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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Social Interactions and its Contribution to the Formation of Economic Principles in Early Childhood

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Abstract: The paper examines how social interactions among friends, teachers and siblings can influence the emergence of notions of economic development in early childhood based on the Saudi Vision 2030, which aims at transforming the educational system, financial literacy, and social interactions engagement in the nation as the main agents of national development. Using the sociocultural theory of learning, the research examines the social interactions among friends, teachers and siblings that might affect the early information of children on resource savings, spending, and management. This study adopted mixed-methods design, survey in the first phase, the second phase was interview. The mixed-methods design was regarding the social interaction among friends, teachers and siblings and its involvement in emerging economic behavior of children among the Saudi preschool educators, in Najran city. Results indicated that modeling, guided discussion and conversation, and daily activities are some of the activities which can promote economic intelligence. Educators observed that children with decision-making, numeracy, and value-based judgment in their friends and siblings are better reasoners. The study concludes that early social interaction with teachers, peers and siblings heighten financial capability, contributes to achieve the goals of the Vision 2030, and promotes accountable citizenship.

Keywords: Social Interactions, Friends, Siblings, Teachers, Sociocultural theory, Contribution, Economic Principles, Early Childhood.

INTRODUCTION

Economic education at the early childhood level is important because it will allow future generations the capacity to help in a more diversified and developed economy. In Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030 (2021) aims to promote human capital and lifelong learning, with social interactions among friends, teachers and siblings, being one of the ways of shaping social and economic consciousness. The early exposure to financial and economic ideas will aid children to think and behave in a morally responsible manner so that they learn to save and value values (Fletcher & Wright, 2024). The first guidance, from teachers, capable peers and older siblings, that a child is exposed to, due to the Saudi cultural context, is when a child is introduced to economic decision-making, which aligns with the principle of the sociocultural theory, which presupposes that learning is a socially mediated process that can be shaped by the teachers, capable peers, older siblings and the society (Julaihah, 2023).

The early childhood stage of economic thought development will contribute to further enhancement of the national economic objectives since economically literate citizens will be more productive and innovative (LeBaron & Kelley, 2021). The program in Saudi Arabia adheres to the educational transformation pillar of the Vision 2030 (2021) that is preoccupied with preparing learners with 21st-century competencies. In this way, this paper will examine how social interaction among capable friends in preschools, teachers and older siblings, in Najran city, can attain the national development goals by acquiring early economic knowledge.

Importance of the Study

The social interactions between capable friends, teachers, and older siblings and the economic education of children is critical in enhancing the objectives of education that the Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 (2021) aimed to achieve. Even though an improvement has been made in terms of the early childhood education reform, the research gap is found to be in the area of intersectionality between teachers, capable friend and older siblings' interaction and sociocultural learning and the unfolding of the economic principle. Previous studies have given significant focus to the financial literacy of teenagers and adults, and not preschool children (Fletcher & Wright, 2024; Lee et al., 2025).

The gap has been addressed in this paper, and the focus will be on the early socialization. It highlights the synergizing of teachers, capable peers and older siblings, and national policies that promote financial inclusion and responsible citizenship. Waldfogel et al. (2023) assert that education and the socioeconomic background of teachers, friends and siblings severely influence the economic education opportunity of children. Therefore, boosting the participation of teachers, friends and siblings in the initial financial education process can help to achieve the objective of the Vision 2030 to provide equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities to all Saudi children.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What roles do teachers, peers, siblings play in influencing the economic principles of preschool children which include saving, budgeting and responsible consumption?
2. How is there a relationship between social interactions among friends, teachers and siblings based economic practices and educational goals of early childhood development Saudi Vision 2030?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Saudi Vision 2030 is directed at the diversification of the national economy on the basis of education, innovation and entrepreneurship (Al Shanawani, 2023). The educational reforms in the context of the Vision 2030 are geared towards early childhood education as the platform of economic sustainability. The Ministry of Education has developed curricula which involve financial education, social responsibility and critical thinking skills within the early learning programs (National Early Learning Framework for Children Ages 0-6, 2018). Children are also taught to be self-regulated, make decisions and appreciate values in economic education (Yeung & Chen, 2023).

Vision 2030 (2021) also promotes the participation of teachers, friends, siblings and communities in the education process because it appreciates the fact that a child is shaped by their social interactions to behave in the long term (Rakha et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2023). The sociocultural theory asserts that children comprehend financial ideas through social interactions and experiences founded on culture (Kamber et al., 2024). Economic responsibility is exercised by budgeting, saving and deliberating on how to use the resources (Fitriah, 2023). The educational goals of Vision 2030, therefore, would not only be based on preschool learning, but the social interactions among friend and siblings would also be actively included in the formulation of the early financial and economic intelligence.

The social interactions are giving children economic and social learning (LeBaron-Black et al, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2023). The existing research data show that the financial literacy of adolescents increases under the condition of exposure to the social interactions and discussions of money, trade, and saving (Duong et al., 2024). The Saudi culture presupposes that teachers and older siblings are some of the pedagogues and relate what takes place in the economic sphere to the Islamic concept of moderation and stewardship (Arachchi, 2023).

Then, according to the sociocultural theory, friend, siblings and teachers' relationships are an element of the learning process through which children acquire a language and economic principles through guided learning (Julaihah, 2023). Teachers and older siblings are modelling the development of numeracy and economic thinking, which involves the involvement of children in projects related to shopping or saving (Agnew & Sotardi, 2025). Financial socialization is associated with financial management and well-being in later life (Ullah &Yusheng, 2020). This literature demonstrates that early childhood teachers, capable friends and older siblings-based financial education is consistent with the Vision 2030 (2021) goal of ensuring the creation of informed, economically responsible citizens.

METHODS

This research adopted mixed- methods design, survey and interview. The survey provided design and involving Saudi preschool educators, in Najran city, whose children were between the ages of three and six. Educators were selected as respondents because they pay much attention to behavioural tendencies of children (Miller et al., 2021). In the determination of the cultural and contextual relevance, the instrument was validated by academic experts (Fitriah, 2023). Reliability was determined by using Cronbach's alpha, and internal consistency was determined by using Pearson correlation coefficients.

The data collection of the survey, which was in the first phase of the research, it was done using the WhatsApp application in order to provide accommodation to the participant and to capture the trends in digital engagements in Najran Saudi education (Harrison et al., 2023). The analysis was done using the SPSS software, exploiting descriptive statistics in order to establish the central tendencies and correlations.

Second phase of this research used interview with some of the teachers, who answered the survey, to elaborate on some of their responses on the survey to gain better understanding of their insights and experiences regarding the role of social interactions among capable friends, teachers and older siblings. The interview was done using the Zoom application in order to provide accommodation to the participant. The interviews were analyzed thematically using NVivo program.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Results showed that social interactions among friends, siblings and teachers are very crucial in developing economic thoughts when one is at a tender age. Social interactions can educate children about the significance of such principles as saving, spending it right and recognizing the resources. These findings corroborate the findings of earlier researchers who state that social interactions, among friends, siblings and teachers, are the most significant agents of financial socialization (Adam, 2022; LeBaron & Kelley, 2021; Yusuf et al., 2023).

Teachers claimed that children who are engaged in conversations and discussions about money in the classroom or involved in budgeting in their homes demonstrated high numbers and reasoning abilities. This is in agreement with the findings of Duong et al. (2024), who determined that the mathematical knowledge and social responsibility are enhanced by conversations on money. Teachers should use responsible consumption that involves children in the decision-making process, as it may foster the elements of critical thinking and self-regulation, as the priorities of the early learning model of the Vision 2030 (OECD, 2020).

The sociocultural theory is also supported by the results since it shows that children learn throughout active communication such as with teachers, capable friend and older siblings (Julaihah, 2023). These learning experiences make learning easier, thereby supporting the general growth of the child. The preschool socioeconomic status also influences access to financial learning, as is in line with Yeung & Chen (2023). However, it is not just the preschools which are located in wealthy areas are enough to obtain an economic education; the teachers will advance further and discuss money with their students, and whether they are ready to discuss it (Agnew & Sotardi, 2025).

Overall, this study substantiates the available findings of past research according to which financial education during early childhood is a source of long-term financial well-being (Ullah & Yusheng, 2020; LeBaron-Black et al., 2023). It also demonstrates that Saudi preschool teachers are no exception to the direction of being more closely related to the goals of Vision 2030 (2021), aimed at involving teachers, friend and siblings in the education process. These results imply that financial education training of anyone who involved in children caring needs to be introduced in early childhood programs across the nation in order to enhance the economic competence and civic responsibility of children (Kamber et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has come to the conclusion that social interactions among teachers, friend and siblings play a significant role in learning economic principles in the initial stages of childhood. The teachers that are actively engaged in communication with children on their economy and decision-making process are also useful in forming early financial literacy and responsible behaviour. These findings are not opposed to the sociocultural learning theory, where social interaction is considered the major factor in cognitive development (Fitriah, 2023).

The role of the social interactions among teachers, friend and siblings in early economic education can be optimized with the use of the Saudi Vision 2030, which can help in achieving the national objectives of human capital development and economic diversification (Alghamdi et al., 2022). In the early childhood educational programs and teacher training, the Ministry of Education should incorporate teachers-centred economic education modules in the curricula. Relationships between educators, children, siblings will aid in ensuring that economic literacy is an inseparable aspect of children, and the learning processes.

Subsequent longitudinal effects of the social interactions-based economic socialization on the consequent financial behaviour can be investigated in future research. The future of this study might also involve more exposition of rural and urban comparisons that would provide more information on the cultural diversity that constitutes the economic education in Saudi Arabia.

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