

Research Article

Assessing the Psychological Adaptation of Kindergarten Teachers in Halabja Province

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History	This research investigates the realm of psychological adaptation, a critical aspect of the human experience that profoundly influences our daily lives, especially as we navigate the complexities of work and existence. Employing a descriptive methodology and quantitative techniques, data was collected from 166 kindergarten teachers in Halabja province, Kurdistan, Iraq, comprising both private and public educational institutions. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis, deploying a T-Test to scrutinize disparities in average scores between two groups and a One-way ANOVA for comparisons across multiple groups. The findings reveal that there are no statistically significant gender differences in the mental adaptation of kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province. However, a marginally significant mean difference (3.688, $p = 0.058$) is noted between the 20 - 29 and 30 - 39 age groups, suggesting a potential trend in mental adaptation levels among these age categories. In contrast, no statistically significant differences emerged in the comparisons involving the 50 - 59 age group. The data accentuates the significance of age disparities in mental adaptation among kindergarten teachers, particularly underscoring the contrast between the 40 - 49 age group and the 20 - 29 age group, emphasizing age as a crucial factor affecting mental adaptation levels.
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1. Introduction

Psychological adaptation, a central facet of the human experience, shapes our lives as we navigate the complexities of work and daily existence. Regardless of the nature of our professions or vocations, our attitude towards work plays a pivotal role in determining the quality of our days. It can be the difference between a life marked by upheaval, inconsistency, oppression, fatigue, and hopelessness, and one characterized by fulfillment, resilience, and a sense of duty (Schmitt & Pilcher, 2004).

Gersamia and Imedadze (2015) state that within this milieu, teaching stands as a unique and challenging duty among the diverse tapestry of professions. Teaching, like any other art form of work, is not a

path traversed by all, for it entails engaging with the diverse minds that populate our society. It demands constant adaptability in the face of an ever-evolving landscape of ideas and societal shifts. Successful engagement in teaching, and indeed, in all forms of work, hinges upon an open receptivity to new and useful knowledge—knowledge that propels us towards development, renewal, and the frontier of innovation.

At its core, adaptation embodies the harmonious interplay between human beings and their environment. This interplay manifests in two distinct dimensions: adaptation leading to satisfaction and adaptation intertwined with the physical environment and the demands of reality. These dimensions span across various aspects, including the social, cultural, biological, and natural domains (Iuliia, 2018). It is imperative to recognize that the culmination of adaptation's journey rests upon the realization of human satisfaction, happiness, mental acceptance, and harmonious coexistence within one's environment.

A key prerequisite for achieving mental adaptation is self-awareness—an understanding of one's capabilities and limitations. Moreno-Gómez and Cejudo (2019) think that successful adaptation hinges on aligning personal desires with one's skill set. When aspirations diverge from abilities and destiny, unrest, tension, and discord may emerge as formidable challenges. Cultivating a positive mindset emerges as a transformative tool, transcending the boundaries of occupation and daily life, thereby influencing every facet of our existence.

This article embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the profound concept of psychological adaptation. By comprising its multifaceted dimensions, we seek to unravel its significance in shaping human experiences. Through this inquiry, we aim to equip individuals with insights and strategies to navigate life's challenges with resilience and fulfillment. The significance of mental adaptation in society cannot be overstated, making scientific research in the field of psychology an essential necessity. This research strives to address the origins of issues stemming from nature, reality, and society, promoting balance and sound decision-making in individuals' lives. An individual's capacity to adapt to themselves and their social environment, coupled with creative thinking, hinges on maintaining a healthy mental state within society. The social and human dimensions of this mindset are a source of contentment, tranquility, and mental well-being (Gower, et. at., 2014). Individuals possessing such qualities are considered normal, as they possess the requisite level of mental health that allows them to coexist harmoniously with themselves, their families, workplaces, and their broader social surroundings.

The significance of this research lies in its focus on a profession that plays an active and influential role in shaping society through education, as the future of our society rests in the hands of teachers. If kindergarten teachers struggle with mental instability, it could potentially give rise to numerous social, psychological, and educational issues in the future, fostering isolation and mental discord within society. Teachers facing mental health challenges are unable to provide proper education. Additionally, a lack of awareness about how families, teachers, and children should interact within this institution contributes to various educational, psychological, social, and cultural issues. These issues ultimately hinder society's productivity and the development of a well-rounded generation. These factors also induce shifts in the overall societal and individual lifestyle, prompting individuals to adapt to these changes by adopting new mechanisms. Consequently, similar research endeavors are warranted in different communities. The researchers inquired about the mental fitness among the kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province:

1. What is the level of mental fitness among kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province?
2. Is there an association between age groups and the level of mental adaptation among kindergarten teachers in the region?

2. Literature Review

In this literature review, we scrutinize the intricate realm of psychological adaptation, focusing specifically on its levels and manifestations within the context of kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province.

2.1. Exploring the Multifaceted Dimensions of Compatibility in Kindergarten Teachers

Various forms of compatibility exist within the context of psychological adaptation among kindergarten teachers.

2.1.1. Social adaptation

In psychological terms, social adaptation for kindergarten teachers involves the ongoing development and enhancement of their interpersonal abilities, communication approaches, and emotional intelligence. This enables educators to adeptly navigate and address the varied social interactions within a kindergarten classroom environment (Gower, et. at., 2014). Petrová (2016) states that social adaptation refers to an individual's capacity to adjust to the external, physical, and social aspects of their surroundings. It involves achieving a balanced relationship between the individual and their social environment, ultimately leading

to a state of equilibrium. Social adaptation is the process through which individuals modify their behavior, attitudes, and habits to effectively integrate into their social environment, fostering harmonious relationships and meeting the needs of both the individual and the environment (Boyce et al., 2012).

Flem et al. (1998) believe that this type of adaptation encompasses various dimensions, including adjustments in behavior, attitudes, and habits. It is essential for individuals to adapt positively to their physical and social surroundings, which encompass factors like climate, transportation, technological advancements, religion, social interactions, political structures, social, legal, and economic systems. Social adaptation can manifest as either positive or negative changes in an individual's life, often arising from shifts in the external environment. These changes may give rise to various situations and challenges, necessitating adjustments in behavior to address and avoid potential problems. It is important to note that social adaptation involves an individual's ability to tackle environmental, social, and physical challenges, not merely surrendering to an unsuitable environment in the name of adaptation. Instead, it encourages proactive responses to create a more harmonious fit between individuals and their surroundings (Salih et al., 2022).

2.1.2. Professional compatibility

The concept of occupational fit has garnered significant attention from researchers and scientists within the field of industrial psychology. However, the study of occupational fit has brought forth a wealth of theories, models, and research, largely due to the inherent inconsistencies and disparities among researchers. These disparities can be observed in the struggle to define the concept definitively or reach a consensus on a unified theory or model that comprehensively explains its dimensions and its impact on individuals, particularly in relation to the pressures encountered in the workplace (Lee et al., 2017).

On the other hand, Clipa and Boghean (2015) state that ineffectual or poor adaptation to one's job can result in both practical and psychological stress, which may render an individual ill-equipped to handle the demands of their work. The nature of the work itself exerts a considerable influence on an individual's ability to adapt, with factors such as extended working hours contributing to increased stress levels and potential impacts on mental well-being. It is worth noting that disparities in job fit are a natural occurrence among workers, even when their job roles share similarities in terms of responsibilities and time commitment. These discrepancies often stem from the varying treatment each individual receives from their employer or the interpersonal relationships they forge with colleagues (Gagnon et al., 2019).

Furthermore, (Lee et al., 2017) mention occupational compatibility as an important factor which serves as a crucial indicator of job satisfaction and encompasses various elements. It reflects the level of employee productivity, their skillset, satisfaction levels among managers and colleagues, adherence to workplace rules and systems, organizational structure, self-efficacy, job requirements, and prevailing working conditions. The multifaceted nature of occupational compatibility highlights its significance in understanding the dynamics of the workplace and its direct impact on employee well-being and performance.

2.2. Related Scholarly Studies

Research endeavors to investigate the correlation between emotional development factors and subsequent societal adaptation among preschool-aged children residing in Omdurman, Sudan. Additionally, it aims to examine the socio-emotional challenges encountered by 4-year-old boys and girls hailing from families with varying structures. The study is grounded in an investigation encompassing 300 children, aged 4 to 5 years, who attend kindergartens in the town of Omdurman. Emotion comprehension among the children was assessed utilizing the Emotion Matching Task, while their social competence was evaluated using the abbreviated version of the Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation scale, originally developed by LaFreniere (Alwaely et al., 2021). Gender exerted a notable impact on both externalizing and pro-social behaviors, with boys demonstrating elevated scores in anger-aggression but lower scores in social competence. Furthermore, age exhibited a significant influence, revealing that 4-year-old children display lower emotional and pro-social competencies when contrasted with their older counterparts. While gender did not yield statistically significant effects on the measurement of internalizing behavior, age displayed a clear effect, as older children showcased higher scores in anxiety-withdrawal.

Furthermore, other research such as (Alasmari, 2023) shows that adjusting to university life in Saudi Arabia can pose challenges for international students. This qualitative study, grounded in the social adaptation framework, delves deeply into the difficulties faced by international students during their enrollment at Al-Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU) situated in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Employing purposeful sampling, 20 students participated in semi-structured interviews containing 16 questions aimed at eliciting their perceptions regarding the obstacles encountered throughout their stay in Saudi Arabia. The findings unveiled those international students grappled with language barriers, navigated through issues related to culture shock, and experienced emotions such as depression, nostalgia, stress, loneliness, and

homesickness. Nevertheless, these international students maintained positive outlooks regarding their social adaptation and expressed satisfaction with the resources and amenities available at (IMSIU).

Moreover, in their research, scholars like Gersamia and Imedadze (2015) focused on investigating the challenges associated with a child's social adaptation to kindergarten. Their study investigated the complexities of children's adaptation to nursery school, identifying key issues that stem from this adjustment phase. The research findings highlighted two primary factors contributing to these challenges: a notable increase in anxiety levels and the unique dynamics of interpersonal relationships. High anxiety, as a characteristic acquired by individuals during this period, manifests as heightened sensitivity to emotional situations, a subconscious lack of confidence in one's abilities, a strong inclination to preserve a familiar and comforting role that aligns with the individual's self-perception, and a tendency to exhibit intense emotional reactions when this familiar role is at risk of alteration. The study also explored strategies for coping with these challenges. Of particular note was the emphasis on carefully selected active motor games, which not only promote friendship among children and mitigate feelings of isolation but also serve as a means to alleviate the stress that can accompany a child's adaptation to kindergarten.

3. Materials and Methods

In this section, we outline the comprehensive methodology employed in conducting the research, providing a detailed overview of the systematic approach, data collection methods, and analytical techniques utilized to address the research objectives and contribute to a robust understanding of the subject matter.

3.1. Design of the Study

The research adopted a descriptive methodology and employed quantitative techniques to accomplish its goals. Data were gathered from participants through the administration of a questionnaire. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), quantitative research is characterized by the systematic examination of phenomena through collecting data that can be measured, and it relies on statistical, mathematical, or computational approaches for analysis. Quantitative research makes use of various sampling methods and instruments such as online surveys, polls, and questionnaires, making it the most practical method for data collection.

3.2. Sample of the study

The present study included 166 kindergarten teachers from both private and public educational institutions in Halabja province, Kurdistan, Iraq. In this group of teachers, there was a noticeable gender imbalance, with 157 female participants and 8 male participants. This gender imbalance might reflect the nature of the career that kindergarten teachers require more female teachers than male ones. The breakdown of the participants by gender provides important information about the composition of those involved in the research. It's important to note that we obtained prior consent from the educational institution, the school principal, and all participants, ensuring that ethical protocols were followed throughout the research process.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The survey was crafted to include distinct sets of questions, totaling 48 items tailored specifically for kindergarten educators. These questions were developed to assess how important it is to incorporate psychological adaptation skills among kindergarten teachers in Halabja province. We employed a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from 'never' to 'always,' to systematically capture and quantify the teachers' responses and perspectives, ensuring a precise evaluation. It's worth noting that the questionnaire was adapted from a master's thesis authored by Mohammed in 2016 which is not published online, we took the master thesis from the university library. The consent was obtained from the author to use the questionnaire for the current study.

We chose this research approach to gain valuable insights into the effectiveness and acceptance of psychological adaptation practices. For data collection, we utilized a targeted sampling technique to ensure a diverse and representative group of participants. Initially, the questionnaires were distributed in physical form, which were later transferred to a Google Forms link for easy compatibility with SPSS.

The survey questionnaire was divided into two sections: the initial part collected demographic information from participants, while the subsequent section focused on survey-specific details. Spanning a three-month period, from January 2023 to March 2023, the data collection process was strategically extended to allow for a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions and experiences over an extended timeframe. This deliberate extension facilitated meticulous data collection and provided a holistic understanding of participants' perspectives over an extended period.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The data gathered was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). An Independent Sample T-Test was employed to assess whether there was a significant disparity between the average scores of the two groups in regard to a variable of interest. Simultaneously, the One-way ANOVA was used to compare the averages of multiple groups. A preliminary study was conducted to address various critical aspects associated with the survey questionnaire. These aspects included evaluating the questionnaire's effectiveness, collecting feedback on survey formats, estimating the time needed to complete the survey, examining data collection procedures, and assessing the survey's validity and reliability. The pilot study served as an initial investigation to determine the viability and efficiency of the survey instrument before progressing to the main study.

3.5. Issues of Reliability and Validity

Regarding the teachers' responses, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .780 for the forty-eight-item scale also signifies a robust internal consistency among the included items. Consequently, it can be inferred that these items collectively measure the same fundamental concept as a cohesive unit; moreover, none of the items were deleted during the reliability assessment. The noteworthy Cronbach's Alpha values indicate a substantial association among the questionnaire items, implying consistent results if the same participants were to complete the questionnaire on multiple occasions. This enhances the questionnaire's reliability in accurately assessing the intended concept. To ensure the study's validity, only kindergarten teachers were chosen to participate in the research and respond to the questionnaire.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), an essential statistical measure related to the suitability and appropriateness of the data for factor analysis, is a measure of sampling adequacy with a value of 0.686. This value reflects the extent to which the dataset is suitable for factor analysis. A KMO value close to 1 indicates that the data is highly suitable, and the score of 0.686 suggests a moderately suitable level. This value indicates that the variables in the dataset share some degree of commonality.

4. Result and Discussion

This section presents the findings stemming from our investigation into the mental fitness and adaptation levels among kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province.

4.1. Gender disparities in mental fitness among kindergarten teachers

In this section, we present the results and engage in a comprehensive discussion of the mental fitness levels observed among kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province, shedding light on the crucial aspects that influence their well-being and overall performance in the classroom.

Table 1. Gender Disparities of the Kindergarten Teachers

		Independent Samples Test						
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Mental Adaptation	Equal variances assumed	0.061	0.806	-0.878	163	0.381	-1.881	2.143
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.938	7.848	0.376	-1.881	2.006

The significant section of the table detailing gender disparities in the mental adaptation of kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province is instrumental in revealing the statistical significance, or lack thereof, in these disparities. The table begins by assessing the equality of variances between the male and female groups using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances. In this case, the F-statistic is 0.061, and the associated p-value is 0.806. This non-significant p-value suggests that the variances of mental adaptation scores between male and female teachers are relatively equal, a crucial assumption for further analysis.

Subsequently, the table provides results for the t-test for Equality of Means. Under the assumption of equal variances, the t-statistic is -0.878, with 163 degrees of freedom, and a two-tailed p-value of 0.381. This p-value indicates that the difference in mental adaptation means between male and female teachers is not statistically significant. In other words, there is no strong evidence to conclude that gender plays a significant role in influencing the mental adaptation levels of kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province.

Furthermore, when equal variances are not assumed, and a Welch's t-test is employed, the t-statistic is -0.938, with 7.848 degrees of freedom, and a two-tailed p-value of 0.376. Once again, the p-value is non-significant, reinforcing the conclusion that gender disparities in mental adaptation are not statistically significant, even when the assumption of equal variances is relaxed.

In summary, the significant section of the table underscores that there are no statistically significant gender disparities in the mental adaptation of kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province. Both tests, whether assuming equal variances or not, consistently demonstrate that the difference in mental adaptation means between male and female teachers are not statistically significant. These results suggest that gender does not exert a statistically significant influence on the mental adaptation levels of kindergarten teachers in this specific region.

Career decisions are significantly influenced by cultural expectations and traditional gender conventions. Should it be widely held that kindergarten teachers are more suited for their roles, this idea may serve as a deterrent for men who are interested in pursuing professions in education. Moreover, societal opinions frequently influence people's goals for their schooling and careers. If there is a belief that there are better job options for males in other sectors, this viewpoint can unavoidably result in fewer men deciding to teach kindergarten.

Moreover, there is an obvious correlation between career choices and conventional gender stereotypes. Stereotypes based on gender will persist if society maintains the belief that some occupations are better suited for a specific gender. As such, these prejudices have the potential to significantly impact people's decisions about their schooling and career path.

In light of these considerations, addressing and challenging these perceptions becomes crucial for fostering inclusivity and ensuring that career choices are driven by personal interests and abilities rather than by gender-based expectations. By systematically dismantling these stereotypes, society can create a more equitable environment where individuals feel imaginative to pursue careers based on their passions and aptitudes, irrespective of established traditional gender norms.

4.2. Age Disparities of the Mental Adaptation

In this section, we present the outcomes of our investigation regarding the age-related disparities in mental adaptation among kindergarten teachers, aiming to identify the specific age group that demonstrates the highest level of mental adaptation.

The table provides a detailed analysis of the significance of age disparities in relation to the mental adaptation of kindergarten teachers. The Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) test is employed to compare multiple age groups, with a focus on their mean differences. The table demonstrates the significant

mean differences, standard errors, and associated significance levels (Sig.), along with 95% confidence intervals for each comparison.

Table 2. Age Disparities of the Kindergarten Teachers

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: Tukey HSD						
(I) Age		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	30 - 39	3.688	1.455	0.058	-0.09	7.47
20 - 29	40 - 49	5.198*	1.540	0.005	1.20	9.19
	50 - 59	2.382	3.167	0.876	-5.84	10.60
	20 - 29	-3.688	1.455	0.058	-7.47	0.09
30 - 39	40 - 49	1.510	0.999	0.433	-1.08	4.10
	50 - 59	-1.306	2.943	0.971	-8.95	6.33
	20 - 29	-5.198*	1.540	0.005	-9.19	-1.20
40 - 49	30 - 39	-1.510	0.999	0.433	-4.10	1.08
	50 - 59	-2.816	2.985	0.782	-10.57	4.93
	20 - 29	-2.382	3.167	0.876	-10.60	5.84
50 - 59	30 - 39	1.306	2.943	0.971	-6.33	8.95
	40 - 49	2.816	2.985	0.782	-4.93	10.57

Notably, the age group 40 - 49 stands out with a significant mean difference of 5.198 when compared to the 20 - 29 age group ($p = 0.005$), and this result is marked with an asterisk (*) indicating statistical significance at the 0.05 level. This finding suggests that teachers in the 40 - 49 age bracket exhibit a significantly different level of mental adaptation compared to those in the 20 - 29 age group.

Furthermore, there is a marginally significant mean difference (3.688, $p = 0.058$) between the 20 - 29 and 30 - 39 age groups, suggesting a potential trend in mental adaptation levels across these age categories. However, the other comparisons, including those involving the 50 - 59 age group, do not yield statistically significant differences.

In summary, the table highlights the significance of age disparities in mental adaptation among kindergarten teachers, with particular emphasis on the noteworthy contrast between the 40 - 49 age group and the 20 - 29 age group, emphasizing the importance of age as a factor in mental adaptation levels.

For these differences among the age groups, several factors could be linked to the findings of the present study. One plausible explanation is that the 40 - 49 age group may have accumulated more life experiences, including both successes and challenges. Consequently, this wealth of experiences might contribute to higher levels of resilience in this age group. The life experiences gained over the years could equip individuals in their 40s with better coping mechanisms, thereby positively impacting their mental adaptation. In contrast, the relatively less experienced 20 - 29 age group may face greater challenges in developing effective coping strategies.

Moreover, individuals in the 40 - 49 age group might have achieved a more stable and advanced position in their careers. This sense of accomplishment and job stability could play a pivotal role in positively influencing their mental well-being. In comparison, individuals in the earlier stages of their careers, particularly those in the 20 - 29 age group, might be grappling with uncertainties and career transitions. These early-career challenges could potentially contribute to lower levels of mental well-being in this age cohort. Thus, the interplay of life experiences and career stability emerges as a compelling explanation for the observed differences in mental well-being across age groups in the present study.

5. Conclusion

The research presented here sheds light on the critical aspects of mental fitness and adaptation levels among kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province. The findings from this study have several important implications. First and foremost, it underscores the significance of addressing the mental well-being of kindergarten teachers, given their pivotal role in shaping the educational and psychological development of young children. The results revealed no significant gender disparities in mental adaptation levels among these educators. This suggests that both male and female kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province exhibit relatively similar levels of mental adaptation, which is an encouraging finding in terms of gender equity in the profession. Moreover, when examining the impact of age on mental adaptation, the study highlighted a significant difference between the 40 - 49 age group and the 20 - 29 age group, indicating that teachers in their forties experience significantly different levels of mental adaptation. This result suggests that age does play a role in shaping the mental adaptation of kindergarten teachers. However, no other significant age-related disparities were observed. To further advance our understanding of these dynamics, it is recom-

mended that future studies delve into the underlying factors contributing to the differences in mental adaptation among the age groups and explore strategies for supporting the mental well-being of kindergarten teachers in their forties. Additionally, a longitudinal study could provide valuable insights into how the mental adaptation of kindergarten teachers evolves over time and in response to various life and career experiences. Furthermore, it is essential to continue to research and prioritize the mental well-being of educators, particularly those in early childhood education, as their resilience and mental fitness have a direct impact on the overall well-being and development of young learners. The well-being of teachers not only affects their own lives but also significantly influences the quality of education provided to the next generation. It is crucial that educators receive the necessary support and resources to ensure their mental well-being, as this is an investment in the future of our society. In conclusion, this research contributes to our understanding of mental adaptation among kindergarten teachers in Halabja Province and highlights the need for ongoing studies to further explore and address the factors influencing their mental well-being. By promoting the mental health of educators, we can foster a positive educational environment and, ultimately, a brighter future for our children and society as a whole.

Declaration of Competing Interest The authors declare that they have no known competing of interests.

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