

Deciding Not to School Children: A Socio-Economic Profiling of Education Without School in Colombia

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Abstract

Education without school is a growing social phenomenon. Colombian families are increasingly choosing this kind of education. The number of research projects related to this practice has been progressively increasing. This paper discloses a preliminary descriptive study on characteristics for education without school in Colombia. A survey was given to families carrying out education without school and belonging to the country's largest family network (EnFamilia). In the United States, the average annual spending for education for Education Without School is much lower than the average annual expenditure for education without school in Colombia. The results are analyzed from socio-economic aspects. It is concluded that the research on some characteristics, such as the relationship between the time dedicated to education without school and its financing, should continue; whereby education without school can have an impact on the processes for raising and caring of children and adolescents.

Keywords: Education Without School, Family, Education

Introduction

THROUGHOUT THIS PAPER, the term Education Without School (hereinafter, EWS) will be used to describe the diversity of educational approaches taken by families deciding not to send their children to school. Some researchers defined the subject as a type of education transcending the school space and relinquishing its traditional regulatory forms (Jurado, 2011), wherein integral development for children is pursued in the context of the family home or in larger community circles. In any case, EWS does not involved in the official school institution, either public or private (Goiria, 2009). The scope of EWS is linked to the common concept of education, whose purpose is to instruct in every subject, so the one is complementary and not hostile to the other (Restrepo, 2011).

Over the last 50 years, the practice of EWS has achieved a progressive recognition in the education agenda in several countries of the world, such as the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Hungary, Japan, Kenya, Russia, New Zealand, South Korea, Thailand, and the United Kingdom, among others (Ray, 2016). Likewise, the increase in public policies pertaining to EWS developed and expanded in the United States and other

countries in the previous decades is relevant (Waddell, 2010), because it allows various references as parameters for comparison.

EWS Expense Estimates

As noted in the literature on estimated spending for EWS, Lyman (1998), Rudner (1999), and Ray (2010, 2016) developed studies which determined that in the United States, the average expenditure for child was \$645 USD (see Table 1). The analysis made by Lyman (1998), published in the USA Today magazine and sponsored by The Society for the Advancement of Education, presented the main results for a non-probabilistic calculation carried out by the Home School Legal Defense Association. According to Lyman, EWS spending took into account the money used to carry out educational activities, such as going to the library, attending vocational classes, acquiring didactic and pedagogical materials, private tutoring, and social activities aimed at learning. The average expenditure for EWS was calculated from a survey of 1,657 families. Lyman (1998) found the yearly average cost paid for EWS per person was \$546 USD.

Rudner (1999) made a non-probabilistic estimate based on 20,760 EWS children, who belong to 11,930 families. Rudner (1999) found that the amount of money spent in 1997 by EWS families on textbooks, didactic materials, tutoring services, and vocational progress varied between less than \$200 USD to more than \$2,000 USD. The average amount spent was approximately \$400 USD.

Taking into account Rudner's calculation (1999), Brian Ray (2010) performed a non-probabilistic study based on 11,738 students. The research goal was to be comparable to Rudner's and, therefore, to be considered the same expense categories. Ray found that the yearly EWS spending per capita has a gap of \$400 and \$599 USD. This paper takes the average value for that gap as reference.

Ray, president of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI), posted a yearly summary of the main findings of his research. In the year 2016, the data was \$600 USD as the average annual expenditure for EWS (Ray, 2016). Table 1 shows a weighting of the average expenditure presented in every research described above. With data in U.S. Dollars, it was decided to adjust the current exchange rate in the study period using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the United States to make a feasible comparison between these values with prices in 2016. The Colombian Peso to U.S. Dollar conversion exchange rate used in this document was the annual 2016 average, being \$3,054.12 Colombian Pesos for each U.S. Dollar according to World Bank Graphics (2017).

Table 1

Comparison according to different studies spending per EWS child in the U.S., and calculating the average price adjusted to December 2016 in USD.

	<i>Study</i>			
	<i>Lyman (1998)</i>	<i>Rudner (1999)</i>	<i>Ray (2010)</i>	<i>Ray (2016)</i>
Period Analysis	1997	1997	2009	2015
Annual average expenditure EWS in the US (Different Grades)	\$546	\$400	\$500	\$600
Spending adjusted for annual inflation in United States at 2016 prices*	\$816	\$598	\$559	\$608
Average annual expenditure per capita at 2016 prices	\$645.35			

* Calculation estimated for this study.
Source: Lyman (1998), Rudner (1999), Ray (2010; 2016), and World Bank (2017).

The calculation presented in Table 1 indicates that, on average, the estimates consider an average monthly expenditure per capita above \$645 USD for the United States. Most likely, this data is far from the Colombian context where the expenses can be different given the differences in infrastructure and in the provision of public goods with free access, which is why it is more relevant to advance the empirical work for this analysis. It should be noted that, unlike what occurred in other countries, EWS in Colombia is not associated with a generalized appropriation, either public space or institutional infrastructure. Therefore, several families choosing EWS for their children are assuming the expenses of many services that in other countries would be of public provision.

Goals and Methodology

This paper aims to present EWS characteristics in Colombia. Referencing previous research conducted in the United States, this paper examines and compares the cost associated with Colombian families choosing to engage in EWS as an education choice. In order to achieve the goal, quantitative and qualitative methods are used to perform this research.

Target population and sample group

The target population of this research were families choosing to educate without school in Colombia. There were no data on how many families have opted for EWS; therefore, an unknown population or sample size exists. Support networks for those families engaging in EWS has been increasingly available. Although, it was unknown if all those opting for this modality are attached to these networks. The units for analysis were families. The main source of information were responses from parents.

Instrument for data collection: Questionnaire design

Data were collected with the help of a survey as a methodological tool. The survey (see Appendix A) consisted of 17 questions; the first five (5) were designed to characterize the population. Questions six (6) to eleven (11) inquired about income and expenses for each unit of analysis. The last six (6) questions related to the physical, monetary, and time expenses invested in EWS resources by these families. The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions. To validate the instrument, a preliminary survey was conducted with five (5) EWS families.

Data collection tool

Data for this research was collected with a survey as a methodological tool. A mixed method approach was used to designing the survey. The quantitative data were obtained at the same time as the qualitative data. For the purposes of this study, the quantitative questions are more relevant than qualitative questions.

Questions were multiple choice type and scaled. The questionnaire was made available with the electronic tool Google Forms. Responses were grouped based on previous research. The case of ethnicity and income took into account the categorization made by the Ministry of Education of Colombia in its forms for registration to state tests for secondary education. Religion responses were based on research by William Beltrán (2012).

In order to validate the tool, a pilot study was conducted with five (5) families. Modifications were made with every new respondent's details of the tool. Furthermore, this tool was preceded by the data collection tool Education Without Schooling Survey in Colombia and Spain: A Comparative Study carried out by Erwin Fabián García López and Carlos Cabo González, the use of which was input for the doctoral thesis of Cabo (2012). Additionally, it was also preceded by the presentation of the paper Preliminary Results of the Surveys on Education Without School in Colombia and in Spain: A Comparative Study at the Second International Congress of Education Without School carried out by the National University

Education Without School in Colombia

of Colombia in 2010. This presentation also served as input to García López for publications as an author and co-author in the books: *Un Mundo por Aprender* (2011), *International Perspectives on Home Education Do We Still Need Schools?* (2015), and the *Wiley Handbook of Home Education* (Barrera, García & Will, 2016).

Data collection technique

In order to collect information, it was decided to apply the survey questionnaire to an established network of EWS families since the sample group was unknown, as mentioned previously. The survey was applied in one of the oldest and most extensive networks in the country, the Colombian Family Education Network, “Red EnFamilia,” as a way to get closer to the largest number of EWS families. This network has approximately 1387 member families. The form was sent via the internet to its members and was self-directed voluntarily by 121 families (consisting of 212 EWS children), from October to November 2017. The survey was conducted with the support of the EnFamilia Network through the distribution of the survey.

It is necessary to assert that the methodological approaches by Baptista, Fernández, and Sampieri (2014); Manterola and Otzen (2017); and Pimienta (2000) were taken into account. It should also be stated that the sample was a non-probabilistic type, so no inferences were made. Statistics cannot be generalized because these were directed samples. Since there was no sampling frame, it was not possible to calculate variable probabilities or confidence levels.

It should be noted that the material collected for more than a decade through the action research process on Education without School (EWS), Collaborative Self-Learning (C.S.), Family Education (F.E.), and Flexible School Models (FSM) has also been incorporated into the analysis. Universidad Nacional de Colombia’s field notes have been collected through semester courses and local and regional meetings with EWS families. Likewise, empirical observations and semi-structured interviews have been conducted with dozens of EWS families in Colombia.

Survey Results

The total sample size was 121 families. In general, the results are presented as a percentage of the basic unit of analysis (Families). Only in some cases, they are presented in arithmetic value, since responses demonstrate different considerations of mothers and fathers.

Sociodemographic characterization of participating families

The sociodemographic characterization of the families for the sample is presented in Table 2. These factors include place of residence, ethnicity, political position, and family composition. Regarding the place of residence for the surveyed population, the highest percentage lived in the city of Bogotá. Table 2 shows that 43% of respondents lived in the capital of the country, while 11% of families dwelled in the outskirts. Results indicated 16.5% lived in one of the three most populated cities in the country: Medellín, Barranquilla, and Cali. Families who indicated dwelling in a medium-sized town such as Armenia, Manizales, Pereira, Bucaramanga, Cartagena, Villavicencio, Ibagué, Popayán, Cúcuta, Pasto, or Tunja made up 21.49% of the

respondents, and 7.44% dwelled in other municipalities of smaller size: Copacabana, Rionegro (Antioquia), Buenaventura, Jamundí (Valle del Cauca), Soatá (Boyacá), Calarcá, Montenegro (Quindío) or Fonseca (La Guajira). One family surveyed stated that they did not have an established place of residence since their family travels permanently.

Table 2

Sociodemographic characterization sample: Place of residence, ethnicity, and family configuration

A. place of residence	
Item	%
Bogotá DC	43.0%
Bogotá outskirts	11.6%
Medellín	9.1%
Barranquilla	4.1%
Cali	3.3%
Armenia	3.3%
Manizales	3.3%
Bucaramanga	2.5%
Cartagena	2.5%
Villavicencio	2.5%
Ibagué	1.7%
Pereira	1.7%
Popayán	1.7%
Cúcuta	0.8%
Pasto	0.8%
Tunja	0.8%
Other cities	7.4%
B. Ethnicity	
Multiracial	56.91%
White	36.59%
Afro-Colombians	2.44%
Any	2.44%
Indigenous	0.81%
Other	0.81%
C. Family classification	
Nuclear	63.6%

When contrasting this information with the fieldwork (field notes, semester courses at Universidad Nacional, empirical observation, and semi-structured surveys with some EWS families), it can be stated there are signs that the EWS phenomenon is growing and expanding to various places that even transcend the big cities. Researchers who conducted this study also observed an expansion of the phenomenon of EWS in Colombia, highlighting a growth of the phenomenon within rural communities, neo-rural, and diverse indigenous communities. The growth was especially noted in the indigenous communities of the South Pacific, whose ancestral vision of the education finds resonance and congruence in the concepts and reflections that this type of education provokes.

The ethnic classification presented in Table 2 indicated that only 6.5% of the families surveyed did not recognize part of a White or Mestizo ethnic group. Only two (2) families referred to themselves as a couple with ethnic differences, one of whom claimed to be a mestizo-white couple and another mestiza-afro-descendant. Seventy (70) surveyed families declared themselves mestizas, and forty-five (45) recognized themselves as white. Only one is identified as indigenous (Arhuaco, Cubeo, Embera, Guambiano, Huitoto, Inga, Kankuamo, Paez, Pasto, Pijao, Sikuani, Tucano, Wayúu, Zunú or other) and another as Neo Muisca. Three (3) families declared themselves to be of African descent, and the same number did not identify within any ethnic group.

Table 3
Sample for sociodemographic characterization

A. Religion	
Item	#
Catholic	36
Believe in God but do not follow any religion	31
Evangelical Christian	19
Spiritual Studies	7
Protestant	6
Jewish	4
Mormon	3
Pachamamá	3
Other	23
B. Philosophical and political position	
Social Ecology	25
Conservative	18
Liberalism	17
Progressivism	6
Solidary Anarchism	6
Feminism	6
Socialism	4
Nationalism	3
Anarcho capitalism	1
Any	26
Other	15

In Table 3, the religion section demonstrated that the respondents stated they were: Catholics (36), Evangelical Christians (19), spiritual studies or new age (7), Protestants (6), Jews (4), Mormon (3), and Pachamámicos (3). Thirty-one (31) families claimed to believe in God but not follow any religion. Only two (2) families identified themselves as atheists and one (1) family as agnostic. Additionally, the group surveyed was composed of Adventists (2), Buddhists (2), Hare Krishna (2), Pantheist (2), Charismatic Evangelist (1), Pentecostal (1),

Jehovah's Witness (1), Orthodox Catholic (1), reformed Baptist (1) and Baha'i (1). Two families responded as not belonging to any religion, and three (3) identified themselves with one of these positions: love with no religion, personal religion, or religion of the earth. One family replied that they did not know. Some families identified with two or more religions. The information contained in this response, as well as the place of residence, can be considered as an indication of heterogeneity in the sample.

Regarding the question: Which of the following philosophical and political positions is identified? In Table 3, it was observed that twenty-five (25) of the families surveyed claimed to be or have a member whose posture responds to social ecology; eighteen (18) were identified within the conservative position; seventeen (17) within liberalism; six (6) selected progressivism; six (6) chose solidary anarchism; six (6) were feminism; four (4) were socialists; three (3) chose nationalists, and one (1) selected capitalist anarchist. Twenty-six (26) of the total of respondents did not identify themselves within a philosophical/political position. Fifteen (15) were recognized within the Other category, in which they entered responses such as Christianity (3), humanism (3), social theology of the church (1), participation, responsibility, cooperation and respect (1), free (1), libertarian (1), epicureanism (1), continental chavism (1), center-right (1), capitalism (1), politics is good, and the problem lies in what is in the hearts of men (1). It should be noted that some of the family groups were identified within two or more categories.

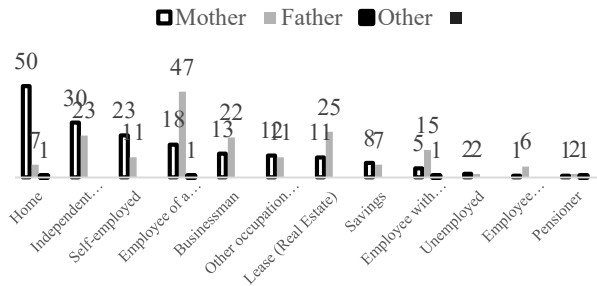
Regarding the results of the family composition, it was found that ninety-eight (98) of the respondents were part of a family in which the father and mother are together (nuclear or extensive). Twenty-three (23), which was 19.01%, surveyed families were recognized within a single-parent structure, with separated parents, or with a blended family. Relating these results to the question six (Origin of income of the family group) and fifteen (How much do you value the monthly time dedicate to EWS by the parents of EWS children within the family group?), it was found that ten (10) families declared single-parent or separated parents, the mother was the head of household, and only in one (1) was the father responsible for the upbringing of daughters and sons.

Socioeconomic Results for Those Families Taken as Sample: Economic Characterization

Responses regarding the family group income (see Figure 1), presented a high variation, due to the fact that there was no grouping towards a category of sources of family income. It should be emphasized that the category Other integrates the response of the stepmothers and stepfathers that make up the families.

Figure 1

Number of families recognizing the following activities as their source of income.

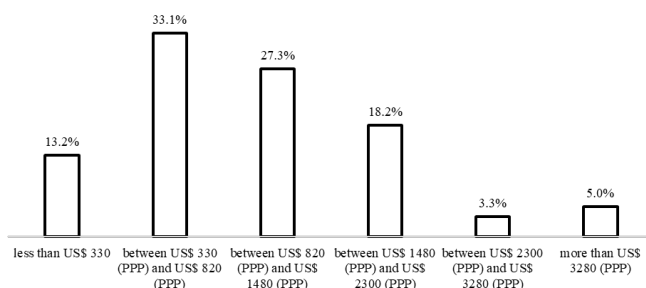


The most significant data of the non-probabilistic sample are: a) 41.3% of the responses account for mothers dedicated to the home, although not exclusively; 32 of the 50 mothers who claimed to dedicate themselves to the home also claimed income from other activities; b) 43.8% of families stated that mothers were engaged in independent exercise of their profession or self-employment; c) 39.7% of family groups surveyed recognized that the father (including a stepfather) obtained income from technical or professional employment; d) 39.7% of families recognized that fathers obtained income from lease (real estate) or product of the exercise of professional independence; e) a family reported that their children also collaborated in obtaining income for the family group. In general, families earned their income from two or more activities. Additionally, it should be mentioned that only six (6) families reported income for working as construction and/or industrial workers. Notably, those who reported this category as a source of income did not have a second source.

Of the 50 families reporting that the mother allocated time to household chores, 36% (18 families) declared having a marital relationship in which the mother was exclusively dedicated to the home and the father to obtain income. With the help of question 15 (How much do you value the monthly time devoted by the mother and/or father to the EWS of the children of the family group?), it can be affirmed that of these 18 families, 8 registered that it was exclusively the mother who allocated time to the EWS of the children.

Figure 2

Number of families by monthly income range



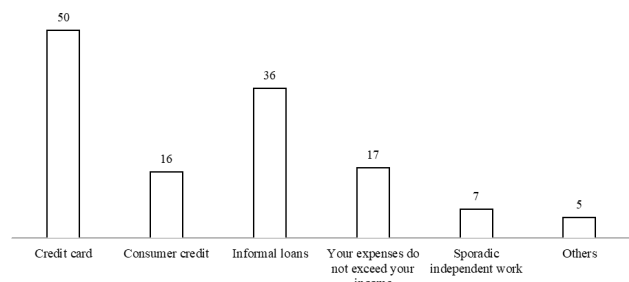
In this case, it is highlighted that more families obtained monthly incomes higher than \$1,480 USD than those that received incomes lower than \$330 USD, demonstrating a

socioeconomic preponderance in the sample of families with higher than average incomes (see Figure 2). It is worth noting that Cárdenas (2013), the monthly income in Colombia is of the 75th percentile is close to USD 510. In the sample, 53.72% exceeded this margin, and 33.06% was positioned around it.

The eighth question in the survey is: If the family can't afford their monthly expenses with their income, how can they afford their necessities (their expenses)? Figure 3 shows that 71.1% of respondents stated they were indebted through the financial system, while 14.0% stated that their expenses did not exceed their income. The Other category was marked by families using savings (2) and by families not responding (2).

Figure 3

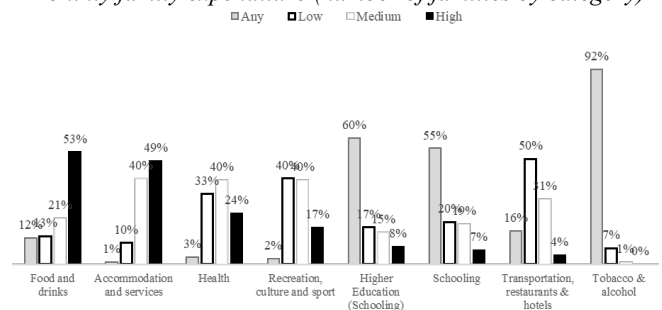
Financing of expenses (number of families)



Empirical observations and semi-structured interviews around the phenomenon in Colombia allow us to infer that this type of family often has economic practices with lower debt risks. For this reason, it is necessary to explore more about the sources of financing for EWS families. In many cases, EWS is a strategy in families with a medium socioeconomic level used in order to optimize their expenses and minimize the debt due to high educational expenses.

Figure 4

Monthly family expenditure (number of families by category)



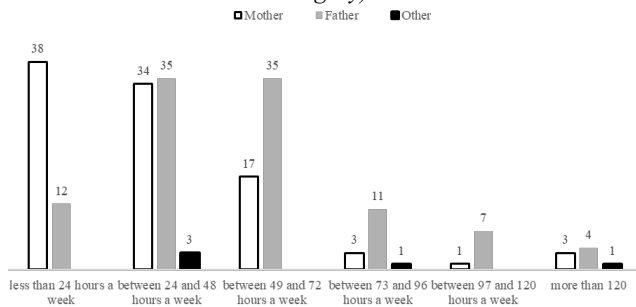
The order of importance for household expenses (see Figure 4) revealed the use of resources in a high and medium margin was mainly in housing (89.26% of families selected the high or middle option in this category). Spending by rank of high and medium importance: food was 74.38%, health was 63.64%, and recreation culture & sport was 57.02%. Families scored low or zero for the expenditure they made in tobacco & alcohol; only 0.83% of families selected the high or middle

option in this category of expenditure. In the higher education expenditure, 23.14% selected a high to medium rank of importance. Schooling some of the members of the family was 25.62%, and transportation was 34.71%. The classification for this question was based on the expenditure structure proposed by the National Department of Statistics (DANE).

Regarding the average time dedicated to obtaining income (see Figure 5) in those families surveyed, except for those families whose time was less than 24 hours weekly, it was the fathers who spent the most time on this activity. The other category integrated the response of the stepmothers and stepfathers that make up the families.

Figure 5

Average time spent earning income (number of people per category)



Of the 97 mothers and a stepmother who have reported some response, 74.23% spent less than 49 hours a week to obtain income, and 4.12% spent more than 72 hours. Of the 108 fathers, including four stepfathers, who have reported some response, 46.30% spent less than 49 hours a week earning income, and 10.19% spent more than 72 hours. Two (2) families reported both the father and mother spend between 73 and 120 hours weekly. Three (3) families registered both parents spending more than 120 hours per week to earn an income. Combining these responses with question 12 (Average time dedicated to EWS by each child or adolescent of the family group) taken from these families, three families (3) spent more than 67 hours a week to attend the EWS of their children.

Taking into account the number of families surveyed, on average, they had two (2) children, which is compatible with the trend of families with socioeconomic conditions above the average according to the 2008 quality of life survey (Cárdenas, 2013). The results indicated 24.79% have one (1) child, 55.37% have two (2) children, and 18.18% have three (3) children. Two families surveyed claimed to have more than four children; no families reported having four (4) children.

Of the 11 families that had reported having a child of legal age (in Colombia, the age of majority is considered 18 years old), each of them had at least one other child under 18 years old (see Figure 6). In response to question 11, it was reported that all of the 121 families surveyed had a total of 238 children. Of these, 212 were EWS children.

Figure 6

Age of the children making up the families (number of people per category)

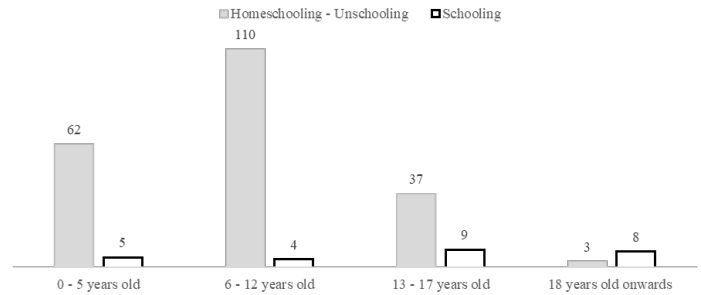
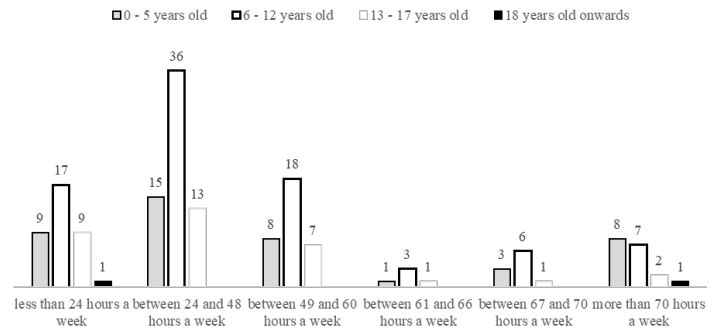


Figure 7

Average time dedicated to EWS for each child or adolescent member of the family group (number of families per category)



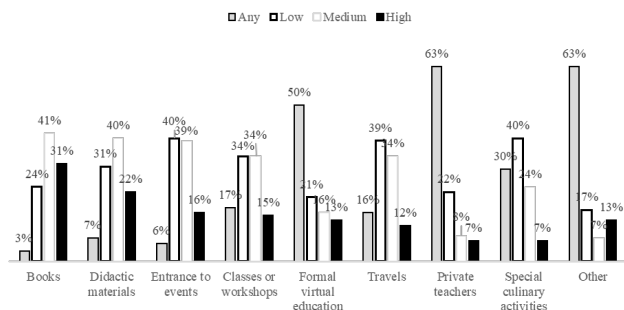
Regarding the time dedicated to EWS for each child (see Figure 7), it was found that 38.55% of mothers and fathers had spent an average of 24 to 48 hours per week on the education of their children. Those spending less than 24 hours consisted of 21.69%. The results indicated that 19.88% spent between 49 and 60 hours, which is the same percentage that had been recorded among mothers and fathers who have spent more than 60 hours a week for the education of their children.

The sample had an extreme variance, and it cannot be assured that there was a negative correlation between the time dedicated to obtaining income or the amount of income and the time dedicated to the EWS of children. Although, it should be emphasized that no families that reported obtaining income of more than \$2,300 USD dedicated more than 60 hours a week to this practice.

Families that have reported a family member dedicated to the home, or those whose mothers were exclusively dedicated to the home, spent more time educating their children without school. On average, those families that registered neither mother nor father dedicated to the household (70) registered a weekly dedication of 39.5 hours. This is less than the 43.5 hours dedicated by families (51) in which one of the members spent part of their time at home. For this sample, it cannot be stated that neither the income nor the average time dedicated by mothers and fathers to obtain income influenced the amount of time spent accompanying the EWS of the children.

Figure 8

Resources and tools used by EWS families (number of families by category)



Based on Figure 8, it can be stated that within the materials identified by the families as elements and characteristics that were part of the type of EWS they practice, about three (3) out of every four (4) families (72.73%) allocated an amount that in relation to their own consumption was high or medium. Likewise, didactic materials (61.98%) and tickets to events (54.55%), such as theater, cinema, or museums, received a high or medium margin in relation to spending. Approximately one (1) in every two (2) families (48.76%) dedicated resources to classes or vocational workshops. Families ranked trips (45.45%) in a similar proportion to classes or vocational workshops. The number of families that allocated significant resources to special culinary activities was relatively low (30.58%).

The results indicated that 20.66% of the families responded indicating resource expenses in the Others options. In question number 14, this answer is expanded. Responses found that in general, the families considered as resources destined to EWS: field trips, conversational-experiential work, sports activities, free play and learning, non-formal virtual education, the management of an orchard, and religious events.

Figure 9

Monthly time spent by the mother and/or father to the EWS of the children and/or adolescent members of the family group (number of people per rank)

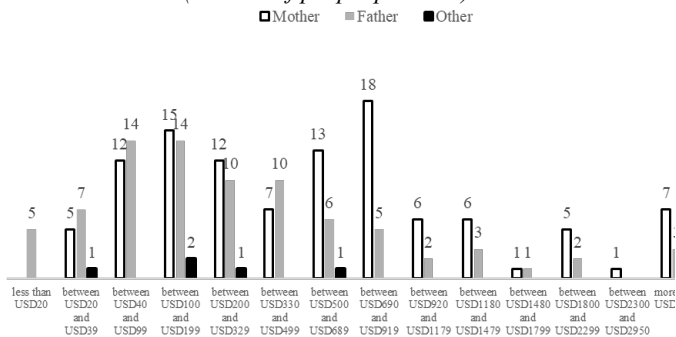


Figure 9 illustrates the monetary value that families placed on the spending of time in the EWS. It was found that mothers valued EWS's work in a higher percentage because 56.63% of the people who assigned a valuation were women. The Other category integrated the response of stepparents making up the families. Of these, 41.44% had a perception of the value of the

time dedicated to accompanying the EWS of their children, less than \$330 USD monthly, 34.23% considered that the value of their dedication is between \$330 USD and \$920 USD. The remaining 24.32% represented an assessment of their time greater than \$920 USD.

The assessment made on time spent by the parents (and stepparents) revealed that 61.18% was an allocation of less than \$330 USD, while 15.68% was between \$330 USD and \$919 USD. With respect to the remaining percentage (12, 94%), its valuation exceeded \$920 USD. Overall, there was a higher evaluation of the EWS time of the mothers (and stepmothers) that surpassed 1.69 times the economic estimate that was made of the time dedicated to this work by the fathers (and stepfathers).

Figure 10

EWS Monthly expenditure segmented by age range (number of families by rank)

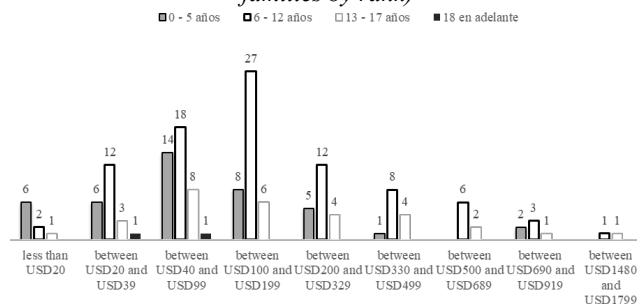
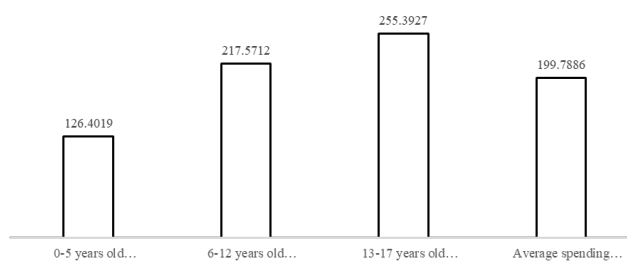


Figure 10 shows a tendency of the monthly expenditure of Educating Without School. Children from zero (0) to five (5) and from 13 to 17 years old monthly expenditure ranged between \$40 USD and \$99 USD. Children between six (6) and 12 years old had the highest expenditure, which was between \$100 USD and \$199 USD.

Figure 11

Average monthly expenditure in dollars for education without school by age range



To design Figure 11, participants answered the question: "On average, how much monthly income is directly allocated for EWS of each child according to the age range?" The goal of this question was to know how much a family spends on the EWS for each child on average by age range. To achieve desired results, a grid with checkboxes was designed. The participants' answers were contrasted with those shown in question 11 and

plotted out the number of children per EWS family. Families are asked to take into account spending on topics such as teaching materials, private classes, transportation to designated sites specifically for learning, books, trips, entrance to events, private teachers, etc. Figure 11 does not integrate the subjective assessment of the time dedicated by parents using EWS.

It should be noted that in Figure 11, the two outliers that were in the range between \$1480 USD and \$1799 USD were omitted. The average monthly expenditure for children from zero (0) to five (5) years was \$127 USD. For children between six (6) and 12 years of age, the average monthly expenditure was \$218 USD. For teenagers between 13 and 17 years of age, the average monthly expenditure was \$256 USD. Overall, it can be affirmed that the families of the sample spent on average EWS was close to \$199.80 USD monthly, around \$2,397 USD annually.

Microeconomic and Macroeconomic Analysis of Expenditures

If we take as reference the monthly average expenditure reported by the families, which was \$445 USD, the average annual expenditure was equal to \$5,340 USD. This would indicate that the expenditure is 8.3 times higher than the studies conducted in the United States by Lyman (1998), Rudner (1999), and Ray (2010; 2016) shown in Table 1.

Table 4
Spending on public education in Colombia.

Public expenditure on primary, middle, and secondary schooling in Colombia	
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	4.49%
Percentage of public expenditure on education allocated to primary, middle, and secondary education	72.13%
Public expenditure on education allocated to primary, middle, and secondary education	\$21,644,795,711 USD
Total number of students enrolled in the official sector	8,298,185
Public expenditure on education per student (Adjusted by CPI at November 2017 prices)	\$2,860 USD

Figures in dollars (adjusted by PPP 2016).

Source: World Bank (2017) and Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, DANE (2017, 2016).

If this annual average is compared with Colombian public education expenditure in 2015 (see Table 4), and after adjusting it to 2017 prices, which took into account the CPI accumulated during the year, it was found that the expenditure per capita in primary, middle, and secondary school is \$2,860 USD. This indicated that the average annual cost of EWS for the families surveyed in Colombia was 46.45% greater than the per capita expenditure on public schooling. Despite the latter, if the annual public expenditure of the families is ordered according to the value of their expenses, it was found that the public expenditure per capita was higher than the average for 74.38% of the participants in the lower range, the 90 families with the lowest expenditure. It was also true that if one took into account the average annual expenses of families that earn less than \$800 USD, the numbers were 25.54% lower than the public spending on official schooling per capita in Colombia. The national expenditure in public education per capita was greater than the absolute expense incurred by 42.15% (51) of the EWS families in the sample.

If only the 52 data points for Bogotá DC were considered, the average annual cost of educating without a school was \$5,796 USD. When this amount was compared with the public education expenditure per capita, it was 61.70% higher. However, if the sample was again organized according to the expenses level, the average expenditure of 53.85% of the families, the 28 families of Bogotá with the lowest expenditure, was lower than the public education expenditure per capita. It was also true that for 17 of the total of 52 families in Bogotá (32.69%), their expenditure on education was less than the public education expenditure per capita.

On the other hand, if the expenses of the families that chose to send their children to private schools were considered, the average annual cost of private schooling in Colombia was \$1,443 USD out of a total of 10,424 private schools. This means that in relation to the sample, the average annual cost of EWS was lower than private education for 39.67% (48) of the families in the sample. Furthermore, 76.47% (13) of EWS families, whose income was less than \$800 USD per month, spent less than the average national expenditure on private schooling.

Table 5
Spending on public schooling in Bogotá DC, in USD.

Average administrative, operating and infrastructure spending during a year adjusted to 2017 prices *	
Average investment in Infrastructure of public schools between 2015 and 2017	\$15,861,647
Annual investment in infrastructure taking into account depreciation of 50 years	\$317,233
Direct transfers to schools built between 2011 and 2014 – average	\$5,988,693
Expenditure of the School meals program between 2012 and 2015 – average	\$905,516
Average administrative, operating and infrastructure spending during a year adjusted to 2017 prices	\$7,211,441
Average number of students attended the Schools that received investment in infrastructure between 2011 and 2014	\$3,249
Annual public education expenditure per capita in primary, secondary and middle school	\$2,220

Figures in dollars (adjusted by PPP 2016).

* In order to compare the figures, the data for each of the values per year was adjusted by the Consumer Price Index (CPI, from the year corresponding to the figure and December 2016).

Source: Secretaria de Educación Distrital (SED, 2017). Planning Advisory Office, Secretaria de Educación Distrital (SED 2015; 2016). Database of the Electronic System of Public Contracting (SECOP). Report of registration of the Secretaria de Educación Distrital to the Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN), Planning advisory office 2015. Annual Management Report of the Secretaria de Educación Distrital, Office of Programs and Projects 2015.

If we took into account the average cost of private schools in Bogotá D.C. (MEN, 2017), which was \$2,041 USD and the sample data obtained from the school district, the figures were not very different from previous comparisons between the public education expenditure per capita and the average expenditure of private schools in the capital. Given that there were more than 300 private schools (MEN, 2016), where families spent over \$8,000 a year and incurred in an increasingly pressing financial debt, we can determine that the annual expenditure in private schools was 33.25% higher when compared with the average annual cost of EWS. The latter reveals that hypothetically, if a family with socioeconomic conditions above average living in major cities in the country decided to EWS their children, they could reduce the time allocated to getting monetary resources and increase the time allocated to parenting, education, and good living.

Concluding Thoughts

This research was based on research conducted in the United States by Lyman (1998), Rudner (1999), and Ray (2010, 2016). To begin an exploratory work on the socioeconomic characterization of Education Without School in Colombia and expenses associated with this type of education, a survey as a methodological tool was used as a first approach to quantitative data has been achieved. The results of this survey determined that the families' average annual expenditure for EWS in Colombia is 3.7 times higher than the average for the United States found in the investigations. The reasons for this difference between the two countries originate in multiple factors. As mentioned above, the first difference is in the quality of public goods and the discrepancy between the margins of appropriation of the public. Furthermore, this difference may be based on the individualization of family groups. Overall, there is no organized environment allowing families to supplement or share their expenses or activities, incurring in most cases in a deep individualization for spending.

Even though the majority of EWS families in Colombia that responded to the survey have monthly incomes above the average in Colombia, it should not be understood in any way that this is the general behavior of the majority of the EWS population. When compared with the fieldwork and the empirical observations carried out previously, the processes of families that have income below the average in Colombia and decide to use EWS are known in detail. For example, in the case of neo-rural families, families are made up of people raised in the city who take the alternative of a life in the countryside and decide to educate their children without school. Consequently, as a result of their lifestyle away from consumerism, families generally live with an income well below the average.

It has also been observed that a large number of families decided to use EWS because it is more economical and provides them with similar, and in some cases, higher educational quality margins. These families do not consider that they are risking the education of their children. Rather, they are enjoying a more careful lifestyle with the family group. A few families with more than two (2) children, some parents have renounced long hours of work for money and would rather spend more time educating their children. Information should continue to be collected in order to advance the characterization of EWS in Colombia, and subsequently expand it to the Latin American context.

It is necessary that confirmatory studies should be made using samples and continue with specific studies on each of the approaches arising from the use and analysis of the methodological tool defined for this work. Emerging hypotheses have been generated in relation to aspects, such as sources of financing for EWS families and the ratio of optimizing their expenses and minimizing the debt, which can be caused by the high educational costs of schooling in other families. Another field for analysis emerging is given by the low margin of spending on tobacco and alcohol in the families surveyed and the care and self-care practices allowing to increase the well-being of the family group. Research about EWS is an opportunity to contribute to education improvement and the best care of human beings, especially for children.

It should be noted that EWS studies open the possibility for public institutions to provide different assistance services to EWS families, thus avoiding the homogenizing and static nature of the school. Beyond directly providing subsidies or bonuses to families assuming the EWS methods to their members, from the institutional framework, these processes could be augmented or, more specifically, generate learning environments that exceed the schools.

The challenge for public education establishment regarding EWS is to propose new ways of understanding education, but above all, propose new ways of understanding the collective, opening channels of communication in the community to generate and understand new processes so that the community can use these to educate and integrate themselves. The understanding of EWS should not be the idea that it is not going to school but must start from the understanding that true education is generated in a learning environment in which affection is conceived and circulated affection, characteristics which are not typical in a classroom setting. In other words, EWS is a question of schooling, not because it directly confronts it, but because it offers other ways of educating people, which can be constituted as a more efficient use of resources, providing better results.

Finally, EWS, in general, is a type of education advocating for the role of parenting within the educational processes, as evidenced by the results of this study in relation to the time the families surveyed dedicate to education. The daily abandonment of many children who attend school, in both public and private institutions, is regrettable. Some parents, responding to their pressing monetary needs and in different stages of life, longing for public recognition, have gradually abandoned their role as caretakers and companions of their children. In some cases, they have replaced them with vigilant and disciplinarian behavior. Some EWS processes, then, highlight the relevance of the family and focus attention on the importance to generate and circulate affection to enhance learning processes.

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