

Parents and Home-schooling during the Covid-19 Confinement in Morocco

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Abstract

The issue of digital technology emerged during the first Covid-19 confinement in March 2020, highlighting the importance of digital inclusion, especially in the context of home-schooling. How did parents experience home-schooling during the pandemic-imposed confinement? In this article, we will present the results of a survey on parental experiences during the Covid-19 confinement in Morocco, specifically focusing on the dimension of home-schooling. We will examine the parents' sense of competence in assisting their children with home-schooling and their satisfaction with the distance-learning measures implemented by schools.

Keywords: home-schooling, Covid-19 confinement, digital-learning measures, parental satisfaction, parental sense of competence.

Abstract

Emerso nel marzo 2020 durante il primo confinamento da Covid-19, il tema delle tecnologie digitali ha evidenziato l'importanza dell'inclusione digitale, specie nell'ambito dell'istruzione parentale. Come hanno vissuto i genitori l'istruzione parentale durante il confinamento imposto dalla pandemia? In questo articolo presentiamo i risultati di un'indagine sull'esperienza di confinamento nel contesto dell'emergenza Covid-19 in Marocco con un focus sulla dimensione dell'istruzione parentale. In dettaglio, particolare attenzione è prestata al senso di competenza genitoriale nell'assistere i figli nell'istruzione parentale e alla soddisfazione dei genitori rispetto alle misure di apprendimento a distanza attuate dalla scuola.

Parole chiave: istruzione parentale, confinamento da Covid-19, misure di apprendimento digitale, soddisfazione dei genitori, senso di competenza genitoriale.

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1. *Introduction*

Home-schooling, imposed by the March 2020 confinement, forced educational institutions to implement distance-learning measures (DLM) to which teachers, pupils, and parents had to adapt quickly. Parents had then to juggle teleworking, family life, and home-schooling while constantly cohabitating with other household members for several weeks or months. They had to adapt to new routines, reorganise their daily lives, and navigate changes in family dynamics without the support structures they previously relied on (Andreu *et al.*, 2022; Carignan *et al.*, 2020; Spinelli *et al.*, 2020). Concerning home-schooling, parents had to assist their children by acting as mediators between teachers and pupils, facilitating the transmission of school knowledge. Their role involved not only supervising homework as usual, but also actively engaging their children in school activities (Delès, 2021a). Parents not only dedicated more time to monitoring schoolwork, but also ventured into an unfamiliar territory: pedagogy (Delès, 2021b). The collaboration between schools and families took on new significance in the home-schooling situation, where parents became essential partners in ensuring the continuity of the school's educational mission. How did parents experience home-schooling during the pandemic-imposed confinement? Did they have the skills for this sudden responsibility thrust upon them? Were the DLM measures proposed by the school satisfactory for parents?

Rayou (2022) shows through a survey of 29 families in France, assessing the effects of confinement on pedagogical continuity, that parents feared they would not be able to cope with the new role of being a home teacher, especially parents from working-class, these having more difficulty understanding teachers' instructions and expectations, or being disorientated by the pressure to collaborate with teachers. The question probably involves specific issues in Morocco, given the low level of education of the population, especially for women. In 2020, the proportion of adult women (aged 25 and over) with no education in Morocco was estimated to be 52.9% *versus* 25.9% for men (HCP, 2021).

In addition, Carignan *et al.* (2020) highlighted, based on the testimonies of university mothers in Canada, that they felt overwhelmed during confinement and encountered significant difficulties in balancing everything. But household chores and responsibilities related to the education and care of children still largely fall on mothers rather than fathers in Morocco. In 2020, women dedicate 20.8% of their daily time to domestic work *versus* 3% for men, and only 5.6% to professional activities

versus 22.6% for men (HCP, 2021). Moreover, working Moroccan women continue to bear the burden of domestic chores, spending 4 hours and 18 minutes per day on them, which is only 1 hour and 42 minutes less than housewives. The average daily workload for Moroccan women amounts to 6 hours and 21 minutes, of which 79% for domestic activities. In 2020, the average daily domestic workload for women increased by 33 minutes during the confinement period (HCP, 2021).

Additionally, having access to sufficient space to provide each child with a dedicated workspace, as well as access to necessary materials and digital tools, are conditions that impact parents' ability to create an environment conducive to learning (Rayou, 2022; Sanrey *et al.*, 2020). Sanrey *et al.* (2020) specifically mention the availability of equipment required to access the resources provided by teachers and the availability of computers relative to the number of individuals needing them in the household. But the lack of material resources and access to the internet and digital resources affects a large number of families in Morocco.

Rising from the aspiration to gain a better understanding of the parental experience during the Covid-19 confinement in Morocco, Myriam Kettani (Centre MyPsy, Casablanca), Houda Ouazzani Touhami (Centre MyPsy, Casablanca), and Geneviève Lepage (Centre Grandir, Fes) conducted a joint survey on parents of children under 18 years old in Morocco. This article presents some of the survey findings specifically related to the dimension of home-schooling.

2. Procedure

The survey was conducted during the initial lockdown period in spring 2020. Data collection took place between May 13th and June 15th, 2020, utilising a self-administered questionnaire created on Google Form. The questionnaire was shared through a call for participation on various social networks, predominantly Facebook and WhatsApp. This approach helped to ensure access to a diverse sample despite the restrictions imposed by the confinement measures.

3. Measures

The questionnaire is structured into two sections. The first section focuses on evaluating the socio-demographic data of the parents and

their children including:

- parents' age (under 35/35-44/45 and above);
- parents' gender (female/male);
- parents' family situation (single/married/divorced/widow);
- parents' level of education (baccalaureate or below/bachelor's degree/master's degree/PhD);
- number of children (one or two/three or more);
- school level of children (one level/two different levels/three different levels including preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school);
- parents' place of residence (urban/rural).

The second section of the questionnaire consists of three items aimed at assessing the parents' experience with home-schooling:

- average time spent per day by the parent on home-schooling;
- sense of parental competence in assisting children with home-schooling;
- parents' level of satisfaction with the DLM implemented by the school.

To accommodate the participants, the questionnaire was created in two languages: French and Arabic.

4. *Sample*

For this research study, the sample size consisted of 182 parents aged between 28 and 61 years old, with one to five children, and at least one of them enrolled in either preschool, elementary school, middle school, or high school. Out of the total sample of 182 parents, 17.58% (n=32) completed the questionnaire in Arabic, while 82.42% (n=150) responded in French. More than half of the parents (58.24%, n=106) are aged between 35 to 44, whereas more than a quarter (28.02%, n=51) are in the range of 45 years old or more, and only 13.74% (n=25) are aged between 25 and 34. The sample includes a high proportion of mothers (78.02%, n=142; *versus* 21.98% of fathers, n=40), married parents (91.76%, n=167), and parents with a Bachelor's or Master's degree (73.62%, n=134; *versus* 13.19% PhD holders, n=24; and 13.19% baccalaureate and under, n=24), as well as families with one or two children (71.98%, n=131), and with parents living in large urban centres

(82.32%, n=149), having children in one school level (53.85%, n=98) or two school levels (41.21%, n=75). Parents with children in only one school level were primarily parents of children in elementary school (23.63%, n=43) or pre-school (17.03%, n=31). Parents whose children were at two school levels were mainly parents with children at elementary and middle school (15.38%, n=28) or at preschool and elementary school (13.19%, n=24).

It is worth noting that the level of education among parents in our sample is higher compared to the general Moroccan population. Additionally, the distribution of the level of education is similar for both fathers and mothers.

5. Results

The analysis of data regarding parental experience of home-schooling during the Covid-19 confinement in spring 2020 in Morocco reveals that the parents in our sample spend an average of 1.9 hours per day ($\sigma=1.50$) accompanying their children in school learning. Furthermore, a quarter of parents (24.9%, n=45) are slightly or not satisfied with DLM implemented by the school, less than a half (45.3%, n=83) are moderately satisfied, while just over the remaining quarter (29.8%, n=54) are very or completely satisfied. Finally, 40.7% of parents think that they do not have the skills to assist their children in school learning against 59.3% who feel they do (see Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of variables of interest over the whole sample

Variable	Categories	%	Mean	Standard deviation
Time(h) Home-schooling			1.9	1.5
Satisfaction DLM	very/completely moderately slightly/not	29.83 45.30 24.86		
Sense of parental competence	yes no	59.32 40.68		

Next, we examined the variations in parents' experience with home-schooling in relation to the socio-demographic variables. With regards

to the time spent by the parents in home-schooling (see Table 2), the data analysis shows that mothers spend on average more time per day in helping their children with school learning ($m=2.05$; $\sigma=0.13$) than fathers ($m=1.40$; $\sigma=0.21$), this difference being significant according to the ANOVA test ($F[1]=5.29$; $p<.05$). The average time spent daily by parents in home-schooling differs depending on the age of the parents. In fact, parents aged under 35 spend on average 2.09 hours ($\sigma=0.31$) a day assisting their children in school learning, against 2.21 hours ($\sigma=0.14$) for parents aged between 35 and 44, and only 1.17 hours ($\sigma=0.23$) for parents aged 45 or more. ANOVA reveals that there is a significant difference between the three age categories ($F[2]=8.43$; $p<.00$). To determine which of the three categories are affected by this difference, we conducted a Tukey test. The results confirmed a significant difference between parents aged 45 and over and parents aged 35 to 44 years ($p<.05$), as well as between parents aged 45 and over and parents under 35 years ($p<.001$). However, there was no significant difference between parents aged 35 to 44 years and parents under 35 years.

Table 2: Variation in time spent by the parent in home-schooling according to parents' socio-demographic characteristics

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	F	Pr(>F)
Parents' gender			5.29	0.022*
Female	2.05	0.13		
Male	1.40	0.21		
Parents' age			8.43	0.000***
Under 35	2.09	0.31		
35-44	2.21	0.14		
45 or more	1.17	0.23		
Family situation			0.27	0.761
Number of children			0.22	0.636
Parents' level of education			1.48	0.222
Children school level			0.40	0.674
Place of residence			0.65	0.525

Note: * $p<.05$ *** $p<.001$

In our study, we also investigated the variations in parents' sense of competence in helping their children in school learning in relation to socio-demographic variables (refer to Table 3). Chi-square tests revealed

significant relationships between parents' sense of competence in home-schooling and parents' gender [$\chi^2(1,182)=3.61$, $p<.05$], as well as their level of education [$\chi^2(3,182)=10.57$, $p<.05$]. Regarding parents' gender, the results showed that just over half of the women (55.7%) felt competent in helping their children in school learning, compared to 73.0% of men in the sample. Furthermore, the findings indicate a correlation between parents' level of education and their sense of competence. Among parents who graduated with a baccalaureate or lower, 31.8% reported feeling competent in assisting their children. This percentage increased to 54.9% among parents with a Bachelor's degree, 69.1% among those with a Master's degree, and 60.9% for parents with a PhD level of education.

Table 3: Variation in parental sense of competence to support their children in school learning according to socio-demographic characteristics

Socio-demographic variables	Categories	Parental sense of competence			
		% No	% Yes	χ^2	p
Parents' gender	Female	44.29	55.71	3.61	0.057***
	Male	27.03	72.97		
Parents' age	Under 35	26.09	73.91	3.45	0.178
	35-44	45.71	54.29		
	45 or more	36.73	63.27		
Family situation	Single	100	0	4.07	0.254
	Married	38.89	61.11		
	Divorced	53.85	46.15		
	Widow	100	0		
Number of children	One or two	37.80	62.20	1.55	0.213
	Three or more	48.00	52.00		
Parents' level of education	Baccalaureate or under	68.18	31.82	10.57	0.014***
	Bachelor's degree	45.10	54.90		
	Master's degree	30.86	69.14		
	PhD	39.13	60.87		
Children school level	One level	42.11	57.89	1.32	0.517
	Two different levels	36.99	63.01		
	Three different levels	55.56	44.44		

Place of residence	Countryside	75.00	25.00	3.03	0.220
	Small town	48.15	51.85		
	Big city centre	37.93	62.07		

Note: *** $p < .001$

Similarly, we examined the variations in parents' satisfaction with the DLM proposed by the school in relation to socio-demographic variables (refer to Table 4). Chi-square tests revealed significant relationships between parents' satisfaction and their age [$\chi^2(4.182)=10.36$, $p < .05$], the number of children [$\chi^2(2.182)=10.24$, $p < .05$], and the children's school level [$\chi^2(4.182)=18.01$, $p < .05$]. The data analysis revealed that one in three parents aged 45 or above (31.4%) expressed being either slightly or not satisfied with the DLM proposed by the school. In comparison, a quarter of parents between 35 and 44 years old (25.5%), and only 8.3% of parents under the age of 35 reported the same level of dissatisfaction. Moreover, 41.2% of parents with large families expressed being dissatisfied or not very satisfied with the DLM offered by the school, while only 18.5% of parents with one or two children reported the same level of dissatisfaction. Besides, more than three-quarters of parents with children in three different school levels found the DLM to be slightly or not satisfying (77.3%), compared to only a fifth of parents with children in the same school level (22.7%) and those with children in two different school levels (21.3%).

Table 4: Variation in parents' level of satisfaction with DLM according to the socio-demographic characteristics

		Satisfaction of DLM				
Socio-demographic variables	Categories	% Very/ completely	% Moderately	% Slightly/ not	χ^2	p
Parent[s]'s G[gender]	Female	29.79	47.52	22.70	1.90	0.338
	Male	30.00	37.50	32.50		
Parents' age	Under 35	45.83	45.83	8.33	10.36	0.035
	35-44	33.02	41.51	25.47		
	45 or more	15.69	52.94	31.37		
Family situation	Single	100	0	0	6.85	0.335
	Married	30.12	46.39	23.49		
	Divorced	23.08	38.46	38.46		
	Widow	0	0	100		
Number of children	One or two	33.08	48.46	18.46	10.24	0.006**
	Three or more	21.57	37.25	41.18		

Parents' level of education	Baccalaureate and under	13.04	43.48	43.48	7.52	0.275
	Bachelor's degree	34.62	48.08	17.31		
	Master's degree	31.71	45.12	23.17		
	PhD	29.17	41.67	29.17		
Children school level	One level	36.08	41.24	22.68	18.01	0.001***
	Two different levels	24.00	54.67	21.33		

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

6. Discussion

The results of this research, conducted on a sample of parents in Morocco during the first Covid-19 confinement in spring 2020, indicate that nearly half of the parents did not feel competent enough to support their children in school learning. Helping children with school learning involves understanding lessons, supervising and supporting learning, applying concepts to exercises, and ensuring comprehension and integration of what is being taught. In this context, parental understanding of school content and the pedagogical dimension of support are crucial factors. Additionally, in the context of distance learning, familiarity with digital tools is also necessary. Supporting children in school learning, therefore, requires a diverse range of skills. It can be assumed that many parents were not adequately prepared or equipped for this sudden responsibility thrust upon them which is in line with Rayou's results (2022), which highlight parents' fears of not being able to cope with the new role of being a home teacher.

Among the parents in our sample who felt they lacked the skills to help their children in school learning, a significantly higher percentage were women, while our results also show that the feeling of competence in helping children in school learning is significantly linked to the parents' level of education. This finding might have been explained by the fact that, on average, women have lower levels of education compared to men in Morocco (HCP, 2021). However, this proportion is not reflected in our sample, where mothers and fathers have equivalent levels of education. This specificity may be attributed to the recruitment method via social networks.

Another possible explanation is that mothers may have been less willing than fathers to develop and implement pedagogical skills to support their children in school learning due to the greater difficulty in balancing all the tasks assigned to them during confinement. Indeed, household chores and responsibilities related to the education and care of children still largely fall on mothers in Morocco (HCP, 2021). It is also worth noting that the majority of participants in our study on the experience of parents during confinement are mothers. Our results support this, as mothers spent more time on average assisting their children in online learning compared to fathers. Therefore, while in normal circumstances, mothers often have to juggle their workday with household chores and childcare, during confinement, they had to shoulder additional burdens related to home-schooling and the constant presence of children at home. Many mothers also faced the absence of domestic help or childcare services that usually provided assistance. As a result, they may have encountered significant difficulties in balancing everything during the confinement (Carignan *et al.*, 2020), which may have affected their ability to maintain the patience, attention, and concentration required for home-schooling, consequently impacting their feeling of competence in helping their children with school learning.

Furthermore, parents' responses regarding their satisfaction with the DLM implemented by the school were varied, with an approximately equal proportion of satisfied and dissatisfied parents, many expressing mixed opinions. However, our findings indicate that older parents tend to be less satisfied, despite spending less time on average supporting their children in school learning. This can be attributed to the fact that older parents generally have older children who are more likely to be in middle school or high school. Moreover, while teenagers are generally more independent in their learning, they are undergoing a critical period of socialisation and identity building that may have posed challenges for both adolescents and their parents during the confinement period. Adolescents are required to establish autonomy from their parents and the associated identifications in order to achieve psychological and emotional independence, and to integrate socially through peer relationships and the broader socio-cultural context. Nonetheless, the experience of confinement, with its accompanying social isolation, can create a sense of confinement that hampers the necessary psychological growth and potentially leads adolescents towards regressive or transgressive behaviours (Gratton *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, the inability to envision the future and concerns about academic prospects have also been challeng-

ing for many young people and their parents (Barrense-Dias *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, the stakes related to secondary schooling, such as taking exams (e.g. brevet), choosing a career path, and preparing for the baccalauréat, are significant. However, the confinement measures disrupted normal conditions for test preparation and sitting, which could have caused stress and disappointment for both young people and their parents.

The level of parent satisfaction with the DLM implemented by the school also varies depending on the number of children and the number of different school levels among siblings. Parents of larger families and those with children in multiple school levels tend to be significantly less satisfied compared to parents with fewer children or those with children in fewer school levels. This can be naturally explained by the increased workload associated with supporting multiple children in their learning. It could be also explained by the fact that having access to sufficient space, as well as necessary materials and digital tools are conditions more challenging to meet for larger families that have significant consequences for maintaining pedagogical continuity (Sanrey *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, it should be noted that the implementation of DLM can vary considerably across different school levels (e.g. preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school), requiring parents to navigate multiple parallel home-schooling systems when their children are enrolled in different school levels simultaneously. Providing support and resources that address the specific needs of parents and pupils across different family sizes and school levels can help ensure a more effective and equitable learning experience.

The main limitation of this study is the non-representative nature of the sample. The recruitment process excluded the poorest, least educated, and most rural sections of the Moroccan population, who likely faced more challenges with home-schooling during the Covid-19 confinement. Additionally, there was a significant underrepresentation of fathers in the survey compared to mothers. However, despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights as it is the only study available on parents' experiences of the Covid-19 confinement in Morocco. It is important to recognise that while the confinement due to the Covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020 was an unprecedented situation, similar situations may arise in the future. Therefore, it is crucial for DLM implemented by schools in time of confinement to consider the needs of parents in supporting their children's learning, as they play a vital role in co-education, especially in home-schooling situations.

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