieved a bachelor's degree in a variety of fields, they all agreed that the academic achievement of the parents is not an essential prerequisite for them to effectively be able to practice homeschooling with their children. According to the participants, it is sufficient for them to have knowledge of what should be taught to their children. Third, the participants emphasized the role of their familiarity with homeschooling principles through workshops, seminars, and readings. Nine out of the ten interviewed parents had a prior familiarity with this pedagogy, and the only parent who didn't said that "*I wasn't cognizant of homeschooling, but I consulted curricula and I felt that I can start and give it a try.*" Fourth, the interviewed parents highlighted some key personal characteristics and traits that parents must have to effectively practice homeschooling, such as boldness to practice this unusual teaching method, determination, dynamism, and patience. As one parent stated "*This practice needs patience and forbearance, but if I'm not patient and forbearing with my child, from whom would I expect this? The school?!*" As for the fifth factor, most of the parents agreed on the ease of homeschooling younger children, and that the more children advanced in scholar levels (secondary stage), the more the process became difficult. Hence, homeschooling children at higher levels requires more effort. The sixth factor refers to the agreement of both parents on the process, as the absence of this criteria could lead to serious familial disputes. The last factor is the necessity of the availability and access to relevant pedagogic resources to enable parents to homeschool their children.

The second theme refers to the motives for choosing homeschooling for one's children. Four motives were raised by the parents:

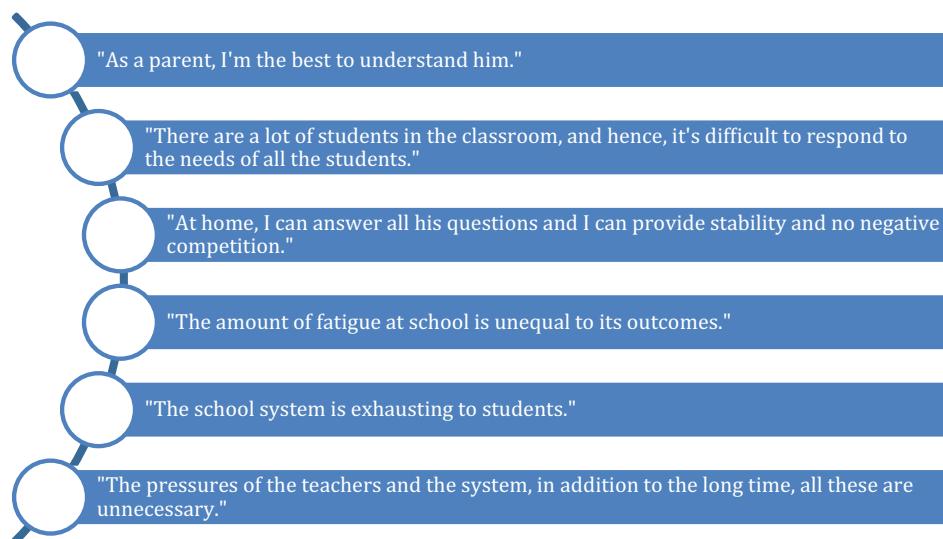
1. Academic motives: All the interviewed parents aimed for their children to achieve outstanding academic outcomes. They raised concerns and reservations about the school system, as one participant noted, "[There are] so many pupils in the class and their interests are diverse, and the teacher cannot answer all their questions." Besides, the participants considered homeschooling to give opportunities to widen competencies based on the child's interests, while avoiding school pressure and fatigue, as a mother said, "At home, we can probably answer all the [child's] questions without

**Figure 3**

*Factors to be considered by parents practicing homeschooling in order to optimize the homeschooling experience.*

**Figure 4**

*Parents' citations about academic motives related to homeschooling adaptability to each child.*



exposing him to the pressure to which he would be exposed at school." Additional citations in support of this theme are presented in Figure 4.

**Table 3***Advantages of homeschooling*

<b>Advantages on the personal level</b>	<b>Advantages on the social level</b>
Passion for learning and discovery (10*)	No lifestyle restrictions in terms of eating, dressing, and school transportation (6*)
Strengthening the relationship between parents and children, which enhances emotional satisfaction (8*)	Benefiting of nature (5*)
Paying attention to children and their energies, by speeding up sometimes and slowing down at other times (8*)	Acquiring skills and techniques usually not acquired in schools (7*)
Freedom in most of the choices (5*)	No negative pressure due to competition (5*)
Knowing the child's personality and desires (6*)	
No homework (7*)	
A unique, rich, and beautiful experience (10*)	
Turning the lesson into a fun game (4*)	
Learning stems from a problem and a need (5*)	
Self-learning and self-management of their lives (2*)	

\*The values in brackets refer to the number of participants who raised these points.

2. Religious and educational motives: Four Muslim participants referred to the recommendation to avoid sending children to school before a specific age, relying on a narration of the prophet Muhammad “Leave them for seven years, and educate them for seven years.” Moreover, seven participants (Muslims and Christians) mentioned teaching their religious concepts and values through homeschooling their children.

3. Health motives: One participant turned to homeschooling due to health conditions affecting their child (migraine and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder), “He suffered from severe migraines when he was young, and although it was treated early in his childhood, we decided to keep homeschooling him after we had tried it.”

4. Financial motives: Seven participants mentioned refusing to pay large amounts of money for adequate private school fees, or their inability to afford it. As for public schools, these participants were not satisfied with their academic levels. A participant said, “You know how’s the situation of public schools in Lebanon, and we cannot afford adequate private schools!”

The third theme refers to the effects of homeschooling that were raised by the participants. In fact, participants mentioned various effects of homeschooling, which were organized as advantages and challenges associated with homeschooling. These are presented in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

**Table 4***Challenges of homeschooling*

<b>Challenges on the personal level</b>	<b>Challenges on the social level</b>
Pressure at home (2*)	Lack of Arabic teaching resources (8*)
Creates problems between the child and the parents (1*)	Lack of social activities (7*)
Lack of discipline (2*)	Difference in children's aptitudes, skills, and predisposition to learn (1*)
Children are passively comfortable with their parents while at school they are not (3*)	The inexistence of a curriculum specific to homeschooling (7*)
Social isolation (3*)	Social pressure (4*)
Requires more efforts from the parents compared to regular school (6*)	Justification of illogical adopted method (1*)
Requires a lot of time for preparation and follow-up (7*)	
Present the information attractively and interestingly (3*)	
No social life for the parents (4*)	

\*The values in brackets refer to the number of participants who raised these points.

Curriculum selection for homeschooling and pedagogical characteristics is the fourth theme emerging from the results. Given that no official Lebanese curricula are available for homeschooled children, parents must choose by themselves a curriculum to teach to their children. Overall, the official Lebanese public curriculum was predominantly used by most of the participants. The various curricula combinations used by the participants are listed below:

- The official Lebanese public school's curriculum and books (two participants)
- A combination of the Lebanese official curriculum from various books used in public and private schools (six participants)
  - A combination of the Lebanese official curriculum and Charlotte Mason curriculum (one participant)
  - No curriculum; teaching based on the child's needs and preferences (one participant)

Through the analysis of documents and interviews, the study uncovered diverse and innovative pedagogic methods employed in homeschooling to convey ideas, such as educational games, natural explorations, live experiments, and problem-solving approaches. For instance, one participant narrated how their child learned about atmospheric pressure and its impact on the human body by transitioning between the mountain and the coast. Additionally, the research highlighted the adaptation of teaching to the personal realities of the children, incorporating the child's life

circumstances into the educational process. An example provided was a mother using her family's details in educational materials to explain the concept of family, which includes names of family members, personal interests, family beliefs, and using household items to teach counting. This level of personalization, as noted by a parent, is challenging to achieve in a traditional classroom setting due to the large number of students.

Furthermore, the study pointed out parents' keen interest in their children acquiring a broad range of skills and languages, from listening to reading texts, engaging in various clubs and activities like horse riding, music, and drawing, to embarking on nature trips. One remarkable case mentioned was of a 16-year-old learning up to five languages. The involvement of participants in homeschooling groups also emerged as a significant practice. Seven participants were active in two spontaneous homeschooling groups, which appeared to facilitate the sharing of educational experiences, methodologies, and pedagogical strategies, thereby enriching their homeschooling practice. This communal involvement supported continuity and resilience in homeschooling efforts, facilitated by the connection of new homeschooling families with veterans and educational consultants inside and outside Lebanon, and enhanced the social lives of the children through group activities and trips.

Regarding the homeschooling schedule, variations were noted among participants. Some adopted a dynamic, flexible approach without fixed days or hours for lessons, allowing for a monthly planning of competencies and daily learning based on available time. Others adhered to a more structured schedule, aligning lesson times with the parents' work schedules, either in the morning or evening. Despite these variations, a consensus emerged on the daily lesson duration, which remarkably did not exceed 2 hr, in stark contrast to the conventional 8-hr school day. In fact, the participants confirmed that each subject required approximately 10–20 min, without any additional educational tasks or school-related homework outside of school hours. This efficiency in time use, without the burden of additional homework, was attributed to the direct, personalized nature of homeschooling, which leverages a deep understanding of each child's capacities and learning needs, according to the participants. Notably, most participants (nine) mentioned taking three days off a week, emphasizing a flexible, intensive learning schedule that allows for significant leisure and rest, underscoring the customized and adaptable nature of homeschooling.

The fifth theme refers to the child's interaction and wellbeing with the homeschooling experience. The participants' responses varied regarding their children's interaction with the homeschooling experience. While no negative reactions were reported, three

participants mentioned that they did not receive any feedback (neither negative nor positive) from their children due to their young age (less than six years). The others noted positive reactions from their children, particularly after observing their peers who attend traditional schools. Some parents expressed their children's feelings on their behalf in various ways, while other children expressed their own satisfaction directly. It is noteworthy to mention that seven of the participants' children went to school for a specific duration of time, and thus, these parents have experience in school education and homeschooling education and can accurately compare both experiences.

The sixth theme raised by the parents participating in this study refers to the outcomes of homeschooling. Mainly, parents addressed two types of outcomes: psychological-emotional and academic outcomes. First, of note, the psychological and emotional outcomes referred to in this context are not meant in the technical sense but rather in a conventional one. Parents noticed an increased sense of belonging among their children to the family, compared to other non-homeschooled children, which they found to be a pleasant aspect. Many parents sought to document these experiences, as one participant highlighted, recalling sweet memories and situations shared with their children, which were either written down or captured in photographs.

Moreover, mutual emotional stability between parents and children was observed, as mentioned by seven participants. They emphasized that this stability shields children from the negative pressure and competition present in schools, while simultaneously fostering a sense of motivation, happiness, and eagerness for learning among the children.

Regarding academic outcomes, in the absence of an official homeschooling evaluation framework, parents employed various assessment methods. Despite some reservations about the evaluation methods used, the essence for some parents was the comfort of their child's academic personality, particularly when the child independently seeks knowledge and uncovers new concepts. This, to them, represents the truest form of achievement.

Nine participants opted for annual exams conducted by private schools without actual attendance in the schools, in addition to the official exam they are slated to take or have already taken. In contrast, one participant did not conduct any formal evaluations for their children during their educational journey, relying solely on the International General Certificate of Secondary Education exam typically undertaken before university. Analysis of these evaluations revealed that the academic results of homeschoolers were predominantly very good or excellent. "Very good" here is defined as achieving

an average score above 15/20 in many evaluations and subjects, aligning with parents' reports of their children's "excellent evaluations."

Two children of the participants, who reached the age of eligibility to take the official exam, achieved remarkable success; one ranked third in Lebanon in the official Brevet exams, and the other ranked fourteenth in his province. This approach also enabled children of seven participants to join clubs and acquire various skills and languages, with one child being proficient in Spanish, Turkish, German, Persian, in addition to Arabic, English, and French.

An interesting observation made by three participants was the shift in the academic reference point for their children. Unlike school-going children who see their teachers as the ultimate authority, often quoting, "*But the teacher said so!*" homeschooling has allowed parents to retain a kind of scientific reference or source authority in their children's eyes, ensuring that the educational and knowledge-seeking process remains closely tied to the familial unit.

As for the seventh and final theme, the participants highlighted the importance of both partners' (parents') agreement of the process. Two participants mentioned their prior agreement with their partner on embarking on the homeschooling journey. The others discussed their reactions to their partner's proposal of homeschooling; some spoke of initial disagreement followed by concession, while others were cautiously optimistic, with one saying, "*I was always watchful, waiting to see where we would end up!*" Some entered the experience with fear, to the extent of playing the "*devil's advocate*" to thoroughly challenge the idea.

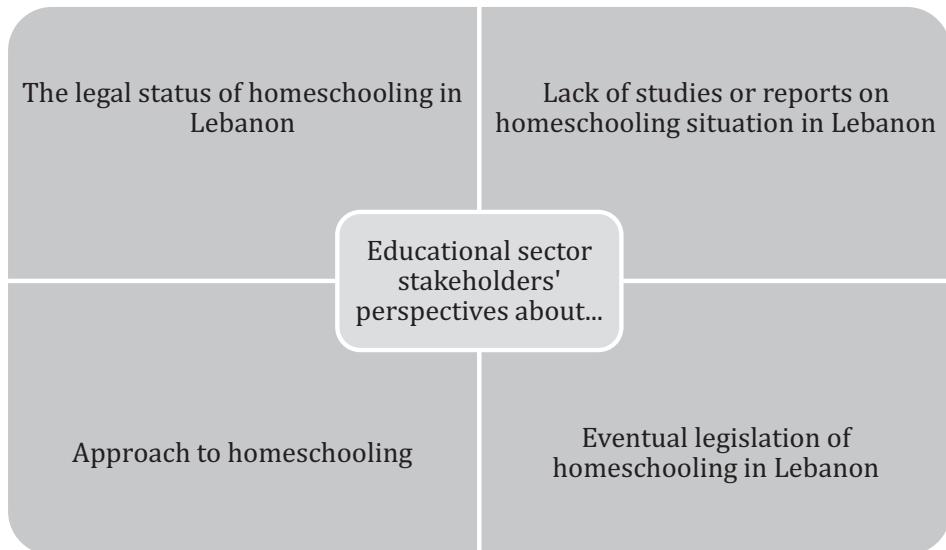
In conclusion, the study highlighted a unanimous agreement among all participants on the importance of legalizing homeschooling in Lebanon.

The third research question aimed to examine the stance of three experienced stakeholders in Lebanon toward homeschooling. The semi-structured interviews conducted with three stakeholders in the educational sector revealed four main themes (Figure 5): the legal status of homeschooling in Lebanon, the lack of studies or reports on homeschooling, the stakeholders' approach to homeschooling, and the legislation of homeschooling in Lebanon.

The three stakeholders agreed that the current legal status of homeschooling in Lebanon is such that parents can only choose homeschooling for preschool since this stage is not mandatory. This type of education is unregulated and unamended in Lebanon, as confirmed by the participants, thus preventing students from sitting for official exams unless through a school or as a free candidate after a certain age. Individuals can only enter university if they present an official certificate or its equivalent.

**Figure 5**

*Main themes raised by three educational stakeholders in Lebanon toward homeschooling.*



Homeschooling is exceptionally confined to hospitalized children with long-term health issues (cancer) or to juvenile prisoners who cannot attend school. Organizations and associations send volunteers or teachers to hospitals or prisons to educate them, or they limit themselves to supporting parents in educating their children. Additionally, the ministry has allowed pupils who are behind in school – only in the first and second cycles of the elementary stage, that is, the first six years of education – to learn outside of it through associations, to later join the school.

Participants unanimously agreed that there are no official studies on homeschooling in Lebanon, however, some reports might exist within organizations and associations concerned with education in hospitals, prisons, and homes.

Opinions and concerns about homeschooling in Lebanon varied among the stakeholders, with some endorsing and encouraging it, others cautiously non-opposing, and some discussing the pros and cons of its recognition and considering the specificities of each country's legislation.

Through the discussions, the stakeholders mentioned different advantages and disadvantages of homeschooling as perceived by them on various dimensions (Table 4).

The stakeholders involved agreed regarding the necessity of legislating homeschooling in Lebanon, however, they differed on the allowed stages. They suggested that the foundations and mechanisms for homeschooling be determined by a ministerial decree, that necessary supplies and essentials be provided, and that necessary legislations be enacted. As one participant pointed out, homeschooling under the supervision of

**Table 5***Advantages and disadvantages of practicing homeschooling.*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homeschooling enhances the individual's relationship with their family and protects them from discrimination and bullying found in some schools (2*). It relies on individualized teaching methods that can focus on a child's personal abilities and talents (1*).</li> <li>- It facilitates the learning process for those with health conditions preventing mobility, those living in isolated areas difficult to commute from and to, or those who choose self-directed learning after having paused their formal education for a period (3*). It accommodates many special educational needs (3*).</li> <li>- It motivates children who do not resonate with the traditional school system to pursue their education, and this a right of theirs (2*).</li> <li>- It customizes lessons and teaching tools to the learner (1*).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeschooling diminishes the interaction between the student and their peers at an early age and their presence in a comprehensive educational environment, in addition to possibly indicating a lack in social interaction or a problem in achieving success (1*).</li> <li>- It deprives them of various life and academic experiences (1*).</li> <li>- It deprives them of following the full curriculum, learning from qualified teachers who possess expertise and use diverse teaching methods and tools, and from equal and fair opportunities in quality education (1*).</li> </ul>
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homeschooling involves parents in the educational responsibility and cultural transmission, especially concerning values and religion, strengthening family bonds (2*).</li> <li>- It eases education for families with children having special educational needs or whose children do not mesh well with the school system's teaching (3*).</li> <li>- It reduces financial burdens on parents (1*).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It increases family pressures and places responsibility on parents who may not be qualified to undertake it (2*).</li> </ul>
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homeschooling decreases student overcrowding in classrooms and reduces pressure on teachers (1*).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It diminishes social and cultural interaction within the school (1*).</li> <li>- It limits the school's role in spreading common culture in society and building a foundational character for all citizens (2*).</li> </ul>
State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homeschooling lightens the financial load on the state regarding their education cost (1*).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It leads to the emergence of multiple, potentially conflicting, cultures within society, which could result in social, economic, and political problems (2*).</li> </ul>

\*The values in brackets refer to the number of participants who raised these points.

specialized schools according to the approved curriculum is feasible and achievable, “*If a group pressures 10 deputies to propose a law, they can achieve this, and I support them! Of course, after figuring out how to organize this form of education... and it’s not difficult! In fact, it’s easy!*”

## 11. Discussion

This study embarked on a qualitative exploration of homeschooling in Lebanon, focusing on understanding the process from the perspectives of parents and educational stakeholders. The objective was to delve into the realities of homeschooling in Lebanon and the driving forces behind its adoption, as well as to gauge the educational sector's stance on this educational approach.

Before discussing the study's results, some important considerations should be kept in mind for interpretation. First, studies on this topic have previously been conducted outside Lebanon and the Arab world; however, most of them were quantitative studies. The qualitative design of this study makes it outstanding by allowing in-depth delving into the homeschooling experience.

The guidelines for homeschooling suggested by participants in this study constitute a topic not covered by previous studies, although this study and its previous ones revealed similar demographic characteristics, such as homeschooled student age range (6–18 years) and ongoing marriage of the parents (no divorce) (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013, 2020; Ray, 2017; Ray, 2010). The current study found that parents can homeschool their children despite not having completed a bachelor's degree, which resonates with Ray's study (2010). Regarding the underlying motives behind homeschooling, this study confirms other findings in the literature (Montes, 2006; Redford et al., 2017) but it differs substantially from Ray's study (2015). In fact, the latter study found that Afro-American parents choose homeschooling for ethncal reasons or to avoid racism (Ray, 2015). Redford et al.'s (2017) study found that most parents homeschooled their children to deliver a moral education and avoid drug addiction. In the current study, parents did not express similar concerns, probably because of the oriental conservative culture in Lebanon, and the availability of a variety of private schools belonging to cultural groups and religious communities, which can ensure educational environments in accordance with parents' preoccupations.

Unlike other studies, such as Kunzmann and Gaither (2013; 2020), Montes (2006), Ray (2015; 2017), and Redford et al. (2017), the current study describes in detail the homeschooling experience such as how parents deal with their children, obstacles they deal with (lack of Arabic resources), the creativity in the methods used, and the overall lifestyle adaptation with homeschooling (daily schedule). Findings of the current study show that despite having access to the same curricula, Lebanese parents of homeschooled children predominantly use a different curriculum than those used worldwide (Hanna, 2012; Redford et al., 2017). This research stands out because it

covers both the actual program (the required days, hours and vacations) and how it is communicated and explained. The results showed that homeschooling can adapt to the student, allowing a more comfortable learning experience, an aspect not discussed in other studies (Hanna, 2012; Montes, 2006; Ray, 2015; Redford et al., 2017). Additionally, the current study relied on the results of exams conducted by schools, parents, or officials, in contrast to the studies of Barwegen et al. (2004), Ray (2015), Medlin and Blackmer (2000), and Rudner (1999), which took place in the United States; Martin et al.'s (2011) study, which took place in Canada; and Baig's study (2019), which was conducted in India and was designed similar to cohort studies. The participating parents also discussed how they received and interacted with the idea during its application, unlike other studies such as Kunzman (2020), Kunzman and Gaither (2013), Montes (2006), Ray (2015; 2017), Redford et al. (2017), and Rudner (1999), who did not mention the issue.

As for the third research question, it is noteworthy that the legal status of homeschooling in Lebanon is similar to that in other countries such as Brazil, where homeschooling is not conferred a legal status except for specific situations, and it differs from that in other countries such as the USA and most European countries (Cavan, 2017; Home School Legal Defense Association, 2024; Ray, 2017). Indeed, the current study emphasized the difficulty of having official studies or reports on homeschooling in Lebanon or in the Arab world, a finding similar to Wierzejski and Boratyńska's (2018) study, unlike in many other countries. In this study, the opinions of stakeholders in the educational sector were discussed in-depth with the participants. In contrast, this was not the case in other studies, such as Cavan (2017), Ray (2017), and Wierzejski and Boratyńska (2018). Several differences emerged between what some of the stakeholders indicated in their understanding of homeschooling and what the participating parents reported (in terms of details and generalities). According to the aforementioned studies, homeschooling deprives students of multiple life experiences and practical training, although examples of these experiences were not given. Barwegen et al. (2004), Medlin and Blackmer (2000), Ray (2015), and Rudner (1999) emphasized that education offers an integrated system of required competencies since there is much more to homeschooling than just studying at home, however, it also includes extracurriculars, trips, and scouting activities, as emphasized by the participants of the present study.

This study has its limitations. The qualitative approach, while offering in-depth insights, limits the generalizability of the findings across the broader Lebanese population. The reliance on self-reported data from parents and stakeholders may also introduce bias, reflecting firsthand experiences and perceptions rather than a comprehensive view of homeschooling in Lebanon. Additionally, the study's scope was

confined to a specific demographic, potentially overlooking the experiences of families from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Besides, the illegal status of homeschooling in Lebanon complicates participants' recruitment, therefore, other perspectives might have been missed in this study.

## 12. Conclusion

Although this study's results are not generalizable, its significance lies in understanding the homeschooling educational model and its approach. This understanding aims to find solutions to the problems and challenges posed by the participants or to theoretically establish the model for future adoption. In addition, the research explored both the academic and procedural realities of homeschooling and the opinions of stakeholders in the educational sector. In Lebanon, the lack of regulation and organization around homeschooling complicates the process of contacting participants and obtaining their information, further exacerbated by the country's instability. Besides, finding Arabic sources on homeschooling was also a challenge.

Considering the findings from this study and those in the scientific literature, the following recommendations for future homeschooling studies have been developed, with the hope that this paper will contribute to the production of studies about homeschooling and related themes in the Arab world:

1. Development of dynamic curricula tailored to homeschoolers.
2. Inclusion of homeschoolers from the Arab world in future studies.
3. In-depth examination of the curricula and programs utilized.
4. Creation of clear mechanisms for homeschooling like those used abroad.
5. Conducting a quantitative study on homeschoolers with the Ministry's prior confirmation that no harm will be caused to them.
6. Inclusion of the social dimensions of homeschoolers in the study.
7. Conducting a quantitative study like the current study to compare the results.
8. Conducting a quantitative study to determine the effects of homeschooling on students' motivation to learn.

The findings of this study contribute to enriching the educational sector in Lebanon considering that it focuses for the first time on homeschooling in the country through

the qualitative data that it has provided. It was highlighted during this study, which lasted nearly a year, that homeschooling is a valuable and rich educational experience, yet it is quite relative. In fact, homeschooling may be more appropriate for some families than for others, depending on a variety of factors specific to each family.

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## Competing Interests

None

## Author Biography

Ali Nazar is a multidisciplinary researcher interested in various topics; namely Islamic history, education and religion. He holds an MBA from the Lebanese University, a master's degree in educational management focusing on homeschooling in Lebanon from Saint-Joseph University, a master's degree in Islamic jurisprudence from Al-Rasoul Al-Akram University and is currently pursuing a PhD degree in Islamic jurisprudence and linguistics. Ali has authored and presented several papers in jurisprudence and education and works in Islamic history research at the American University of Beirut. Besides, Ali has published a philosophical novel in Arabic titled "Mary's World."

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