

The Level of National Awareness among Public and Private Kindergarten Children in the City of Amman, Jordan

Ali Alelaimat^a, Hesham Alomyan^{b*}, Hana H. Al-Fulfuly^c, ^aHashemite University, Zarq, Jordana, ^bUniversity of Petra, Amman, Jordan, ^cIsra University, Jordan, Email: ^aAliolaimat@hu.edu.jo, ^{b*}halomyan@uop.edu.jo, ^chanaalfulfuly@yahoo.com

This study aimed at identifying the level of national awareness among kindergarten children in the city of Amman, Jordan. The study sample consisted of 196 male and female children from public and private kindergartens. The study used a national awareness scale prepared by the present researchers. The results of the study showed that kindergarten children in public and private schools have an acceptable level of national awareness. However, private kindergarten children have a higher level of national awareness than public kindergarten children. No significant differences were found between male and female children in the level of national awareness.

Key words: *National Awareness, National Education, Kindergarten Schools, Kindergarten Children.*

Introduction

In the past few decades, educational systems have put special emphasis on the pre-school stage as one of the most important stages that contribute to the formation of the human character. The significance of this stage has also relied on the guidance that can be provided and the level of effect on learners' behaviour combined with their physical, mental, and psychological development. It is a stage where learners begin to build their understanding of themselves and the community around them through their interaction with the environment.

The interest in children and the level of caring given to them since early childhood is one of the criteria used to measure the progress and development of any society. Focussing on children's welfare and upbringing is vital because it helps to prepare them to face challenges posed by rapid changes in their life and in society. Many countries are now facing social,

cultural, scientific, moral and even psychological challenges that affect the care, ethics, and upbringing of children. Interest in childcare has become one of the most important goals of many societies, including Jordanian society. The importance of this interest stems from the fact that children are generally considered the true source of strength and development of any society.

Most societies have witnessed changes in the lives and values of their individuals and Jordanian society is one such society. These changes have created numerous social phenomena, such as social violence, for example. Violence among students has become evident at universities and schools where negative behaviour sometimes erupts and serves as an obstacle to the development of a stable society. This raises a concern as to how a society perceives citizenship. The result is an increase in the need to promote the values of citizenship among students, with special emphasis on the early childhood stage.

The early childhood stage is the most important stage in the process of educating and caring for children. Children of today will deal and interact with the information technology revolution and actively participate in the political, social, and economic decision-making of the future. Therefore, children need an upbringing that will develop their awareness of both the present and future in which acceptable values and good morals are cultivated. Arabella (2007) has pointed to the importance of the early childhood stage as it controls most of the subsequent stages of the growth and formation of the child's personality. At this stage, the child acquires some concepts, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, in addition to national values, patriotism, and the freedom to belong.

The development of national awareness in pre-school children is often an important educational objective in the developed world. It is also an indication of the coherence of the people of a given society and the rules underlying the structure and development of communities. The importance of developing national awareness in the early years of children's lives has been emphasised by many scholars and educators. For example, Fernanza (2011), the UNICEF representative in Tunisia, stated in a press conference that educating children about the principles of citizenship is considered one of the main areas of UNICEF's intervention. This includes the dissemination of citizenship values that should be taught at this important stage because it is imperative for the educational institution, as the appropriate place for social integration, to teach children the values and principles of behaviour in order to create a balanced society of equality and justice.

Entwistle (1994) stressed that national education should be taught in the official curriculum of schools, where the policy of school usages, customs, and provisions of activities play a prominent role in the acquisition of knowledge and information linked to national education. A study by John (2003) confirmed the importance of instilling citizenship values and loyalty

through teaching history in primary education in order to produce citizens who possess the inherent skills and values of belonging and citizenship.

Therefore, it is essential to develop a culture of citizenship in children in their early years as this improves their sense of belonging to their people, homeland, and heritage. There is also a national need to develop a sense of identity and social knowledge and the capacity to participate in the community, as well as a knowledge of the rights and duties of citizens in accordance with the international requirements.

Literature Review

The issue of citizenship in education has been of great interest to educators and research centres around the world. Several studies have been conducted to investigate the appropriate degree of including national education in school curricula, and how this inclusion prompts loyalty and citizenship in students. For example, Khedr (2000) identified the role of education in the promotion of a sense of belonging to a homeland. His study used a descriptive approach in diagnosing the awareness of belonging among students at the basic education stage in Egypt with the aim of determining how the school contributes to strengthening and developing the sense of belonging among students. The study found that the school plays an effective role in achieving the sense of belonging in students by involving them in activities and programs that take place within the school.

Another study by Orabi (2010) aimed to identify the role of the family and the school in the development of loyalty and citizenship in children. The results indicated that loyalty is an important aspect of citizenship. Nationalism is a result of citizenship. There is no effective loyalty without good citizenship. Citizenship is acquired by simply belonging to a particular group or state, while nationalism is acquired through good deeds. The individual develops national loyalty from his home environment first, then from his school, and then from his entire community, so that the individual feels that she/he is part of the community. The results of the study also indicated that the family has a great role in raising children to be loyal citizens.

Abdulwahab's study (2012) investigated the effect of activities proposed for developing citizenship in pre-school children. The study sample consisted of 27 male and female children, aged between 5 and 6 years, selected from one of the kindergartens in the city of Khartoum, Sudan. The results showed that the activities proposed were effective in the development of citizenship in children. In their study, Khalis and Abu-Hilu (2013) identified the value of teaching citizenship to kindergarten children in Palestine and measured the attitudes of kindergarten teachers towards teaching this subject. The sample of the study consisted of 60 kindergarten teachers. The study used three tools: parameters of teachers' trends, semi-court interviews, and analysis of the content of kindergarten curricula. The results of the study showed that the attitudes of the teachers towards teaching the subject of citizenship were

positive, but the results of the interviews also indicated that including the subject of citizenship was limited and that it was not directly present in kindergarten curricula.

In the same vein, Mohammed (2013) carried out a project to design a list of appropriate citizenship values for kindergarten children and to determine the extent to which the kindergarten programs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considered teachers' perspectives on citizenship values. The sample consisted of 30 kindergarten teachers in Al-Baha region. A set of measuring tools prepared by the researcher included a list of the appropriate values of citizenship for kindergarten children, as well as a questionnaire for kindergarten teachers on the extent to which kindergarten activities take into consideration citizenship values. The study results indicated that the units included in the self-learning curriculum for kindergartens in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considered some of the appropriate citizenship values for the kindergarten child, noting that the ranking of the values of citizenship in the self-learning approach was as follows: freedom, order, cooperation, and religious affiliation. The objectives of the educational units did not include the values of satisfaction or rationalisation of consumption. The results also showed that kindergartens through integral child-oriented activities seek to develop the values of citizenship in kindergarten children and to prepare them to be good citizens.

Similarly, Habib (2014) conducted a study examined contemporary trends in citizenship education through various international examples and Saudi Arabia's experience in instilling citizenship in an attempt to reach a proposed conception of citizenship education suitable for the Saudi environment. The results indicated that national education is very important to develop citizens according to the society's philosophy and enlighten them with the knowledge, values, and skills that help them perform their role in society through the school, the media, and all the institutions of society that make them good citizens.

In a comparative study, Starkey (2000) investigated citizenship education in Britain and France. He found that both countries were more interested in focussing on citizenship education in the late 1990s. However, the English education system was interested in creating a multicultural society that was united in patriotism and loyalty. At the same time, the French educational system adopted a commitment to renounce racism, advocate human rights, and oppose unfair practices. This divergence in orientation reflects the difference in political ideology from which the political systems of Britain and France originated. While the French education system certainly emphasises the integration of individuals within the republican political system, the English system aims to create a new society and a new national identity. Whatever the difference between the two systems, they both agree on educating citizens about their duties and rights and on encouraging them to take positive action in serving the country and achieving its interests.

Finkel (2000) emphasises that the US government relies heavily on civic education programs because it teaches the values of democracy, respects national gains, and promotes national inclusion and cohesion. This motivates the US government to spend tens of millions of dollars a year on these programs. Through a field study on some developing countries, Finkel showed that teaching democracy in schools contributes positively to respect for the opinion of others and ways to live with others and tolerate them, all of which has a tangible impact on the concepts of citizenship education.

In reviewing the literature and related studies, it is clear that most previous studies investigating the subject of citizenship demonstrated the importance of citizenship in any society, the role of family and school in developing the concept of citizenship, and the importance of the concept of nation (e.g., Khalis & Abu-Hilu, 2013; Orabi, 2010). Meanwhile, other studies aimed at clarifying the concept of citizenship education and its practice (e.g., Finkel, 2000; Habib, 2014; Muhammad, 2013; Starkey, 2000).

The present study agrees with the previous studies in their focus on the subject of citizenship, but it differs from them in that it deals with a very important issue, namely, the role of public and private kindergartens in the development of national awareness in children. Hence, the objective of the present study is to determine the level of national awareness of children in both public and private kindergartens.

Statement of the Problem

The current challenge in Jordan is to uphold the values of citizenship. The Jordanian child is now exposed to cultural invasions which threaten to destroy the value of the nation. Consequently, there is a need for the development of national awareness which must be the focus of the curricula and educational programs in kindergartens and schools. It is widely accepted that the main objective of a motherland is to achieve loyalty to the values and principles of the land.

To ensure the development of national awareness in Jordanian children, a special unit named "National Unity" has been included within the national curriculum for children at the preschool level. This curriculum was designed to develop a national understanding of citizenship and its concepts. However, the curricula of private kindergarten programs have tackled the issue of repatriation and citizenship only through class activities performed outside the class, as indicated by the researchers of the present study in Amman.

Hence, the present study is an attempt to determine to what extent public and private kindergarten programs contribute to the development of national awareness among children. To achieve this goal the level of national awareness of both public and private kindergarten

children will be measured and a comparison will be drawn between the level of national awareness of both public and private kindergarten children.

Objectives of the Study

The present study sought to identify:

1. The level of national awareness among the public and private kindergarten children in the city of Amman
2. Differences in the level of national awareness among children enrolled in public and private kindergartens
3. Differences in the level of national awareness between male and female kindergarten children

Importance of the Study

The importance of the present study can be classified into theoretical importance and practical importance.

Theoretical Importance

The theoretical importance of the present study is highlighted as follows:

1. Enriching the educational library by including the national awareness of kindergarten children.
2. Highlighting the presence of national awareness in public kindergartens.
3. Highlighting the presence of national awareness in private kindergartens.
4. Assisting in preparing further studies on the development of national awareness in kindergartens.
5. Directing the attention of specialists to the development of national awareness among kindergarten children.
6. Showing the importance of the kindergarten stage for acquiring and understanding information about the homeland.

Practical Importance

The practical importance of the present study is highlighted as follows:

1. Assisting kindergarten departments in finding different educational activities to develop the national awareness of children.
2. Educating teachers about the importance of preparing various educational activities to develop children's national awareness.

3. Assisting the authors of special kindergarten curricula by incorporating topics for the development of national awareness in children's books.
4. Directing the attention of specialists in kindergarten programs to include the subject of the homeland and citizenship as a separate issue within kindergarten curricula.
5. Adopting the national awareness scale by kindergarten teachers to determine the level of national awareness among children.
6. Including the subject of national education in the training of kindergarten teachers.

Operational Definitions

Awareness: defined as knowledge, understanding, and appreciation in a particular field, which helps guide the individual's behaviour towards caring for this field (Qandil, 2001).

Nationalism: defined as the development of interaction and linkage between the individual and his country – politically, scientifically, socially, culturally, and educationally – to achieve and develop national identity and nationalism in the face of globalisation challenges (Mohammed, 2013).

National Awareness: defined as knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the concept of patriotism, which makes a person a good citizen, loving and loyal to his/her nation, committed to its principles and laws, understanding its problems, and able to participate actively in solving them (Qandil, 2001; Mohammed, 2013).

Limitations of the Study

The current study has the following limitations

- The study is limited to examining the level of national awareness among public and private kindergarten children.
- The study is limited to kindergarten children in selected public and private kindergartens in the city of Amman in the second semester of the academic year 2017/2018.
- The results of the study will depend on the objectivity of the respondents and the validity and reliability of the instrument used in the current study, namely the national awareness scale.
- The generalisation of the study results is valid only for the population that the sample was drawn from and similar communities.

Research Method

Population and Sample

The target population of the current study consisted of all Level II kindergarten children (male and female) located in public and private kindergartens in the city of Amman, Jordan. The sample of the study consisted of 196 level II male and female children between 5 and 6 years old. The sample was randomly selected from public and private kindergartens in the city of Amman where one classroom was chosen from each kindergarten. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the names of the schools and the number of children selected:

Table 1: Names of the public and private kindergartens participated in the present study

Public kindergartens	Private kindergartens
Al-Qanitrah	Ard Al-Farah
Al-Gisah	Taqaroub
Al-Hadayqiah	Alateeq al-alamyah
	Ayatalnamodaji academic
	Tho-al norayn

Table 1 shows the names of the public and private kindergartens in the city of Amman, Jordan, where the national awareness level was measured.

Table 2: Distribution of the study sample by type of kindergarten and gender

Kindergarten type	Male	Female	Total
Public	45	46	91
Private	61	44	105
total	96	100	196

Table 2 shows the distribution of the participants of the study by type of kindergarten and gender.

Instrumentation

The researchers developed the instrument called National Awareness Scale (NAS) used in the current study after going through the following phases.

1. Accessing the theoretical literature on patriotism and citizenship, and its styles of development in children.
2. Reviewing previous studies, which dealt with the subject of national awareness in children.

3. Accessing a number of assessment criteria designed to measure the level of belonging and citizenship in children, taking into account the following standards:
 - a. National affiliation scale of a preschool child (Badir, 1991)
 - b. Appreciation scale of citizenship of pre-school children (Abdulwahab, 2012).
4. Accessing the indicators of citizenship in children by Qandil and Mohammed (2010), which are employed as a criterion for the construction of a measure of national awareness. The indicators include the following:
 - Exercising feelings of belonging to the motherland.
 - Showing empathy towards the symbols of the motherland, such as the flag, the King, the map, etc.
 - Taking into account public ethics, such as good conduct, dialogue, appearance, relations, etc.
 - Following laws and regulations such as paying taxes, traffic rules, etc.
 - Adhering to the social values that support social progress and peace, such as tolerance, responsibility, fraternity, and equality.
 - Recognising the importance of professions and their different roles in society.
 - Distinguishing between private and public ownership.
5. Becoming familiar with different cultures included in Jordanian society.
6. Taking into account the characteristics of different age groups.
7. Accessing the curricula of public and private kindergartens.
8. Accessing various websites on childhood.

Validity of the Scale

To determine the validity of the scale, the items of the scale were reviewed by a group of Jordanian university faculty members specialising in education, psychology, measurement, and evaluation to ensure the appropriateness of the images and the accuracy of the wording of the questions. Consequently, the final test consisted of 22 items.

Reliability of the Scale

To determine the reliability of the scale, a pilot study was conducted using a sample of participants, similar to the actual participants, to verify children's understanding of the images and to know the time it takes to apply the scale individually. The sample consisted of 20 male and female children between 5 and 6 years old from Al-Farah Kindergarten. The average time of 8 minutes was calculated by applying the following equation:

$$\frac{\text{The time taken by faster child to answer} + \text{the time taken by slower children to answer}}{2} = 8$$

Results and Discussion

The results of the present study are discussed according to the study objectives as follows:

Study Objective One: identifying the level of national awareness among public and private kindergarten children in the city of Amman.

To achieve this goal a one-sample *t*-test was used by comparing the average level of national awareness of the study sample with the hypothetical mean of the scale as shown in Table 3:

Table 3: The significance of the differences in the mean and hypothetical mean of the study sample on the national level of awareness scale.

Sample	Mean	Hypothetical mean	Standard deviation	<i>t</i> value	Significance level
196	18.122	12.000	3.354	25.559	0.01

Table 3 indicates that the mean of the national awareness scale was 18.122 with a standard deviation of 3.354 and the hypothetical mean of the scale was 12. After running the one-sample *t*-test, the *t* value was 25.559, making it statistically significant at the level of 0.01.

This result reveals that the participants of the study showed a high level of national awareness when compared to the hypothetical mean of the scale. It can possibly be attributed to the fact that the majority of programs designed for kindergarten children include national activities and events that develop national awareness. In addition, such programs promote patriotism by providing children with the skills necessary to understand rights and duties and to learn to co-exist and cooperate with others and develop values of tolerance and dialogue. The outcome agrees with the results of Mohamed's study (2013), which showed the effectiveness of activities directed to children, whether systematic or extracurricular, in the development of citizenship among children. It also agrees with the study of Abdulwahab (2012) on the effectiveness of activities in the development of citizenship among kindergarten children.

Study Objective Two: Identifying differences in the level of national awareness among children enrolled in public and private kindergartens.

To achieve this objective an independent samples *t*-test was run as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean, standard deviation, t value, and responses of the public and private kindergarten children on the national awareness scale.

Kindergarten type	<i>n</i>	mean	Standard deviation	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i> value	Level of significance
Public	91	16.264	3.179	194	8.419	0.01
Private	105	19.733	2.588			

The results showed that the mean of responses of the private kindergarten children on the National Awareness scale was 19.733, with a standard deviation of 2.588. However, the mean of the responses of the public kindergarten children was 16.264 with a standard deviation of (3.179). The calculated *t* value was 8.419, which was significant at the level 0.01 for private kindergarten children. The outcome is possibly due to the fact that the majority of private kindergartens offer various in-class and outside-class activities, such as songs, dances, competitions, games and stories. In addition, most private kindergartens have better facilities than public kindergartens, which usually consist of a classroom attached to a primary school. Furthermore, good quality kindergarten environments are usually not available in the public kindergartens despite the existence of a specific unit within the national interactive curriculum. This result is in line with the study of Khalis and Abu-Hilu (2013), which indicated that the curricula of some kindergartens did not focus directly on the development of patriotism.

Study Objective Three: identifying differences between male and female kindergarten children in the level of national awareness.

To achieve this objective, as shown in table 5, the mean and standard deviations were calculated and a two independent sample t-test was run.

Table 5: Mean, standard deviation and value between males and females.

The Sample	<i>n</i>	mean	Standard deviation	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i> value	Significance level
Males	106	18.000	3.098	194	0.554	none
Females	90	18.267	3.66			

As shown in Table 5, the mean for males in the national awareness scale was 18.000 with a standard deviation of 3.098, whereas the mean for the females was 18.267, with a standard deviation of 3.644. The t-value 0.555 is not significant at 0.05, which means there is no significant difference between male and female children on the level of national awareness. It is possible that this result is due to introducing children of both genders to the same activities and events provided by public and private kindergarten programs.

In conclusion, it appears that kindergarten children in Amman have a high national awareness level. However, private kindergarten children have a higher level of national awareness than public kindergarten children. There were no significant differences between male and female kindergarten children on the national awareness level.

In conclusion, it is suggested that strengthening the national awareness among children of public kindergartens can best be achieved by providing them with the necessary skills that familiarise them with their rights and duties. Such skills are expected to raise children's capability in dealing with vital national issues such as coexistence and cooperation with others who share the same land.

Moreover, such skills will contribute eventually to the development of the values of tolerance and reinforce dialogue among individuals of the society. Various activities can be carried out to help children clearly realise their national identity, strengthen a positive image of their national heritage, and make them proud of their history and achievements. Finally, children can identify with their homeland which will lead to the promotion of their culture, participation and cooperation with neighbours, and development of feelings of respect for others and their property.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study, the followings are recommended:

1. Increasing activities and events which develop feelings of belonging to the homeland. Such activities and events may include singing, storytelling and drama, and visits or excursions to heritage sites, tourist sites and museums
2. Developing social values (such as tolerance, equality, and responsibility) in kindergarten children which will support cultural progress and promote social stability
3. Increasing the activities of cooperative education within the curriculum of kindergartens
4. Disseminating the concept of children's rights among children themselves to increase their awareness of their rights and deepen a sense of belonging and loyalty to the homeland
5. Preparing a guide for national education in coordination with the philosophy and objectives of kindergarten development
6. Including the subject of national education in the preparation programs of kindergarten teachers
7. Utilising the national awareness scale in future studies on the reality of citizenship in children



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