

**Overcoming Challenges While Homeschooling: A Quantitative Study of Parental Concerns  
and Strategies, Including the Relationship of Children Having Special Needs and the Rate  
of Homeschooling**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental correlational study is to test the relationship between children having special needs and the rate of homeschooling and to test the relationship between parental dissatisfaction with the learning environments in public or private schools and the choice to homeschool. The theoretical framework in this dissertation focuses on the Holistic Learning Theory and the Montessori Method. “What is the relationship between children having special needs and the rate of homeschooling?” and “What is the relationship between parental dissatisfaction with the learning environments in public or private schools and the choice to homeschool?” are the two research questions asked. Two instruments to be utilized for this study are the 2019 Homeschooling and Full-Time Virtual Education Rates and the 2019 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey, PFI, Public Use Datafile Codebook. The population to be analyzed from the 2019 Homeschooling and Full-Time Virtual Education Rates includes a weighted number representing 1.5 million homeschooled students in the United States ages 5-17 based on the sampling method provided. A quantitative non-experimental correlational analysis using Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient Test, and the Chi-Square Test of Independence provides the answers to the research questions. The practical information in this dissertation can be used to increase awareness as to why many parents choose to homeschool their children. The study can also help medical providers, professional teachers, and other service providers discern the growing need for services for homeschooling families. This study could impact industries for medical providers, sports coaches, and educational providers by encouraging these professionals to increase their services to assist homeschooling families. Future research can be done to highlight the growing need for services for homeschooling families, including online therapy, inclusion in local sports teams, and virtual courses.

*Keywords:* Homeschool, homeschooling children with special needs, virtual school, online education, homeschool co-op.

PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving husband, Stefan Bumpus-Barnett, and our two wonderful children, Shiloh and Seraiah. You all have inspired me to strive to be the best mother, wife, and homeschool teacher that I can be. As a stroke survivor, I am grateful to you, Stefan, for your continuous love and support as you have guided me through my healing process. Your love for our Heavenly Abba, Yahweh, and His Anointed Son, Yeshua the Messiah has strengthened our family through good times and tough times. When I had my stroke, in 2016, college was not a consideration. Stefan, you encouraged me to go back to school and I am eternally thankful! When you found the competency-based degree programs at WGU, they proved to be a blessing for our family. Completing my degrees at WGU allowed me to have the opportunity to enroll in my EdD program at South College! I am grateful to all the faculty and staff members at both universities I attended who have encouraged me along my educational journey. The journey is life-long and I am thankful to be here! I am forever thankful to my Heavenly Abba, Yahweh, and His Anointed Son, Yeshua the Messiah for the strength and encouragement they provide through the Ruach HaKodesh!

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA)

Institute of Education Sciences (IES)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES)

Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (PFI)

Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

PREVIEW

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

There are specific challenges faced when homeschooling children, including children with special needs. The problem is that there is a lack of resources in many school systems to support conditions for children with specific medical needs, and individualized learning environments for all students (Groover & Endsley, 1988; National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). This problem leads to many parents deciding to homeschool their children (United States Department of Education, 2020). The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental correlational study is to test the relationship between children having special needs and the rate of homeschooling, and to test the relationship between parental dissatisfaction with the learning environments in public or private schools and the choice to homeschool. The discussion in this chapter includes the historical context and social context of homeschooling. The theoretical framework of this dissertation is highlighted, along with the problem statement and purpose statement. The significance of the study, research questions, and definitions for specific terms are also included.

### **Background**

Supporters of homeschooling feel that homeschoolers benefit from the personalized attention from their parents, and when they grasp a concept they can quickly move on without waiting for the majority of students in a class to understand the same idea (Jeynes, 2016). However, some parents have not been responsible while claiming to homeschool, and a Harvard law professor has publicly called for more legal regulation of homeschooling due to certain cases of abuse from irresponsible parents (Bartholet, 2019; Mineo, 2020). While there are differing opinions on the topic of homeschooling, it is imperative that opposers and supporters understand

the impact of homeschooling on society by analyzing valuable research (Sikkink, 2020). The historical, social, and theoretical contexts will be explored to highlight verifiable data regarding homeschooling and the need for more research regarding how homeschooling impacts society.

### **Historical Context**

Early education in the United States involved parents homeschooling, particularly the fathers, who taught their children and other children living or working in their households (Carper, 2000; López Coleman, 2014). This type of homeschooling was unregulated, and the effectiveness depended on variables such as region or gender as literacy was emphasized more for boys than girls and in the North more than in the South (Carper, 2000; Lewis, 1989). In 1642, the first law in America regarding education, The Massachusetts School Law, was passed which required the heads of households to be responsible for the education of their children and any children living in their household (Crofton, 2020; Sutherland Institute, 2023). The Massachusetts colonists were predominantly of the Puritan religion, and the followers had the goal of creating a Godly society as an example for others (Crofton, 2020). In 1647, a law in Massachusetts passed mandating towns with fifty or more households to have a person appointed to teach the children in the town and that the teacher's wages should be paid by the parents or masters of the children (Crofton, 2020). This law was called the Massachusetts General School Law of 1647, but it was also called The Old Deluder Satan Law because the Puritans believed that the Devil was a threat to those without education (Crofton, 2020). The Puritans believed that mandating education would help the colonial citizens form their own relationship with scripture (Crofton, 2020). In areas outside of New England, families, churches, and farmers helped to provide education for the local children (Middlekauff, 1961; Sutherland Institute, 2023). These early laws and traditions helped to develop the modern-day educational systems in the United States (Sutherland

Institute, 2023).

In 1852, a compulsory attendance law was passed in Massachusetts requiring twelve weeks of public school for children between the ages of 8-14 (Ensign, 1969; López Coleman, 2014). As other states followed by passing compulsory attendance laws, homeschooling was not seen as the normal mode of education (López Coleman, 2014). Even though compulsory attendance laws were made, children with disabilities and special needs were often times prevented from attending school, which meant they were homeschooled or sent away to residential schools, asylums, or institutions (Bhattar, 2023; Kuntze, 2016; Martens et al., 1940; Special Education Local Plan Area Administrators of California, 2024). Many people have faced abusive environments in institutions or asylums that were underfunded, overcrowded, and understaffed (Bhattar, 2023). Litigation conditions and the internet have also revealed abusive situations in residential schools (Gertz & Boudreault, 2016).

In 1973, the Rehabilitation Act was passed and later amended in 1992, which required that people with mental or physical impairments should not be discriminated against or denied benefits from programs using federal funds (Special Education Local Plan Area Administrators of California, 2024; Western Governors University, 2020). Judith Huemann, a strong disability rights activist, led a 26-day protest in 1977 urging the government to implement Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (United States Department of Justice, 2023). Section 504 was the first time the federal government recognized disabilities as a civil rights category (National Park Service, 2024). As a child, Judith Huemann was denied access to public school at the age of 5 because her wheelchair was considered a fire hazard (Litvinov, 2021).

In 1975, the Education of Handicapped Act was passed, which was later changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990, requiring free public education in the least

restrictive environment for students with special educational needs (Special Education Local Plan Area Administrators of California, 2024). These laws allow children with special educational needs to have access to public education. However, some parents of children with special needs still prefer to homeschool due to a lack of resources at schools or concerns with school environments (Groover & Endsley, 1988; National Center for Education Statistics, 2023).

### **Homeschooling Historical Context**

The modern-day homeschool movement started in the 1970s, and efforts for more laws to support homeschooling were realized in the 1990s (Coalition for Responsible Home Education, 2024; Gaither, 2009). Dr. John Holt has been credited with starting the modern homeschool movement (Coalition for Responsible Home Education, 2024). Dr. John Holt was an educator who initially supported reforming public schools, but he later called for parents to teach their own children and liberate them from the strict structures of formal schools (Coalition for Responsible Home Education, 2024; López Coleman, 2014). Dr. Holt's homeschool pedagogy included a method he called unschooling. The method of unschooling involves no formal curriculum, grades, or tests (Gaither, 2009; López Coleman, 2014). Dr. Holt felt that formal schools placed too much emphasis on standardized tests instead of focusing on the interests and creativity of children (Cochren, 1999). Dr. Holt created a publication, and later a newsletter, entitled *Growing Without Schooling* which included stories and news regarding homeschooling, a home school family directory, resources for alternative education, and a dialogue for home educators (Cochren, 1999).

During the early times of the modern-day homeschool movement, some states required regulations for homeschooling in harmony with local school boards, such as submitting curriculum plans and participating in standardized testing for the students (Coalition for



Responsible Home Education, 2024). During this time, some states also required homeschooling parents to have teaching licenses (Coalition for Responsible Home Education, 2024). However, some home educators felt that the laws in some states were oppressive, and by the 1980s, petitioners urged their states to revise certain laws to become more accommodating to homeschoolers (Coalition for Responsible Home Education, 2024). In the 1980s, Mike Farris, an attorney and homeschooling father sought to create a non-profit organization to support homeschooling families and founded the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA, 2024a). Mike Farris' friend, Mike Smith, also an attorney and homeschool father, joined the organization as a member of the founding board of directors. Together with staff members, these attorneys have helped homeschooling families in many legal situations (HSLDA, 2024a).

As technology started to increase, the avenue for online learning also started to grow. This has now included virtual public schools, virtual private schools, and online courses (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Many home educators are now utilizing online services to enhance their homeschooling methods or as comparable alternatives to traditional homeschooling (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023; United States Department of Education, 2020).

### **Social Context**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents around the world who had never homeschooled before experienced the process of their children being educated online at home (Castro-Kemp & Orcid, 2023; Marevci & Salihu, 2023). While the pandemic caused numerous stressors, some parents reported positive experiences such as improvements in routines, improved eating habits, and children feeling happier and safer at home (Asbury et al., 2023; Castro-Kemp & Orcid, 2023; Tokatly Latzer et al., 2021). After the pandemic, many parents decided to continue

educating their children at home (January, 2023). This increase in homeschooling has impacted society as there is a need for teachers, medical professionals, and other service providers who can offer specific support, including online services, to homeschooling families (Cahapay, 2020; National Center for Education Statistics, 2023).

### **Theoretical Background**

This study is analyzed through two established theories: The Holistic Learning Theory, and the Montessori Method. Analysis through the lens of the Holistic Learning Theory and the Montessori Method can reveal how common strategies that are already used by home educators, such as focusing on creativity, making personal connections with students, and using all aspects of life to educate children, align with these established theories (Groover & Endsley, 1988; Johnson, 2023; Montessori, 1989). This analysis shows that even if parents may not have received formal education regarding certain learning theories, they are naturally providing teaching methods that align with proven theories (Groover & Endsley, 1988; Johnson, 2023; Montessori, 1989).

It is also important to note that the data from the 2019 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey also reveals certain strategies used by home educators, such as using homeschool co-ops and online courses (United States Department of Education, 2020). A homeschool co-op consists of a group of homeschooling parents and their children who participate in group learning activities, socialization methods, sharing talents, and celebrating peer achievements together (Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators, 2015). The strategies utilized in homeschool co-ops align with aspects of the Holistic Learning Theory and the Montessori Method, such as helping children achieve independence and providing positive socialization activities (Johnson, 2023; Montessori, 1989). Choosing specific online courses that

align with the individual needs of a student also aligns with the Holistic Learning Theory (Johnson, 2023).

### ***Holistic Learning Theory***

The Holistic Learning Theory focuses on the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical, and social well-being of a person (Johnson, 2023; Rudge, 2010). Educators who were credited as the originators of the Holistic Education Movement, which started in the 1980s, believed that the entire well-being of a child should be more important than molding a child to be a certain type of worker or citizen (Miller, n.d., Rudge, 2010). Jaafar and Schwartz (2018) highlighted that the Holistic Learning Theory also focuses on acquiring technical knowledge, reacting to real-world situations, and the transformation of individuals and societies. (Jaafar & Schwartz, 2018). Jaafar and Schwartz (2018) explained that the Holistic Learning Theory focuses on three specific aspects, including explicit, implicit, and emancipatory learning dimensions (Jaafar & Schwartz, 2018).

### ***Montessori Method***

The Montessori Method is a learning theory created by Dr. Maria Montessori that focuses on the creativity and personal interests of the students to enhance learning (Lillard, 2019). Dr. Montessori observed children of various cultures and backgrounds, and her experiences helped her discern that to achieve independence, each student needs individualized assistance (Montessori, 1989). Dr. Montessori observed how children would teach themselves by learning from their surroundings, and she designed a classroom and learning materials allowing children to focus on their natural desires to learn and to choose their own materials (American Montessori Society, 2024).

### **Problem Statement**

The problem is that there is a lack of resources in many school systems to support conditions for children with specific medical needs and individualized learning environments for all students (Groover & Endsley, 1988; National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). This problem leads to many parents deciding to homeschool their children (United States Department of Education, 2020). The lack of resources in many schools also includes a lack of safety measures leading to bullying and social pressures, which also causes many parents to decide to homeschool their children (de Carvalho & Skipper, 2019; Ludgate et al., 2022).

There is a need for more research to provide awareness as to why many parents choose to homeschool their children. This dissertation can help bridge the gap between opposers and supporters of homeschooling by providing valuable research regarding why parents choose to homeschool, and the impact of homeschooling on society (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023; United States Department of Education, 2020; Sikkink, 2020). The population in the data set being utilized aligns with this problem statement as the data identifies specific reasons why many home educators have become dissatisfied with local school systems.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative non-experimental correlational study is to test the relationship between children having special needs and the rate of homeschooling, and to test the relationship between parental dissatisfaction with the learning environments in public or private schools and the choice to homeschool. For the utility of this study, the variables are categorized as specific medical conditions, educational environments for learning, parental concerns, and academic institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023; United States Department of Education, 2020).

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is theoretically significant because the reasons why parents choose to homeschool, as shown in the data, align with the Montessori Method and the Holistic Learning Theory (Groover & Endsley, 1988; Johnson, 2023; Montessori, 1989; United States Department of Education, 2020). The data identifies that many parents choose to homeschool due to a lack of resources in local school systems and unsafe learning environments (United States Department of Education, 2020). These issues provide evidence that many local school systems do not have enough resources to provide holistic and individualized education that focuses on the personal needs of each student (Johnson, 2023; Montessori, 1989; United States Department of Education, 2020). Learning theories can be utilized to help teachers guide their methods to enhance their students' educational environments, which can also improve student learning (Varghese, 2020).

The study is empirically significant because it adds research to the topic of homeschooling by allowing readers to discern the lived experiences of homeschooled children and their families (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023; United States Department of Education, 2020). Lawmakers, educators, and any people who oppose homeschooling can benefit from learning about the concerns of home educators and the learning strategies that are utilized. Also, as technology continues to increase, this study provides empirical evidence regarding the use of technology by home educators (Gann & Carpenter, 2019). Future studies can benefit from the quantitative non-experimental correlational methodology used in this dissertation because data is utilized from a much wider population of homeschooling families compared to research articles that focus on smaller populations of homeschoolers. This study, therefore, allows for a wider view of the impact of homeschooling on society as the data focuses

on a weighted number representing about 1.5 million homeschooled students in the United States ages 5-17 based on the sampling method utilized (United States Department of Education, 2020).

The study has practical application related to the increase in homeschooling in recent years. The data from the 2019 Homeschooling and Full-Time Virtual Education Rates identifies a weighted number representing about 1.5 million homeschooled children in the United States ages 5-17 according to sampling methods utilized in the 2019 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (United States Department of Education, 2020). The data set used in this dissertation is limited to the number of parents who completed the survey according to the sampling that is utilized. However, Duvall (2021) provides research regarding an estimate of 3.2 million parents in the United States who homeschooled their children in pre-pandemic times. This number increased to 5 million parents during the pandemic in 2020 (Duvall, 2021).

### **Research Questions**

The data set being utilized in this dissertation is the 2019 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (United States Department of Education, 2020). A document highlighting some of the statistical data in this survey is also utilized, entitled the 2019 Homeschooling and Full-Time Virtual Education Rates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). The survey includes responses from parents regarding educational concerns, strategies utilized for homeschooling, and unique circumstances related to homeschooling children with special needs. The survey includes specific variables that can be analyzed for this dissertation, including medical conditions, educational environments for learning, parental concerns, and academic institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023; United States Department of Education, 2020).

The population to be analyzed in this study are the respondents to the 2019 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023; United States Department of Education, 2020). The data shown in the 2019 Homeschooling and Full-Time Virtual Education Rates are restricted to students ages 5 to 17, and this caused the sample to be reduced to about 15,700 students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). However, the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey Public Use Datafile Codebook reveals the unweighted and weighted data for all 16,446 respondents from the 2019 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (United States Department of Education, 2020). The statistical tests in this study focus on the respondents who stated that their child is homeschooled. The unweighted data from the 2019 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey includes 532 respondents who stated that their child is homeschooled (United States Department of Education, 2020). When weighted, this represents 1,775,233 homeschooled students in the United States (United States Department of Education, 2020).

The planned methodology for this dissertation is a quantitative non-experimental correlational approach. Correlational research involves observing the associations between variables without any manipulation (Lawrence, 2023). This method has been chosen for this dissertation because the data set being utilized contains variables and statistical information regarding homeschooled students in the United States. The quantitative data set to be utilized is the 2019 Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey provided in the United States. This data set provides quantitative information regarding specific concerns of homeschooling parents, challenges faced by home educators of children with special needs, and a comparable alternative to traditional homeschooling (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023; United States Department of Education, 2020). This survey is provided periodically, and the information from

2019 is currently the latest data available to the public during the time of preparing this dissertation. The research questions to explore using the data set are as follows:

**RQ1:** What is the relationship between children having special needs and the rate of homeschooling?

**RQ2:** What is the relationship between parental dissatisfaction with the learning environments in public or private schools and the choice to homeschool?

### Definitions

The definitions for terms specific to the study are provided with contextual support from the literature.

1. *Holistic Learning Theory* – A learning theory based on the word *holon*, meaning something that is whole and a part of something simultaneously (Johnson, 2023). The theory focuses on the interconnectedness of human dimensions, including emotional, social, intellectual, and physical dimensions (Johnson, 2023). The Holistic Education Movement started in the 1980s focusing on integrating humanistic ideals and spirituality (Rudge, 2010).
2. *Homeschool co-op* – A group of homeschooling parents and their children who participate in group learning, socialization methods, sharing talents, and celebrating peer achievements together (Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators, 2015).
3. *Montessori Method* – A learning theory created by Dr. Maria Montessori that focuses on utilizing the personal interests of the students and their creativity to enhance the learning process (Lillard, 2019).