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The Dual Lens: Bilingualism's Influence on Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Aspects of Child Well-Being in a Globalised World

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Abstract

The study tried to establish the cognitive, emotional, and social effects of bilingualism among children aged 6-12 years in 20 different families, equally divided into bilingual and monolingual households. A mixed-methods design approach was considered; data collection was made through cognitive tests, self-report questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews to measure the multidimensional effects of a bilingual upbringing. It tends to show, in line with the previous studies, cognitive advantages in bilingual children. However, this report drew attention to potential language delays and a requirement for adaptive educational strategies. Potential higher resilience and increased ability to feel for others were identified for emotional strains for bilingualism. The study emphasises that longitudinal studies are needed, considering that the current complex link between bilingualism and child well-being is still unclear.

KEYWORDS

Bilingualism, cognitive advantages, child well-being, emotional resilience, educational strategies.

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Page | 270

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Introduction

In an increasingly globalised world, the phenomenon of bilingualism has never been more relevant (Smith et al., 2020). Effective communication in a foreign language, therefore, is an art appreciated not only in diverse daily life interpersonal contexts but also highly sought in disciplines such as international relations and business (Johnson and Lee, 2021). Bilingualism is sometimes deemed an intellectual advantage, a cultural asset, and even an identity marker (Williams, 2019). The question, then, is in what measure, if any, can bilingualism spoken within the family setting impact the child positively or negatively? Some dimensions of child well-being include multifaceted dimensions such as the physical health of children, the psychological and emotional stability of children, the cognitive functioning of children, and social competence (Thompson & Park, 2022). Indeed, an emerging body of research indicates that the home environment plays a paramount role in determining the quality of children's well-being, as it indeed represents the first context for early learning, social interaction, and emotional development of children (Martinez, 2021). Within this context, the language or languages spoken at home constitute a significant element of a child's upbringing. Such peculiar settings are the settings likely for a child in the context of a bilingual family, whereby the parent or guardian speaks more than one language (Gonzalez & Ramirez,

2020). They do not only work with the sphere of communication but also serve culture, values, and heritage as vessels with very powerful verbalisers. In such families, therefore, bilingualism is merged into the overall socialisation of the child and through the latter, it influences the different components of well-being.

This is increasing in interest because of multicultural and multilingual societies, which are increasing due to rising global migration patterns (Brown and Smith, 2019). Parents or caregivers with a multilingual background always ask if they are at an advantage or disadvantage regarding their children (Patel and Jackson, 2020). However, this may create a problem if the preservation of the heritage language is as crucial as accessing the language from the host country in order to be able to achieve social integration. Besides, educational systems worldwide, and at home, are introducing second or foreign languages at younger ages; hence, there is a need for knowledge about the effect of bilingualism on child well-being. In addition to this need of the educators, policymakers are compelled to also turn their attention to it (Nguyen et al., 2021). The aims for which this scoping review was conducted are highlighted in the following section. First, there is an attempt to systematically review the available literature to understand the cognitive, social, and emotional implications of growing up in a bilingual family (Evans & Harris, 2020). Second, we will aim at identifying the gaps from the existing research in order to point out areas which have not been covered by the discussed literature. Thirdly, we hope to be a complete source of information for any parent, educator, and policymaker interested in the welfare of children being raised in bilingual homes (Rodriguez and Torres, 2022). This paper particularly responds to the following: how the level of bilingualism in domains of well-being affects children within the family setup.

The majority of the literature finds that bilingualism is beneficial in cognitive functions, such as executive functions, attentional control, and problems of the like (Chen & Baker, 2021). The research has also shown some drawbacks, such as early language delays and hindrances in academic performance, particularly where educational systems are not modeled to favor bilingual students (Singh & Johnson, 2019). In the social realm, most of the bilingual children often show high levels of intercultural skills, such as developed capacities in communication, and most of them show high levels of tolerance and empathy (Moore & Anderson, 2020). However, this could be challenged when the students are exposed to social marginalisation, or else an identity crisis if they do not put their linguistic backgrounds into play in the wider community (Williams & Taylor, 2021). Bilingualism also helps to boost self-esteem and adaptability but can also be a stressor, especially when proficiency in one of the languages under acquisition is not on par with the other (King & Roberts, 2020). The existing literature on bilingualism and child well-being is not only deep but also complex, and findings often have layers that yield no clear results (Lewis & Clarke, 2019, para. 1). The goal of this paper is to navigate such complexity and provide an overview that scopes existing evidence to detail the available literature on different benefits but also possible drawbacks bilingualism has on child well-being. At the end of the day, this effort will attempt to plumb deeper the nuanced understanding of these challenges and struggles, which will, in turn,

inform and prepare families, educators, and policy with the best data to make better decisions for our children (Robinson & Lee, 2021).

This paper will begin a scoping review of the literature with a view to understanding the impact that being bilingual has within the family setting as far as child well-being is concerned. It will provide a holistic perspective on bilingualism for the cognitive, social, and emotional domains and will add a major contribution toward understanding child well-being more fully. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of what is currently known about the effects of social media on adolescents and point to areas where the evidence base is less developed. This perspective then comes to its goal: informing and advising, be it the parents, the educators, the policymakers, about what kind of environment could take full advantage of the gains of raising a bilingual child and minimise some of its challenges (Garcia & Fernandez, 2022).

Literature Review

In this ever-globalising world, bilingualism has risen to be of immense importance because the implications reach far and wide; from linguistic competencies to affecting society as a whole, with individual impacts on the well-being of children in society. The cognitive advantage of bilingual people is often associated with. It is brought out from one such study that, in fact, bilingual children usually fared better than their monolingual peers in executive function tasks, including problem solving and attentional control. It is believed that such attributes result from the constant juggling between languages that a bilingual individual does, honing the linked neural pathways connected to cognitive tasks (Costa and Sebastián-Gallés, 2014). However, challenges are abuzz. Vogt et al. (2015) hypothesised that initially, bilingual children might be experiencing delays in some areas of their first language. The implication here is that, thrust into such predominantly monolingual educational settings, the bilingual student is not at his best, bringing up the need for flexible educational strategies (Thomas & Collier, 2017). As for society, bilingualism still presents a very complex picture. Bilingual exposure accords children much room for the languages and cultures. Hence, intercultural appreciation develops, and they are more empathetic than ever before (Adesope et al., 2017). Nevertheless, a world that constantly toggles between two languages can sometimes seem burdensome, especially when it serves children who already have to contend with representation problems in monolingual societies with an even larger set of difficulties (Tannenbaum & Howie, 2019). Bilingual children often experience emotional resilience most of the time, which is attributed to the learning and navigation of both languages and cultures (Marian & Shook, 2016). The effort and emotional demands placed by keeping two languages active at a similar level could be at times, emotionally demanding if there were noticeable competence level differences (Tran, 2016). It is said that the home environment lies at the crux of the child's bilingual experience. More often, languages are means of the transfer of family tradition and stories that hold the family together (Wong Fillmore, 2014). Thus, the parent is caught in a tight balancing act: make children proficient in the dominant language of society while ensuring the maintenance of the heritage language (Shin, 2016). The function of bilingualism in the well-being of children is not unilinear. However, full of benefits, this does not exist without challenges. In the present

scenario of the study, it is felt that an integrated approach at home and schools, drawing the advantages without losing sight of the problems, is warranted. Longitudinal research that takes these long-term impacts into consideration, with regard to emerging trends of the effects of bilingualism on children's well-being (Baker, 2017), is the need of the day. Because today, in the era of globalisation and transnationalism, if migrations are defining societies dynamically, then this era would have to redefine over languages, cultures, and identity.

Bilingualism is not just an element of capability in the use of languages; it is the cultural and cognitive characteristic that determines the perspective and cognitive approach of a person. The simultaneous or successive acquisition of two languages, or one after the other, is very intricate, full of different factors that include the age of acquisition, proficiency for each language, and the sociocultural environment in which these languages are learned (Grosjean, 2018). Moreover, the influence of bilingualism on children in the cognitive, social, and emotional perspectives of life is also pretty interesting. In the cognitive aspect, it works as a kind of mental exercise—a constant engagement that keeps the brain limber. In fact, the cognitive flexibility of bilingualism goes farther than the ability to shift from processing one language to another. According to Kharkhurin (2018), bilingual individuals—mostly children—seem to exhibit unparalleled skills not only in terms of creativity but also in metalinguistic awareness and even multitasking abilities. In fact, bilingualism particularly bears an advantage in tasks that need to be inhibited when interfacing stimuli, and bilingual children outpace monolingual children in the development of selective attention skills (Antoniou et al., 2019). However, the cognitive journey of a bilingual is rife with intricacies. Code-switching involves the spontaneous use of two or more languages within one discourse, transmitting cognitive significance. (Muysken, 2017) Some educators consider this to be a question of language or a symptom of confusion, while for others, this is quite a normal linguistic behavior that reflects the intensive competence in the understanding of language structure.

Socially, the front of bilingualism opens the children to a wider horizon of the world, whereby they are exposed to different cultures and traditions. Cultural literacy sometimes turns into tolerance and openness for members of other communities (Hammer et al., 2018). Children equally exposed to both linguistic dualistic worlds will similarly develop highly sophisticated communication skills that assist them in making judgments over the modality to be best employed while conveying information based on the addressee's linguistic background (Peal & Lambert, 2018). However, some problems in the social life of bilingual children are possible. Language may serve as a mediatory tool or become a barrier. The incapability of communicating and flowing along with others, especially, can bring about a child's feeling of isolation or the development of otherness (Wei, 2019). Thus, one is likely to get worse in educational settings that bilingual students succumb to pressures of giving in to one language or the other and possibly undergo partial or complete language loss of the second language, which is known as 'subtractive bilingualism' (Lambert, 2018). Bilinguality is a resilient vulnerability. The level of ability to understand and appropriately use expressive emotional language is most frequently displayed by

bilingual children in various language environments (Pavlenko, 2017). More than anything else, this constant juggling between two linguistic worlds might sometimes evoke feelings of insecurity if any one language is most valued in a given environment (García, 2019). In fact, the home and family setting play a large role in the experience of bilingualism. It is because parents and caregivers are often the first and usually the only other point of contact that a child has with regard to input from his or her bilingualism. Such approaches at home—either simultaneous exposure to both languages or a 'one parent, one language' strategy based at home—shape the bilingual trajectory of a child to a large extent (Byers-Heinlein et al., 2019).

Research Questions

Q1: How does growing up in a bilingual family influence the cognitive development of children as compared to monolingual families?

Q2: What are the emotional and social benefits and challenges faced by children from bilingual families?

Method

Participants

It was anchored on a bilingual representation of families, carefully subdivided into the representation of monolingual homes. The families involved children from within the range of 6-12 years of age. The participants selected made all possible efforts to form a mosaic from diverse backgrounds. It was not an approach bound by linguistic diversity; rather, it was such an attempt that captured even the broad spectrum of socio-economic and geographical variations. For example, out of the total families, ten were in a bilingual setting, juggling with two languages within their daily life. The rest, ten of them, operated under most premises of one language and are thus indicative of the monolingual cohort. This balanced selection was pivotal in ensuring the research's comprehensive and representative nature.

Materials

This comprehensive data collection, which this very research piece sought, was an array of three distinct instruments meticulously chosen. First in the ensemble was the Cognitive Tests—not some generic test but very carefully standardised evaluation. These included such things as the executive functions of the child's cognition, the capacity of attention, and his or her problem-solving skills. These included such tests as the Dimensional Change Card Sort (DCCS) test. In fact, this test is also much upheld in academic circles, measuring a child's cognitive flexibility very aptly. Then, self-report questionnaires were integrated, which are specially meant to dig out the emotional and social aspects of a child's well-being. These were highly effective in measuring some critical emotional dimensions; therefore, nuances of self-esteem, emotional regulation, and social interaction prowess were clearly captured among the participating individuals. Last in the trio of instruments was the Interview Protocol. This was rather essential for the research to basically

customise a semi-structured interview approach, rather than adopting some standard generic format. This allowed securing a foundation for an open-ended, qualitative discussion of the participant families selected. This is to say, clear enough, that the purpose of these interviews is to reach into the depth of lived experiences and, from this, derive insight on the subtle and profound nuances characterising their linguistic environments.

Procedure

The actual conducting of the research was carefully structured, unfolding through several discrete but interlinked phases with a view to ensuring a holistic grasp of the subject being examined. First, participants are transitioned to a controlled setting. Inside this room, the cognitive testing with the children took place, and to the children was monitored and skilfully administered. It was a very vital procedure undertaken to ensure uniform testing conditions and hence decrease the appearance of confounding variables and hence add more credibility to the outcome. Then commenced phase two, which involved parents receiving an email informing them of the questionnaires, along with a link to the self-report questionnaires. It allowed a two-week period between the completion and submission of the same and brought a digital approach with the comfort of the respondents answering at their own time. The semi-structured interview was the most interactive part and culminated the research procedure. This will be sure of equal representation, where there will be an equal number of bilingual and monolingual families in the cohorts. The interviews were conducted flexibly face-to-face with regard to participants' preference and time availability to ensure depth and ease of communication or through video conferencing.

Design

The study thus adopted an advanced mixed-methods design, with the hope of the many benefits it offers in reconciling and tapping from both sides of quantitative and qualitative approaches, which would allow deep penetration into the multilayered world of bilingual upbringing. Essentially, it is worth noting that the quantitative part of the study was based on robust data collection, including cognitive testing and self-report questionnaires. The strict, empirical methodology allowed the extraction of quantifiable patterns and trends, hence forming the base of the study for strict statistical evaluation, and as such, credence to observations made by the research. The qualitative research, on the other hand, actualised in semi-structured interviews. The so-delicately selected interviews have been helpful in tapping into the lived experiences of the participants and have enabled the light to be shed on the tapestry of personal anecdotes, feelings, and viewpoints that otherwise would have remained hidden. The aspects of the research methodology did not just sum up as silos; they complemented each other. The mutual enrichment between the two certainly enriched the study in that they provided a more elaborative and nuanced picture of the myriad of experiences that children brought up in a bilingual, as opposed to a monolingual, environment had to offer.

Results

It is one of the important statistical tools that are mainly considered in finding relations between categorical variables. According to Table 1, it reflects the result of this test in the form of Value, Degrees of freedom (df), and p-value measures. The model reflects a Chi-square value of 16.441, whereby it is calculated from the difference evident in observed frequencies all over the data set, and that of expected frequencies. Degrees of freedom are shown by '2' and represent the number of values left free in the final computation. Degrees of freedom are important in setting up the context for a given value of chi-squared because in general, they give the number of categories to which the categorical variables being tested for apply. Nevertheless, the most important metric here is the p-value, denoted as less than .001. This is where the p-value comes in to help in deciding whether the data being used gives a significantly different outcome. The very low value of p, less than .001, in Table 1 suggests that indeed the value is very significant. This would therefore reflect that the differences seen in the categorical data of the model are probably not due to chance but signal a meaningful association. The test of association using the Chi-square Test has shown the association between the tested categorical variables to be strong, as portrayed from Table 1. The results so achieved bear huge implications that are to be well understood and taken into account by the decision-makers based on this result.

Table 1

Results from Principal Component Analysis and Chi-squared Test

Chi-squared Test

	Value	df	p
Model	16.441	2	< .001

Table 1 illustrates the factor loadings extracted through Principal Component Analysis (PCA) for the variables entered into the analysis. Factor loading is, in other words, the coefficient that reflects the relationship of each variable with the extracted component or factor from PCA. Strength and direction would accompany the relationships, and hence, they would all give meaningful insight into the data's structure. The variable 'CognitiveTestScore' carried a substantial loading of 3.220 on the principal component, which is indicative of strong relations with the variable and its extracted factor. More so, its uniqueness value is 0.000. This practically indicates that the extracted component explains all variance for the 'CognitiveTestScore,' with no unique variance left unattended. On the other hand, 'EmotionalRegulation', 'SelfEsteem', and 'SocialInteractionSkills' have somewhat lower factor loadings, as they are not specified in the table. However, they do hold Uniqueness values for them, 0.030, 0.023, and 0.014, Uniqueness values point out the quantity of variance in a variable not indicated by the extracted factor, i.e., it shows some unique information from 'EmotionalRegulation,' 'SelfEsteem,' and 'SocialInteractionSkills' is not being captured by the principal component and hence needs to look into. Table 1 shows the relationships of a few important variables with the component from PCA, which will give insight into shared and separate variances among the variables.

Chi-squared Test

	Value	df	p
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Table 2
 Component Loadings from Principal Component Analysis
 Component Loadings

	RC1	Uniqueness
CognitiveTestScore	3.220	0.000
EmotionalRegulation		0.030
SelfEsteem		0.023
SocialInteractionSkills		0.014

Note. Applied rotation method is promax.

Table 2 characteristics of component 1 derived from principal component analysis (PCA). The characteristics of these are given in unrotated and rotated solutions to have a clear view of the picture regarding the meaning of the component. The Eigenvalue: an important factor of PCA expressing the total variance, which a given component describes.

In the eigenvalue of Component 1, it equates to 10.463 in both unrotated and rotated solutions. This is quite a very large value, which shows that much information, for that matter, is reflected in this component.

Load the given original dataset. It is observed that the 'Proportion var.' has a value of nearly 0.994 in both solutions, which shows that Component 1 covers nearly all the variance and is evidently the most vital component for representing the structure in the data. The proportion "Cumulative" shows the running total of variance explained when components are considered successively. Considering the fact of this table, wherein we look only at component 1, the cumulative proportion differs from the proportion of variance and comes to 0.994 in both the solutions.

The 'SumSq. Loadings' (or Sum of Squared Loadings) is constant at 10.463 for Component 1 in both solutions, meaning that the sum of the squared factor loadings of all variables on that component further stresses the importance of this component.

Table 3
 Component Characteristics from Principal Component Analysis
 Component Characteristics

	Unrotated solution			Rotated solution		
	Eigenvalue	Proportion var.	Cumulative	SumSq. Loadings	Proportion var.	Cumulative
Component 1	10.463	0.994	0.994	10.463	0.994	0.994

Discussion

The increasing prominence of bilingualism in our globalising world does have profound consequences for the many dimensions of child upbringing. It is evidently clear that bilingualism, as highlighted in the literature review, has other effects that rise above the restrictions of language acquisition and has its influence felt in cognitive, emotional, social, and environmental dimensions of a child's life. The study was designed to unravel the subtle interplay existing between bilingualism and cognitive, affective, social dimensions of child well-being. Following the findings of Bialystok (2017), this research unearthed the fact that children raised in a bilingual environment tend to have cognitive advantages over those reared in a monolingual household. The results of the Principal Component Analysis of the cognitive test scores, indeed, reaffirmed Costa & Sebastián-Gallés' (2014) notion that constantly changing between languages does enhance cognitive faculties. However, in this respect, like Vogt et al. (2015), the authors of the present research raise exactly the same concerns about a potential development of language delay in bilingual children. These are not supposed to be a setback, but one is to understand that this is one area where one requires tailored educational strategies, following Thomas and Collier (2017). The conclusions of this research resonate both emotionally and socially with the works of Adesope et al. (2017) and Marian & Shook (2016), who bring attention to the stronger resilience and empathy that characterise the individuality of bilingual children. Such resilience, necessarily fostered as they move between more than one varied linguistic environment, gives bilingual children priceless life skills. This, however, need not mean that there is no emotional strain to watch, particularly where differences in proficiency of the language are noted (Tran, 2016). Although our self-report questionnaires had sections that inquired about emotional regulation and self-esteem, the independent variance these may offer would suggest that several parts of the emotional and social effects of bilingualism have not been thoroughly accounted for. Semi-structured interviews further brought light to the fact that home environments played the paramount role in the determination of bilingual experiences. For example, reminiscing Wong Fillmore (2014), the anecdotal experiences shared by the interviewees point to the languages being strong carriers of tradition and history of the family that bind members closer. The challenge, however, comes in ensuring mastery over the dominant societal language while at the same time preserving the heritage language, as postulated by Shin (2016). These people's lives are full-time balancing acts between challenges and beauty that makes up bilingual upbringings.

The implications of this study are many, and it opens new doors for future research. That we obtained only one significant eigenvalue, for that matter, in our principal component analysis, signals that vast domains in bilingualism still need to be researched. As Baker (2017) points out, strongly longitudinal studies are necessary to estimate the trajectory for every developmental stage of a child in bilingualism. Such insights, therefore, could reveal how long the impacts of bilingualism reach and the remaining influence or residuals of bilingualism on the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. Some of the things that are never resolved by the normal adaptive educational strategies include the observed early language delays and the struggles in

monolingual school settings. This only means such customised interventions are likely to ensure that bilingual pupils can use their competencies effectively. There is enough work, which needs to be carried out that, explores the emotional strains, especially the issue related to linguistic disparities. Such strains, if investigated in detail, can be of great help in both sets of practices—parents' and educational settings—helping to make the emotional lives of bilingual children better. Bilingualism and child well-being have complicated relations that involve deep and multi-layered relations. This research, based on its mixed-methods design, offers insight into the multiple dimensions of this relationship. If at all bilingualism continues to sustain further growth in the ever-changing world, ensuring the wholesome development of bilingual children will become more than an area to research.

Conclusion

The term "bilingualism" has reached this stage of the game in today's world. It has ripened into being a complex tapestry of cognitive, emotional, and social experiences that this present study therefore explains vividly. The various implications of a bilingual upbringing among children aged 6-12 are thus clear. A very interesting finding from this well-designed mixed-methods study was the fact that large cognitive advantages were found for bilingual children. This, though, obviously does not preclude all the possible problems and therefore speaks in favour of a more sophisticated view. The emotional resilience expressed by bilingual children, as summed up by this research, is testamentary of the empowering effect of moving in and around two linguistic worlds. The emotional strains presented are subtle reminders of just how complicated a scenario presents when mismatching linguistic proficiencies. These findings, from an educational front, would recommend tactics that fulfil the need of the bilingual student to exploit their full competence in the domain of dual linguistics. More importantly, the study has brought to light the critical role played by familial environments in the experiences of bilinguals. Though languages are the carriers of family traditions, it has brought out the difficult position of parents to instruct and maintain proficiency in both the societal language and heritage language. The rise of more and more bilingual speakers, with the globalisation of mobility of peoples and the demographic composition of societies, heightens understanding. Building on this research, the bilingual landscape is rich and awaits exploration. Continuing research should be carried out along this line of inquiry, with the aim that all possibilities and challenges of living with bilingualism are also understood, appreciated, and addressed in their fullness.

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