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In Their Own Words: A Qualitative Exploration of Karachi's Home-schooling Co-ops

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ABSTRACT

Abstract—This qualitative phenomenological case study explores the structure, challenges, and perceived benefits of homeschooling cooperatives usually called co-ops in Karachi, Pakistan, within a broader comparative context of global homeschooling trends. While homeschooling has grown into a mainstream educational alternative in countries like the United States, it remains relatively unregulated and emerging in Pakistan. Drawing on rich interview data from homeschooling parents, this study investigates their purpose, their organization and the challenges that come with them. The findings reveal that co-ops in Karachi function as grassroots, parent-led initiatives offering academic enrichment, peer interaction, and emotional support. These co-ops vary in form ranging from weekly group activities to online instruction and seasonal workshops and are sustained through voluntary contributions and shared pedagogical values. This study examined the lived experiences of thirteen homeschooling parents in Karachi, Pakistan, using purposive and snowball sampling, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and NVivo thematic analysis to explore the functioning of homeschooling co-ops. Three primary themes emerged: a) the management models of Co-ops b) challenges faced by the co-ops and c) the broader purposes co-ops serve in fulfilling religious, academic, and socio-emotional goals. This research contributes to a limited but growing body of literature on homeschooling in non-Western contexts. By capturing the lived experiences of Pakistani home-schoolers in Karachi, it provides critical insight for policymakers, educators, and scholars interested in alternative education models. The study advocates for flexible policy support, enhanced digital connectivity, and collaborative resource-sharing frameworks to empower homeschooling communities while preserving their core values of independence and personalization.

Keywords: Home-schooling Co-ops, Home-schooling Pakistan, Home-schooling motives and challenges

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INTRODUCTION

Homeschooling has transitioned from an alternative to mainstream education in many countries, including the United States, South Korea, Australia, and the UK (Sabol, 2018). Originally rooted in the hippie movements of the 1960s-70s, homeschooling evolved as both a secular educational choice and a means for religious parents to instill faith-based learning (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2009; Olsen, 2008; Ray, 2002). In the U.S., educational reformists like Raymond Moore and John Holt encouraged parents to regain control over education, leading to the legalization and institutional support for homeschooling (Gatto, 2000; Ray, 2009). By 2021, nearly 4-5 million K-12 students were homeschooled in the U.S., with enrollment growing between 2-8% annually (Ray, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this trend, as parents sought alternative education models amid prolonged school closures (Ingraham, 2022). Unlike temporary online schooling directed by institutions, homeschooling is parent-led and offers autonomy in curriculum design (Valiente et al., 2022). Today, homeschooling in the U.S. accommodates both ideologues, who seek to preserve religious and moral values, and pedagogues, who prioritize child-centered learning and academic flexibility (Ray, 2000; Valiente et al., 2022).

In Pakistan, homeschooling remains a novel and largely an unregulated concept (Bilal, 2017). While the rising costs of private education and COVID-19 closures have driven more parents toward homeschooling (Gardezi, 2020), there is no formal policy, framework, or structured support. Despite the absence of published research, homeschooling communities are emerging through social media networks, workshops, and informal peer support. However, the lack of a standardized curriculum and assessment structure poses challenges for parents navigating this mode of education (Hassan, 2020).

Homeschooling in Pakistan remains unrecognized and unstructured**,** lacking a formal framework, curriculum, or policy support (Bilal, 2017; Hassan, 2020). Despite its global prevalence, little research has explored how parents in Pakistan manage home-schooling and what support is provided to them. (Gardezi, 2020), particularly whether they align with ideologues, prioritizing religious and moral values, or pedagogues, emphasizing academic flexibility and child-led learning. Additionally, homeschooling presents unique challenges for parents, requiring long-term commitment and mental resilience, often without institutional support (Calear et al., 2022).

The significant role of Home-schooling Co-ops

Home-schooling cooperatives, generally referred as home-schooling Co-ops is an essential hub of collaboration where home-schooling families join together to share instructional responsibilities, home-schooling resources that worked for them and loads of emotional support resulting from the very demanding and committing role of home-schooling. According to Marby (2023) the co-ops bring a great benefit in expanding the educational opportunities in a way that enables the home-schooling parents to pool expertise, outsource and offer diverse subject areas that might be difficult for them to manage individually. Those might include foreign languages, specific historical education, science labs or fields of arts and religion (Marby 2023). The other benefit

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of these home-schooling Co-ops is how they play the role of preparatory stations for many to enter higher education institutes and track academic progress gradually (Ray, 2017).

One of the most frequently cited concerns about homeschooling is limited peer interaction and the potential lack of social development opportunities (Medlin, 2013; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). One of the major pros of home-schooling co-ops is that they completely counteract with this notion and provide kids with immense socialization opportunities that too across different age groups, these co-ops ensure developing interaction, developing cooperation, empathy and leadership through structured and unstructured group settings (Medlin, 2013). One major perk of these co-ops is their nature of interactions which are based on real-world dynamics much more closely than the contemporary classroom settings, enhancing children's cognitive built and adaptability.

Reis (2011), rightly says that home-schooling comes with a lot of cognitive labor which can be really isolating for so many parents. But being part of a home-schooling co-op eases off a lot of burden from parents, as it brings about many ways to promote mutual learning, connection and emotional support for parents. Allowing them complete autonomy over the values and educational philosophy they want to instill in their kids, while still being benefitted from the group instruction, socialization and accountability. Thus, children involved in a Co-op settings gain enhanced critical thinking, cognitive and collaborative skills through interactive, across various ages student-led learning experiences (Van pelt, 2015). As overall, the home-schooling co-ops are usually an effective and balanced blend of flexibility and structure, empowering both the home-schooling parents and children with support, resources and customized educational experiences.

In short, home-schooling co-ops serve as vital ecosystems that blend flexibility with structured group support. They offer academic enrichment, peer socialization, emotional grounding for both home-schooled children and parents, and skill-building through collaboration. As homeschooling continues to rise globally, co-ops stand out as a sustainable and empowering model for community-based learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper was to explore the functioning, challenges and objectives of home-schooling Co-ops in the Pakistani home-schooling context. As homeschooling gains traction in urban centers like Karachi and Lahore, co-ops have emerged as collaborative platforms where families share educational responsibilities, learning resources, and pedagogical support (Fatima, Kaukab, & Sheikh, 2023). These cooperatives often address gaps in traditional schooling by providing customized learning experiences, fostering peer interaction, and promoting a sense of shared community (Mabry, 2023). In short, the aim of this paper is to fill the research gap by looking into the lived experiences of home-schooling parents with reference to Co-ops in Karachi, contributing to a deeper understanding of grassroots home-school learning innovations in Pakistan. Understanding the dynamics of these co-ops is essential for an informed educational discourse, developing the support home-schooling families need, the study can be a guiding line for the Pakistani education policy makers and educators

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in the field of alternative learning models.

Research questions

1. What purposes are achieved through home-schooling Co-ops in the Pakistani home-school setting?
2. How do home-schooling Co-ops function in Pakistani home-school setting?
3. What are the issues and challenges associated to home-schooling Co-ops in Pakistan?

Home-schooling in Pakistan

The concept of home-schooling is fairly niche concept in Pakistan, but it is rapidly gaining momentum in the big metropolitan cities such as the capital, Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore. Seems like home-schooling parents are finding this approach doable in terms of integrating their personal beliefs and educational philosophies with cultural and religious values (Atiq, et al., 2025).

The concept of home-schooling in Pakistan emerged in the midst of parents facing numerous challenges, their extreme concerns over quality of education, accessibility and cultural relevance. As some of the research from Pakistan talks about how parents opt for home-schooling following their dissatisfaction with contemporary schooling methods, overcrowded classrooms and the perceived lack of ethical and moral instruction (Fatima, Kaukab, & Sheikh, 2023). Many parents feel that this educational approach allows a lot of flexibility in terms of a personalized curriculum that is in line with the family values and children's individual learning.

The Covid-19 pandemic also gave a chance to realize for parents how home-schooling serves as a great alternative educational model. As soon schools closed, much families shifted to home-based learning, gaining hands-on experience with its benefits and challenges. This big shift has also prompted talks and discussions among researchers, educators and policymakers about integrating home-schooling into the broader educational framework of Pakistan (Afreen et al., 2025).

A recent qualitative study by Afreen, Aftab, and Tanvir (2025) indicated that home-schooling parents from Pakistan mostly opt for home-schooling and alternative educational models to ensure instilling religious and cultural values. But the absences of a formal legal framework for home-schooling in Pakistan do pose challenges in terms of difficulties with the curriculum, standardization and access to higher education institutions. Despite all these hurdles and challenges the home-schooling community in Pakistan has been rapidly growing , their major support is coming from the online resources, home-schooling co-ops acting as support networks that help in outsourcing guidance and curriculum materials (Fatima, Kaukab, & Sheikh, 2023).

Thus there are limited number of studies on home-schooling in Pakistan but some of the studies from Fatima et al (2023) and Qureshi and Ali (2022) indicate that home-schooled children in Pakistan are often the ones exhibiting stronger performance academically and exhibit a well-rounded personality. Parents reported that home-schooling is way to foster critical thinking, creativity and moral development, some of the attributes that they find lack in the contemporary traditional schooling system

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(Fatima et al., 2023). Along with these perks, parents do report challenges such as social isolation if not taken care of, also the exhaustive need for parental commitment and overall societal skepticism which still persists.

Home-schooling Co-ops in Pakistan

Home-schooling co-ops in Pakistan have particularly instrumental in addressing some of the challenges that are associated with home-based and alternative education in Pakistan. According to Mabry, (2023) these co-ops are collaborative groups where families come together to share resources, expertise, and responsibilities, thereby enriching the educational experience for their children. If we look at co-ops functioning in Pakistan, they are being operated informally, with home-schooling parent outsourcing joint classes, field trips and co-curricular activities that may be not possible at an individual level (Fatima et al., 2023). Participating in home-schooling co-ops not only enhances and diversifies the learning experience but also weighs down some burden that is being shared by the home-schooling parents at individual levels (Fatima et al., 2023)..

The growth of digital platforms has further facilitated the management of homeschooling co-ops in Pakistan. Online forums and social media groups enable families to connect, share resources, and coordinate activities more efficiently. This digital connectivity has been particularly beneficial in urban areas, where homeschooling communities are more prevalent (Afreen et al., 2025).

Mabry, (2023) says that managing these co-ops requires a lot of communication, clear objectives and a shared mindset and commitment among the home-schooling families that are participating. Some of the challenges with managing home-schooling co-ops are coordinating schedules, managing group dynamics and aligning the educational and personal philosophies of the group members. However, successful co-ops often establish structured frameworks, including designated roles and responsibilities, to ensure smooth operation (Mabry, 2023). Moreover the growth of digital platforms have further facilitated the management of home-schooling co-ops (Afreen et al., 2025). The home-schooling families connect though social media and online forums, they share their resources and coordinated more effectively (Afreen et al., 2025).

Home-schooling Co-ops, challenges in Pakistan

While reviewing the literature, there wasn't much information on how Co-ops are functioning in Pakistan, but I could fetch out some information from the recent study by Afreen, (2025) which says that one of the significant issues is lack of formal legal recognition of home-schooling which leads to the uncertainties regarding curriculum standards and assessment methods (Afreen et al., 2025). This ambiguity may hinder the participation of some families in co-ops due to the concerns of validity of their children's education. Resource constraints are another common challenge. Co-ops often rely on the voluntary contributions of parents, which can limit the range of subjects and activities offered. Additionally, coordinating schedules among families with diverse commitments can be difficult, potentially leading to inconsistencies in the educational experience (Mabry, 2023). The other issue that could be of concern with home-schooling co-ops is the difference in educational philosophies and teaching

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methodology, which can sometimes create conflict with in the co-ops. As it requires maintaining consistent teaching standards, effective communication and mutual understanding among members. Without clear guidelines and conflict-resolution mechanisms, these differences can hinder the co-op's functionality (Fatima et al., 2023). Addressing these challenges necessitates the development of structured frameworks, access to resources, and potential policy support to legitimize and facilitate the operation of homeschooling co-ops in Pakistan.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study was qualitative in nature, where the focus was to explore the in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of the participants. The thing about qualitative research is that it emphasizes the exploration of the social phenomenon in the most natural setting (Grossoehme, 2014; Yin, 2016). The study utilized a phenomenological case study framework, examining the functioning of home-schooling co-ops specifically in Karachi- Pakistan. Phenomenology in research explores social and psychological phenomenon, that too with the lens of those who have actually experienced it, in an aim to actually understand the meaning behind the lived experiences (Groenewald, 2004; Neubauer et al., 2019).The aim was also to capture the real life human experiences within the context, which was done through merging case study methodology with phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Merriam, 2009).

Research Tools

Data collection involved semi-structured Phenomenological interviews. Phenomenological interviews are a **subjective yet detailed** verbal method designed to produce rich, **first-person narratives** from participants, particularly in healthcare and educational research (Tanwir, Moideen, & Habib, 2021). Bouzioti (2023) argues in his paper that these interviews aim to explore **lived experiences** through **open-ended, semi-structured questions**, allowing participants to describe their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions without constraints (Bouzioti, 2023). Researchers defend phenomenological interviews as **equally valid and reliable** as quantitative methods, emphasizing their ability to generate deep insights into human experience (Høffding, Martiny, & Roepstorff, 2021). Grounded in phenomenological concepts like **temporality, corporeality, and intersubjectivity**, these interviews help researchers understand human experiences **as they are actually lived** (Sholokhova, Bizzari, & Fuchs, 2022). More broadly, phenomenological research offers a **flexible framework** that enables scholars to analyze complex social phenomena and the nuanced dimensions of human interaction (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022).Some studies, from last ten years suggest Phenomenological interviews allowed for probing and clarification, enabling the researcher to adapt questions based on participants' unique experiences (Grossoehme, 2014; Neubauer et al., 2019).The need for phenomenological interviews for this study was due to the fact that rich and deep insights were required for every case (parent), semi structure phenomenological interviews were the best to be utilized (Tanwir, Moideen, & Habib, 2021)..

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Sample

The study in total involved thirteen home-schooling parents from Karachi- Pakistan. Purposive sampling was used to select information-rich cases, followed by snowball sampling to access hard-to-reach populations (Patton, 2014; Naderifar et al., 2017). Participants met the following criteria:

- Home-schooling parents of primary and elementary-level home-schooling children
- Children age bracket : 3 years to 9 years
- Home-schooling parents in Karachi –Pakistan

Study design and procedure

Data collection began with the development and validation of interview guides by three experts. Each participant underwent one semi-structured interview sessions (80–120 minutes each), which were recorded and transcribed with permission. Field notes and memos were maintained throughout to document reflections and insights (Given, 2008; Emerson et al., 2011). To maintain the anonymity of the participant, each participant was given pseudonym PK-1 to PK-13.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using N-Vivo software. Interview transcripts were coded, with similar codes grouped into categories and themes. This methodology ensured a thorough exploration of the homeschooling Co-op phenomenon, capturing the lived experiences of participants and offering valuable insights into their realities.

Results

The findings of the study indicated there are multiple home-schooling Co-ops running in Karachi, some regular and some are irregular like once a month setup and some are ones that are functioning on weekly basis. There is one running for more than 5 years, run by home-schooling mother of nine home-schooled children and one of the first home-schooling mother in Karachi and religion teacher by profession. The Co-op is organized weekly, and every time books are read and an arts and crafts activity engages the kids, there is also show and tell, home-schooling mothers are welcome to bring snacks which everyone enjoys together, mothers get to know each other and children get to socialize. Other type is like sports days in summers for home-schooled children, all of this is organized by home-schooling mother who volunteers to organize and execute. And occasional pottery classes for home-schooling children by home-schooling mother who is a medical doctor by profession. Other kinds are online co-ops where home-schooling parents are volunteering to teach the subject they are expert in to a group of home-schooled children, giving an opportunity to the home-schooling parents to outsource teaching and learning when needed. The other type of Co-ops are Lego sessions where one home-schooling mother, who is a data scientist by profession invites a group of home-schooling children for a span of four weeks, one day per week and teach children with different tips and tricks to build stuff from Lego blocks. There are many running privately and are not very much accessible. But Co-ops are being held and home-schooled children are getting chance to socialize, learn, and engage and the home-schooling parents who are usually mothers are getting

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guidance and support from each other. The results of the study indicated three major themes 1) Purpose achieved through Co-ops 2) Management of home-schooling co-ops and 3) Issues and challenges with home-schooling Co-ops.

Purpose Achieved Through Co-ops

It is to be noted that among the participants of the study, majority of the parents that home-school their children are either regular members or participate in some kind of co-ops in Karachi. Many participants described homeschooling co-ops not just as educational alliances, but as value-driven communities. These groups fulfill deeper goals such as nurturing religious and moral development, strengthening family bonds, and supporting child-led learning and a sense of belonging for home-schooled children. For instance, PK-5 wanted family bonding as one of the motives for home-schooling her children, but joining co-ops helped her children make friends and socialize, she said ,

"We wanted strong bonding with family, friends and our roots all together" .

Peer influence is real, be it in contemporary schooling scenario or home-schooling. The difference is, in a home-schooling scenario the parents get to choose who their child's friend becomes and who are they influenced from. The meet ups for the co-ops are most of the times monitored by the parents and they exactly know who their child is interacting with and what influence are they bringing home with them. For instance, PK-13 in this regard said,

"*She started wearing hijab because her home-schooling friends do."*

Such influences indicates that peer values within the co-op can reinforce desired social behaviors.

One of the major challenge and critique home-schooling parents face is lack of socialization and isolation of their children in a home-schooling environment. While interviewing a home-schooling mother,PK-9, with regular attendance to the local Co-ops in her community she seemed very content with how her daughter was growing up to be a very confident and socialized individual, as someone with normal socialization a child going to a contemporary school would be. She said, "*Ayesha is very social and confident*." indicating that co-ops can foster socio-emotional growth even without formal schooling environments. The role of co-ops in enabling academic independence also stood out. The study found that co-ops played a key role in promoting academic independence among children. By participating in group activities, presentations, and peer discussions, students began taking responsibility for their own learning. As one parent shared,

"My elder son is completely independent—he studies, makes questions, and builds websites" (PK-13).

Exposure to different teaching styles and observing older peers also encouraged children to manage their studies more independently. Co-ops created an environment where motivation shifted from parent-led to self-led learning. "*We dramatize and tell stories at home." (PK-12).* Home-schooling co-ops serve not only academic aims but also personal, social, and spiritual objectives for Pakistani families

Management of home-schooling co-ops

This study found that homeschooling co-ops in Karachi operate through a community-led, decentralized structure anchored in voluntary participation and shared

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responsibility. Rather than relying on formal hierarchies or institutional frameworks, co-ops are sustained by parents who contribute based on their individual strengths, availability, and areas of expertise. The organization of these co-ops reflects a grassroots model of collaboration, where tasks such as teaching, coordination, and logistics are informally divided among participating families.

Parents typically self-select roles, those skilled in specific subjects or crafts volunteer to lead relevant sessions, while others manage planning, communication, or hosting duties. One participant shared,

"*We indulge in different activities like book clubs, homeschooling meetup*" (PK-5). Reflecting how families organize regular educational gatherings. Another noted,

"We go to the park… sometimes I take them, sometimes their father does" (PK-6).

The quotes above are demonstrating flexible role-sharing within families to sustain participation.

The management of co-ops also includes planning hands-on projects and group activities, often led by parents with subject-matter knowledge. As one parent explained, *"We made 3D projects and did experiments in the science co-op"* (PK-13).

This highlighted the active role families play in designing and delivering content. While leadership rotates informally, the success of these co-ops depends heavily on consistent communication, mutual trust, and a collective sense of purpose.

In the absence of centralized control, these co-ops are self-organizing, adaptive, and shaped by the evolving needs of the families involved. This form of management allows for both flexibility and continuity, enabling home-schooling families in Karachi to create structured yet personalized learning environments within a communal framework.

Issues Faced in Managing Co-ops

Despite the collaborative spirit and community-driven strengths of homeschooling co-ops in Pakistan, their management presents a range of persistent challenges. One of the most frequently reported concerns is the lack of consistency in participation and scheduling, which can disrupt both learning continuity and group cohesion. As one parent explained, *"We do not follow a strict routine… gaps of 1–1.5 months"* (PK-9). Such irregularities often arise due to varying family commitments, illness, or logistical difficulties, making it difficult to sustain momentum and shared planning.

Another significant obstacle is limited access to educational resources. Parents frequently struggle to find suitable teaching materials or curricular tools, which adds to the mental and emotional burden of managing co-op sessions. One mother remarked, *"Lack of resources is a major issue; sometimes it gets overwhelming what to do…"* (PK-13), while another added, *"Sometimes you don't get the exact books…"* (PK-13), underscoring the ongoing struggle for high-quality, affordable, and contextually appropriate content.

Social and familial pressures also impact the smooth functioning of co-ops. In some cases, extended family members disapprove of homeschooling altogether, creating emotional stress that spills into co-op engagement. One participant shared,

"My mother-in-law gave me a very tough time in order to home-school my children" (PK-14).

This statement is highlighting how deeply personal dynamics can affect collective

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educational efforts.

Additionally, differences in pedagogical philosophy or expectations among co-op members can lead to tension. As inferred from PK-6's reflections, disagreements over teaching styles or discipline approaches can challenge group unity and the effectiveness of collaborative teaching.

Together, these challenges reflect the fragile balance required to sustain co-ops, and point to the need for clear communication, shared educational values, structured planning, and increased access to resources to ensure long-term viability in the Pakistani homeschooling context.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that homeschooling co-ops in Karachi function as dynamic, parent-led initiatives that serve multiple educational, social, and spiritual purposes for both the home-schooled children and parents. These co-ops range from informal, once-a-month gatherings to well-structured weekly sessions that have run consistently for several years. Their diversity reflects both the creativity and adaptability of the home-schooling community in Pakistan, as well as the varying capacities and commitments of home-schooling families.

The major purpose achieved through co-ops indicated in this study is holistic in nature, they do not only act as mere platforms for academically supplementing home-schooling children, but aid them in socialization, developing academic independence and likeminded spiritual growth. One of the additional benefits parents talked about for socialization in co-ops is the safety is socialization, as these are monitored spaces where peer influence is carefully curated. Home-schooling parents consider this form of intentional peer modelling as one of the highest gains of joining local home-schooling co-ops. Some parents also talked about how significantly home-schooling co-ops impacted positively in the socio-emotional growth of their children during the home-schooling process. Complementing these aspects, home-schooling co-ops in Karachi are also enabling home-schooling mothers to connect, share resources and progresses, spend quality time together, a chance to reduce the mental load that accompanies the cognitively intensive task of homeschooling their children.

Secondly, the management of home-schooling co-ops in Karachi is solely driven by home-schooling mothers who volunteer to do so. These home-schooling mothers are self-driven and motivated to serve as per the area of their interest and expertise, as it is a win-win situation for them when one home-schooling mother is an expert in one field and the other is experts in some other area, they outsource each other's expertise. Overall the co-ops are operating in a decentralized and community driven form. This informal yet organized system ensures flexibility while fostering a sense of shared ownership. As the teaching responsibilities and organizational tasks are rotated within families, making the system both sustainable and cooperative. These findings align with global literature that highlights the parent-led, adaptive nature of homeschooling co-ops (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013).

However, consistent with previous research on the limitations of homeschooling networks (Qureshi & Ali, 2022), one of the challenges home-schooling co-ops pose is

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the inconsistency and irregular attendance. Which often interrupts the flow of learning or weakens the group cohesion. Home-schooling mothers who volunteer to allow their space in co-ops often feel exhaustion by irregular attendance. The other thing could be the disagreements over teaching styles leading to interpersonal tension, indicating the need for clearer communication and shared pedagogical understanding. The other challenge that comes along with home-schooling co-ops is the diverse routine and schedules of every home-schooling family, due to which many are not able to show up at all.

The study illustrates that while homeschooling co-ops in Karachi are grassroots, flexible, and deeply valued by participants, they are not without structural and interpersonal challenges. Their success hinges on mutual trust, resource-sharing, and the emotional labor of parents mostly mothers who lead these initiatives. These findings emphasize the need for light-touch policy support and resource facilitation to sustain co-ops without compromising their autonomy and parent-led ethos. As such, home-schooling co-ops in Karachi represent a compelling model of community-based, culturally rooted education that warrants further research and thoughtful support.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to explore the functioning, challenges, and perceived outcomes of homeschooling co-operatives in Karachi, Pakistan. Through rich, narrative insights provided by thirteen homeschooling parents, the study uncovered that homeschooling co-ops, though varied in structure and frequency, play a vital role in enhancing the home-schooling experience. These parent-led groups facilitate collaborative teaching, resource sharing, socialization for children, and emotional support for parents. Whether held weekly, monthly, or as seasonal sessions, the co-ops represent a flexible response to the challenges of individualized instruction, while reinforcing parental agency in education.

The data highlighted three core themes, how co-ops are managed, the issues they encounter, and the purposes they serve. Co-ops are primarily sustained through parental volunteerism, mutual trust, and shared pedagogical values. However, participants also reported difficulties including inconsistent attendance, lack of standardized resources, and occasional interpersonal conflicts among co-op members. Despite these limitations, the perceived benefits outweighed the drawbacks for most families. Co-ops were described as not only academic facilitators, but also as spaces that nurtured socio-emotional development, moral formation, and community belonging.

These findings contribute to the growing body of qualitative literature on home-schooling in non-Western contexts. The study underscores the importance of acknowledging culturally grounded motivations behind homeschooling and the role co-ops play in actualizing those goals. It also highlights the need for future research into ways co-ops could be better supported—through digital networks, informal policy recognition, or localized resource hubs—without compromising their core values of flexibility and autonomy.

In conclusion, homeschooling co-ops in Karachi function as dynamic, grassroots responses to educational needs that are both academic and cultural. Their continued evolution offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers aiming

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to support alternative education models in Pakistan and similar socio-cultural settings.

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