

An Interplay Between Mass Media and Homeschooling

By *Fredrick Mwanyumba Tweni**, *Josephat Nairutia Kemei[±]* &
Kizito Muchanga Lusambili[°]

Homeschooling and mass media are inseparable entities. The significance of mass media in acceleration of homeschooling is titanic. Mass media provides an avenue for interaction among the homeschoolers and their facilitators as well. It allows for the interchange of content and enhances discussion. Mass media promotes research that has to a greater extent enhanced the success of homeschooling among the practicing individuals who have ended up embracing this curriculum. Therefore, this paper examined the interplay between the two items. It dwelt on its significance and brought about the mutual interdependence that emerges when the two are intertwined for academic use. The paper adopted a qualitative research method and was addressed by phenomenological research design/ approach. It majored on the use of oral interviews, focus group discussion and was supplemented by secondary data from the secondary findings. Moreover, the findings were presented thematically and comprehensively which was enhanced by discussion of each issue independently as it emerged from the research findings.

Keywords: *homeschooling, mass media, interdependence, interchange, curriculum*

Introduction

The interplay between mass media and homeschooling represents a dynamic and evolving relationship within the realm of education. As mass media continues to shape our modern society, its influence on homeschooling practices and the impact of homeschooling on children's engagement with mass media have become subjects of increasing interest and concern. This interplay raises questions about how media can be effectively utilized as an educational tool in homeschooling environments, as well as the potential challenges and consequences associated with its use. Mass media, encompassing various forms such as television, radio, internet, and social media, has a powerful presence in the lives of children and families today. It provides a vast array of educational resources, entertainment options, and avenues for social connection. Homeschooling, on the other hand, has emerged as an alternative educational approach chosen by a growing number of families seeking personalized instruction and flexibility.

*Graduate Student, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1707-8926>

[±]Graduate Student, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4911-3378>

[°]Senior Lecturer, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5430-4558>

The convergence of mass media and homeschooling offers unique opportunities and challenges. On one hand, mass media can serve as a valuable resource for homeschooling parents, providing access to a wealth of educational materials, online courses, virtual field trips, and interactive learning platforms. It allows parents to supplement their teaching with multimedia resources that cater to different learning styles and provide exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences. Moreover, media can foster engagement and interactivity, promoting active learning and critical thinking skills. Educational television programs, documentaries, and online educational platforms have gained popularity among homeschooling families as tools to enhance subject comprehension and facilitate independent learning. Additionally, social media platforms and online communities provide avenues for homeschooling parents to connect, share resources, and collaborate, thereby creating a sense of community and support.

However, the interplay between mass media and homeschooling is not without its challenges. Concerns arise regarding the potential negative impact of excessive screen time, exposure to inappropriate content, and the influence of commercialized media on children's values, beliefs, and behaviors. Homeschooling parents must navigate the fine line between utilizing media as an educational tool and safeguarding their children's well-being and healthy development. Furthermore, the role of media in shaping homeschooling practices raises questions about the autonomy of parents as educators. How does media influence the design and implementation of homeschooling curricula? What are the effects of media consumption on children's learning outcomes and academic achievement in homeschooling contexts? These questions warrant exploration to better understand the implications of the interplay between mass media and homeschooling. Given the significance of this interplay, there is a growing need for research that examines the ways in which mass media impacts homeschooling practices and how homeschooling, in turn, shapes children's engagement with media. This research can inform educators, policymakers, and parents about the potential benefits and challenges associated with media use in homeschooling, while also fostering the development of media literacy initiatives tailored to homeschooling contexts.

Therefore, the interplay between mass media and homeschooling represents a complex and evolving relationship within the realm of education. Understanding how mass media influences homeschooling practices and how homeschooling affects children's engagement with media is crucial for educators, parents, and policymakers. This exploration can shed light on the potential benefits, challenges, and consequences of media use in homeschooling environments, ultimately contributing to informed decision-making and the development of effective educational strategies in the digital age.

Literature Review

In a recent University of Arizona Law Review article, Elizabeth Bartholet, a Harvard law professor, claims that the "homeschooling regime poses real dangers to children and to society." Bartholet's legal argument is that homeschooling is an

infringement on child rights, placing children in inferior, socially isolating, and dangerous educational environments (Bartholet 2020). This threatens democracy, she says, since homeschooling is not likely to provide the kind of civic education available in public schools, especially regarding democratic values. Besides the risk of child abuse and indoctrination, the strength of far right-wing religious conservatives in the homeschooling movement ensures that children will be forced into submitting to patriarchy, leading, Bartholet fears, to “female subservience.” If that wasn’t enough, she goes on to charge the homeschooling movement with links to white supremacy and racial segregation. According to Bartholet, the future of our democracy depends on “freeing” these children from unhappiness and ignorance (Bartholet 2020).

Beyond the anecdotal “evidence” provided by Bartholet, the question remains is there social scientific evidence that demands the “death penalty” for homeschooling? After considering the impact of the homeschooling movement on community involvement, diversity, and the dignity of the child, it is clear that Bartholet’s prosecution fails to overcome reasonable doubt (Bartholet 2020). Bartholet claims that homeschooling “...parents...are ideologically committed to raising children in isolation from the larger society....” She fails to recognize that homeschooling families have the highest level of community involvement of all school sectors. This civic involvement not only strengthens social capital and trust within communities, but also provides a “hidden” or implicit curriculum important for civic socialization, which may carry into young adulthood. Bartholet seems to take the “home” in homeschooling too seriously, as if their windows have prison bars. In actual practice, homeschoolers are organized in complex networks with educational organizations, civic, religious, and cultural organizations, informal personal and virtual support groups, friendship circles, extended family, and so on. Therefore, it’s upon this argument hold by Bartholet that this study unraveled the interplay between mass media and homeschooling in the wider scope.

Methodology

This study adopted phenomenological research approach. This is because, phenomenology aims to understand individuals’ lived experiences and their subjective interpretations of a particular phenomenon (Koopman 2015). This approach allows researchers to explore the perspectives, beliefs, and behaviors of homeschooling parents and children regarding their interactions with mass media in the context of education (Raffaele and Knoff 1999). Therefore, the study targeted parents and students pursuing the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) programme in home schools in Kenya. Statistical data from a reconnaissance study conducted in schools offering the ACE programme confirmed that as of 2020, there were 274 students pursuing the programme from home. A sample of 42 students and 18 parents was selected from attendees at the ACE annual convention, where all learners following the ACE curriculum and their parents gather annually. This convention spans one week and offers participants diverse ACE-related activities. Data were collected through focus group discussions with students and interviews

with parents. Based on research showing that 80% of themes captured by two to three focus groups, while 90% by three to six groups (Guest et al. 2017), the 42 learners were distributed in six groups of seven learners each. Similarly, following researchers' assertions that saturation can be reached by interviewing 12-20 participants (Hagaman and Wutich 2017), 18 parents were found to be ideal for participating in interviews.

Both focus group discussions and interviews were effective for capturing the experiences and perspectives of homeschooling parents and children regarding mass media use (Kontio et al. 2004). The researcher, identified a diverse sample of homeschooling families who actively engaged with mass media in their educational practices. The researcher considered factors such as geographical location, socioeconomic status, educational philosophies, and the age range of children. This provided a broad range of perspectives on the interplay between mass media and homeschooling. Open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and practices related to mass media in homeschooling were employed in the two data collection instruments (Rosenthal 2016). Qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, and variations in participants' responses regarding their interactions with mass media (Braun and Clarke 2021). The study explored how mass media is integrated into homeschooling practices, its perceived benefits, challenges, and any changes in attitudes or behaviors resulting from media consumption. Findings were interpreted based on the identified themes and patterns, and presented in a comprehensive and contextualized manner, providing quotes and examples to support the interpretations (Skelton 1994).

Discussion

The study sought to establish the interplay between mass media and homeschooling. Consequently, the study made the following findings and provides a robust discussion.

Information and Resources

This study established that mass media such as television, radio, and the internet, provide a wealth of information and educational resources that homeschooling parents can utilize. Moreover, educational websites, online courses, documentaries, and interactive platforms complements home learning by enhancing the curriculum and supplementing teaching materials (Collins and Halverson 2018). According to one of the parents who has embraced homeschooling, "mass media, such as educational television programs, documentaries, and online platforms, provide a wealth of educational content to our homeschooling children (Oral Interview, 15/03/2023). Information about these resources helps homeschooling families to enrich learning experiences by adopting and integrating them into their curriculum. Therefore, by leveraging such mass media resources, homeschooling can become more engaging, diverse, and accessible. It also emerged from this study

that mass media resources offer homeschoolers access to a wide range of perspectives, cultures, and ideas. The presentation of real-world mass media was found to be an avenue for enhancing visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles among home schooling individuals. Therefore, information about these resources enables homeschooling parents to select appropriate content that aligns with their educational goals, interests, and learning styles.

Another respondent remarked that: “indeed mass media is serving as valuable supplementary tools for our homeschooling children. It complements traditional textbooks which are hard to find and expensive. Besides, mass media diversifies curriculum materials allowing our children to access to develop the required skills” (Oral Interview, 15/03/2023). Educational websites, online courses, and interactive learning platforms provide additional resources that cater to diverse learning styles and interests. By staying informed about these resources, homeschooling parents can integrate them effectively into their teaching methods. This study found out that mass media keeps homeschooling families informed about current events, social issues, and global affairs. By following news outlets, podcasts, and online publications, homeschoolers develop a broader understanding of the world. This knowledge can be incorporated into discussions, research projects, and critical thinking exercises, fostering a deeper sense of global awareness and citizenship.

Findings from the focus group discussions revealed that information about mass media resources facilitate collaboration and networking among homeschooling families. For instance, it emerged that online platforms, forums, and social media groups provide spaces for sharing experiences, recommendations, and insights on utilizing mass media effectively in homeschooling. This interplay allows parents to exchange ideas, discover new resources, and create a supportive community (Focus group discussion, 17/03/2023). Furthermore, the focus group discussions showcased that mass media offers opportunities for homeschoolers to develop media literacy skills. By accessing and analyzing various forms of media, such as news articles, videos, and podcasts, homeschooling students were able to improve their critical thinking, information evaluation, and media interpretation abilities. Consequently, information and resources that promote media literacy education enable homeschooling parents to guide their children in understanding the impact and influence of mass media (Focus group discussion, 17/03/2023).

Based on the preceding argument, this study concludes that information and resources serve as bridges between mass media and homeschooling, enhancing the educational experience for homeschooling families. They enable access to educational content, enrich learning experiences, provide supplementary tools, foster global awareness, facilitate collaboration, cater for diverse learning styles, and promote media literacy skills. By staying informed and utilizing these resources effectively, homeschooling can benefit immensely from the interplay with mass media.

Curriculum Guidance

Another critical finding by this research was that mass media offers guidance to homeschooling parents on curriculum planning, teaching methodologies, and

educational philosophies. Television programs, documentaries, and online resources provide insights, lesson plans, and recommendations for effective homeschooling practices (Clark 2001). Through an oral interview with one of the respondents the following response caught our attention. “I find mass media very useful since its curriculum guidance offers me with a structured approach to homeschooling, allowing me to handle several subjects and to cover the objectives comprehensively”. In retrospect, mass media helps parents to align their educational goals with the broader educational standards and frameworks (Oral interview, 20/03/2023). The respondent added that, “by incorporating mass media resources into the curriculum, me and other homeschooling families enhance our children’s learning experiences through diverse perspectives and real-world examples.

Another respondent agreed with the preceding respondent by retorting that:

Through curriculum guidance facilitated by mass media, am able to select appropriate content and resources required for various subjects. Moreover, we as homeschooling parents are able to identify mass media materials, such as documentaries, educational videos, and interactive websites that align with the curriculum (Oral interview, 21/03/2023).

Therefore, by integrating mass media resources into specific lessons and units, homeschooling families enrich the curriculum with engaging and multimedia-based learning experiences.

In essence, through such findings showing the utility of mass media in curriculum guidance, this study confirms that, curriculum guidance is a function of mass media, and it often encourages interdisciplinary approaches to homeschooling, where multiple subjects are integrated to explore a particular topic or theme. Mass media resources play a significant role in this interdisciplinary learning by linking different subjects. For example, a historical documentary can be used to explore not only history but also language arts, cultural studies, and media literacy. Curriculum guidance facilitates the identification and integration of mass media resources for interdisciplinary learning opportunities.

These findings are in tandem with Burke, who affirmed that homeschooling allows flexibility in designing and adapting the curriculum to meet the individual needs and interests of students. Curriculum guidance provides a framework that homeschooling families can customize to suit their unique circumstances (Burke 2022). Mass media resources offer a wide range of topics and formats, allowing homeschooling parents to tailor the curriculum by incorporating materials that resonate with their children’s learning preferences and styles (Burke 2022).

Therefore, from these arguments, it can be deduced that the interplay between mass media and homeschooling enriches curriculum guidance which often includes guidelines for assessment and evaluation of student progress. Homeschooling parents can use mass media resources to create diverse assessment tasks, such as creating multimedia presentations, writing reflections on documentaries, or participating in online discussions. These assessments provide opportunities for homeschoolers to demonstrate their understanding of the curriculum and apply critical thinking skills to mass media content.

In this regard, this study concludes that curriculum guidance serves as a foundation for homeschooling and facilitates the interplay between mass media and homeschooling. It provides structure, coherence, and guidelines for content selection and integration. Curriculum guidance supports interdisciplinary learning, allows for flexibility and adaptability, and provides frameworks for assessment and evaluation. By incorporating mass media resources into the curriculum, homeschooling families can enhance the learning experience, foster engagement, and promote a well-rounded education.

Access to Diverse Perspectives

According to Arai, it's recorded that, mass media exposes homeschooling students to diverse perspectives and cultures, which can broaden their understanding of the world. Through news, documentaries, and other media outlets, students can learn about different societies, global issues, and various viewpoints, fostering critical thinking skills and cultural awareness (Arai 1999). These arguments were supported by a respondent who stated that "i like mass media because it exposes homeschooling students to a wide range of perspectives, cultures, and ideas which they may not encounter through traditional curriculum materials" (Oral Interview, 24/03/2023). Research has shown that such exposure broadens their horizons and helps them develop a more comprehensive understanding of the world. Moreover, diverse perspectives challenge students to think critically and consider multiple viewpoints (Oral Interview, 24/03/2023). Reflecting this assertion, this revealed that mass media resources, such as documentaries, news articles, and opinion pieces, provide opportunities for homeschooling students to analyze and evaluate different perspectives on various topics. This fosters critical thinking skills and encourages students to form well-informed opinions. Findings with the focus group discussions with homeschooling students confirmed that mass media introduces homeschooling students to diverse cultures, experiences, and backgrounds (Focus group discussion, 27/03/2023). By engaging with stories and narratives from different communities, students develop empathy and a deeper understanding of the complexities of the world. This exposure promotes cultural sensitivity and helps students appreciate and respect diverse perspectives.

The findings showing that mass media enriches homeschooling students learning scope by offering diverse perspectives are consistent with findings by McCarthy & Carter, who established that mass media has the potential to showcase diverse voices and narratives that are often underrepresented in traditional curriculum materials (McCarthy and Carter 2014). Therefore, by accessing a wide range of media content, homeschooling families can ensure that their educational journey is inclusive and representative of diverse identities, backgrounds, and experiences (McCarthy and Carter 2014). Further, McCarthy & Carter maintain that exposure to diverse perspectives through mass media resources stimulates meaningful discussions and debates within the homeschooling environment. Students can engage in thoughtful conversations with their parents or peers, exploring different viewpoints and challenging their own assumptions. These

dialogues enhance communication skills, promote active listening, and foster an open-minded approach to learning (McCarthy and Carter 2014).

In line with the arguments postulated by McCarthy & Carter this study affirmed that access to diverse perspectives empowers homeschooling students to actively seek out information and engage with media resources independently. They can explore a variety of sources, critically evaluate information, and form their own opinions. This sense of agency nurtures self-directed learning and equips students with the skills needed to navigate an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. Therefore, this study avers that, access to diverse perspectives through mass media resources enriches the homeschooling experience by broadening horizons, enhancing critical thinking, fostering empathy and cultural understanding, promoting inclusivity and representation, encouraging dialogue, and empowering student agency. By incorporating diverse media content into their curriculum, homeschooling families can cultivate a well-rounded education that prepares students to be global citizens.

Educational Content and Entertainment

Mass media can blend education and entertainment into edutainment, providing engaging content that captivates homeschooling students. Platforms like educational television shows, podcasts, and interactive apps offer a combination of educational material and entertainment value, making learning enjoyable and interactive (Martin and Loomis 2013). Through interviews with parents of homeschooling students, it emerged that content in mass media, such as educational television programs, documentaries, and online platforms, provide engaging and interactive learning experiences for homeschooling students (Oral interview, 28/3/2023). One parent had this to say “I like the way mass media caters for the different learning styles. These resources utilize captivating visuals, storytelling techniques, and interactive elements to make learning enjoyable and effective”. The respondent further alluded that, by incorporating educational content into their curriculum, homeschooling families can enhance student engagement and foster a love for learning (Oral interview, 28/3/2023).

The parents’ views showing the utility of mass media in edutainment were echoed by students through the focus group discussions as cited verbatim

Mass media offers a variety of mediums, including videos, podcasts, interactive websites, and educational games, which cater to different learning styles and preferences. We as Homeschooling students leverage these resources to provide multimodal learning opportunities, allowing us to learn through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic means (Focus group discussion, 30/3/2023).

This finding showing that mass media facilitates edutainment which in turn caters for visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning resonates with findings by Winn, who determined that educational content in mass media often presents real-world examples, practical applications, and case studies that help students make connections between academic concepts and their practical relevance (Winn 2002). Moreover, Winn argued that homeschooling families can utilize these resources to demonstrate

how theoretical knowledge is applied in real-life situations, enhancing students' understanding and encouraging critical thinking (Winn 2002).

Through these findings relating mass media with edutainment, this research contends that mass media resources provide additional learning materials that supplement and expand the homeschooling curriculum. They offer opportunities to explore subjects beyond traditional textbooks, introducing new topics, perspectives, and areas of interest. Homeschooling parents can incorporate educational content from mass media to enrich their curriculum, offering a broader and more comprehensive educational experience.

These findings are consistent with views by Baines that entertainment elements in mass media, such as engaging narratives, captivating visuals, and appealing characters, can spark students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning (Baines 2008). When educational content is presented in an entertaining and enjoyable manner, students are more likely to be actively engaged in the learning process. Therefore, by incorporating elements of entertainment into educational content, homeschooling families can create a positive and exciting learning environment.

These arguments by Baines were reflected by a respondent who retorted that “mass media resources encourage lifelong learning and curiosity by presenting a vast array of topics, ideas, and discoveries. They inspire students to explore beyond the confines of their curriculum and develop a love for learning that extends beyond their homeschooling experience” (Oral interview, 3/4/2023). Therefore, the study confirmed that by incorporating educational content from mass media, homeschooling families can instill a sense of curiosity and a lifelong passion for knowledge in their students. In essence, educational content and entertainment in mass media promote the interplay with homeschooling by providing engaging and interactive learning experiences, offering multimodal learning opportunities, establishing real-world connections, supplementing the curriculum, motivating students, fostering curiosity, and encouraging lifelong learning. Moreover, incorporating these resources into their teaching approach, homeschooling families can create a dynamic and enriching educational experience for their students.

Potential for Distractions

One challenge with mass media in the context of homeschooling is the potential for distractions. The vast array of entertainment options available through mass media can divert students' attention from their studies if not managed effectively. Parents need to establish clear boundaries and monitor media consumption to maintain focus on learning (Bienkowski et al. 2012). An interview with one parent revealed that, the potential for distractions in mass media requires homeschooling parents to be aware of the impact and manage them effectively (Oral interview, 3/4/2023). The parent added that; by acknowledging the potential distractions, parents can take proactive measures to create a conducive learning environment, set boundaries, and establish guidelines for media usage during homeschooling hours (Oral interview, 3/4/2023). Therefore, this study found that, the presence of distractions in mass media provides an opportunity for homeschooling parents to teach media literacy skills. By guiding students in

critically evaluating and discerning credible sources, identifying biased content, and understanding persuasive techniques, parents can empower their children to navigate the digital landscape responsibly.

Another parent observed that, mass media offers both educational and recreational content, and striking a balance between the two is crucial. According to him, “homeschooling parents can leverage the potential distractions by incorporating educational content from mass media into the curriculum while being mindful of minimizing excessive exposure to purely recreational media that may hinder learning progress” (Oral interview, 5/4/2023). Based on the preceding argument, this study therefore found that, potential distractions in mass media call for selective use of media resources. Homeschooling parents can curate and select specific educational content that aligns with their curriculum goals, focusing on high-quality resources that facilitate learning and minimize potential distractions. Therefore, by being intentional with media choices, parents can maximize the educational benefits while mitigating distractions.

Another aspect that arose from focus group discussions was that the potential distractions in mass media highlight the importance of time management and self-discipline during homeschooling. The discussions unearthed the importance of allocating dedicated time slots for educational media usage, establishing routines, and encouraging self-discipline to minimize distractions and maintain focus on learning objectives (Focus group discussion, 7/4/2023). This revelation from the discussions complemented the views given by Dyson, who established that, the potential distractions in mass media can be managed by incorporating intentional media breaks and variety into the homeschooling schedule. This approach allows students to take short, purposeful breaks to engage in recreational media or other non-screen activities, maintaining a healthy balance and preventing excessive distraction (Dyson 2001).

The potential for distractions in mass media presents challenges that homeschooling parents must navigate. Therefore, by raising awareness, teaching media literacy skills, balancing educational and recreational media, selectively using media, emphasizing time management and self-discipline, and incorporating media breaks and variety, parents can effectively manage distractions and harness the educational potential of mass media in the homeschooling environment.

Influence on Socialization

Homeschooling is sometimes be criticized for limiting social interactions, but mass media can help bridge this gap. Television programs, online communities, and social media platforms can connect homeschooling students with peers who share similar interests and educational experiences. Virtual communities can provide a sense of belonging and socialization opportunities (Cooper and Sureau 2007). Based on influence on socialization, this study established that, mass media exposes homeschooling students to a wide range of perspectives, cultures, and societal issues beyond their immediate surroundings. This exposure enhances socialization by providing students with opportunities to learn about different ways of life, traditions, and belief systems. The study further revealed that, exposure to mass media fosters

empathy, understanding, and appreciation for diverse cultures and encourages home schooling students to become more globally aware citizens (Oral interview, 6/4/2023).

These findings on mass media fostering empathy, understanding, and appreciation for diverse cultures while making students to be citizens with global awareness was echoed by a respondent who stated that “mass media content often prompts discussions and critical thinking about social, ethical, and moral issues” (Oral interview, 8/4/2023). Additionally, the respondent asserted that “homeschooling families can leverage this content to initiate thoughtful conversations, encouraging students to analyze and evaluate societal norms, values, and behaviors”. Another respondent divulged that “engaging in these discussions promotes socialization by enabling students to articulate their own viewpoints, understand others' perspectives, and develop critical thinking skills” (Oral interview, 8/4/2023). Therefore, this study determined that mass media influences socialization by shaping students' media literacy and digital citizenship skills. Homeschooling parents' guide students in navigating media content, discerning credible information, and understanding the potential impact of media on society. This fosters responsible digital behavior, empowers students to engage with media mindfully, and prepares them to participate responsibly in online communities.

Further findings from the interviews with parents revealed that mass media provides homeschooling families with access to information about social issues, current events, and global affairs (Oral interview, 9/4/2023). And that by staying informed about these topics, students can develop an understanding of societal challenges, injustices, and opportunities for positive change (Oral interview, 9/4/2023). Based on this, the study discerned that homeschooling parents can incorporate discussions, research projects, and service-learning activities related to these issues, promoting socialization and encouraging students to become active agents in addressing societal concerns. The study also found that mass media plays a role in shaping individuals' identities and self-perception. Such findings had hitherto been highlighted by Beveridge who posited that homeschooling families can utilize media resources that offer diverse and inclusive representations of various identities, cultures, and backgrounds (Beveridge 2013). Therefore, by exposing students to positive and authentic portrayals, mass media can contribute to a more inclusive and affirming socialization experience, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting empathy towards others. Similar to Beveridge's argument, this study affirmed that, indeed, mass media platforms provide opportunities for homeschooling students to engage with online communities centered on shared interests, hobbies, or educational pursuits. Participating in these communities allows students to connect with peers from different backgrounds, exchange ideas, collaborate on projects, and develop social skills in a virtual environment.

Therefore, the influence of mass media on socialization promotes the interplay with homeschooling by exposing students to diverse perspectives and cultures, fostering discussions and critical thinking, developing media literacy and digital citizenship skills, addressing social issues, influencing identity development, and facilitating engagement with online communities. Moreover, by effectively incorporating mass media into the homeschooling experience, families can enhance

socialization opportunities, broaden students' perspectives, and cultivate socially responsible individuals.

Bias and Accuracy

Mass media can present biased information, misinformation, or incomplete perspectives. As homeschooling parents, it is essential to teach children critical media literacy skills to evaluate sources, question narratives, and think independently. Parents can guide their children in discerning reliable sources of information and developing a well-rounded understanding of the world (Prins 2017). One respondent stated that “bias in mass media provides an opportunity for homeschooling students to develop critical thinking skills”. The respondent further alleged that, “by exposing students to media with various biases, homeschooling parents can guide them in analyzing and evaluating sources, identifying bias, and discerning between fact and opinion.” According to this respondent, “this cultivates a healthy skepticism and encourages students to seek multiple perspectives, enhancing their ability to make informed judgments”. These respondents’ sentiments echoed Kunzman, who determined that, the presence of bias in mass media underscores the importance of media literacy education within homeschooling (Kunzman 2012). Kunzman further noted that, by teaching students to critically evaluate sources, assess credibility, and recognize bias, parents equip them with the necessary skills to navigate the media landscape independently. Media literacy education promotes discernment and empowers students to become responsible consumers and creators of media content (Kunzman 2012).

Based on the above discussion, this study found that, bias in mass media highlights the importance of consuming a diverse range of media sources. Homeschooling families can actively seek out diverse viewpoints, perspectives, and voices to counterbalance any inherent biases present in mainstream media. This encourages students to engage with a variety of sources, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues. Moreover, a pertinent issue that emerged from this study is that the accuracy in mass media is paramount in promoting interplay with homeschooling. Therefore, parents can emphasize the importance of fact-checking and verification by cross-referencing information from multiple reliable sources. This would cultivate a habit of seeking accurate and reliable information, ensuring that students are well-informed and can discern between credible and misleading content.

Findings from the focus group discussions indicated that bias and accuracy in mass media provide homeschooling families with opportunities for meaningful discussions and debates (Focus group discussion, 10/4/2023). The discussions further revealed that, by analyzing and comparing contrasting perspectives and examining how bias and accuracy influence media coverage, students develop critical thinking, communication, and negotiation skills. Thus, engaging in these discussions promotes a deeper understanding of media influence and encourages students to form well-rounded opinions. Through the discussions, this study also found that bias and accuracy in mass media prompt homeschooling students to consider the ethical dimensions of media consumption and production. Homeschooling parents can

encourage discussions about responsible journalism, media ethics, and the potential impact of biased or inaccurate reporting on individuals and society. This fosters ethical awareness and a sense of responsibility in engaging with mass media.

However, the study ascertained that bias and accuracy in mass media promote interplay with homeschooling by fostering critical thinking skills, encouraging media literacy education, diversifying media consumption, emphasizing fact-checking and verification, stimulating discussions and debates, and raising ethical considerations. By addressing bias and accuracy within the homeschooling environment, families can empower students to navigate the media landscape effectively, critically engage with information, and become discerning consumers of mass media.

Parental Involvement and Media Monitoring

Homeschooling parents often have more control over their children's media consumption, allowing them to curate content that aligns with their educational goals and values. They can actively participate in media consumption by watching or exploring content with their children, providing opportunities for discussion and critical analysis (McQuiggan et al. 2015). The study through the focus group discussion discerned that parental involvement in homeschooling allows parents to actively engage with their children's media consumption. Moreover, the discussions disclosed that by discussing media content, asking questions, and offering guidance, parents can help students navigate the complexities of mass media, critically analyze information, and develop media literacy skills (Focus group discussion, 9/4/2023). This involvement fosters a collaborative learning environment where parents and children can explore media together. Further, the focus group discussions divulged that, parental involvement includes setting boundaries and rules for media usage within the homeschooling environment (Focus group discussion, 9/4/2023). Based on this, this study highlighted that, parents can establish guidelines that align with their educational goals and values, ensuring that media consumption remains balanced and purposeful. By monitoring and regulating media access, parents can create a healthy media environment that supports learning and minimizes potential negative influences.

The sentiments above were supplemented by interview findings. One participant observed that parental involvement enables the filtering and curating of media content based on educational needs and values (Oral interview, 10/4/2023). According to this participant, “homeschooling parents can select appropriate media resources that align with the curriculum and promote educational objectives. By curating media content, parents can ensure that students have access to high-quality, age-appropriate, and relevant materials that enhance their learning experience” (Oral interview, 10/4/2023). The preceding argument supports arguments by Hutchison, who posited in his works that;

Parental involvement provides opportunities for teaching media literacy skills within the homeschooling context. Parents can educate their children about media biases, fact-checking techniques, and critical analysis of media content. This equips students

with the tools to navigate mass media independently, evaluate information critically, and make informed decisions (Hutchison et al. 2020).

In this regard this study deduced that parental involvement promotes open communication between parents and children regarding media consumption. By creating a safe and non-judgmental space for dialogue, parents encourage children to share their thoughts, questions, and concerns about media content. This communication allows for deeper understanding, addressing any potential misconceptions, and reinforcing the values and principles upheld within the homeschooling environment. Moreover, this study found that, parental involvement encompasses teaching responsible digital citizenship skills. Homeschooling parents can guide their children in understanding the ethical and responsible use of media, promoting respectful online behavior, and protecting their privacy and safety. This involvement ensures that students develop a positive and responsible digital presence, both as consumers and creators of media content.

Therefore, this study ascertained that, parental involvement and media monitoring promotes interplay between mass media and homeschooling by actively engaging with students, setting boundaries and rules, filtering and curating media content, teaching media literacy skills, fostering open communication, and promoting responsible digital citizenship. By actively participating in their children's media experiences, homeschooling parents can create a supportive learning environment that encourages critical thinking, enhances media literacy, and reinforces the educational goals of homeschooling. Additionally, mass media can serve as a valuable tool for homeschooling parents, offering educational resources, diverse perspectives, and socialization opportunities. However, parents must strike a balance between utilizing media for educational purposes and managing potential distractions or negative influences. Active parental involvement and teaching critical media literacy skills are crucial in navigating the interplay between mass media and homeschooling (Dahlquist et al. 2006).

Conclusion

This study concludes that, the interplay between mass media and homeschooling is a complex and multifaceted relationship that has evolved over time. While both mass media and homeschooling have their unique advantages and drawbacks, their interactions can significantly impact the perception, accessibility, and effectiveness of homeschooling as an alternative form of education. Mass media, including television, movies, and news outlets, have the power to shape public perception and opinions about homeschooling. Positive portrayals can shed light on the benefits of homeschooling, such as personalized learning and flexibility (Dahlquist et al. 2006). Conversely, negative portrayals might perpetuate misconceptions or concerns about socialization and academic standards, leading to misunderstandings among the general public. Mass media can serve as a valuable source of information for homeschooling families. Through documentaries, websites, and online platforms, parents can access resources, curriculum ideas, and connect with other

homeschooling families. However, the abundance of information can also lead to confusion and overwhelm, especially for parents new to homeschooling. Mass media's advancement, particularly the internet and online platforms, has opened up new opportunities for homeschooling. Virtual classrooms, educational apps, and online communities facilitate communication and access to educational content (Collins and Halverson 2018). However, excessive screen time and the potential for misinformation are challenges that must be navigated. Mass media can contribute to the visibility and recognition of homeschooling as a legitimate educational option. Documentaries, news features, and interviews with successful homeschoolers can inspire others to explore homeschooling as a viable choice (Anthony and Burroughs 2012). On the other hand, biased reporting or sensationalized stories can create unnecessary scrutiny and obstacles for homeschooling families. Mass media plays a role in shaping social norms and values, influencing how homeschooling is perceived in society. Concerns about homeschoolers' socialization may arise from media portrayals, while cultural influences can impact families' decision to homeschool, depending on prevailing educational attitudes and values. Finally, the interplay between mass media and homeschooling can significantly impact how homeschooling is understood, practiced, and received in society. While media can serve as a valuable resource and advocate for homeschooling, it can also perpetuate misconceptions and challenges. It is essential for both media consumers and producers to approach homeschooling with an open mind, understanding the diversity of homeschooling approaches and the educational possibilities it can offer. Additionally, responsible reporting and accurate portrayals of homeschooling can help foster a more informed and supportive environment for homeschooling families.

References

- Anthony KV, Burroughs S (2012) Day to Day Operations of Home School Families: Selecting from a Menu of Educational Choices to Meet Students' Individual Instructional Needs. *International Education Studies* 5(1): 3–17.
- Arai AB (1999) Homeschooling and the redefinition of citizenship. *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 7: 27–27.
- Baines L (2008) *A Teacher's guide to multisensory learning: Improving literacy by engaging the senses*. ASCD.
- Bartholet E (2020) Homeschooling: Parent rights absolutism vs. child rights to education & protection. *Ariz. L. Rev.* 62.
- Beveridge S (2013) *Children, families and schools: Developing partnerships for inclusive education*. Routledge.
- Bienkowski M, Feng M, Means B (2012) *Enhancing Teaching and Learning through Educational Data Mining and Learning Analytics: An Issue Brief*. Office of Educational Technology, US Department of Education.
- Braun V, Clarke V (2021) Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based qualitative analytic approaches. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 21(1): 37–47.

- Burke KM (2022) How do homeschoolers approach creative arts learning and how can they be supported? Developing a flexible framework for homeschool contexts. *British Educational Research Journal* 48(5): 974–995.
- Clark T (2001) *Virtual Schools: Trends and Issues. A Study of Virtual Schools in the United States*. Available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED462923>.
- Collins A, Halverson R (2018) *Rethinking education in the age of technology: The digital revolution and schooling in America*. Teachers College Press.
- Cooper BS, Sureau J (2007) The politics of homeschooling: New developments, new challenges. *Educational Policy* 21(1): 110–131.
- Dahlquist KL, York-Barr J, Hendel DD (2006) The choice to homeschool: Home educator perspectives and school district options. *Journal of School Leadership* 16(4): 354–385.
- Dyson LL (2001) Home-school communication and expectations of recent Chinese immigrants. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 455–476.
- Guest G, Namey E, McKenna K (2017) How many focus groups are enough? Building an evidence base for nonprobability sample sizes. *Field Methods* 29(1): 3–22.
- Hagaman AK, Wutich A (2017) How many interviews are enough to identify metathemes in multisited and cross-cultural research? Another perspective on Guest, Bunce, and Johnson's (2006) landmark study. *Field Methods* 29(1): 23–41.
- Hutchison K, Paatsch L, Cloonan A (2020) Reshaping home–school connections in the digital age: Challenges for teachers and parents. *E-learning and Digital Media* 17(2): 167–182.
- Kontio J, Lehtola L, Bragge J (2004) August. Using the focus group method in software engineering: obtaining practitioner and user experiences. In *Proceedings. 2004 International Symposium on Empirical Software Engineering, 2004. ISESE'04*, 271–280. IEEE.
- Koopman O (2015) Phenomenology as a potential methodology for subjective knowing in science education research. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* 15(1).
- Kunzman R (2012) Education, schooling, and children's rights: The complexity of homeschooling. *Educational Theory* 62(1): 75–89.
- Martin DJ, Loomis KS (2013) *Building teachers: A constructivist approach to introducing education*. Wadsworth Publishing.
- McCarthy M, Carter, R (2014) *Language as discourse: Perspectives for language teaching*. Routledge.
- McQuiggan S, McQuiggan J, Sabourin J, Kosturko L (2015) *Mobile learning: A handbook for developers, educators, and learners*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Prins E (2017) Digital storytelling in adult education and family literacy: A case study from rural Ireland. *Learning, Media and Technology* 42(3): 308–323.
- Raffaele LM, Knoff HM (1999) Improving home-school collaboration with disadvantaged families: Organizational principles, perspectives, and approaches. *School Psychology Review* 28(3): 448–466.
- Rosenthal M (2016) Qualitative research methods: Why, when, and how to conduct interviews and focus groups in pharmacy research. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning* 8(4): 509–516.
- Skelton J (1994) Analysis of the structure of original research papers: an aid to writing original papers for publication. *British Journal of General Practice* 44(387): 455–459.
- Winn W (2002) Research into practice: Current trends in educational technology research: The study of learning environments. *Educational Psychology Review* 14: 331–351.