



Friend-making abilities of homeschooled individuals in adulthood

Veena Vijaya kumar¹, Dr S Hemalatha²

¹ Research Scholar, SLiCA, Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science, Padur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

² Professor and Research Supervisor, Department of Commerce, SLiCA, Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science, Padur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

This paper discusses friend-making skills of homeschooled adults in the adult life, the role of home, societal exposure, and extracurricular activities in influencing this behaviour. The participation in the study was 244 adults who were school and graduate-level homeschooled. A structured questionnaire, which contained the demographic data, the items assessing the social skills, and the difficulty in friendship-making, was used to collect the data. The analysis of demographic trends and social issues was conducted through descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, weighted averages), and the underlying factors that affect friendship development were identified with the help of the factor analysis. Results indicated that there was a four-factor designation, Home Socialization Environment, Community Exposure and Peer Interaction, Extracurricular Skill Development, and Friendship Building and Social Participation. The weighted average analysis showed that the key issues facing the homeschool adults were the inability to adult social norms, lack of interaction with people of their similar interests and feeling awkward in large social events. The research recommends the provision of organized social opportunities, guidance interventions, parental and mentor and community-based support to improve social competence and friendship-making ability. In general, the results emphasize the relevance of the purposeful development of social skills and academic education to help adults who are homeschooled to engage in purposeful social interaction.

Keywords: Homeschooled adults, friend-making abilities, social skills, community exposure, extracurricular activities

Introduction

The elements of friendship and social networks are vital part of the adult life since they play the important role in the emotional well-being, psychological health, professional achievement, and the quality of life as a whole. Good social networks offer emotional support, alleviate a feeling of loneliness and make one more resilient to tricky circumstances. Social skills are also important in the working life and in the community where they help in networking, teamwork and leadership that are essential to career development and personal growth. Homeschooled people enjoy special educational experience, which is often vastly different to schooling, and especially, regarding extended exposure to peering, engagement in organized group work, and informal and casual social interactions. Although homeschooling has been said to provide an avenue of flexibility and customized learning process that best suits the needs of a specific individual, it casts doubt on how this might affect the social growth in the long run. Restricted exposure to high peer groups and traditional classroom instruction could have an effect on the social competencies, including conflict management, collaboration, and relationship management. It is then important to understand the friend-making skills of homeschooled people in adulthood as it will assist in establishing how early educational experiences influence the development and acquisition of social skills, the capability to create and maintain meaningful relations and to become a part of larger social and professional groups. This knowledge can be useful to parents, teachers, and policy-makers who want to maximize the opportunities of social development in homeschooling settings and make sure that

homeschooled individuals can successfully manage the intricate social lives once they become adult.

Review of Literature

Kaye, M. C. (2011) ^[1]. This paper has discussed the perceptions and meaning of friendship in Aspergian adolescents in a special school. The research was done at the Orion Academy, which is a preparatory high school of students with Asperger Disorder and Non-verbal Learning Disability, and involved three focus groups comprising eight students in grades 8–12. The research results indicated that these adolescents do wish and are able to have lasting, deep friendships. Their capacity to build and sustain friendships was positively facilitated by social skills courses, small classes, class composition and unavailability of bullying. Ghimire, P. (2022) ^[2, 10]. The home offers a safe setting in which the health, safety and the rights of the children are given priority and learning based on play is facilitated to ensure emotional strength, independence as well as confidence. A successful transition in home to early childhood education requires school readiness. The paper examined school readiness in practices that happen at home and the knowledge of ECED professionals about the availability of school readiness through a qualitative case study design by utilizing interviews and observations. The results have shown that early academic demands usually dominate the needs of development with the significance of the collaborative partnerships and the holistic approach. School preparedness does not just refer to academic orientation but it entails all aspects of early childhood growth, which in systems such as Nepal has not been adequately incorporated.

Shaw, S. R., & Jankowska, A. M. (2018) [3]. The chapter provides an overview of educational interventions and accommodations of students with intellectual disabilities with references to recent findings and the combination of educational and mental health assistance. It also highlights the cooperative nature of the work of educators, psychologists and the school professionals in improving the individual needs of students and adopting effective measures in their favour.

Research Gap

Although the nature of homeschooling is becoming more and more prominent, few systematic studies have been conducted to examine how homeschooled people form and retain friendships in adulthood. The literature on social development is primarily concerned with social development in childhood and adolescence, thus creating a considerable gap in the topic of social implication of homeschooling in the long term. In addition, there is very little available empirical data on comparisons of the social networks, challenges and friendship skills of adults who are homeschooled and traditionally schooled. This research aims at filling such gaps by exploring the social competencies, quality of friendships and issues that homeschooled adults face when forming and maintaining meaningful social relationships.

Statement of the Problem

During the adulthood stage, social competence is a major aspect of friend-making. The homeschooled people are exposed to a different social environment when they are still growing and this can affect their ability to form and sustain friendship in later years. Lack of interaction with peers, dependence on family based socialization, and differing degrees of community and extracurricular activities may affect the magnitude and quality of adult social networks. The research will explore the impact of homeschooling on

friendship during adulthood and the factors and challenges involved that determine the social outcomes.

Objectives Of the Study

- To determine the aspects that affect the development of friendship among adults in the homeschooling setting.
- To investigate the challenges of homeschooled people in forming social networks in their adult life.

Scope of The Study

This paper is based on adults who have been homeschooled at some stage of their childhood and teenage. It looks at their friend-making skills, such as social confidence, ability to form and sustain friendships as well as involvement in social networks. The study also explores the problems these people encounter when trying to have relationships in adulthood. Only available groups of homeschooled adult experiences are included in the study.

Research Methodology

The research design adopted was descriptive because the researcher was investigating the friend making skills of home schooled persons in adulthood. It was composed of 244 adults (aged 18 years) that had been schooled at home since the school age to graduate level. A purposive sampling method was employed to choose participants in order to have a representative sample of different educational levels, sex, and neighbourhoods. The structured questionnaire was used to collect data, which consisted of demographic data, questions assessing friend-making skills, and problems with socialisation. Descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage and weighted averages as well as factor analysis were used to analyse the gathered data. To determine which factors are most important as far as friend-making skills are concerned. This approach provided effective coverage of the development of the social skill and the dynamics of friendship among home schooled adults when they grow up.

Data Analysis And Interpretation

Table 1: Socio-Economic Factors (No. Of Respondents= 244)

Demographic Factors	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	120	49.18
	Female	124	50.82
Duration of Home-schooling	Up to 2 years	60	24.59
	2-5 years	80	32.79
	6-10 years	70	28.69
	Above 10 years	34	13.93
	Primary	40	16.39
Education level	Class 6-9	60	24.59
	Class 10-12	70	28.69
	Technical/Vocational College	40	16.39
	Graduation (Bachelor's)	34	13.93
	Urban	120	49.18
Place of Residence	Semi-Urban	70	28.69
	Rural	54	22.13

Source: Primary Data

Gender: 244 adult participants took part in the study, and it was fairly balanced, as it consisted of 120 men (49.18) and 124 women (50.82). This implies that there was almost equal representation of the two genders in the sample of adulthood.

Length of Homeschooling: The homeschooling length was reported to be different by the participants. Most of them had 2-5 years (32.79%), 6-10 years (28.69%), less than 2 years (24.59%), and over 10 years (13.93) of homeschooling. This demonstrates that the adults in the

study experienced different experiences with homeschooling as they were growing up.

Education Level: In terms of highest level of education, most adults had completed Class 10 12 (28.69), Class 69 (24.59), Primary school (16.39), Technical or Vocational College (16.39) and graduation (13.93). This is indicative of a diverse variety of educational backgrounds among the participants in this case in the adult group.

Place of Residence: With regard to residential background, nearly half of the adults resided in urban background (49.18) then semi-urban (28.69), and rural areas (22.13). This shows that they were sampled at different social and environmental backgrounds as adults.

Factor Analysis- Factors Influencing Friendship Development Among Homeschooled

Table 2.1: Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
My home environment improved my communication skills.	.806	.124	.201	.138
I participated in group activities at home.	.774	.249	.184	.128
I had chances to meet relatives and extended family.	.694	.218	.318	.056
I was supported to join social activities.	.593	.191	-.089	.546
My family encouraged me to interact with peers.	.584	.270	-.151	.492
I regularly met people of my age in the community.	.316	.787	.188	-.019
Community tasks improved my social confidence.	.256	.743	.402	.018
I had enough peer exposure through community groups.	.234	.701	.292	.173
I joined extracurricular activities.	.062	.636	-.087	.591
Extracurricular improved my teamwork skills.	.107	.156	.876	.158
Structured activities made it easier to connect with new people.	.287	.353	.700	.033
I interacted with peers during extracurricular.	.179	.401	.547	.311
Extracurricular helped me make friends.	-.045	.391	.373	.671
I took part in community events.	.297	-.047	.078	.664
Community interactions helped me build friends.	.094	-.030	.352	.576
Total	6.225	1.676	1.314	1.051
% of Variance	41.501	11.171	8.758	7.005
Cumulative %	41.501	52.671	61.43	68.435
Total	6.225	1.676	1.314	1.051

The Rotated Component Matrix provided a strong and meaningful solution of the factor as it contained four factors with a contribution of 68.44% of the total variance. Component 1 would be the Home Socialization Environment because it indicates high loadings on items that pertain to the development of communication, involvement in home-based group activities, communication with relatives and support of the family to engage in social activities. Component 2 echoes Community Exposure and Peer Interaction which has heavy loadings on the statements regarding encountering peers in the community, community tasks, and community groups confidence. The dimension of

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.838
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1904.417
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to determine the suitability of the data to factor analysis. KMO = 0.838 and this is within the meritorious range, thus showing that the sample size and the inter-item correlations were sufficient to perform factor analysis. Moreover, the Chi-square value in Bartlett Test of Sphericity was 1904.417 with 105 degrees of freedom and the p = 0.000 level and indicated the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix. Collectively, these outcomes prove the fact that the data can be used to conduct the exploration factor analysis.

Extracurricular Skill Development is represented by Component 3, and there is a high loading on the item that focuses on teamwork, structured activities, and peer interaction in the process of extracurricular participation. Component 4 is Friendship Building and Social Participation where items emphasize community events, possibilities of making friends as well as peer-interaction support. All these aspects, combined together, help explain why the home environment, exposure to the community and extracurricular activities all contribute to the development of friend-making skills in homeschooled students as they grow up.

Table 3: Weighted Average Method- Challenges Of Homeschooled People In Forming Social Networks In Their Adult Life

Challenges	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Mean Score	Rank
I felt awkward in large social gatherings.	121	58	34	22	9	244	4.07	3
	605	232	102	44	9	992		
I had difficulty relating to peers from traditional schools.	55	110	40	23	16	244	3.68	5
	275	440	120	46	16	897		
Making new friends as an adult is challenging.	49	77	83	24	11	244	3.53	6
	245	308	249	48	11	861		
I experience anxiety in unfamiliar social situations.	51	73	36	54	30	244	3.25	9
	255	292	108	108	30	793		

Maintaining friendships over time is difficult.	54	69	38	37	46	244	3.20	10
	270	276	114	74	46	780		
I needed time to learn adult social norms.	103	89	38	14	0	244	4.15	1
	515	356	114	28	0	1013		
Connecting with people with similar interests is hard.	84	114	39	6	1	244	4.12	2
	420	456	117	12	1	1006		
My social network is smaller than others'.	70	67	85	8	14	244	3.70	4
	350	268	255	16	14	903		
I face difficulties in professional or community groups.	63	63	53	43	22	244	3.42	7
	315	252	159	86	22	834		
I lack confidence initiating conversations in new environments.	74	63	36	27	44	244	3.39	8
	370	252	108	54	44	828		

The discussion of the issues of home schooled adults that seek to form social ties shows that some important patterns are present. The greatest challenge was the fact that I needed time to learn what social norms are like in adulthood (Mean = 4.15), which suggests that transitioning to the socially expected behaviour in adulthood was a huge challenge. Next came the one that stated that it was difficult to find people who shared the same interests (Mean = 4.12), and it implied that the issue of finding people with similar interests was of high concern. The third biggest problem said was awkwardness during big social events (Mean = 4.07), which also shows that one feels awkward in a high-interaction environment. Participants also admitted of having a smaller social network than other people (Mean = 3.70) and having trouble relating to other people of traditional schools (Mean = 3.68). The middle level ones were the difficulty in professional or community groups (Mean = 3.42) and the inability to have conversations in inappropriate settings (Mean = 3.39). The lesser but still pertinent issues were anxiety during unfamiliar social situations (Mean = 3.25) and having problems in sustaining friendships in the long term (Mean = 3.19). On the whole, the results indicate that although home schooled adults experience some social issues, the most significant barriers are associated with the process of adjusting to adult social norms and the establishment of the meaningful relationships with other people.

Findings Of The Study

- The pretext consisted of a slightly higher number of females (50.82) than males (49.18).
- Most of the participants had attended home schooling during 2-5 years (32.79%).
- Most adults had the highest level of education of Class 1012 (28.69 percent).
- 9.18 percent of the respondents resided in urban regions.
- A four-factor structure that was determined by the factor analysis explained 68.44% of the total variance. Factor 1, Home Socialization Environment (41.50%), comprised the items that refer to the skills in communicating, having family support, and involvement in the home activities. Factor 2, Community Exposure and Peer Interaction (11.17%), included questions about the interaction with peers and the performance of community activities. Factor 3, Extracurricular Skill Development (8.76%), covered under structured activities and teamwork and Factor 4, Friendship Building and Social Participation (7.01%), covered items on making friends with the help of communities and social gatherings. These results suggest that home environment, exposure in the

community and extracurricular experiences all combine to influence the friend making skills of home schooled individuals as adults

- In the weighted average, it was revealed that the greatest problems of home schooled adults with regard to finding friends were getting used to the rules of adult social life (Mean = 4.15), getting used to people with common interests (Mean = 4.12), and feeling awkward at large social events (Mean = 4.07). There were other significant challenges such as having a smaller social network (Mean = 3.70) and associating with peers in conventional schools (Mean = 3.68). In general, the results reveal that the main problem of home schooled adults is to adapt to social expectations of adults and establish any meaningful relationships.

Suggestions

- Give a chance to organise group work, community projects and interaction between peers at early age.
- Participate in extracurricular activities like sporting activities, arts and clubs in order to enhance team work and communication.
- Organize social activities/study groups or projects with colleagues in both home schooling and traditional schooling.
- Provide adult social norms, networking and community-engaging guidance programs or workshops.
- Make active participation of parents, mentors or coaches who can give feedback, encouragement and socialisation opportunities.
- Use online forums, virtual learning communities and social media to complement the face-to-face communications.
- Arrange orientation events, team building events, and social skill training via schools, colleges, and other community groups.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that as adults, home schooled people experience special social difficulties especially, in adjusting to adult social norms and meaningful friendships. The home setting, the exposure to the community and the involvement in extracurricular activities are some of the factors which are important in shaping social skills and confidence. Although the majority of the respondents had the opportunity to socialise with their peers and participate in community life, the amount of home schooling, the level of education, and the location affected their capacity to make friends. The adults who are home schooled can develop their social competence and build stronger peer networks by receiving systematic social opportunities, parental guidance, and support through community programmes and mentors. In

general, the results emphasise the need to develop social skills, with the degree of intentionality, and academic training to help home schooled persons grow holistically during their adult years.

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