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Kindergarten Teacher Attitudes toward Developing Economic Concepts in Young Children

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Abstract

This study explores kindergarten teachers' attitudes toward integrating economic concepts into early childhood education. It aims to understand how teachers perceive the importance of instilling basic economic concepts, such as needs and wants, consumption and saving, spending, and simple trade, in preschool children, the results indicate that kindergarten teachers positively perceive the importance of developing economic awareness at an early age in children. They emphasize that instilling these concepts contributes to building responsible future individuals and enhancing practical life skills. The study revealed a positive attitude among teachers regarding their willingness to adopt strategies that support the development of economic concepts.

Keywords: Kindergarten Teacher Attitudes Developing Economic Concepts, Young Children.

Introduction

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which is said to be a bright future map for the country, aims to capitalize on these resources and skills, optimize investments, and strive for progress and development. This is achieved by teaching children's economic concepts, as children are the country's future investment and the leaders of its economic development. The earlier these economic concepts are instilled in children's minds, the more deeply they will be ingrained and the greater the benefits. Financially, they will be implemented and implemented in the future, in today's rapidly evolving global economy; early financial education is gaining recognition as a crucial aspect of childhood development. Kindergarten teachers, as the first formal educators in a child's life, play a key role in shaping their basic understanding of economic principles. The attitudes of kindergarten teachers toward incorporating economic concepts in early childhood education significantly influence the methods, depth, and enthusiasm with which these concepts are introduced in the classroom, Naseem's (2013) study concluded that it is necessary to focus on teaching children the principles of economics to achieve the goals of Vision 2030 and to implement the standards for learning economic principles in kindergarten curricula, Abdel Halim's (2013) study also indicated the importance of enhancing kindergarten curricula with activities that address economic concepts appropriate for children.

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The Importance of Developing Economic Concepts for Children in Early Childhood

Economic concepts can be developed using certain strategies and ideas, such as: The difference between needs and wants, the concept of money and exchange, Saving and spending, Work and reward, the importance of sharing and trading, Research shows that children who are exposed to such concepts early are better equipped to make responsible financial decisions as adults, This supports the findings of Al Saud's (2020) study, which emphasized the need to focus on teaching children the principles of economics to achieve the goals of Vision 2030, as well as to implement the standards for learning economic principles in kindergarten curricula, which are positive for children at this stage. Early.

Kindergarten Teachers' Attitudes toward Developing Economic Concepts and the Factors Influencing Them

Teachers' attitudes refer to their beliefs, feelings, and behavioral aspects. Positive teachers' attitudes toward developing children's economic concepts in the early stages can lead to: Enable greater integration for economic topics in classroom activities, Innovative use of real-life simulations, such as gaming markets, Collaboration with parents to enhance economic learning, Willingness to pursue professional development in economic education

There are also some factors that influence the development of economic concepts among teachers, including, educational background: Teachers with economics experience or financial literacy training tend to appreciate its importance and are more confident in teaching related concepts, Curriculum guidelines: In systems where economic education is explicitly mentioned in the curricula, teachers are more likely to implement it. Also, there is the child's perceived readiness: Some teachers believe that economic concepts are too abstract for young children, which affects their desire to teach them. There is also institutional support: The availability of resources, training opportunities, and supportive school leadership foster positive attitudes toward teaching economic concepts. In addition, there is personal financial literacy: Teachers with higher personal financial awareness are more likely to appreciate the value of early economic education and feel competent in teaching it.

Study Problem

Developing economic concepts is an important aspect of child rearing. The educational process is incomplete without economic education. There are deficiencies in many children's economic behaviors, which reflects this decline and their weak grasp of economic concepts. A survey study was conducted on 20 kindergarten teachers. The results indicated the need to develop economic concepts in young children, based on the teachers' responses in the survey. Opinions and trends regarding the necessity of teaching economic concepts to children in early childhood are growing day by day. The reality is that children need teachers who actively engage in activities to develop economic concepts at this early age. Many kindergarten teachers lack a clear understanding of the development of basic economic concepts such as money, saving and consumption, needs versus wants, and exchange. Based on the above, the study posed the following question: What are kindergarten teachers' attitudes toward developing economic concepts in young children?

Study objectives:

To identify kindergarten teachers' attitudes toward developing economic concepts in young children.

Importance of the Study

The importance of the study is evident in developing economic concepts in early childhood. The preschool stage is a critical period during which children begin to understand the world around them, including knowledge and understanding of basic economic concepts such as money, needs and wants, saving, spending, trade, and consumption. The importance of this study lies in the following:

- The importance of early childhood in shaping a child's personality.
- The importance of economic values in guiding a child's behavior.
- Promoting and developing financial literacy: By teaching children's simple economic concepts, it helps build the foundation for responsible financial management later in life.
- Identifying needs priorities in early childhood and understanding consequences.

Study Limits

The study's limitations are as follows:

Subject Limit: To identify kindergarten teachers' attitudes toward developing economic concepts in young children.

Spatial Limit: Najran City, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Temporary Limit: The second semester of the 2024-2025 academic year.

Human Limit: Kindergarten teachers in Najran City.

Terminology of study:

Kindergarten Teacher Attitudes

Kindergarten teacher attitudes are defined as "a set of mental and emotional responses that a teacher displays toward a specific topic, which influences her teaching behavior and the way she interacts with children and various classroom situations" (Abdul Hamid, 2005), Kafafi (2003) indicates that attitude is "an acquired psychological predisposition that appears in an individual's responses to people, objects, or situations, and influences their behavior and interpretation of various situations.", In the field of early childhood, attitudes represent the main factor in shaping teachers' teaching and interaction styles, as studies show that teachers' positive attitudes towards a particular topic (such as economic concepts) lead to the integration of this topic into the classroom environment and its activation in appropriate ways (Dodge et al., 2002).

Development of Economic Concepts

"An educational process aimed at helping children understand basic concepts related to economics, such as saving, spending, need, desire, exchange, and resources, through educational activities and experiences appropriate to their mental and developmental age" (Abdul Hamid, 2010)., It is also defined as "providing the child with the ability to distinguish between simple economic concepts related to their daily life, and encouraging them to make economic decisions based on understanding, such as choosing between purchasing two items based on their needs and resources" (Al-Khalifa, 2012)., Researchers confirm that developing economic concepts in early childhood helps children understand the world around them and enhances their skills in critical thinking, decision-making, and financial responsibility (Furnham, 1999).

Previous studies

- McCormick & Mathews (2017) emphasized that professional development significantly influences positive attitude change toward economic instruction.
- Abu-Ghazaleh (2018) found that 72% of surveyed kindergarten teachers in Jordan believed economic concepts were important, but only 35% felt equipped to teach them effectively.
- Study (Ibrahim, 2018) the current study aimed to develop a program based on the concept mapping strategy to help kindergarten children acquire some economic concepts. Concept maps are effective in the educational field across various subjects and at all levels of education, particularly kindergarten, as they are the foundation for shaping a child's personality and developing them in all aspects, providing them with a wide range of knowledge, skills, and diverse concepts. The current study addressed some economic concepts, including (investment, paper money, money, currencies, the market, consumption, sources of income, wealth, work, social class, etc.). These concepts were taught to kindergarten children using the concept mapping strategy, which simplified them and divided each main concept into a number of sub-concepts supported by illustrative images. This provided enjoyment and excitement for children, and linked the words denoting the concepts to the elements of movement and representation of the map content. This demonstrated the effectiveness of the program used and the suitability of the mental images for kindergarten children. The study relied on the quasi-experimental approach with a single group in the practical application of the program, using pre- and post-measurements to test economic concepts, and an observation card (study tools). One of the most prominent results of the study was the effectiveness of the program based on the concept mapping strategy in acquiring some economic concepts in kindergarten children. This contributed to teaching them economic behaviors that make them aware of the crises we are experiencing today, between high prices and low income. This helps them strive to build a vision to solve their family's economic problems, starting with participating in solving the economic crisis tomorrow, as they aspire to a better position in a society with a future full of goodness and prosperity. God willing. The study recommended the necessity of using the concept mapping strategy or mental images as a basic activity in kindergarten, which contributes to providing children with various knowledge, information, and concepts that work to shape their behaviors in an organized intellectual manner. Therefore, we hope that the results of the current study will contribute to developing the curriculum followed in teaching kindergarten children, and ensuring the use of modern learning strategies and covering them in future research studies that cover other aspects not covered by the current study.
- Al-Zahrani (2020) reported that teachers in Saudi Arabia showed positive attitudes when provided with training and materials tailored to early childhood learners.

Comments on Previous Studies:

The current study agrees with Ibrahim (2018) regarding the necessity of kindergarten children acquiring economic concepts at this early stage. The results of this study also agree with Abu Ghazala (2018) regarding helping kindergarten children acquire some economic concepts. The current study was also distinguished by its application to kindergarten teachers, also in the city of Najran, Saudi Arabia. The study's variables were also used in constructing the questionnaire for kindergarten teachers.

Study Population and Sample:

The study population consisted of kindergarten teachers in kindergarten institutions in Najran City. The study was conducted during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year and consisted of a random sample of (109) kindergarten teachers.

Study Methodology:

The study followed the descriptive-analytical approach, which focuses on collecting accurate scientific descriptions of the phenomenon under study, describing the current reality and its interpretations, identifying common practices, and identifying the opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of individuals and groups, as well as the ways in which they grow and develop. It also aims to study the relationships between various phenomena (Abdul Hafeez, 2000), p. 84, by assessing kindergarten teachers' ability to develop economic concepts in kindergarten children.

Study Tools:

The researchers developed the study tools (questionnaire) after reviewing relevant information and related studies and based on the information available to the researchers. They prepared the questionnaire in its final form, and the number of its paragraphs amounted to (12) paragraphs. When constructing the questionnaire, consideration was given to its suitability. Since the study was descriptive, the researchers tried to diversify the statistical processing method, as he used the SPSS program to convert non-parametric values (yes - no) into comparable parametric values. He calculated the range of the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and degree of practice. It was found that the range of the mean from 1 to 1.66 represents poor practice, while the mean from 1.67 to 2.32 is average practice, while the mean from 2.33 to 3 is considered high practice. To answer the study questions, the arithmetic means, and standard deviations were extracted for each paragraph of the scale, as well as the percentages.

Stability of study tools:

Aspects of the questionnaire	Number of items	Number of participants	Reliability coefficient
		Kindergarten teachers	Kindergarten teachers
Kindergarten Teacher Attitudes toward Developing Economic Concepts in Young Children	5	109	0.868

Table (1)

shows the reliability of the study tool (kindergarten teachers' questionnaire) regarding their attitudes toward developing economic concepts among kindergarten children. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used. Data was obtained from the total sample, and the following are the stability data:

Table one above shows that the values of Alpha- Cronbach indicate a high degree of internal consistency, which, in turn proves that the scale contains high degrees of reliability significance.

Because the study was descriptive, the researchers sought to diversify their statistical analysis methods. SPSS was used to convert non-parametric (yes/no) values into comparable and contrasting parametric values. The range of means and degree of practice were determined. For

example, practice with a mean between 1.00 and 1.66 was described as weak, practice with a mean between 1.67 and 2.32 was described as average, and practice with a mean between 2.33 and 3.00 was described as very strong. Finally, to answer the study questions, mean scores, percentages, and standard deviations were calculated for all items on the study scale separately.

Study Results:

Kindergarten Teacher Attitudes toward Developing Economic Concepts in Young Children	Responses of kindergarten teachers (N.=109)		
	Mean	Std.	Rank Practice degree
1. I believe that teaching children about saving is essential to building a healthy financial awareness.	2.78	0.816	high
2. I have sufficient knowledge of methods for teaching saving children in kindergarten.	1.88	0.826	Moderate
3. I believe that incorporating saving into the curriculum will improve children's financial skills.	2.84	0.986	High
4. I understand the impact of the concept of saving on children's future financial behavior.	2.95	0.976	High
5. I feel the need for more training on financial education for children.	2.89	0.985	High

Table 2

Means and standard deviations of kindergarten teachers' attitudes toward developing economic concepts for young children.

Looking at Table No. (2), we find that the weighted arithmetic means of the sample members' answers to the paragraphs of this field ranged between an arithmetic mean ranging between the medium and the large. This indicates that kindergarten teachers in various childhood institutions develop economic concepts in kindergarten institutions, and this experience was important and necessary for the kindergarten child because of its impact on his future life and constitutes sustainable professional development for him. It became clear from the responses of the study sample that the teachers have the ability and great experience in developing economic concepts, and most of the answers to the questionnaire paragraphs came with a high degree of verification, which means that kindergarten teachers in the city of Najran have a positive attitude towards developing economic concepts in the early childhood stage., The current study is consistent with Al-Zahrani's (2021) study, which found that teachers demonstrated positive attitudes toward developing concepts when receiving training programs.

Conclusion

The study results concluded that kindergarten teachers play a pivotal role in introducing children to economic concepts. These positive attitudes foster responsibility and can enhance or hinder children's early exposure to financial literacy. These findings reinforce teachers' attitudes through education, resources, and institutional support, which is essential for effectively integrating economic learning into early childhood education. The results concluded that:

- Teaching children how to save is essential for building sound financial awareness.

- Integrating saving into the curriculum will improve children's financial skills.
- The concept of saving influences children's future financial behavior.
- Children need more training in financial education.

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