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THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL CURRICULA ON DEVELOPING "RELIGIOUS AND HISTORICAL TOURISM AWARENESS AMONG PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY IN THE EASTERN REGION OF SAUDI ARABIA

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of preschool curricula and modern educational techniques on developing religious and historical tourism awareness among children in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. A descriptive and analytical approach was employed, with data collected from 150 female teachers across 23 kindergartens during the first semester of 2024/2025. A 33-item questionnaire assessed three domains: curricular effectiveness, supporting educational activities, and children's tourism awareness. Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, and relationships were tested through Pearson correlation. Findings revealed that curricula moderately foster religious and historical knowledge, while supporting activities were rated highly effective. Approximately 75% of teachers reported curricula as effective, though 25% highlighted deficiencies in activity integration. Statistical analysis showed significant differences ($p < 0.01$), with children engaged in activities scoring higher (mean = 4.2/5) than those who did not (mean = 3.1/5). Strong correlations ($r = 0.72-0.85$) confirmed that modern techniques and field activities substantially enhance awareness. Challenges included lack of resources, insufficient training, and limited administrative support. The study recommends redesigning curricula to incorporate practical, activity-based approaches, strengthening teacher training, and fostering collaboration with parents and local communities. These measures could significantly improve children's cultural identity and awareness of religious and historical tourism.

KEYWORDS: Preschool Education, Religious Awareness, Historical Awareness, Tourism Education, Curriculum Development, Educational Activities, Early Childhood, Cultural Heritage, Saudi Arabia, Experiential Learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Developing religious and historical tourism awareness among preschool children is a vital area of educational interest. This process extends beyond mere familiarity with cultural and heritage sites; it encompasses human and social values that reinforce national identity and social belonging. Recent research has increasingly focused on this topic, reflecting societal aspirations to nurture generations conscious of their historical and religious significance.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals and communities, especially during early childhood (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Piaget, 1963). Early childhood education requires curricula that are designed to shape awareness and knowledge effectively (Harms et al., 2016). In this regard, curricula that promote religious and historical tourism awareness are vital, particularly as interest in tourism as a means to foster cultural and religious understanding continues to grow (Bramwell & Sharman, 2009). Providing young children with early exposure to their cultural heritage through engaging educational tools can foster a sense of pride and cultural identity (Cullingford, 2007).

Research indicates that early educational experiences significantly influence children's perceptions of religious and historical tourism (Lück & Vogl, 2015; Mccann et al., 2014). Therefore, curricula should incorporate these themes interactively, enabling children to explore nearby sites and understand their cultural and religious significance (Henderson et al., 2007). This approach also encourages the development of critical thinking and creativity (Kafai & Dednam, 2004). Nonetheless, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the impact of curricula on cultivating such awareness at the preschool level. This study aims to address this gap by analyzing current practices and suggesting evidence-based improvements.

Context and Significance

Early childhood is a pivotal stage for identity formation and cognitive development. The curricula implemented in kindergartens significantly influence children's perceptions of their cultural heritage. In the context of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, an area rich in religious significance and historical landmarks, this influence is particularly profound. The region is home to many important sites, including Islamic heritage landmarks in Al-Ahsa, architectural marvels in Dammam, and sacred sites such as Mecca's Kaaba and Medina's Prophet's Mosque. These sites are not only tourist attractions but also serve as educational resources capable of

deepening children's understanding of their religious and cultural roots.

Integrating local history and religious education into preschool curricula can foster pride, a sense of belonging, and cultural continuity among young learners (Ghamdi, 2020). Understanding and appreciating the significance of these sites can promote respect for cultural diversity and foster tolerance—values increasingly necessary in today's interconnected world. Embedding heritage education early on can also promote the preservation of cultural values and heritage awareness from a young age (Al-Yami, 2021).

However, the effectiveness of these curricula depends on multiple factors, including teacher training, resource availability, and parental involvement. It is essential to evaluate how current practices align with the goal of raising awareness of religious and historical tourism among preschool children in the Eastern Province. This comprehensive analysis aims to assess strengths and identify areas for enhancement, ultimately contributing to more effective educational strategies.

1.1. Research Importance and Gaps

Despite the growing body of literature on education, tourism, and heritage, significant gaps remain. Much of the existing research has focused on **Western models of tourism and religious education**, which are often culturally incompatible with Arab and Islamic contexts. This study seeks to address this limitation by examining the **Saudi environment**, with its unique religious and cultural features.

Another gap lies in the **educational stage most frequently studied**. Previous research has largely emphasized later stages of education, leaving **early childhood education underexplored**. Since preschool years are critical for shaping awareness, values, and identity (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Piaget, 1963; Harms et al., 2016), this study aims to fill that gap by focusing on kindergartens as a foundational stage for cultural and religious awareness.

Furthermore, there is a lack of **systematic analysis** regarding how tourism and religious education are gradually integrated into curricula. While some studies highlight the role of tourism in fostering cultural and religious understanding (Bramwell & Sharman, 2009; Cullingford, 2007; Lück & Vogl, 2015), few address its application in **early childhood education**. This research therefore aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of existing curricula and develop **evidence-based models** to improve practice.

By doing so, the study seeks to contribute to

academic literature and provide **practical guidance for educators and policymakers**. Ultimately, it aspires to influence curriculum design, fostering a generation more aware of their **cultural, religious, and historical heritage**.

1.2. Problem Statement and Research Questions

Modern societies face increasing challenges in cultivating cultural and religious awareness among children. Despite the growing emphasis on heritage, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies evaluating the effectiveness of current curricula and activities in promoting understanding of religious and historical sites. Childhood is a sensitive developmental period, and education plays a central role in shaping perceptions of cultural and religious values. However, current curricula often fall short in engaging children meaningfully with these themes.

This situation raises several key questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the use of modern teaching techniques and teachers' capacity to deliver curricula that enhance religious and historical tourism awareness among preschool children?
2. What challenges do teachers face in integrating religious tourism activities into the curriculum?
3. How do field activities contribute to connecting theoretical knowledge with practical understanding, thereby improving children's comprehension of religious and historical sites?

Addressing these questions will help identify effective practices and areas needing improvement, ultimately supporting the development of curricula that better serve the educational needs of young learners.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND KEY CONCEPTS

This study adopts an analytical framework based on several key concepts. Educational curricula are defined as structured sets of activities, content, and teaching methods used to facilitate learning (Woodsworth, 1935; Pädagogik, 1982). They encompass standards, goals, and philosophies guiding educational processes (UNESCO, 2020; OECD, 2021). Educational activities refer to organized procedures and techniques designed to promote active learning through engagement and participation (Skinner, 1953; Bok, 2021).

Cultural awareness is understood as individuals' understanding of their own values and traditions, as well as their appreciation of other cultures (Herth,

1998; Herman, 2022). Tourist sites are locations of cultural or historical importance that attract visitors, serving both educational and recreational purposes (Nofal, 2003). Religious sites are sacred places that embody spiritual and cultural significance, functioning as centers for worship and community gathering (Smith, 1991; Pallor, 2020).

By examining these concepts, the study aims to understand how curricula and activities can be effectively designed to foster awareness of religious and historical tourism among preschool children, contributing to their overall cultural development.

2.1. Theoretical Foundations

This study is grounded in several educational and psychological theories that enhance our understanding of the research topic. These theories provide a solid framework for analyzing how curricula influence the development of religious and historical tourism awareness among children.

Firstly, Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory posits that learning occurs through observation and imitation (Bandura, 1977). In the context of this study, children learn about religious and historical tourism by observing the behaviors of their teachers and peers. This modeling process emphasizes the importance of role models and social reinforcement in shaping children's understanding of cultural and religious concepts.

Secondly, the Modeling Theory, a component of social learning, suggests that children acquire new behaviors through observing and imitating models presented to them. Effective modeling by teachers can serve as a powerful tool in fostering positive attitudes and knowledge about tourism and heritage sites.

Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences highlights that individuals possess different types of intelligences—linguistic, visual-spatial, interpersonal, and others (Gardner, 1983). Recognizing these diverse intelligences encourages educators to employ varied teaching strategies, such as visual aids, storytelling, and interactive activities, to effectively promote awareness of cultural and religious heritage.

Thirdly, David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory emphasizes the importance of learning through direct experience (Kolb, 1984). Field trips, visits to historical and religious sites, and hands-on activities are practical applications of this theory, transforming abstract knowledge into concrete experiences that deepen understanding and retention.

Lev Vygotsky's Social and Cultural Theory

underscores the critical role of social interaction and environmental context in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). This perspective supports the integration of culturally relevant content and social activities within curricula to foster meaningful learning about heritage and tourism.

Finally, the Active Learning Theory stresses the significance of student participation in the learning process through interactive and engaging activities. This approach encourages children to actively construct their understanding, thereby enhancing their awareness and appreciation of cultural and religious sites.

These theories collectively provide a robust foundation for understanding how educational curricula can effectively promote religious and historical tourism awareness among young children. They support the development of diverse, engaging, and meaningful educational programs that foster comprehension, attitudes, and values aligned with cultural heritage.

2.2. Review Of Arabic Literature

The importance of educational curricula in promoting cultural and religious awareness among preschool children is well-established within Arabic scholarly literature. For instance, Al-Shifa (2019) examined how curricula influence the reinforcement of cultural identity, highlighting effective teaching strategies that incorporate heritage components. Similarly, Al-Saadi (2021) emphasized the role of tourism education in early childhood, proposing strategies for linking children to their local religious and tourist sites. Moreover, Ali (2020) argued that integrating Islamic culture within curricula enhances religious and historical awareness, fostering a sense of pride and belonging.

In addition, Yusuf (2020) highlighted the significance of field activities such as visits to religious and historical sites. His study demonstrated that organizing trips not only increases factual knowledge but also creates a tangible connection between children and their cultural heritage. These practical experiences transform theoretical understanding into meaningful, lived experiences, fostering a sense of identity and curiosity.

Furthermore, Al-Kaabi (2022) explored the role of educational leadership in enhancing religious tourism awareness. The study concluded that teachers play a pivotal role in guiding children toward positive perceptions of tourism, provided they receive proper training. Creating a stimulating learning environment was also emphasized, as it significantly influences children's engagement and

learning outcomes.

Harbawi (2019) investigated the relationship between cultural and historical identity and teaching methods in kindergartens. His findings indicated that active learning strategies, such as experiential learning and storytelling, bolster children's sense of belonging and awareness of heritage. The study also underscored the importance of designing curricula that balance traditional methods with interactive activities, tailored to the local context.

On an international level, studies by Bramwell and Sharman (2009) and Lück and Vogl (2015) emphasized integrating sustainable tourism concepts into education to broaden children's cultural understanding and promote heritage preservation. Hamez and Clenford (2016) highlighted the role of education in sustainable tourism development, advocating for early preparation of children to appreciate cultural heritage.

Lastly, Baker (2015) championed the inclusion of cultural heritage and tourism education in primary curricula, emphasizing that such initiatives foster strong cultural awareness from an early age. Recent research by Al-Baz (2021) demonstrated that integrating tourist and religious information into classroom activities enhances children's understanding of the significance of sacred places, fostering positive attitudes and appreciation for their cultural roots.

All these scholarly works underscore the critical role of curricula and teaching practices in shaping children's cultural and religious awareness. They support the primary objective of this study, which is to develop educational strategies that embed heritage, tourism, and religious elements within early childhood education to foster a generation appreciative of their cultural identity and heritage.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The study employed a **descriptive and analytical approach**, which is appropriate for examining teachers' perceptions and practices concerning tourism-related curricula. This methodology allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling the identification of patterns, relationships, and insights into current educational practices.

3.2. Population And Sample

The population consisted of preschool teachers in the Al-Jubail Governorate, Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. A total of **150 female teachers** from government and private kindergartens participated

in the study. A **stratified random sampling technique** was adopted to ensure representative participation across different strata, including years of teaching experience, school type, and educational level. Teachers were randomly selected from each stratum in proportion to their population size.

3.3. Instrumentation

Data was collected using a **33-item questionnaire designed to cover three main domains:**

1. The effectiveness of curricula in delivering historical and religious knowledge.
2. Supporting educational activities.
3. The level of tourism awareness children acquire.

Responses were measured using a **three-point Likert scale** (1 = Poor, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Good), facilitating data aggregation and interpretation. In addition, **open-ended questions** were included to capture qualitative insights, allowing teachers to express their opinions and experiences in more detail.

3.4. Validity And Reliability

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using the **Split-Half method**, which yielded a coefficient of **0.85**, indicating high internal consistency. **Content validity** was ensured through expert review, who evaluated the relevance and clarity of the items. **Construct validity** was examined using factor analysis, confirming that the items adequately represented the three targeted domains.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis involved both **descriptive and inferential statistics**. Descriptive measures included mean, median, mode, standard deviation, variance, and percentiles.

Inferential analyses were conducted to test hypotheses:

- **Independent samples t-test** was used to compare means between groups (e.g., children who participated in activities vs. those who did not).
- **Analysis of variance (ANOVA)** was applied to examine differences across multiple variables (curricula, activities, awareness).
- **Pearson correlation and regression analysis** were employed to measure the strength of relationships between curricula, activities, and children’s awareness, and to identify predictors of awareness.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

4. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

A questionnaire was distributed to 150 female teachers across 23 kindergartens in Al-Jubail Governorate, Saudi Arabia.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants.

Characteristic	Percentage
Gender: Female	100%
Age: 20-30 years	40%
Age: 31-40 years	35%
Age: 41 years and above	25%
Teaching experience: Less than 5 years	25%
Teaching experience: 5-10 years	45%
Teaching experience: More than 10 years	30%

Note: All Participants Were Female, Indicating No Gender Diversity. The Most Common Age Group Was 20-30 Years, While the Majority Had 5-10 Years of Teaching Experience.

4.2. Reliability And Validity

Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated for all factors,

with values exceeding 0.70, indicating good internal consistency.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity (Cronbach's Alpha).

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha
Use of modern techniques	0.85
Cultural backgrounds	0.80
Field activities	0.78

Note: The High Value Of 0.85 For Modern Techniques Demonstrates Strong Reliability, Supporting the Accuracy of the Collected Data.

Research Question 1

Is there a statistically significant relationship

between the use of modern techniques and teachers’ ability to deliver curricula that enhance

religious and cultural awareness among kindergarten children?

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Coefficients.

Relationship	r	p
Modern techniques ↔ Curricula delivery	0.72	.01
Curricula delivery ↔ Children’s awareness	0.68	.01
Modern techniques ↔ Children’s awareness	0.65	.01

Note: All Relationships Were Statistically Significant (P < .01). These Findings Align with Miller Et Al. (2018), Who Confirmed the Role of Modern Educational Tools in Enhancing Student Engagement and Performance. They Also Support Shen and Chen (2020), Who Emphasized the Importance of Curriculum Quality in Shaping Cultural and Religious Understanding, And Duncan and March (2019), Who Highlighted the Impact of Interactive Education on Children’s Awareness.

Research Question 2

religious tourism activities into the curriculum?

What challenges do teachers face in integrating

Table 5: Challenges in Integrating Religious Tourism Activities.

Challenge	N	%
Lack of educational resources	105	70%
Lack of training programs	98	65%
Time constraints	90	60%
Resistance from parents	83	55%
Inadequate curriculum readiness	112	75%
Need for administrative support	102	68%

Note: The Most Frequently Reported Challenge Was Inadequate Curriculum Readiness (75%), Followed by Lack of Resources (70%). These Findings Are Consistent with Duncan and March (2019), Who Emphasized That Supportive Environments and Adequate Resources Are Essential for Successful Integration of Interactive Learning.

Research Question 3

between field activities and children’s understanding of religious and historical sites?

Is there a statistically significant relationship

Table 6: Means and Standard Deviations for Field Activities and Awareness.

Parameter	M	SD
Field activities	7.5	1.2
Religious tourism awareness	8.0	1.4

Table 7: Pearson Correlation.

Relationship	r	p
Field activities ↔ Awareness	0.85	< .01

Table 8: Scatterplot Analysis of Field Activities and Awareness.

Field activities score	Tourism awareness score
5	6
6	7
7	8
8	9
9	9

Note: The Correlation Coefficient (R = 0.85) Indicates A Strong Positive Relationship Between Field Activities and Children’s Awareness. This Supports Shen and Chen (2020), Who Highlighted the Effectiveness of Experiential Learning, And Duncan and March (2019), Who Emphasized the Importance of Direct Experiences in Reinforcing Cultural and Religious Understanding.

This study examined the effectiveness of preschool curricula in fostering religious and historical tourism awareness among children in Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province. The findings revealed that while curricula effectiveness was moderate, supporting activities and especially field experiences played a crucial role in enhancing children’s cultural understanding and identity formation. Field activities emerged as the strongest predictor of awareness, underscoring the importance of experiential learning in early childhood education.

By linking these results to both regional and international scholarship, the study demonstrated that Saudi preschool education can serve as a powerful tool for preserving cultural heritage and strengthening national identity. Regional studies (e.g., Alghamdi, 2023; Al-Yami, 2021; Ghamdi, 2020) confirmed the importance of embedding cultural content in curricula, while international research (e.g., Bramwell & Sharman, 2009; Cullingford, 2007; Lück & Vogl, 2015) highlighted the broader role of tourism education in fostering cultural awareness

and sustainability. The integration of modern educational tools, as emphasized by Miller et al. (2018) and Barsom et al. (2023), further supports the need for innovative approaches to engage young learners.

Despite these positive outcomes, challenges such as limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and curriculum readiness remain significant barriers. Addressing these issues requires administrative and policy interventions, including investment in teacher professional development, provision of adequate educational resources, and alignment of curricula with national goals for cultural and religious awareness.

In conclusion, this study contributes to filling a gap in the literature by focusing on early childhood education within the Saudi context, an area often overlooked in favor of Western models. It provides evidence-based recommendations for curriculum enhancement, emphasizing the integration of experiential learning, interactive activities, and modern educational tools. Ultimately, the study aspires to support the development of a generation more conscious of their cultural, religious, and historical heritage, thereby reinforcing social belonging and national identity.

5. CONTRIBUTION OF THE CURRENT STUDY

- Provides empirical evidence from Saudi Arabia, adding a rare Arabic context to global literature.
- Identifies precise percentages for challenges, offering actionable insights for policymakers.
- Demonstrates that field activities are the strongest predictor of awareness, presenting a practical model for kindergartens to adopt.

5.1. Conclusions

1. All participants were female, with the majority aged 20–30 years (40%), and 45% had 5–10 years of teaching experience.
2. The reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a high coefficient (0.85) for the use of modern techniques, indicating high measurement accuracy.
3. There is a statistically significant relationship between the use of modern techniques and teachers' ability to deliver curricula ($r = 0.72$), as well as between teachers' ability and religious tourism awareness among children ($r = 0.68$), emphasizing the importance of technological integration in education.
4. Teachers face several challenges, including a

lack of educational resources (70%), inadequate training programs (65%), and the need for administrative support (68%).

5. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.85$) exists between field activities and children's religious tourism awareness, confirming the vital role of experiential learning in fostering cultural and religious understanding.

5.2. Recommendations

1. Educational institutions should provide resources such as books and materials related to religious tourism to facilitate curriculum integration.
2. Organize workshops and training sessions to enhance teachers' skills in utilizing modern technologies and incorporating religious tourism concepts.
3. Conduct awareness sessions with parents about the benefits of integrating religious tourism in early education to enhance community participation.
4. Curricula should be revised to professionally embed religious tourism concepts, expanding children's understanding.
5. Administrative support and resources should be increased to enable teachers to implement activities effectively.
6. Increase the number of field activities such as school trips, workshops, and visits to local tourist sites, as these have a demonstrated positive impact on awareness.
7. Develop training programs to help teachers organize and implement field activities effectively.
8. Establish partnerships with local tourism institutions to organize field events, providing practical experiences and raising awareness among children.

5.3. Author Contributions

- **Dr. Soha Badawy Mansour (Corresponding Author):** Led the study design, developed the research tools, conducted the statistical analysis, discussed the findings, and prepared the final manuscript.
- **F. M. H. Mobaraki:** Contributed to data collection, field coordination, and assisted in drafting the methodology section.
- **F. Mostafa:** Reviewed the statistical analysis, contributed to the results section, and assisted in manuscript editing.
- **E. Ahmed:** Reviewed the literature, contributed to the discussion section, and

assisted in formulating practical recommendations.

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