

Original Article

Household Characteristics of Home schoolers in Kenya

Charles Munene Gachoki, PhD^{1*}

¹ Zizi Afrique Foundation, P. O. Box 6183-00100 Nairobi, Kenya.

* Author for Correspondence ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1086-0851>; Email: cgachoki@ziziafrique.org

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2568>

Date Published: ABSTRACT

30 December 2024

Keywords:

Homeschooling,
Pedagogy,
Home Education,
Kenya.

This study aimed to succinctly identify the unique characteristics of homeschooling households in Kenya. The study used a literature review, a survey, and insights from key informants' interviews. The study found that households that homeschool their children in Kenya are made up of married couples, have multiple children and are well educated with at least a bachelor's degree. One of the household partners stays or works at home and is likely to be the mother since they provide teaching in these households. Only 32 percent have a separate dedicated classroom while 40 percent do not have a dedicated learning space. Moreover, Homeschooling households in Kenya are likely to come from medium urban areas and use multiple curriculums. Homeschoolers in Kenya use 11 curriculums while some of the households do not follow any curriculum. Homeschooling in Kenya is driven by the need for personalised learning, not pedagogical or Christian persuasion.

APA CITATION

Gachoki, C. M. (2024). Household Characteristics of Home schoolers in Kenya. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 8(1), 129-145. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2568>

CHICAGO CITATION

Gachoki, Charles Munene. 2024. "Household Characteristics of Home schoolers in Kenya". *East African Journal of Education Studies* 8 (1), 129-145. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.8.1.2568>

HARVARD CITATION

Gachoki, C. M. (2024) "Household Characteristics of Home schoolers in Kenya", *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 8(1), pp. 129-145. doi: 10.37284/eajes.8.1.2568

IEEE CITATION

C. M., Gachoki "Household Characteristics of Home schoolers in Kenya" *EAJES*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 129-145, Dec. 2024. doi: 10.37284/eajes.8.1.2568.

MLA CITATION

Gachoki, Charles Munene. "Household Characteristics of Home schoolers in Kenya". *East African Journal of Education Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 1, Dec. 2024, pp. 129-145, doi:10.37284/eajes.8.1.2568

INTRODUCTION

Education is a vital and developmental foundation for a child preparing for adult life and a bright future. In the same way, that houses are anchored on strong foundations, a child's education should be built on a strong foundation to produce well-rounded individuals (Gaither, 2015). Since the early years of a child's education lay the groundwork for their

future success, a solid foundation in these years is essential for children to thrive and adapt in their lifetime. Every parent recognises the value of education and strives to provide their children with the best possible learning experience. Naturally, parents consider carefully the optimal learning environment for their children. These considerations involve making choices between the option to enrol their children in the traditional school system

(private or public) or exploring the benefits of homeschooling (Liwanag, & Liwanag, 2020).

The traditional schooling approach emphasizes teacher-directed instruction and is favoured by conservative parents who prioritize standardized testing and oral recitations in a classroom setting and are centred on routine and memorization learning. Although this schooling approach has been found suitable for certain learners, it has been criticized for its non-accommodation of non-traditional learners with unique academic requirements, chronic health conditions, or emotional difficulties stemming from bullying among other circumstances. In such cases, households can consider alternative educational options, such as a homeschooling system, which can provide a more suitable at-home learning environment (Isenberg, 2007), (De Waal, & Theron, 2003).

The COVID-19 pandemic led the world to rethink new means and ways of schooling and acquisition of education, such as hybrid and homeschooling. These emerging trends suggest that, in addition to the changing composition of homeschooling families, the way homeschooling is practised is also evolving (Cheng, & Watson, 2024). Spreading the last three decades, a large body of studies demonstrates that the home learning environment influences children's learning outcomes significantly (Lehrl et al., 2020). Since learning encompasses the relations between a learner and the environment, a favourable environment makes learning easy and offers a higher concentration. Variables such as home conditions, parental involvement, and family dynamics jointly shape the children's learning outcomes (Mansour & Martin, 2009). Research has demonstrated that the home environment, including parental support and engagement, plays a crucial role in determining a child's academic success.

While investigations have delved into various factors such as social factors affecting academic performance have consistently identified household conditions as a critical contributor to student achievement (Ford, 1957). Aspects like family socioeconomic status, parental aspirations, and academic inclination have been found to influence the learning outcomes of high school students. Similarly, studies have shown that the quality of the

household conditions, including factors such as parental involvement and family dynamics, is positively correlated with higher levels of academic achievement, particularly among boys and girls (Daulta, 2008). Daulta (2008) further found that academic performance declined as the quality of the household conditions deteriorated.

The growing popularity of homeschooling stems, in part, from this recognition that home conditions impact academic performance. Parents who choose to home-school their children often do so to provide a more nurturing and tailored learning environment, which they believe fosters their children's academic and personal development. Raymond and his wife Dorothy who are considered the grandparents of Homeschooling argued that parents should take the curriculum to their children and not the children going to school for the curriculum (Moore & Moore, 1972). Since then, there has been a tremendous expansion of homeschooling, albeit depending on geographical location. For instance, the growth in Australia has been phenomenal with approximately six in every 1,000 school-aged children being homeschooled (English, 2021).

The homeschooling movement has evolved from a small, isolated phenomenon in the 1980s to a vibrant national movement, with an estimated 1.35 million children being homeschooled in the US (Cooper, & Sureau, 2007) or 3 percent of the total school-aged population by 2007, which grew threefold to 3.721million in the 2020/2021 school year (National Home Education Research Institute, 2024). With this growth, the demographic profile of homeschooling households has also diversified, with participants coming from a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds. An examination of the changes in the homeschooling population showed that apart from the the number of families and hence children involved in homeschooling increasing over time, stable and protestant groups dominate despite the religious affiliation becoming more diverse concerning location, and age ranges of children (Schumm, 1998). Across the world and in particular Kenya, the concept of homeschooling as well as the learning outcomes are not adequately documented (Tweni et al., 2022). In Africa, the supporters of homeschooling include (Brynard, 2008), who

introduced homeschooling as one Open Learning alternative in South Africa. This situation is mainly attributed to the lack of a comprehensive homeschooler demographic dataset largely because many countries do not require homeschoolers to register. Much of the data is therefore from the US (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013a).

A 1998 to 2000 literature review by (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013a) synthesized the various motivations parents have for homeschooling their children and found that the most common reasons for homeschooling were: the conventional school environment; the desire to instil moral or religious instruction; and pedagogical dissatisfaction. Other factors include retaining a bigger influence and involvement in the children's daily lives where schooling is seen as part of the parenting role; and mistrust of government institutions. The biggest conviction especially among Christians is based on the belief that there is no better teacher to a parent—parents are the primary teachers to their children, a role given by God (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013a). Another factor albeit minor is the group drawn to homeschooling due to racial, linguistic, and ethnic minorities as a means to preserve their cultural and linguistic uniqueness (Dietrich, 2020). Another survey by (Eldeeb et al., 2024a) shows that the decision to homeschool is inherently influenced by family choices, family beliefs and values, dissatisfaction with conventional schooling, special health conditions, and religious or moral guidance. Human rights have also been drawn into the debate of justifying homeschooling. The children's right to an open future principle advanced by Joel Feinberg safeguards a child against the foreclosure of options. This principle has however been challenged on the basis that it does not imply a parental duty is itself impartial in the growth of children (Dietrich, 2020).

Recent studies, however, have associated the homeschooling evolution with many factors. They include physical, psychological, and social factors that affect school safety (Williams-Johnson, & Fields-Smith, 2022), dissatisfaction with the public school curriculum, social values, declining academic standards due to unsuitable pedagogy, integration of religious beliefs, family ethos and values and the increased availability of online and digital education

resources. Although homeschooling has been associated with developed economies such as the USA, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Norway, and New Zealand, the concept has been slow in permeating African Countries. For instance, countries such as Uganda, Botswana, and Kenya are witnessing small numbers of parents pursuing homeschooling for their children (Tweni et al., 2022). The argument posited by governments across these African nations is that progression in education is facilitated by the traditional schooling system, and homeschooling is not supported as a viable option (Rehman et al., 2021). Critics point to the lack of capacity for parents to master pedagogical skills required for the homeschooling curriculum, as well as the inability to access essential learning resources and networks required to sustain homeschooling, social inequality propagated by the system and denial of children of opportunities to progress in adult life. The choice for homeschooling based on literature varies and includes: a lot less than the tuition costs, long school bus rides, increasing class sizes resulting in funding cuts, some moral issues with the curriculum, parents loving learning and spending time with their children, and getting one-on-one attention with the child that is weaker academically (Liwanag, & Liwanag, 2020).

Broadly, the factors can be grouped into several categories: Socioeconomic factors: such as higher average incomes providing resources needed for educational materials and activities (Collom & Mitchell, 2005). Further, homeschooling parents tend to have higher education levels than the general population and hence can navigate curriculum choices and teaching methodologies (Collom & Mitchell, 2005). Employment is another socio-economic factor in which homeschooling households often require one parent to take on the primary educator role, leading to single-income households or flexible work arrangements. The second strand of factors includes values and beliefs. Historically, religious reasons have been a significant driver of homeschooling and faith-based values continue to play a role for many homeschooling families (Collom & Mitchell, 2005). Additionally, families may choose homeschooling to align education with specific cultural or traditional

values, particularly those underrepresented in mainstream curricula.

Third are educational philosophies which include displeasure with the conventional schooling system, academic standards, school environment, bullying, or lack of curriculum flexibility that often motivate parents to choose homeschooling. Homeschool families are hyper-autonomous units with tremendous freedom to create curricula, redesign typical learning pathways, and build innovative partnerships (Hirsh, 2019). The fourth strand of factors is grounded on customized learning: homeschooling provides a flexible environment conducive to meeting individual learners' needs and preferences. Additionally, homeschooled students benefit from personalized attention, enabling tailored instruction and deeper subject understanding (Eldeeb et al., 2024b). At the core of homeschooling is parental involvement where homeschooling households prioritize active parental involvement in their children's education to ensure effective learning. Access to resources is the final strand of factors and includes access to technology and the Internet. The increasing availability of online resources, digital curricula, and virtual learning communities has significantly impacted homeschooling accessibility and practices. Kunzman, & Gaither (2013) note that beyond social networks for socialization, resource sharing, and extracurricular activities, homeschoolers often rely heavily on information-rich resources like libraries and the internet.

In Africa, the emergence of homeschooling can be traced to the South African homeschooling movement in 1994, when Andre and Bokkie Meintjies were prosecuted by the government for homeschooling their children (Gaither, 2015). This movement led to the passage of the South African School Act (no. 84 of 1996), legalizing home education in South Africa and setting the regulatory parameters by the broader National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (Gaither, 2015).

Homeschooling has therefore emerged as an increasingly viable educational option, with a steady increase in the number of families opting for this approach. The reasons behind this trend are multifaceted, ranging from dissatisfaction with the

public school system to a desire for greater control over their children's education. For several decades, a dichotomous framework to characterize homeschooling families based on either ideologies or pedagogues' principles has been the reference point for researchers (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013a). The former, who comprised conservative Christians, wish to impact particular religious values in their children. The latter, who comprised progressive, child-centred parents, wish their children to learn according to a particular pedagogical approach (Cheng, & Watson, 2024). Although many of these perceptions have empirical support, studies also reveal a considerable amount of variation and nuance that is often overlooked by this duality. Recent empirical work such as (Green-Hennessy, & Mariotti, 2023) classify the decision to homeschool based on the reactive versus proactive motivations framework. However, the study identified homeschooling households that do not fit neatly into this dichotomy with families citing factors such as dissatisfaction with schooling options and bullying as the motivation towards their decision to homeschool their children.

Homeschooling, also known as Elective Home Education (EHE) or home education, therefore offers a feasible economic bundle that allows parents to tailor their children's education based on their desires, values and beliefs. Consequently, homeschooling was perceived as a progressive movement that allowed some parents to educate children at home. Hill (2016), argues that the right to control the education of one's children is partially related to religious teaching and that they should be protected from the influences of the world. Liberalist theorists regard homeschooling as a parental avenue to express liberty through the right to choose the ideal way to educate their children with the Netherlands as a reference point (Merry, & Karsten, 2010). Proponents of homeschooling often cite the flexibility, customized curriculum, and opportunities for one-on-one instruction as key benefits. Additionally, homeschooling allows families to incorporate their cultural values, traditions, and beliefs into the educational experience, which can be particularly appealing for minority or marginalised communities. For instance, a study on home-based education involving the Orang Asli, an Indigenous

community in Malaysia, found that home-schooling enabled the preservation of cultural identity and family ties, in addition to providing equitable access to education (Rehman et al., 2021).

Theoretically, therefore, homeschooling presents itself as a way for marginalized families to assert their autonomy and identity within the education system. By taking control of their children's education, homeschooling parents can ensure that their cultural values, beliefs, and traditions are transmitted to the next generation (Hirsh, 2019). Literature exists on schooling choices in both private and public sectors but homeschooling choices are often overlooked (Houston & Toma, 2003).

Theories are few about the motivations and demographic attributes of homeschooling families in non-Western contexts and philosophers do not agree either. Socrates' view on education was the most liberal and argued that it should be based on the individual's willingness to join and participate. Plato (a student of Socrates), initially upheld his teacher's liberal view on education but later shifted towards more utilitarian, institutionalized and state-controlled education. Aristotle's argued towards state control of education, and that individuals should not have the right to educate their children as they deem (Fineman, & Shepherd, 2016).

Any analysis of the school systems whether homeschooling or the conventional schooling system uses economics to justify their arguments. The anchor of this basis is libertarian economists such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill who proposed systems where governments were funders of education and not controllers (Shepherd, 2015). Any form of competition with public schools, including homeschooling, is expected to make the public schools worse off economically. In addition to harming all public school learners, competition is expected to disproportionately affect the poor and the marginalized because the alternatives will act as monopolies. The theoretical reasons behind this harm to public education include that: it is a public good; and enjoys network externalities in many communities, having an opt-out alternative harms may lead to adverse selection; and competition creates a harmful prisoner's dilemma where a worse equilibrium is attained compared to the absence of

competition (Shepherd, 2015). Conservatives such as Friedman however argued that competition in education would improve choices for children and their families, and force public schools to improve. Advocates of competition argue that its absence can also be inefficient by denying households choices leading to high pay to teachers among whom bad ones remain in the system. This situation disadvantages poor and marginalized learners even more than other public school learners.

Public education ensures that everyone, regardless of income, religious affiliation, race, gender, ability, or disability, has access to free education. This principle of equity dictates that educational benefits should, lead to social advancement for all. The provision of state-funded education for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background, is widely regarded as a fundamental public good that should be safeguarded even by individuals who may not directly utilize the public education system.

Homeschooling is not legally recognized in Kenya putting it in a precarious position of not being illegal but also not legal, a situation that has ended in Kenya's High Court. In a Constitutional petition No. 236/19 of 2022 (Were & another v Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education & 2 others; Abuto (Interested Party)), the court indicated that *"there was no evidence of what system and standard they subscribed to teach their children, the academic curriculum and grading system for each stage was not made known, documentation of the various stages of the children's grades and progress were not shared. Further, the petitioners did not disclose how much parents and guardians were qualified to teach their children in those systems and whether they held such necessary qualifications to do so. The guidelines and regulation procedures they complied with were also not stated.... Under Article 53(1)(e) the responsibility of a parent was to care, protect and provide for the child. Parents under the Constitution were not recognized as education providers in the setting of basic education, and neither were they mandated to do so."*

This ruling is in line with (Shepherd, 2015) who argues that by meeting the basic state requirements, schools are allowed to develop school curricula consistent with pedagogical or religious

philosophies and frameworks and to recruit teachers qualified to foster such curriculums in democratic societies. Homeschooling children based on pedagogical and religious grounds still raises questions about the parent's authorization and qualification to homeschool and whether in exercising this entitlement, they may infringe upon the interests of their children (Shepherd, 2015). Parents consider it their primary responsibility as a feature of paternalism, to care for their children, to nurture and to guide them, and this includes making most major decisions on their behalf. In this case, paternalism is assumed to be expressed simply by the virtue of being the parent. Strict adherence ignores the state's paternalistic function exercised on behalf of children, to ensure that their interests are looked after by the parent explaining the reason for child-protection services and foster care in Liberal democratic states because it is erroneous to assume that a child's best interests are always with the parents. This forms the basis for why both the parents and the state make education claims on what is best for children (Shepherd, 2015).

While the state may override parental authority in cases of abuse or neglect, parents normally possess the right to exercise their liberties both to meet a child's basic needs and also to pass along one's values. If parents do indeed have these prerogatives, it is not unreasonable to depict education both as a public, but also as a personal or private good. Naturally, this will entail the prerogative to decide the type of education one's child receives. Shepherd (2015) further argues that despite hard-fought-for freedoms to homeschool as in the case above in Kenya that ended in the high court, the general population still treats the practice with suspicion. These suspicions stem from fear that parents are inculcating anti-national beliefs, values or habits, identity, and social cohesion. The homeschoolers themselves have not helped this situation by their aversiveness to government inspection, coupled with rising reports by the public over 'irresponsible' parenting, leading to calls for government intervention to avert potentially harmful outcomes for the children.

The biggest motivation for the offshoot of homeschooling in Kenya was the deterioration of

teacher-pupil ratios hence low literacy and numeracy levels. The overcrowding in classrooms has been attributed to two waves that affected the education system in Kenya: the introduction of free primary education in 2003; and the 100% transition policy in 2018 keeping the homeschooling debate alive. In addition, the popularity has been driven by dissatisfaction with public schools, a desire for religious and moral education, and safety concerns (Cooper, & Sureau, 2007).

The purpose of this study is to establish the demographic composition of Kenyan households who homeschool their children. The findings of such a study provide empirical salient features of homeschooling households not only to assess popular beliefs about homeschooling households. In addition, the findings from this study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on homeschooling, particularly in the context of developing countries. Understanding the motivations and household characteristics of homeschooling families can inform policymakers and education stakeholders as they seek to develop inclusive and responsive educational systems that cater to the diverse needs of all learners given the rarity of studies that examine specific household characteristics that lead to homeschooling.

METHODOLOGY

Parents make school choice decisions based on preferences, the quality of local schools, and constraints of income and available leisure time. Separating the causal effect of each variable on school choice requires holding the others constant. For instance, if two families with identical preferences, income, and leisure time choose different schools, the difference can be ascribed to the local education market. Families who live in the same area with the same time and income constraints but who choose different schools must have different preferences.

Comprehensive demographic data about homeschoolers remain difficult to obtain, largely because this mode of schooling does not require participants to register, hence researchers rely on invariably incomplete datasets (Kunzman, & Gaither, 2020). To obtain representative samples of the homeschooling population in Kenya has been

challenging mainly because while it is not illegal to practice homeschooling there is no legal grounding for the same. This precarious situation has led to court duels between homeschoolers and the state leading to mistrust of anyone collecting data on the same. Insofar as this mistrust exists between the state and homeschooling families, nonresponse bias in any survey of homeschooling families is possible (Cheng, & Watson, 2024). Most research about homeschooling therefore is based on convenience samples, though there are some exceptions where the data can be posited to be at least closely representative (Isenberg, 2007).

Research Design

Using a qualitative research design via the questionnaire method and interviews, the research systematically sampled 70 parents or guardians who homeschooled their children. The respondents completed a questionnaire with both open and closed-ended questions that represented the study's objective. A parallel interview with some respondents supplemented the survey. Five (5) key informant respondents were interviewed to nuance homeschooling perspectives. Regarding data analysis, questionnaire responses were subjected to thematic analysis, wherein the underlying ideas and themes were identified. To this effect, questionnaire responses were content analyzed and coded individually by the researcher.

The study used an internet-based data collection tool, a method that has been adopted by researchers because of its numerous advantages such as the ability to reach a larger pool of potential participants within a shorter period (*vis-à-vis* face-to-face surveys), study subjects who may be geographically dispersed or otherwise difficult to access, convenience, cost-effectiveness and user-friendly features such as comfortable pace and an enhanced sense of participant control (Menon, & Muraleedharan, 2020).

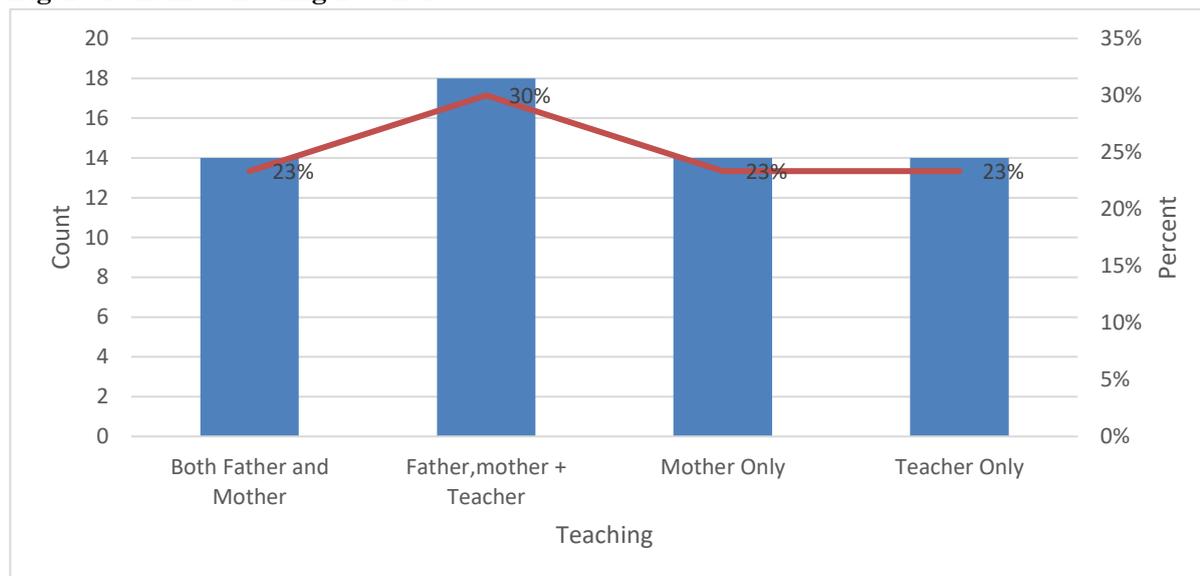
Internet-based surveys suffer from a lack of generalizability of findings because it does not

follow random sampling of respondents. (Menon, & Muraleedharan, 2020) argues that this problem cannot be cured by selecting a larger sample because of the non-availability of non-responder information. This problem was cured by selecting respondents randomly from homeschoolers' WhatsApp and Facebook groups seeking their consent and sending the questionnaire to only those who consented to participate, with a request not to forward the questionnaire to anyone else. The consent was also in-built into the questionnaire as the first item such that those who did not consent could not complete the questionnaire. To avoid duplicate participation, a single-use link was sent to potential participants and a screening question was included to prevent ineligible participants from survey completion as recommended by (Shiyab et al., 2023).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study targeted 70 respondents but only 51 respondents filled the online tool. This represented a 73 percent response rate. According to (Wu et al., 2022; Shiyab et al., 2023), the average online survey response rate is 44.1 percent, and sending an online survey to more participants did not generate a higher response rate. The response rate is also comparable to the 78.9 percent response rate reported by Saleh, & Bista (2017).

Studies in the US show that homeschooled children are likely to live in households headed by a married couple with moderate to high levels of education and income and are likely to live in a household with an adult, not in the labour force. In Kenya, the findings showed that at least 79 percent of the homeschooling couples were married, while at least 70 percent had an undergraduate degree. A study (Sheng, 2014), found that home-schooling households had two parents, with the mother being the parent who stayed at home and practised homeschooling. Respondents were asked who the homeschool teacher was, and their responses are outlined in Figure 1.

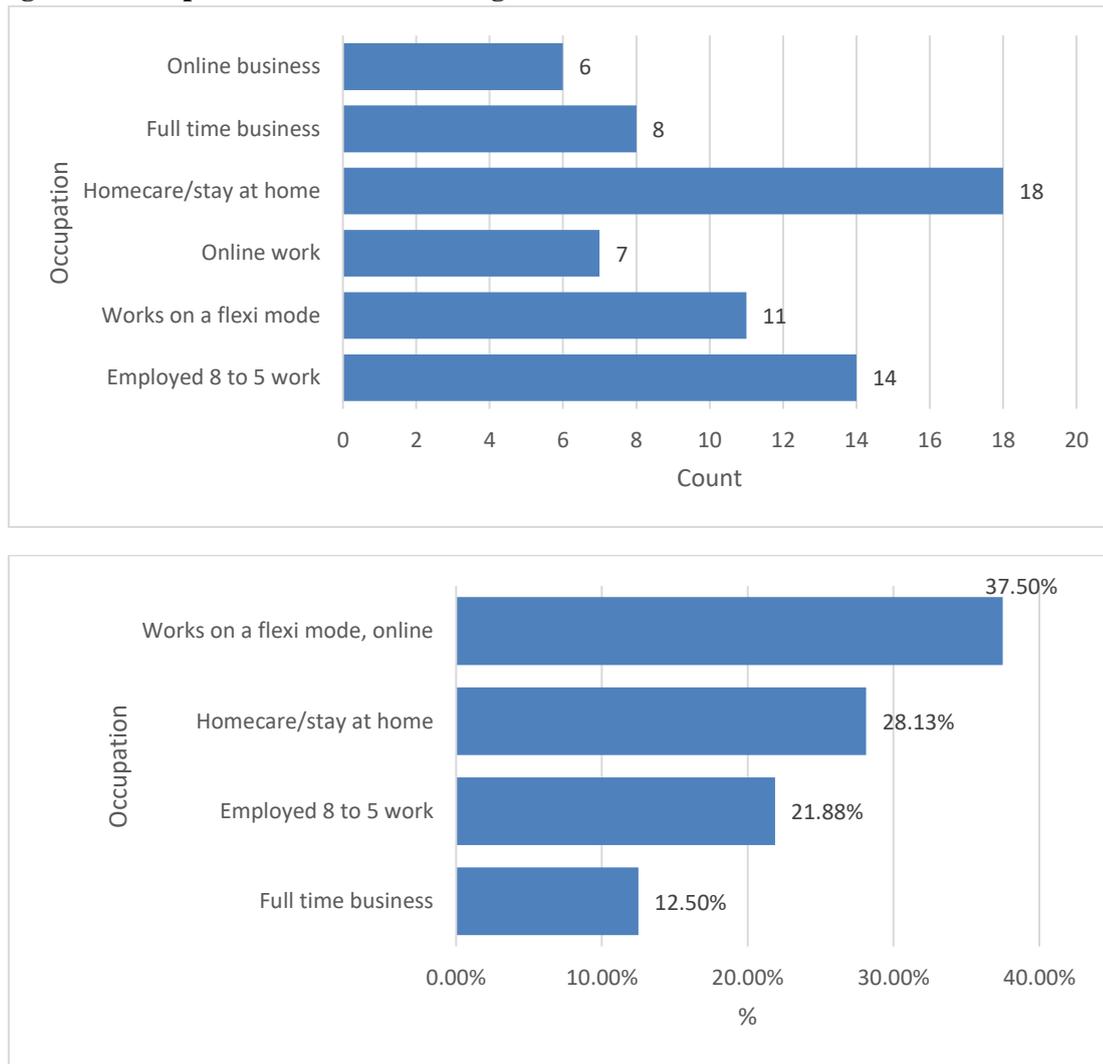
Figure 1: Homeschooling Teacher

By category, 23 percent of households have a mother as the homeschool teacher while noticeably no household indicated having the father as the only teacher of homeschooled children. A study in the USA (Weigel, 2023) showed that 75 percent of homeschool teachers were mothers and 94 percent were married. While 23 percent may seem low for Kenyan homeschooling households, the households seem to prefer female homeschool teachers (59%). These findings are in line with other studies that women do most of the education stuff, such as teaching reading, managing homework and organizing children's social calendars (English, 2021). This confirms that homeschooling households seem to be stable with two parents who are married and at least have a degree (70 percent had a bachelor's degree). According to Isenberg (2007), the presence of other adults in the household is also a critical determinant of the likelihood of homeschooling. This may be because these extra adults take over household tasks such as being the income earner, allowing the mother more disposable time to home-school.

The results show a tendency where households are more likely to engage a teacher as the age of homeschooled children increases. Below 4 years only two households solely used a teacher while 6 households had a teacher engaged to teach children over 14 years. While the results showed that the majority of the homeschool teachers were women, with sufficient education (bachelor's), their engagement as teachers diminished with the age of the children. These results correspond with (Isenberg, 2007) who argues that as children get older the subject matter becomes more complex, making it increasingly difficult for even well-educated mothers to teach.

Previous studies show that homeschooling children are more likely to live in households with three or more children and they are likely to live in a household with an adult, not in the labour force (Bauman, 2002). In this study, most respondent households were homecare/stay-at-home households. A combination of online workers and those working in flex mode shows that they are the majority, at 38 percent, followed by stay-at-home parents (28%).

Figure 2: Occupation of Home-schooling Households



The results show that sixty percent of home-schooled children have at least one non-working adult in the home, compared with thirty percent of other children. Homeschooling is considered unpaid work and part of home care such that the majority of homeschooling parent-teachers and homeschool teachers (for those households that employ a teacher) are women. In the US, 86.1% of all homeschool teachers are women, and only 13.9% are men. If a mother has preschool children and a school-age child, she is predisposed to stay home, decrease her work hours, or even stay out of the labour force entirely and therefore more likely to homeschool.

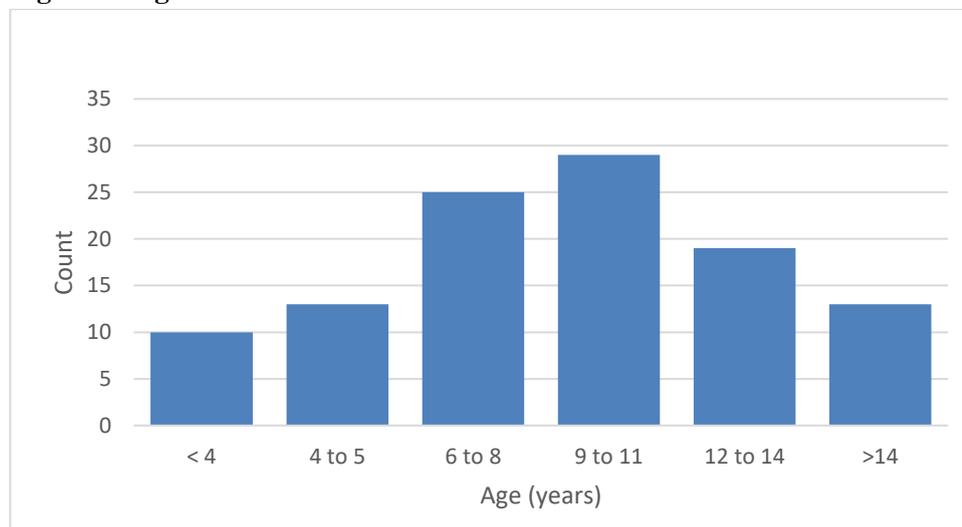
Among the households under the study, only 23 percent had 1 child while the rest had between 2 and 6 children. This finding shows that a homeschooled child is likely to come from a household with multiple children. The findings are not unique and

can be collaborated with other studies. Holding other factors constant, having a preschool child younger than 3 years old increases a household's probability of homeschooling a school-age sibling by 1.2 percentage points; a toddler aged 3 to 6 increases the probability of homeschooling by 0.5 percentage points (Isenberg, 2007). This trend then leads to the conclusion that each additional sibling beyond the first sibling increases the probability that a particular child is homeschooled. Homeschooling seems to work under a scale such that there is a likelihood of 1.2 percent for a child with two other school-age siblings to be homeschooled than a child with one school-age sibling, and a child with three or more siblings in school is an additional 1.7 percentage points more likely to be homeschooled than a child with two siblings.

According to Bauman (2002) homeschooled children are not especially likely to be young or old. In Kenya, the official primary school entry is 4 years and 14-year-olds join secondary education (based on the 8-4-4 system). The findings are consistent with

the National Centre for Statistics which showed that homeschooled learners include those ages 5 to 17 years in the US. The findings showed that the highest number of homeschooled children are between 9 and 11 years followed by 6 to 8 years.

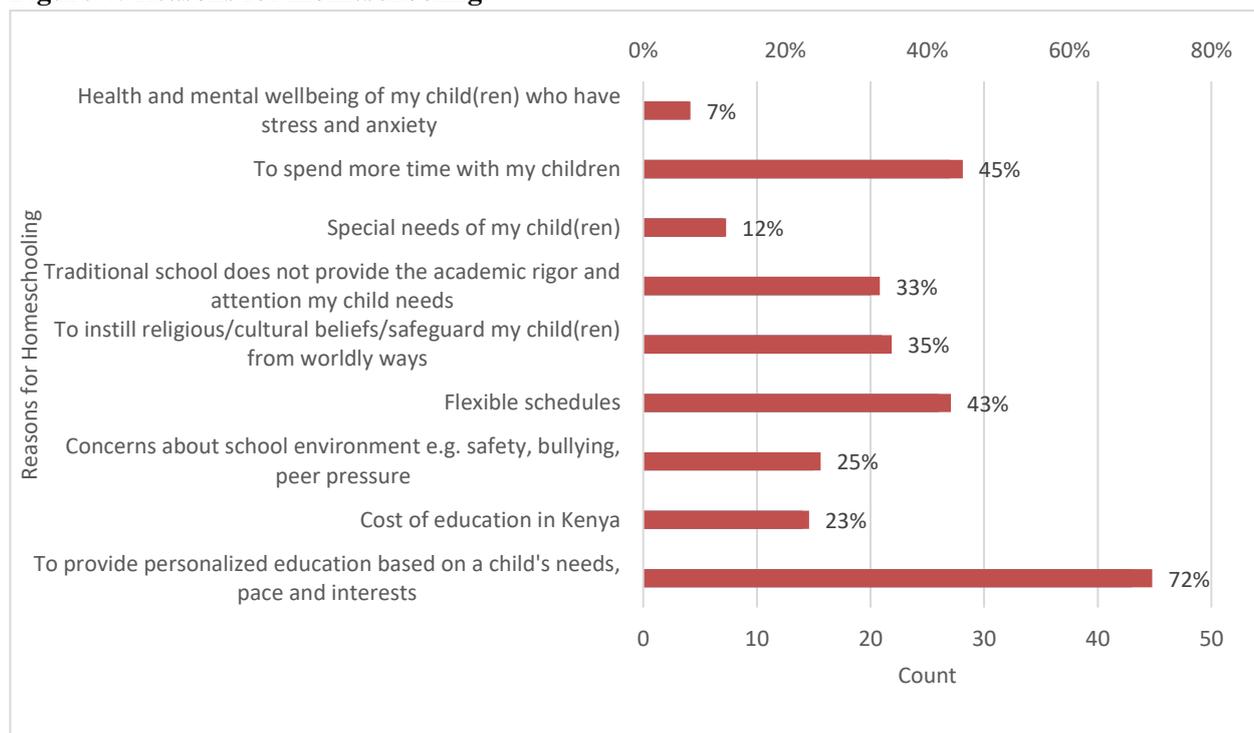
Figure 3: Age of Home-Schooled Children



Most homeschooling households have children aged 9 years to 11 years followed by 6 years to 8 years. The children aged 8 and 11 are a unique group because in 2020 (during the COVID-19-induced school closure), the children were aged 4 and 7 respectively. The school entry age in Kenya is age 4

years in pre-school while age 6 years is the primary school entry age. Considering that ages 4 and 7 were school entry points the parents may have decided to homeschool their children and continued even after schools reopened when the covid 19 eased.

Figure 4: Reasons for Homeschooling

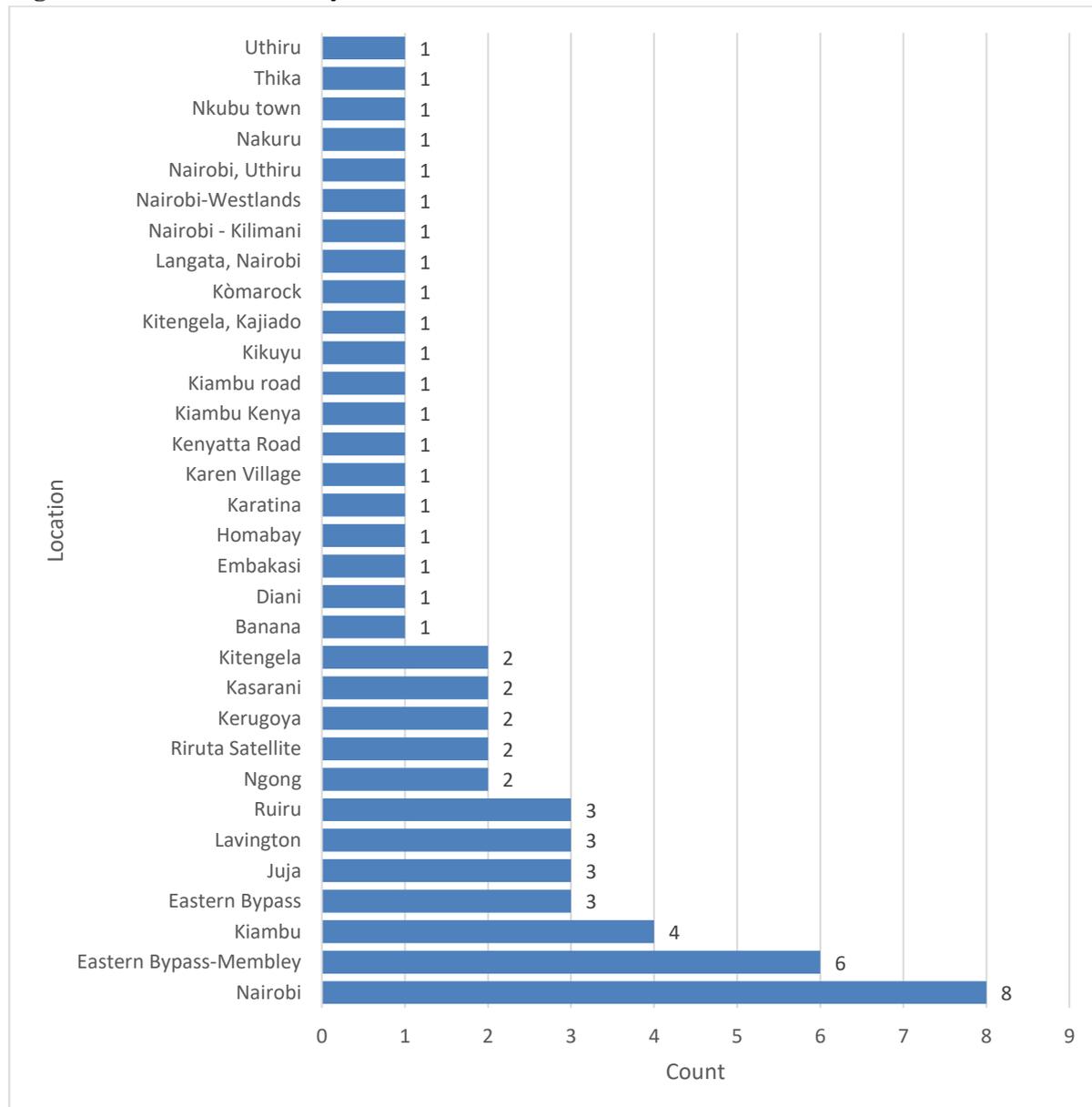


Other research by parents that they were driven to homeschooling due to the shortcomings of regular schools: the regular school had a poor learning environment, parents did not agree with what the school teaches, and children weren't being challenged at school in that order (Bauman, 2002).

Most homeschooling parents are teachers by profession and have above-average income and

education levels, which allows them to dedicate time and resources to their children's education. Middle-class Kenyan parents are more likely to choose homeschooling due to their appreciation for educational theory and practice, as well as their ability to afford to have one parent dedicated to homeschooling. In contrast, parents in low-income brackets often cannot rely on the income of just one spouse. The study picked 32 distinct locations.

Figure 5: Home-Schoolers by Location



Although the spread is seemingly wide, the locations are middle-class estates in Nairobi (a major urban centre) and around Nairobi such as Eastern Bypass, Kiambu and Kiambu Road, Ngong, Juja and Kitengela. Surprisingly, some areas were picked outside Nairobi signifying the creeping spread of

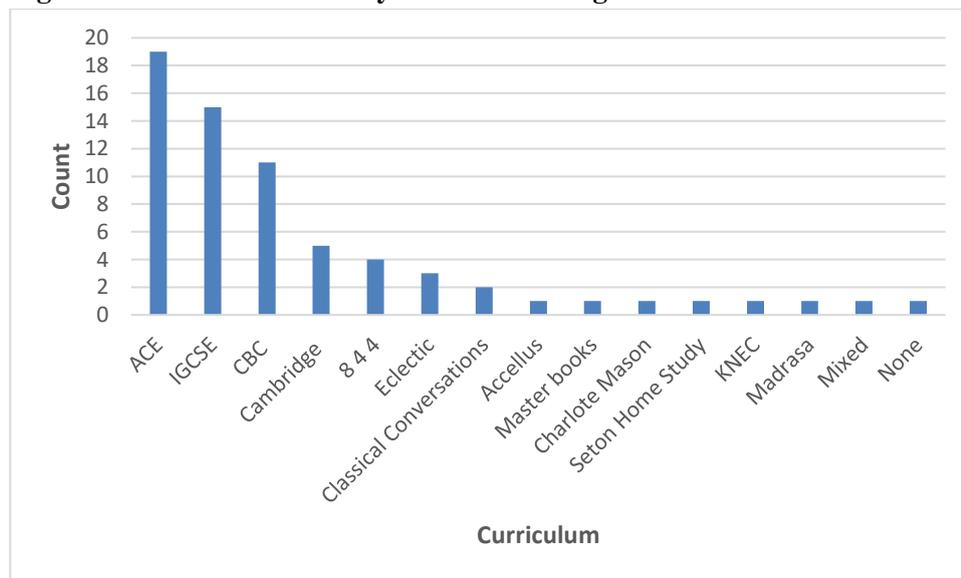
homeschooling in Kenya. These areas off-Nairobi include Diani-Mombasa County, Kerugoya-Kirinyaga County, Homabay town-Homabay County, Karatina-Nyeri County, Nkubu town-Meru County, Nakuru town-Nakuru County and Thika town-Kiambu County. To further check the spread

of homeschooling, the respondents were asked to indicate how many homeschoolers they know in their immediate neighbourhood. There is no comprehensive data on homeschooling in Kenya making it a challenge to estimate the number of homeschoolers. The majority (38%) of the respondents indicated that they knew at least 1 to 5

other homeschooling households indicating the spread of the schooling system.

Among the homeschooling households in Kenya, at least 11 curriculums were identified. This number excluded those who said they use no specific curriculum, KNEC, mixed curriculum and Madrasa.

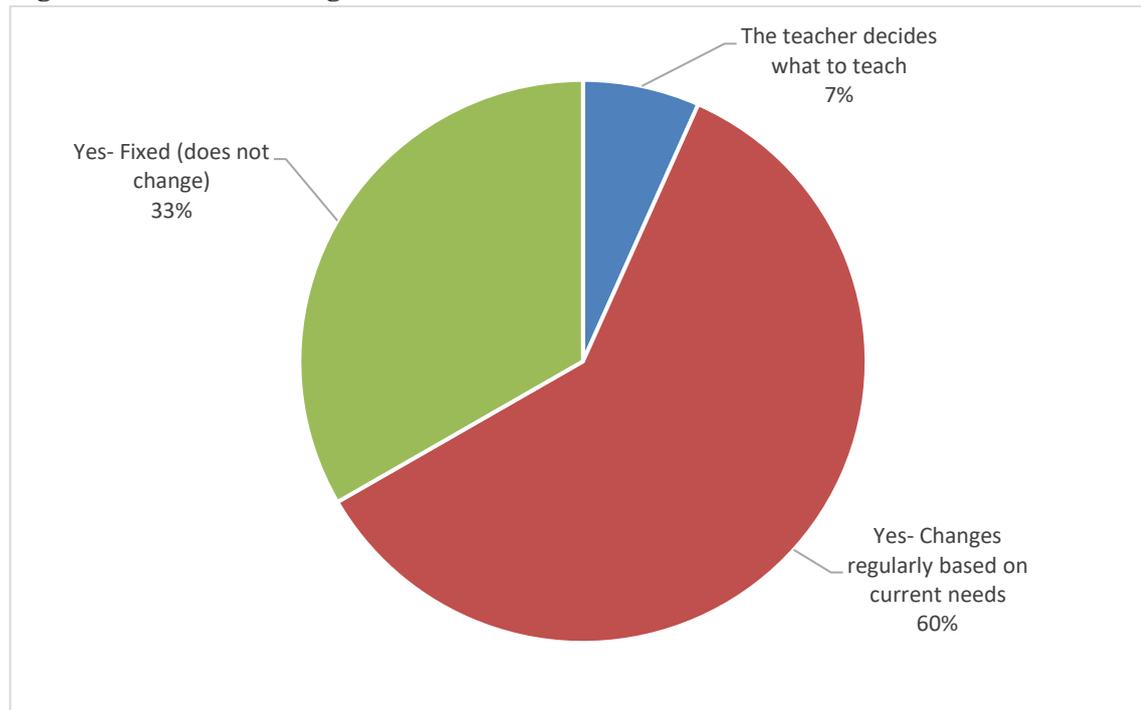
Figure 6: Curriculum Used by Home-Schooling Households



The leading curriculums used by homeschooling households in Kenya are ACE (30%), IGCSE (24%) and CBC (17%). The phased-out 8-4-4 curriculum (replaced with CBC) constitutes 6 percent and was found to be common with homeschooling learners above 12 years. It was evident that the last four categories (KNEC, Madrasa, Mixed and None) constituting 4 percent followed no specific known curriculum. This is consistent with the court finding in Constitutional Petition No. 236/19 of 2022 (Were & another v Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education & 2 others; Abuto (Interested Party)), when it indicated that *“there was no evidence of what system homeschooling parents subscribed to teach their children, the academic curriculum and grading system for each stage was not made known.*

The school timetable is a powerful administrative tool as it performs the important task of allocating a

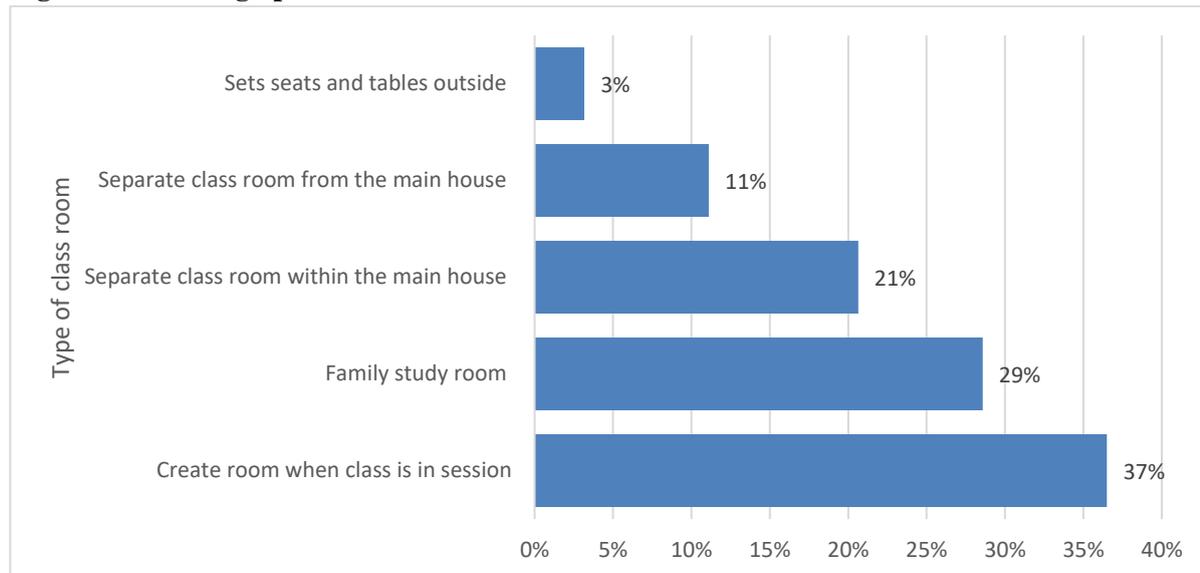
large proportion of a school's most valuable resource -time. A timetable operationalizes the aims and objectives of the school by providing an appropriate structural dimension to the curriculum to make the learning activities effective (Kajo, 2018). No matter what form of school therefore a timetable is a key document to ensure learning activities run efficiently. The debate between homeschoolers and convectional schoolers has been between a rigid versus a flexible timetable. Homeschoolers prefer to use the term homeschool schedule which defines a sequence of events that happens at a certain time similar to the traditional school setup. However, the debate rages on whether the schedule should be fixed or flexible. This study was interested in the homeschooling population and hence interrogated this issue. There are still disagreements between homeschoolers about either fixed or flexible schedules.

Figure 7: Home-Schooling Timetable

About two-thirds (60%) of the respondents preferred a flexible schedule, while 7 percent indicated the teacher decides what to teach (a subtle way of saying they have no schedule). Every schooling system has a vision of what the children are expected to learn, the expected skills to be acquired as well as the knowledge to be gained. Without a learning schedule or a frequently changing schedule, the vision remains a dream since some things will not be covered out of oversight or by the choice of the teacher on the ground. A learning schedule that also changes too frequently and can confuse learners. According to Holland (2019), students with traditional scheduling scored statistically higher on standardized assessments in reading and English. The reason behind this is that the traditional fixed schedule has less student distraction or anxiety associated with a changing daily schedule. Marciniak et al. (2022) have also shown that a fixed schedule leads to better learning outcomes. Dills &

Hernández-Julián (2008) further argue that students learn more in classes that meet more often.

Closely related to the schedule is the investment in a learning space within the home. According to Nja et al. (2023) the physical space of the classroom, and where that space directs attention, affects students' perceptions and how ready they are to engage in the class. Further, (Widiyawanti, 2024) argues that the setting of the learning environment must be able to maximize the potential of the classroom as a learning resource. Every item in the classroom should be used as a learning resource hence; various equipment in the classroom should be managed, arranged, positioned and utilized appropriately and optimally as learning resources. The respondents were therefore asked if they have a dedicated learning space for homeschooling. 37 percent indicated that they create learning spaces when the class is taking place.

Figure 8: Learning Space and Environment

Only less than half 32 percent have a separate dedicated classroom while 40 percent do not have a dedicated learning space. Studies such as (Kholisah et al., 2024) show that the lack of classroom space hurts students' conduciveness to learning. The quality of physical space has been shown to have an impact on the perceived satisfaction, achievement and engagement of learners and in general, is considered to be critical to learning (Brachtl et al., 2023). A comfortable home learning environment in terms of temperature, humidity, space light, desk and chair, among others helps to improve the learning experience. Distractions such as household responsibilities (affecting mainly girls), and noise represent challenges which can hinder a learner's participation when learning takes place at home (Brachtl et al., 2023). While more than a quarter of the respondents indicated they use the family study room, the E-B model recommends learning within spaces is facilitated by the three separate principles including naturalness. This principle factors inputs such as optimal lighting levels, acoustics, learning temperatures and air quality levels (Barrett et al., 2017).

To further check on the commitment of the household, 67 percent of the households that had a fixed schedule/timetable had a separate room inside the house dedicated to homeschooling, while a quarter of them had a separate room outside the house.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to succinctly identify the unique characteristics of homeschooling households and not to weigh on the merits and demerits of homeschooling. The study found that households that homeschool their children in Kenya are made up of married couples, have multiple children and are well educated with at least a bachelor's degree. One of the household partners stays or works at home and this is likely to be the mother since they are the ones providing teaching in these households. Only less than half 32 percent have a separate dedicated classroom while 40 percent do not have a dedicated learning space. Along the same line, only about two-thirds of the respondents preferred a flexible schedule, while 7 percent indicated the teacher decides what to teach (a subtle way of saying they have no schedule). Parents (mothers) are more likely to teach the younger children while households are likely to employ a teacher for the older children above 14 years. Moreover, the characteristics do not deviate significantly from findings in other jurisdictions. Homeschooling households in Kenya are likely to come from medium urban areas and use over 10 curriculums. A small portion of homeschooling households do not follow any curriculum. Homeschooling in Kenya is driven by the need to provide personalized learning and not pedagogical or Christian persuasion.

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