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Schools and emotional and behavioral problems: A comparison of school-going and homeschooled children

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ABSTRACT

Much attention has been focused recently on the deepening crisis in the education system. Researchers have attributed these problems to the school environment. One method for examining this claim is to compare specific emotional and behavior problems among children who attend schools and children who do not. This study examined three aspects of children's emotional world—emotional and behavioral problems, depression, and attachment security—in a group of children attending school and a group of homeschooled children, matched for socioeconomic background and research procedure. The findings indicated a lower level of depression among the homeschooled children; no difference was found between the groups in attachment security. With respect to emotional and behavioral problems, no difference was found in internalizing problems, but more externalizing problems were found among the school-going than the homeschooled children, in 9–10-year-olds and 11–12-year-olds, but not in 6–8-year-olds.

Over the past few decades, researchers have produced a growing volume of evidence that the education systems in the Western world are in a deep crisis regarding many diverse aspects of their activity. These are associated with the goals of education as well as the means employed by the education system, that is, fundamental issues of why and how we should educate (Aviram, 2010; Chubb & Moe, 1990). There is widespread confusion among educators and policymakers regarding these two essential questions and, correspondingly, a lack of agreement regarding the answers to these questions (Biesta, 2009; Hanley, Roehrig, & Canto, 2012; Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006).

One of the main focuses of the crisis is the lack of fit of the education system to current times. The goals and pedagogy of the education system, designed at the beginning of the industrial revolution, were fitting for the modern era; thus there is a very wide gap between these goals and teaching methods and those appropriate for the postmodern era, such as student-centered constructivist goals (Coffman & Klinger, 2014; J. Cogan & Derricott, 2014; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). In many cases, various stakeholders, including parents, have recognized that the school is irrelevant to the world we live in, among other things, because it teaches modern skills to students who actually need postmodern (21st century) skills, such as research skills, self-direction, thinking outside of the box, and more (Gardiner, 2014; McComas, 2014).

However, one of the most disturbing criticisms of the education system is the suggestion that school may contribute to emotional and behavioral problems among students: many researchers have reported that in certain situations, many children feel stress regarding various aspects of school, including

academic and social demands such as constant evaluation, intensive investment in homework, and preparation for tests, discipline, adult expectations of student success, social pressures, and others (see e.g., Bauwens & Hourcade, 1992; A. L. Greene, 1988; Heubeck & O'Sullivan, 1998).

In a study of the impact of school-related stress on the adjustment of children, Barrett and Heubeck (2000) found that school-related stress factors were associated with a high level of anxiety and poor functioning of children in various realms. Plenty, Ostberg, Almquist, Augustine, and Modin (2014) divided stress factors according to their impact on students. They found that the relative impact of teachers, classmates, and parents differed: Low support from parents was associated with performance more than emotional problems, especially among girls; low peer support was more strongly associated with emotional symptoms. Furthermore, the findings indicated a correlation between excessive pressure in school and poor mental health, and of high academic demands with emotional symptoms and poor academic performance.

According to Janosz, Morin, Maïano, Marsh, and Nagengast (2013), adolescents who experience lack of fit between their developmental needs and their socialization experiences in school are liable to internalize the notion that their needs are not worthy of attention and to develop chronic low self-esteem. Other researchers also examined the relative impact of various stress factors. For example, Grannis (1992) found that students rated stress factors classified as general disturbances (such as noise in the classroom) as more frequent, but the least problematic, and reported aggression and academic problems as greater hindrances. DeWolfe (1995)

found that fears associated with fitting in socially and peer acceptance were common among school children. He reported that the three main factors of stress in Grades 5 and 6 were (a) being chosen last for a team, (b) fear of social rejection, and (c) fear of not being promoted to the next grade level. Agrawal, Garg, and Urajnik (2010) also found that peer-group interactions and disciplinary demands were perceived as greater stress factors compared with academic demands and interactions with teachers.

Several studies of school bullying and peer victimization have consistently indicated negative effects of exposure to such experiences on the development of students. A broad range of effects was found, including emotional and behavioral problems, of both types—internalizing (e.g., depression, anxiety, negative self-image) and externalizing (e.g., behavior problems, violence; Hanish & Guerra, 2002; Olweus, 1993; Salmon, Jones, & Smith, 1998; Schwartz, McFadyen-Ketchum, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1998).

Janosz et al. (2008) found that witnessing violence at school was associated more with externalizing problems among students, and actual victimization was associated more strongly with internalizing problems. It is important to note that bullying, exposure to bullying, and violence are not rare in the schools. Due et al. (2005) noted that according to the World Health Organization, between 35 and 40% of the adolescents in their study of 35 countries had behaved like bullies or been bullied in school in the last few months prior to the research. Several researchers found that when they included both verbal and physical violence in the definition, 75–80% of the students testified to having witnessed violent acts in school (Flannery, Wester, & Singer, 2004; Singer et al., 1999).

These findings of a correlation between the school environment and a large variety of emotional problems might raise concern. However, the results of many studies fall short of determining the school as the source of these problems. It might be argued, for instance, that life in a postmodern environment, with its overstimulation, contributes to these problems. The postmodern environment imposes complex social demands that are not necessarily associated with school, such as the demands of a future career, on children. In other words, when we examine the wealth of findings, some of which we reviewed here, the question arises whether attending school actually has a direct impact on the development of emotional and behavioral problems.

One way to examine this question is by comparing emotional and behavioral aspects among children who study in traditional schools and those who do not attend school. In the present research, we examined the emotional and behavioral problems of children enrolled in schools and of children who were homeschooled.

Home schooling has become a fast-growing trend in recent years. In the United States, the practice now represents nearly 3% of all students, and the figure has increased significantly over the last two decades (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). In Israel, homeschooling is much more limited, both nominally (a total of about 500 children) and as a proportion of all students. However, it is a relatively new practice that has recently grown considerably. Ten years ago, the number of families practicing homeschooling in Israel was estimated at 60, and the current figure is between and 360 and 400 families (Neuman & Guterman, 2013)—an increase of some 600%.

Several researchers have discussed the potential impact of homeschooling on the emotional world of the child. Merry and Howell (2009) argued that homeschooling encourages a more intimate and supportive style of parenting, which cultivates healthy social and personal development of children. Some have also suggested that the reduced volume of social interaction with peers may actually constitute a positive factor for children, as it eliminates their anxieties and fears regarding social status (Reavis & Zakriski, 2005). In comparison, the literature also includes arguments that homeschooled children do not have enough exposure to their peer group, so that they do not benefit from the socialization that helps build social skills and are liable to develop emotional and social problems (Abrom, 2009).

This theoretical discourse notwithstanding, only a few studies have directly addressed the impact of homeschooling on the emotional world of the child. Taylor (1986) found that children who were homeschooled had more positive self-images than children in traditional school frameworks. Shyers (1992) employed a double-blind protocol of behavioral observations with 70 homeschooled children and 70 public school students. He found fewer behavior problems among the children who were homeschooled at 8–10 years old. In her examination of college-age students, Lattibeaudiere (2000) found that those who had been homeschooled adapted better, socially and emotionally, compared with students who had attended traditional schools.

In contrast to these studies, in a comparison of children 7–14 years old from 30 families that homeschooled and 32 families that sent their children to school, Stough (1992) did not find any significant differences in self-image, rate of skill acquisition, knowledge, or attitudes required for social functioning.

Although there are preliminary findings regarding the impact of the school system, compared with homeschooling, on the emotional world of the child, the research on this subject suffers three major shortcomings: first, in most cases the research participants were adults (e.g., M. F. Cogan, 2010; Davis, 2006; Dumas, Gates, & Schwarzer, 2010; Gray & Riley, 2013; H. Greene & Greene, 2007; Lattibeaudiere, 2000), who were already in a different educational framework, such as college, or children in late adolescence. Consequently, it is difficult to deeply examine the stages of the impact of the homeschooling process on children of younger ages, at which there is greater flexibility, and the impact on the lives of the children may be more critical. Accordingly, in the present research we focused on children of elementary school age.

Second, the research in most cases has investigated the social activity of children (e.g., Medlin, 2000; Ray, 2012; Rothermel, 2012). Measures of the social activity of the child are important, but they do not provide a view of other dimensions of the child, such as emotional aspects of their world. The research on the emotional aspects of children is very broad, encompassing numerous measures. In the present research, we chose to address three of these that the relevant research literature has shown as important for children's development and that researchers of homeschooling have generally overlooked to date. Thus, we focused on the emotional and behavioral

problems of children (using the Achenbach test, which is widely applied for measuring symptoms of emotional problems in children; Harari, 2012). In addition, we also examined children's attachment security, a prominent subject of the research literature in recent decades (Brumariu & Kerns, 2010). Finally, we investigated the impact of type of education on children's depression. The combination of these three measures was used to obtain initial results regarding the impact of the education system compared with home schooling on central aspects of the emotional world of the child.

Third, in a large portion of the research on the social emotional aspects of school-going children compared with homeschooled children, there was no control group of children who studied in schools. Kunzman and Gaither (2013) discussed this limitation in their broad review of research in this field. For this reason, in the present research we created demographically paired groups, matching the group of school-going children with the group of homeschooled children in terms of ages and socioeconomic status. In addition, the two groups participated in the same research procedure, in order to avoid differences due to the means of administering the tests or the researchers. This type of matched control group enables better conclusions, because the differences between the groups derive from the type of education and not other differences.

Method

Participants

The research participants were 101 children, 36 who studied in schools, and 65 who had been homeschooled for at least 3 years at the time of the research. There were 42 girls and 59 boys; their ages ranged from 6 to 12 years old (M age = 9.18 years, SD = 1.91 years).

To establish the similarity of the groups, we conducted several tests to compare the personal characteristics of the children and their parents in the two groups. Regarding the children, to examine whether the groups differed in terms of ages, we performed a t test for independent samples. The results indicated no significant differences between the groups of children in age, $t(99) = 1.55$, $p > .05$ (in homeschooled children, M age = 8.96 years, SD = 2.02 years; in school-going children, M age = 9.58 years, SD = 1.67 years). In addition, in order to examine whether there were differences between the homeschooled and school-going children in the percentage of boys and girls in each group, we ran a chi-square test for independent samples. The results of the analysis indicated no significant differences between the groups of children in terms of the percentage of boys and girls, respectively, $\chi^2(1, N = 101) = 0.01$, $p > .05$ (in homeschooled children, boys = 38, girls = 27; in school-going children, boys = 21, girls = 15).

With respect to the characteristics of the parents of the children, to examine whether there was a socioeconomic difference between the two groups, we performed a t-test for independent samples that compared the education of the dominant caring figure and the family income of the families that sent their children to school and those that homeschooled. The analysis showed no significant difference between the parents in the two systems regarding these two variables: dominant parent's education: $t(99) = 1.46$, $p > .05$; family income: $t(99) = 1.58$, $p > .05$. It is also important to note that in both groups the parents were nonreligious, that is, we chose groups that were similar in terms of religiosity.

Research procedure

To recruit families for the research, we approached parents in both the groups. We addressed parents who homeschooled during social meetings of homeschooling parents that are held on a weekly basis. In Israel, such meetings are held in several different areas of the country. In light of the relatively small size of the country, almost all the families that homeschool attend them.

To reach families who sent their children to school, we initiated contact in order to create a control group with similar characteristics to those of the parents in the homeschooling group. The parents we approached sent their children to public schools (there is almost no private education in Israel).

We described the target population (6–12 years old) and the purpose of the research to the parents. It noteworthy that the level of response in both groups of parents was very high; with the exception of three families who homeschooled and four who sent children to school, all the relevant families agreed to participate in the research.

We trained research assistants in developing relationships of trust and openness with families and in correct and uniform administration of the questionnaires to children. They practiced these skills with families that did not participate in the research.

The research was conducted in the homes of the families. First, the parents signed an informed consent sheet and then they completed the questionnaires. While the parents were filling in their questionnaires, the research assistants administered the questionnaires to the children. At the end of the session, they initiated an open conversation, with the purpose of answering additional questions the family might have and concluding the session in a positive atmosphere.

Instruments

In the present research, we employed three questionnaires to examine three psychological constructs: one on depression, one on emotional and behavioral problems, and one on attachment.

Depression

The Child Depression Inventory (CDI; Kovacs, 1981, 1982) is a self-report questionnaire that measures the level of depression in children under the age of 13. The questionnaire, which was translated into Hebrew, comprises 27 items regarding four areas: Emotional, cognitive, motivational, and somatic. For every item, the child is asked to choose one of three sentences, ranked according to severity, that best describes his or her feelings and behavior during the 2 weeks prior to completing the questionnaire. Every item is scored 0, 1, or 2. For example, on one of the items, the child chooses which of three items describes him or her best: "I am sad sometimes" (0), "I am sad often" (1), or "I am sad all of the time" (2).

To calculate the final score, all the item scores are added together; a higher final score denotes a higher level of depression. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha internal reliability score of the questionnaire was .77. In previous research, high levels of validity and internal reliability were found (Comer & Kendall, 2005; Saylor, Finch, Spirito, & Bennett, 1984; Zalsman et al., 2005). This includes research based on the Hebrew version of the questionnaire (Shani Sela, 1999).

Emotional and behavioral problems

The Hebrew version (Zilber, Auerbach, & Lerner, 1994) of Achenbach's (1991) standardized Child Behavior Checklist includes 113 behavior-related statements that parents rank regarding their children on a 3-point Liker-type scale ranging from 1 (*untrue*) to 2 (*very true*). The questionnaire has been standardized for child's gender and age, so that a score is produced for several categories of emotional and behavioral difficulties. In this research, we used the common division into two axes of problems. Half of the questions referred to each of the axes, externalizing behavior and internalizing behavior, where each was produced according to standardization of the questionnaire in Hebrew (expressed in *t* scores). Examples of items in this section that were presented to the parents to rank were "destroys objects that belong to his family or other children" and "not disciplined in the home."

Externalizing behavior refers to problems such as aggressive behavior, delinquency, violation of rules, and hurting others. Internalizing behavior refers to symptoms of anxiety and depression, introversion and social detachment, and somatic complaints. Examples of items in this section that were presented to the parents to rank were "feels or complains that nobody loves him" and "feels worthless or inferior." In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha internal reliability score for externalization was .93 and for internalization was .91.

Attachment security

The Hebrew version (Granot & Mayseless, 2001) of the Security Scale (Kerns, Klepac, & Cole, 1996) includes 15 items and is designed to evaluate how children perceive security in their parent–child relationships in mid-childhood and early adolescence. The result is a single index that refers to the child's degree of attachment security. Attachment security is measured in this questionnaire with in terms of the level of trust that the attachment figure will respond quickly and be accessible, turning to the attachment figure at times of stress and calm, and interest in bonding with the attachment figure. Every item includes two statements. First the child is asked to choose which statement best describes him or her. After choosing, the child then notes whether the statement is correct for him or her to a great or slight degree. A higher score on the questionnaire reflects a more secure relationship. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha internal reliability score of this questionnaire was .76.

Results

To examine whether the children who were homeschooled and those who attended school differed in terms of emotional and behavioral problems, as well as the differences between the age

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the attachment security and depression questionnaires, by type of education.

| | Type of education | | | | | |
| | Home schooling (n = 64) | | Traditional school (n = 35) | | | |
Measure	M	SD	M	SD	F(1, 94)	η^2
Attachment security	3.11	0.46	3.22	0.43	0.98	.01
Depression	4.80	0.21	8.40	0.27	7.86**	.08

Note. **$p < .001$.

groups in this respect, we performed three Age × 2 Group multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) regarding the level of depression and attachment security of the children, and regarding their externalizing and internalizing behavior. To examine these effects across different ages, we divided the participants into three age groups of equal age range: the first groups was composed of Grades 1 and 2 (6–8 years old; 23 homeschooled children, 10 school-going children), the second group of Grades 3 and 4 (9–10 years old; 23 homeschooled children, 9 school-going children), and the third group of Grades 5 and 6 (11–12 years old; 19 homeschooled children, 17 school-going children).

The results of the analysis regarding depression and attachment security indicated a significant difference between the children who were homeschooled and those who attended school, $F(2, 93) = 5.56$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .11$. However, a significant difference was not found between age groups, $F(4, 186) = 0.15$, $p > .05$, and no significant interaction of education and age was indicated, $F(4, 186) = 1.09$ $p > .05$. In Table 1, we present the means and standard deviations of the two groups by type of education on the depression questionnaire and the attachment security question, and the results of the different analyses conducted for each questionnaire separately.

The table indicates significant differences between the children who were homeschooled and those that attended school in level of depression, where the children who attended school scored higher on the CDI than the homeschooled children did.

The MANOVA regarding internalizing and externalizing emotional problems indicated a significant difference between children who were homeschooled and those attending schools, $F(2, 94) = 8.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$. No significant difference was found among age groups, $F(4, 188) = 1.80$, $p > .05$. While a significant interaction of type of education by age group was indicated, $F(4, 188) = 2.51$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$. The means and standard deviations of internalizing and externalizing problems

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of the internalizing and externalizing problems, by type of education.

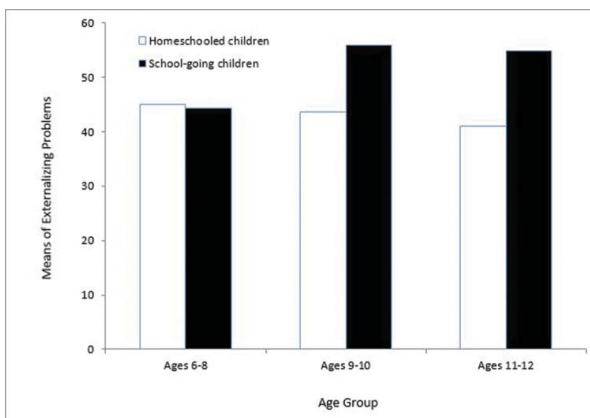| | Type of education | | | | | |
| | Home schooling (n = 64) | | Traditional school (n = 35) | | | |
Measure	M	SD	M	SD	F(1, 95)	η^2
Internalizing problems	46.95	9.70	50.92	11.31	2.63	.03
Externalizing problems	41.00	7.96	52.19	11.37	16.51**	.15

Note. ***$p < .001$.

Figure 1. Means of externalizing problems of homeschooled and school-going children in the three age groups.

and the results of the separate analyses for each of the measures are presented in Table 2.

As the table indicates, significant differences were found between the school-going and homeschooled children in terms of externalizing problems; the rate of externalizing problems was higher among the children who attended school.

As noted, the results of the MANOVA also showed significant interaction of education by age. In the variance analyses conducted separately for each measure, significant interaction was found only for externalizing behavior, $F(2, 95) = 4.83$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .09$. This interaction is presented graphically in Figure 1.

The figure shows that among the 9–10- and 11–12-year-old children, the level of externalizing behavior of those who were homeschooled was lower than that of those who attended school. In contrast, among the children 6–8 years old, no difference was found between the groups in the level of externalizing problems. Indeed, the simple effect analyses conducted for each age group separately revealed that among the children 6–8 years old, there was no significant difference in externalizing problems by type of school, $F(1, 31) = 2.89$, $p > .05$. In comparison, among the group of children 9–10 years old, a significant difference was indicated between the homeschooled and school-going children in externalizing problems, $F(1,30) = 8.00$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .21$. In this age group, the mean score on externalizing problems for the homeschooled group ($M = 43.61$, $SD = 10.68$) was lower than the mean for the group of school-going children ($M = 55.89$, $SD = 11.99$). Similarly, among the children 10–12 years old, a significant difference was also found by type of school in terms of externalizing problems, $F(1, 34) = 20.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .38$. In this age group, too, the mean score of externalizing problems among the homeschooled children ($M = 41.00$, $SD = 7.96$) was lower than that among the children who attended school ($M = 54.82$, $SD = 10.15$).

Discussion

In the present research, we addressed one of the aspects of the education crisis, namely, the suggestion that schools might `contribute to the development of emotional and behavioral problems among students. For this purpose, we compared school-going children with a matched group of homeschooled children in terms of a number of emotional dimensions. The data indicated that the level of depression among children who

attended school was higher than that among the homeschooled children, and no difference was found between the groups in terms of attachment security. The findings also revealed that the level of externalizing problems among children who attended school was higher than that among their homeschooled counterparts, and no difference was found between the groups in the level of internalizing problems. In addition, the findings on externalizing problems indicated a difference between the groups only in Grades 3–4 and 5–6, and not among the children in Grades 1–2.

As noted, these results are based on a study using demographically matched groups. To create such a sample, we chose groups with the same level of mother's education, father's education, family income, and mother's age. All the participants also underwent the same research procedure. The use of matched groups provides evidence to supports the hypothesis that type of education was the source of the differences between the groups in the aspects examined in the present research.

It is important to note that as in any comparison of population groups, even when there are identifiable differences between the groups, there may be numerous explanations regarding the source of these differences. Accordingly, it is important to consider the present study as part of a wider body of research on the impact of school in terms of different factors, and not as a study that establishes this impact itself. In other words, the data obtained in this study may have implications for numerous fields of research, but this article naturally refers to the aspects relevant to the present research.

With respect to the impact of school climate, which the research addressed, there are several possible interpretations of these findings:

Influence of the school environment

The findings of the present research support those of many previous studies that revealed a relationship between school environment and emotional and behavioral problems. From this perspective, the research of Modin, Östberg, Toivanen, and Sundell (2011) is particularly interesting. These researchers used the Demand Control Support model (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990), which describes work conditions that might explain the correlation between stress and poor health. According to this model, control and social support from superiors and colleagues are critical resources for coping with stress and workload, and situations of high demand, low control, and low support can be expected to produce psychological stress, which in turn leads to poor health. Although the model was developed with respect to the job environment, Modin et al. argued that children's learning environment has many parallels to the adult work environment, such as, dates for submission of assignments, a hierarchy of authority, and limited control over tasks and activities. In addition, the range of demands and control over decisions might be more limited for students than employees, and therefore the implications for their health might not necessarily be milder.

However, although the present findings may be seen as highlighting the role of the school environment, this does not explain why we found a difference only in the dimension of externalizing behavior and mainly in older age groups. Nevertheless, this result is consistent with previous research that also

indicated a relationship between school environment and problems of externalizing. For example, Nesdale and Lambert (2007) found that rejection by the peer group had a strong negative impact and was associated with an increased tendency towards inappropriate social behavior. Such behavior, which includes violence, delinquency, and discipline problems, is an important aspect of externalizing problems.

Several researchers have also argued that the view that individuals can easily become victims at school might also influence the perception of antisocial behavior as a coping strategy (Ng-Mak, Salzinger, Feldman, & Stueve, 2002). According to this position, witnessing violence repeatedly can produce externalizing problems by means of a normalization process, by which the individuals become psychologically and morally insensitive to violence. As a result, they perceive aggressive strategies for coping with conflict as justified. This line of interpretation might also explain the difference between the two groups in externalization in the older age groups only, as the effect arises from prolonged and repeated exposure to violence. Exposure to violence in not rare in schools (Nansel et al., 2001); therefore we can assume that this is one of the explanations of the findings of the present research.

Influence of the home environment

Naturally, the difference found between the groups does not necessarily indicate an impact of school environment. The source of the difference could also be the home environment. It is possible, for example, that the presence of an adult who reacts more quickly and personally to interactions between children and their physical and social environment helps reduce externalizing problems that arise naturally at these ages. Such an explanation is consistent with the view of Merry and Howell (2009), who referred to the potential of the home environment to be intimate and supportive. This view does not attribute emotional and behavior problems to the school, but emphasizes the importance of the home environment.

Eccles et al. (1993) claimed that a school environment designed for a large number of children contradicts the developmental needs of adolescents for autonomy, intimacy, shaping identity, sexuality, and abstract thinking. This suggests that not being in an environment with a large number of schoolmates could benefit the individual child. This view is consistent with the theories presented in the introduction, which consider an increased number of interactions in school as a negative factor for some children (Reavis & Zakriski, 2005).

In spite of the importance of the findings of the present research, it is important to note its limitations. First, these are preliminary findings, which we hope will lead to further research of the subject, and they are based on one specific sample. To create a solid foundation for addressing the impact of school on the emotional and behavioral problems of children, further research that reproduces the same results is necessary. Until further findings are published, those obtained in the present research can only provide an initial direction.

Second, the present research, as the first of its type in the field, did not examine many of the aspects that are salient to the issues we studied. For example, it would be important in future researchers to examine whether the effect of the school on the emotional and behavioral problems differs among children with different personality traits. It would also be interesting to examine how the character of the school class, the nature of the relationship with educational figures, and the relationship with the peer group affect the dimensions we examined in this research. Examination of these additional variables might shed further light on the relationship between school environment and the variables included in the present study.

Third, even though the two groups were matched by the children's ages and gender ratios within them, as well as the parents' education, family income, and religiosity, there may be other differences between the groups that we did not examine in this research. These could be important in explaining some of the differences indicated by the present research findings, but it was not possible to examine all the characteristics of the compared groups in a single study. Therefore, it is important to take this limitation into account and to compare the results with those of other studies that include other parameters.

In addition, the present research focused on children of elementary school age. In light of the indication that the effect changes over time, it would be interesting to examine the same issues among children of younger and older ages, in order to obtain a clearer picture of the process. Furthermore, it is important to remember that the present research used a group of children who were homeschooled for comparison regarding the emotional and behavioral dimensions examined. These findings cannot be seen as an indication of a clear advantage of homeschooling compared with traditional schools. They are preliminary in nature, and we focused on specific aspects; thus they do not provide a comprehensive comparison of the two educational frameworks.

Finally, as noted, in any research that compares population groups, the findings might be associated with other sources. In this case, they might be related, for example, to differences between the groups in social fabric, parenting styles or personality, or other variables.

The limitations notwithstanding, the present research contributes to our understanding of the effect of school on emotional and behavioral problems. Despite previous findings on this subject, almost no research to date has provided a reliable comparison between children who do and do not participate in the traditional school framework. In this respect, the present research raises important questions and hypotheses for future studies on the subject. We hope that these findings will serve as a basis for further research to learn more about these important issues.

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