

## Different reasons for one significant choice: Factors influencing homeschooling choice in Israel

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**Abstract** Homeschooling is an alternative to conventional education in many countries all over the world, though legal regulations vary. This article examines why parents opt for homeschooling. The large body of research on the topic (especially from the United States) points to a variety of reasons for making the choice to homeschool. The most common reasons are of a pedagogical nature, but in many cases they are also family-related. What has not yet been investigated in depth is the relationship between the different reasons for choosing homeschooling and the way in which homeschooling is practised. There is also a lack of research on the relationship between the reasons for choosing homeschooling and the parents' personalities, educational background and attitudes towards both homeschooling in particular and the education system in general. Using a mixed methods design in order to examine these relationships, the authors of this article questioned 62 homeschooling families in Israel. The findings indicate that some parents chose to homeschool for pedagogical reasons only and others for both pedagogical and family-related reasons. Furthermore, the latter group held more positive views of the effect of homeschooling on children – and the mothers in that group, on average, were more educated compared with those who cited pedagogical reasons alone. The reasons for choosing homeschooling were also found to be associated with the character of the homeschooling practice, with families whose reasons were pedagogical only devoting more hours, on average, specifically to studying.

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**Résumé** Différentes raisons pour un choix d'importance : facteurs qui influencent la décision sur l'instruction à domicile en Israël – L'enseignement à domicile est une alternative à l'éducation conventionnelle dans de nombreux pays de tous les continents, même si les réglementations juridiques diffèrent. Cet article examine les raisons pour lesquelles des parents optent pour l'instruction à domicile. Le vaste corpus de recherche sur le sujet (provenant notamment des États-Unis) signale plusieurs raisons en faveur de ce choix. Les plus courantes sont de nature pédagogique, mais dans de nombreux cas elles sont également d'ordre familial. Ce qui n'a pas encore été exploré jusqu'ici est la relation entre les différentes raisons de choisir cet enseignement et les manières de le pratiquer. La recherche présente une autre lacune concernant la relation entre d'une part ces raisons, d'autre part la personnalité et le niveau d'instruction des parents ainsi que leur opinion sur l'enseignement à domicile en particulier et le système éducatif en général. Appliquant un modèle de recherche à méthode mixte en vue d'examiner ces relations, les auteurs de l'article ont questionné 62 familles pratiquant l'instruction à domicile en Israël. Les résultats indiquent que certains parents ont pris cette décision uniquement pour des raisons pédagogiques, d'autres pour des raisons tant pédagogiques que familiales. Ce deuxième groupe a en outre des opinions plus positives sur les conséquences de l'instruction à domicile sur les enfants, et les mères concernées ont en moyenne une instruction supérieure à celles évoquant uniquement des raisons pédagogiques. Les raisons de choisir l'éducation à domicile seraient par ailleurs associées à la nature de cette pratique, chez les familles qui avancent des motifs uniquement pédagogiques et consacrent en moyenne davantage d'heures à l'apprentissage.

## Introduction

Homeschooling is a practice whereby children are not enrolled in schools but study school subjects at home. The term is used with reference to parents or guardians who teach their children at home (Blok 2004; Neuman and Aviram 2003, 2008). Throughout most of human history until the Industrial Revolution, which began in the 18th century, homeschooling was common in Western countries such as England, France and Germany (Wilhelm and Firmin 2009); in fact, until then only a very small number of children attended educational institutions. Correspondingly, there were also very few public education systems, school buildings or professional educators. Parents were responsible for the education of their children, which in many cases was an integral part of the family's daily life, rather than an activity which took place at a specific time or in a specific place. After the Industrial Revolution, mandatory education laws were enacted, a large number of public education systems were established, numerous educators were trained and children were required to attend school (Hiatt 1994; Gaither 2009; Neuman and Aviram 2003, 2008; Wilhelm and Firmin 2009; Guterman and Neuman 2014).

The scope of homeschooling varies among countries. In the United States (US), for instance, an estimated 2 million children are homeschooled; in England, the estimated figure is 80,000; in Canada, 50,000; in Australia, 30,000; and in France, 2,800 (Neuman and Guterman 2013). Furthermore, this practice has been expanding in the Western world in recent decades, as is evident, for example, in Canada and the US, where the estimated number of homeschooling children grew from a few thousand in the 1970s to 2 million in 2010 (Aurini and Davies 2005; Blok and Karsten 2011; Ray 2011; Kunzman and Gaither 2013). In Israel, although the practice began later (approximately two decades ago during the 1990s), there has also been a significant increase in the number and percentage of homeschoolers. An estimated 360 families currently engage in homeschooling in Israel (two decades ago, there were only about 60 families) (Neuman and Guterman 2013).

It is possible to understand the rapid development of the practice of homeschooling over the last two decades against the background of growing criticism of the education system and the pursuant quest for alternatives to conventional schools (Fielding and Moss 2011; Clennon 2014; Pilat 2014). Among these approaches, homeschooling is one of the most interesting and perhaps the furthest from conventional education. As noted, in contrast to alternative frameworks, making the choice to homeschool is not just a change of educational setting, but a choice to remove the child from any formal institution of learning (or never even send it there in the first place).

There are likely to be several serious implications resulting from the decision to remove a child from the mainstream education system. For example, it may affect the family's standard of living if one parent is forced to stop working or reduce their hours (Neuman and Aviram 2003). It may also influence the child's social development, since school is a social framework in which children meet and develop relationships with other children their own age, as well as undergoing a process of socialisation into the culture in which they live (Merry and Karsten 2010; Després 2013). Thus, the decision to take a child out of a formal academic setting is not a trivial one. It is a decision with economic, social and academic implications which are likely to be far-reaching for the family and the child.

What brings parents to the point of making such a significant choice? In recent years, researchers who analysed the National Household Education Survey (NHES) – a comprehensive survey on education-related topics conducted in the US every two years<sup>1</sup> – arrived repeatedly at the conclusion that the main factors in a parent's decision to begin homeschooling were pedagogical (dissatisfaction with academic instruction and a desire to provide a non-traditional approach to a child's education), religious (a desire to provide religious instruction), and related to the school environment (Princiotta and Bielick 2006; Bielick 2008; Noel et al. 2013).

It is important to note that it is not just a matter of a few isolated cases. Amber Noel and her colleagues (2013), who analysed the NHES of 2012, found that 91 per cent of homeschooling parents in the US reported that concern about the school

<sup>1</sup> The National Household Education Survey (NHES) is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the US. For more information, see <https://nces.ed.gov/nhes/> [accessed 29 March 2017].

environment was the most important reason for choosing homeschooling. Robert Kunzman (2009), who summarised a large body of research which examined the reasons for choosing homeschooling, claims that most homeschooling parents believe they can provide a better educational experience for their children than a school can, and they are ready to sacrifice their time, money and professional development to make this happen. Generally (though not always), the parents are not satisfied with the conventional educational options, including private schools. Similar to Noel et al. (2013), Kunzman pointed out that in the 2007 NHES, 88 per cent of parents involved in homeschooling identified concern about the environment (2009) in conventional schools as a significant factor in their decision to homeschool (Green and Hoover-Dempsey 2007; Isenberg 2007; NCES 2008).

Nolen Olsen (2008) also found that the main factors which motivated parents in Canada to choose homeschooling for their children were pedagogical. He listed the factors in order of importance: (1) the negative influence of socialisation of the peer group; (2) religion; (3) a child's special educational needs or disability; (4) a parent's own negative experiences in school as a child; (5) lack of administrative support on the part of the school; and (6) an incident at school in which the child was involved. Brian Ray (1999) suggested additional pedagogical reasons for the choice of parents in the US to homeschool, including: an aspiration for greater individual academic achievement than the school demanded; a wish to create a personal study programme and an educational environment appropriate for the child's needs and strengths; and finally, a desire to offer children opportunities for facilitated social interaction with other children and adults, rather than letting the school determine this activity.

It should be noted that the concept of *pedagogical reasons* includes a broad range of parental views. For example, a number of studies exposed ideological reasons for parents to homeschool. Several studies conducted in the US, for example, revealed that religious groups held prominent views that children should not learn theories of evolution, which contradicted their beliefs about creation (see e.g. Hanna 2011). These pedagogical reasons cited by parents for discrediting schools differ greatly, for instance, from concerns about a low standard of education. Nevertheless, in all cases, the reasons are school-related, that is, they refer to the character and content of school studies.

The emphasis on pedagogical reasons is also reflected in specific groups of homeschooling families. For example, Carrie Winstanley (2009), who researched a special group of homeschooling – parents of gifted children in England –, found that pedagogical reasons were most central in the decisions of these families, too. Winstanley claimed that homeschooling was a last resort for the frustrated families of gifted children whose complex needs were not being met by conventional schools.

Although much research has demonstrated that the main reasons for choosing homeschooling are pedagogical, there is evidence that this significant choice is also affected by family-related factors, that is, the character of the family unit and the relationships among its members. For example, Sally Varnham (2008) found that homeschooling parents in Australia and New Zealand placed special emphasis on parental responsibility in their children's education, the relationship with their

children and their children's particular health needs. All of these are important elements in the decision to homeschool. Both Nolen Olsen (2008) and Ed Collom (2005) noted that in some cases, specific family needs led parents to choose homeschooling. Brian Ray (1999) found that some parents chose homeschooling with the aim of cultivating a better relationship between their children and themselves, and between children and their siblings. Bonnie Boschee and Floyd Boschee (2011) also showed that for certain families in the US, the main reason for choosing homeschooling was to strengthen relationships in the family.

While this review of reasons for homeschooling is general, it is nevertheless important to note the variance by country. For example, in the US, many families choose homeschooling for religious reasons, but in Australia, more families homeschool because of their remote location (Kunzman 2009). Most of the data presented here refer to the US; there are almost no figures on this subject regarding Israel. In this respect, in addition to providing information on the relationship between reasons for homeschooling and character of the practice, the study we present here also offers findings on the reasons for choosing homeschooling in Israel.

Although much research has addressed the question of why parents choose homeschooling, very little attention has been directed towards investigating the factors that underlie the diverse reasons which parents cite for this decision. In the study we present here, we were interested in two questions: Do parents with different levels of education choose homeschooling for different reasons? And are their reasons for choosing home education associated with particular personality traits?

The study we present here focused on these factors by examining the reasons for homeschooling among a group of families in Israel, and the relationship between these reasons and a list of additional factors including parents' education level; central aspects of the parents' personalities; and parental attitudes towards the educational system and homeschooling. In our view, an examination of the relationship between reasons for choosing homeschooling and a parent's background and personality was likely to shed light on some of the factors behind the choice to homeschool. This relationship has not merited much attention by researchers to date.

In addition to these factors, which are important in their own right, the study we present here also focused on the practical behavioural implications of the reasons for homeschooling. Research has shown broad diversity in the way homeschooling is carried out by different families (Ricci 2011). Some practise *structured homeschooling*, in which parents initiate structured study processes at home and insist on a predefined schedule for these processes (Taylor-Hough 2010). By contrast, other families practise *unstructured homeschooling* or *unschooling*, in which learning is not initiated by the parents but is based on the natural learning desires of the child (ibid.). Of course, this is not a binary system, but rather a continuum in which each family adopts its own unique plan (Barratt-Peacock 2003). The question arises, then, whether the reasons for homeschooling are also associated with the chosen character of homeschooling. Previous research has not provided a clear-cut answer to this question. Therefore, the study we present here focused on the underlying factors of

the different reasons for choosing homeschooling, as well as the implications of these reasons for the way homeschooling is practised.

In addition to these variables, our study also examined parental personality and demographic aspects. It was important to include these variables in the examination in light of previous research findings which suggest a correlation between them and educational choices made by parents. For example, in a meta-analysis of the interrelationships among the Big Five personality factors,<sup>2</sup> Peter Prinzie et al. (2009) found that a parent's personality was associated with their parenting practices. With regard to the focus of the study we present here, the meta-analysis indicated that a high degree of parental involvement, which is characteristic of extroverted parents, can contribute to more active and assertive parenting, which involves a greater emphasis on discipline and boundaries. It also showed that parents with a high level of conscientiousness were likely to raise their children in a more structured and consistent environment.

Another prominent finding of the research about the relationship between personality and parenting style concerns attachment. Although a full review of the knowledge in this field is beyond the scope of this article, it should be noted that anxious attachment, which is associated with fear of abandonment and distancing in intimate relationships, has been found to correlate with the development of strict, and sometimes even inflexible parenting mechanisms. By contrast, avoidant attachment, which is associated with fear of close relationships, has been found in some cases to correlate with a tendency towards more distant parenting (Edelstein et al. 2004; Kindsvatter and Desmond 2013; Sümer and Harma 2015). As discussed here, research has shown that educational views and practices are significantly correlated with parents' personalities and personal characteristics. In order to take into consideration these findings and the connection between them and the reasons parents state for choosing to homeschool, the study we present here examines parents' personalities and personal characteristics.

## Method

### Participants

Of the 62 parents who participated in our study by completing questionnaires, 46 were women (76.12%) and 16 were men (23.88%). The number of children per family ranged from 1 to 7 and the average number of children was 2.45. The standard deviation was 1.29. Fifty-nine of the participants were secular and 3 were religious. The mothers' average years of education was 15.93 (SD = 2.68). Fifty-nine of the participants were married and 3 were single. All the children of the research participants were of elementary-school age. Each of the participants represented a different family (none of the participants were married to each other). All were parents of children who were homeschooled in Israel. None of the parents

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<sup>2</sup> The Big Five Inventory (BFI) personality factors are: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (John et al. 1991).

in the sample were teachers employed by Israel's Ministry of Education. Most of them ( $n = 56$ ) did not follow the ministry's national curriculum, but progressed independently through the mathematics, English and science workbooks which they chose according to their own judgement and in consultation with the children. Thirty-three of the participants noted that they had chosen the curriculum solely in agreement with their children; 11 said they had no curriculum at all and that learning was based on subjects which arose in the household.

The respondents were divided into two groups based on their main reason for having chosen homeschooling: 29 were in the "pedagogical only" group; and 33 were in the "pedagogical and family reasons" group (see *Procedure* section).

## Research tools

For the purpose of this research, we used three questionnaires: the Big Five Inventory (BFI); a questionnaire on attitudes towards homeschooling; and a demographic questionnaire.

### *BFI questionnaire*

The Big Five Inventory or BFI (John et al. 1991) examines five main personality characteristics: openness to experience; conscientiousness; extraversion; agreeableness; and neuroticism. The BFI questionnaire is composed of 44 short descriptive phrases which represent different personality traits. The participants rate themselves on each trait on a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly). By averaging the relevant items, a separate score emerges for each of the five personality traits. In the study we present here, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.78 for openness to experience, 0.85 for conscientiousness, 0.83 for extraversion, 0.78 for agreeableness and 0.89 for neuroticism.

### *Attitudes questionnaire*

The second questionnaire we asked the parents to fill in was one we designed to find out about their attitudes towards the education system and the influence of homeschooling on their children. The questionnaire was composed of short descriptive sentences for which the participants rated their level of agreement on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly). The section of the questionnaire which examined attitudes towards the education system was composed of six short descriptive sentences. For example, one of the items was "I have faith in the education system". An averaging of items resulted in a score for the parent's attitude towards the education system. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this section was 0.87.

The section of the questionnaire on attitudes towards the influence of homeschooling on children was composed of seven short descriptive sentences. For example, one of the sentences was "Homeschooling is helpful for children". An averaging of items yielded a score for the parent's attitude towards the influence of homeschooling. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this section was 0.91.



### *Demographic questionnaire*

The parents completed a demographic questionnaire which included their and their family's personal characteristics, such as gender, number of children in the family, education and income. In addition, it included questions on how many hours were devoted to learning each week, on average, for each child in the family; the number of weekly social meetings of each child with other homeschooled children; and the number of weekly social meetings with children who were not homeschooled. The questionnaire also included an open-ended question in which respondents were asked to cite their reasons for choosing to homeschool. This question was related to the main goal of our research, which was to examine the relationships between the choice to homeschool and the way in which homeschooling was practised, and the choice to homeschool and parents' attitudes and personalities.

These answers were divided into a number of categories, with each answer placed in one category. This, in effect, divided the respondents into groups based on their answers to this question. This categorisation process was based on qualitative methodology (see e.g. Strauss and Corbin 1990; Dey 1993). During the process, the researcher classified the data by ascribing different sentences and text parts to groups with a common denominator, constantly comparing different parts of the text and finding similarities or differences between them (Seidel and Kelle 1995). The result of the process was that different parts of the text belonged to different topic groups. In accordance with Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba's *peer debriefing principle* (1986), one researcher carried out the analysis, and then the second researcher critically re-examined the results of this analysis. Disagreements between the two researchers were resolved through discussion.

The process of categorising the text included a number of stages. The first stage was *open coding* (Strauss and Corbin 1990), in which the data were placed in a category – one or several words which described the reason or reasons why the parents chose homeschooling. Then the categories were grouped in a process of *mapping analysis* (Pidgeon and Henwood 1996) into two super-categories: pedagogical reasons only (for example, discontent with the public education system or worldviews about how teaching and learning should take place); and both pedagogical and family reasons (an example of family reasons is the joy of being together as a family, or the belief that the family is the most suitable environment for a child). Each of the reasons cited by the respondents on the questionnaires was placed into one of these categories.

### **Procedure**

We invited homeschooling parents to a meeting during which, as they had been informed ahead of time, questionnaires were administered, followed by a lecture on homeschooling. Before handing out the questionnaires, we explained to the parents that our research was intended to collect and analyse new information on homeschooling. The parents then signed an informed consent form. Four parents (approximately 6%) refused to fill out the questionnaires. After the questionnaires had been completed, there was a question-and-answer session about the



questionnaires and the research. This was followed by a lecture, which discussed the findings of previous research in Israel on the emotional and academic abilities of children who were homeschooled compared with those who attended school (Guterman and Neuman 2016).

Based on their answers regarding the main reason for choosing to homeschool, the parents were divided into two groups: those whose main reason for choosing homeschooling was pedagogical only; and those whose primary reasons were both pedagogical and family-related.

## Results

Four Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) analyses were conducted in order to determine whether the two groups of parents, who were divided based on whether they had chosen homeschooling for pedagogical reasons only or for both pedagogical and family reasons, differed in terms of educational background, personalities, attitudes towards homeschooling and the education system, and way of practising homeschooling.

The results of the analysis regarding the parents' years of education indicated a significant difference between the two groups of parents:  $F(2,59) = 6.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .18$ . The means and standard deviations of parents' education by reasons for choosing homeschooling, as well as the results of the separate analyses for each indicator, are presented in Table 1.

As indicated in Table 1, significant differences were found between the two groups of parents in terms of the mothers' years of education. Among parents who chose homeschooling for both pedagogical and family reasons, the mothers' education was higher than in families who chose homeschooling for pedagogical reasons only.

The results of the second analysis, which pertained to the parents' personalities, indicated no significant differences between parents who chose homeschooling for pedagogical reasons and those who chose homeschooling for both pedagogical and family reasons:  $F(5,56) = 0.87$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\text{Eta}^2 = .07$ .

The results of the third analysis revealed significant differences between the groups of parents in terms of attitudes towards homeschooling:  $F(2,59) = 2.44$ ,

**Table 1** Means and standard deviations of parental education by reason for choosing homeschooling

Reason for choosing homeschooling						
	Pedagogical ( <i>n</i> = 29)		Pedagogical and family ( <i>n</i> = 33)			
<i>Measures</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> (1, 60)	<i>Eta</i> <sup>2</sup>
Mother's education	14.55	1.62	16.27	2.17	12.26*	0.18
Father's education	14.72	1.91	15.30	2.28	1.20	0.02

Notes:  $p < .01$ ; \* = significant difference

**Table 2** Means and standard deviations of parental attitudes by reason for choosing homeschooling

Reason for choosing homeschooling						
	Pedagogical ( <i>n</i> = 29)		Pedagogical and family ( <i>n</i> = 33)			
<i>Measures</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> (1, 60)	<i>Eta</i> <sup>2</sup>
Attitudes on educational system	2.99	1.15	2.85	1.05	0.26	0.01
Attitudes on influence of homeschooling on child	4.87	0.93	5.38	0.88	4.88*	0.08

Notes:  $p < .05$ ; \* = significant difference

$p < .05$ ,  $Eta^2 = .08$ . The means and standard deviations of the parents' attitudes by reasons for choosing homeschooling, as well as the results of the separate analyses for each indicator, are presented in Table 2.

As indicated in Table 2, significant differences were found between the groups of parents in their attitudes on the influence of homeschooling on their child. Parents who chose homeschooling for both pedagogical and family reasons viewed homeschooling more positively than did parents who chose homeschooling for pedagogical reasons only.

The results of the fourth analysis showed significant differences between groups of parents in the way in which they practised homeschooling:  $F(2,59) = 3.69$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $Eta^2 = .11$ . The means and standard deviations of the way homeschooling was practised according to reasons for choosing homeschooling, as well as the results of the separate analyses for each indicator, are presented in Table 3.

As indicated in Table 3, significant differences were found between the groups of parents in terms of the number of weekly hours devoted to learning. The parents who chose homeschooling for pedagogical reasons only devoted a greater number of weekly hours to learning compared with the parents who chose homeschooling for both pedagogical and family reasons.

## Discussion

The decision to educate a child in one way or another is one of the most important and meaningful choices that each family can make. When it comes to the decision to take a child out of a formal educational framework entirely, the choice is even more significant; it has far-reaching ramifications both for the child and for the family and it is not surprising that researchers are interested in this choice. As discussed in the introduction, several studies have examined the reasons for choosing homeschooling (Princiotta and Bielick 2006; Bielick 2008; Noel et al. 2013). However, the study we present here delved further into this issue, examining whether the difference in the reasons for choosing homeschooling is related to other factors. Parents were asked to state their reasons for choosing homeschooling. Through qualitative analysis, we divided the respondents into two groups: parents whose

**Table 3** Means and standard deviations of way of practicing homeschooling by reason for choosing homeschooling

Reason for choosing homeschooling						
<i>Measures</i>	Pedagogical ( <i>n</i> = 29)		Pedagogical and family ( <i>n</i> = 33)		<i>F</i> (1, 60)	<i>Eta</i> <sup>2</sup>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Daily schedule	4.28	1.34	3.88	1.34	0.26	0.01
Hours devoted to learning	4.76	4.08	1.61	2.52	4.88*	0.08

Notes:  $p < .05$ ; \* = significant difference

reasons for choosing homeschooling were pedagogical only; and parents whose reasons were both pedagogical and family-related. Our study examined the relationship between the division of these two groups and the parents' attitudes towards homeschooling and the education system, their personalities and their level of education. In addition, we investigated whether the differences in the reasons for choosing homeschooling were related to the way homeschooling was carried out.

Unlike most of the questions in the demographic questionnaire, the one used to establish the parents' reasons for choosing homeschooling was open-ended. The decision to employ qualitative means to collect information on the reasons for choosing homeschooling, and to use this information to analyse the results of the closed-ended questions, was based on the view that mixed methods research is best suited to the examination of unknown phenomena. In this type of design, qualitative instruments are used to gain insights and develop working theories, which are then tested by means of quantitative measures.

The qualitative paradigm is based on the premise that in order to capture people's real and authentic experiences, we must allow them to express themselves freely. Using the texts of such free expression, it is possible to conceptualise and gain insight into their perceptions of reality. Thus, we asked the respondents to describe their reasons freely and then divided them into categories.

This method allowed us to use qualitative tools to create a working theory which divided the reasons for choosing homeschooling into two main groups: pedagogical only; and both pedagogical and family-related. This working theory is actually a positive theory or, in measurement and evaluation terms, a descriptive theory; it describes "what is" (in contrast to a normative, or prescriptive theory, which describes "what should be") (Yuengert 2004; Aldrich et al. 2007; Hands 2012).

After the formulation of our working theory, which suggested a division of the homeschooling parents into two groups according to the reasons they chose homeschooling (pedagogical only and both pedagogical and family-related reasons), we tested the theory by using the data collected using the closed-ended questionnaire. In other words, we examined whether the groups which emerged in the qualitative part of the research were meaningful to the examination of the quantitative data.

Indeed, we discovered a connection between the division created in the qualitative part of the study and a list of factors. First, we will discuss the factors

which are likely to be at the root of the reason for choosing homeschooling, and then we will discuss the findings concerning the connection between these reasons and the way homeschooling was carried out.

With regard to the parents' attitudes, there was no difference between the groups in their attitudes towards the educational system, but a difference between the groups was found in their attitudes regarding the influence of homeschooling on their child. Families who chose homeschooling for both pedagogical and family reasons had more positive views of the impact of homeschooling on their child than did families who had chosen homeschooling for pedagogical reasons only. This finding may indicate that one's view of the educational system is not the root of differences in the reasons for choosing homeschooling, but instead, these reasons are influenced by one's attitude towards homeschooling and its impact on the child. Of course, it is also possible to draw the opposite conclusion: that when the reasons for choosing homeschooling are also family-related, parents notice other aspects of the contribution of homeschooling, so that their views on homeschooling are more positive than those who consider pedagogical reasons only.

The results indicated that there was no significant difference between the groups in terms of fathers' years of education, but there was a significant difference in terms of mothers' years of education. The mothers in families whose reasons for choosing homeschooling were both pedagogical and family-related had a higher level of education than the mothers in families who had chosen homeschooling for pedagogical reasons only. These findings correspond with previous research which showed that in the majority of families, the mother is the parent who is most involved with the children and, therefore, the most influential one (Neuman 2003; Guterman and Neuman 2014). Perhaps better-educated mothers are more aware of family-related aspects and therefore focus on them more when deciding to homeschool their children. In addition, these mothers might feel that they have taken fuller advantage of education, and therefore allow themselves more freedom to focus on aspects other than pure pedagogy. Of course, in order to understand these connections better, further research is required which replicates the findings in additional groups and examines the underlying factors.

It is interesting that no personality differences were found between parents who chose homeschooling for pedagogical reasons only and those who chose homeschooling for both pedagogical and family reasons. In future research, it will be important to examine additional aspects of this subject, since in all likelihood parents' personalities are somehow connected to their reasons for choosing homeschooling.

The study we present here also considered the relationship between the reasons for choosing homeschooling and the way in which homeschooling is practised. The results indicated that parents whose reasons for choosing homeschooling were pedagogical only devoted a greater number of weekly hours to learning compared with those who chose homeschooling for both pedagogical and family-related reasons. It can be assumed that when a family focuses primarily on pedagogical aspects, more time and effort are dedicated accordingly, and this is expressed in the number of hours dedicated to learning. It is possible that families who choose homeschooling for family-related reasons as well dedicate more time to other

activities, such as family trips, joint preparation of meals and so on, at the cost of time and effort dedicated specifically to learning.

As noted earlier, one of the accepted divisions in the literature regarding the practice of homeschooling is based on the degree of its structure. The instruments we used in our study to measure the degree of structure in home education were (1) the number of hours devoted to parent-initiated learning and (2) the degree of existence of a daily schedule. With regard to these measures, one can assume that families who chose homeschooling for both pedagogical and family reasons see learning as arising out of family activity and not just as hours devoted to structured and initiated learning, compared to families who chose homeschooling for pedagogical reasons only. Therefore, it may be that from the point of view of families who chose homeschooling for both reasons, the hours of learning reported in the research are hours of structured learning, while in fact there are additional hours of learning which are unstructured. Accordingly, the two groups of families may view the very definition of learning differently. In further research, it would be interesting to examine the connection between the reasons for choosing homeschooling and the variety of activities which take place within the family, to get a clearer picture of the relationship between these reasons and the degree to which the family puts an emphasis on different kinds of activities.

Finally, it is important to take into consideration the Israeli context of the study we have presented here. In light of the dearth of research on homeschooling in Israel, most of the literature we have cited in this article refers to studies conducted in other countries, indicating international trends. However, since our study refers to homeschooling in Israel, it not only makes a start on filling a gap in research in this country, but also offers a further contribution to the knowledge about homeschooling worldwide, in particular in Europe and the US. It may be assumed that, cultural differences notwithstanding, there are similar groups of reasons – such as religious, family-related, pedagogical and others – for choosing to homeschool in different places. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct similar studies in other countries and compare the relationships indicated with those found in the study we have presented here. Such an investigation would constitute a further stage in the comparison of homeschooling between different countries, contributing to the understanding of homeschooling from an international, and not only local, perspective. It would also be interesting to further investigate the differences among countries in terms of parents' reasons for homeschooling, and the relationship to the type of homeschooling practised. This would include, for example, *unschooling* (studying topics chosen by the learner, which in Israel is likely to be associated with “naturalistic” homeschooling focusing on closeness to nature) and *structured homeschooling* (in which parents have structured goals and/or methods) (Neuman and Guterman 2016).

Despite the significance of these findings, our study has a number of limitations. First, this is a preliminary study, and it is important to also examine the data of other samples of homeschooling families. Second, the study we have presented here related to the personality and educational aspects which might underlie each family's stated reasons for choosing homeschooling; in future research, it would be interesting to explore additional aspects which were not examined here, such as

educational approach, parents' past experiences with the educational system and so on. Finally, it will also be important in further research to consider aspects such as the influence of the different reasons for choosing homeschooling on the child's social world or on family relationships, as well as their relationship with the reasons for choosing homeschooling.

Despite these limitations, the study we have presented here is an important addition to research in this field. In light of the significance of the decision to homeschool, as well as the notable growth of this trend, it is essential to obtain a clear picture of the factors which are at the root of this choice. Beyond the theoretical contribution, this type of understanding can inform professionals who assist homeschooling families. Our finding that the reasons for choosing homeschooling have an impact on how homeschooling is practised further emphasises the importance of research in the field. Such research is complex, and in many cases it may require a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, but this complexity serves to add grounded information and advance our understanding of these important aspects of choosing homeschooling.

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