

Size Distribution of Population within Kindergarten Levels in the City of Basra

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Abstract

Studying the population within kindergarten age groups is one of the important population studies, as this age group is considered one of the important segments and a gateway towards children entering the educational progression. Thus, this research analyzed the size distribution of children within kindergartens in the city of Basra, and studied it for the period (2007, 2022) in terms of the numerical variation of children and by gender (males, females), number of classes, classes, and educational staff. The research found that there is a disparity in the numbers of registered children between the city and the region of the governorate, and an increase in the number reached (1, 4, 7) as a difference between the period studied (2007, 2022). Likewise, the increase in the number of buildings reached a difference of (3) kindergartens only, because most of the institutions affiliated with the government sector have not been renovated. In addition, some kindergartens were joined together due to their geographical location being moved to accommodate new children.

Keywords: population, population geography, kindergartens, education, Basra.

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INTRODUCTION

Childhood is regarded as the most important stage in human's life, where he/she gets influenced by different factors surrounding them. The first five years are really significant in the formation process of child personality- which has an everlasting impact on them. The International Conference for Childhood has recommended the necessity of looking after pre-school children and establishing and nurturing pre-school organizations – which are normally referred to as kindergartens (Adas, 1980, p.13). Islam also has paid a lot of attention to the child and has emphasized that the child is the most valuable asset that one has after believing in God and His prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Thus, children are so closed to Allah. Allah, in fact, Has glorified childhood when He swore by it in the

Holy Quran, when He said: I swear by this city (1), and you are free of restriction in this city (2), and by the father and that which was born of him (3) (Quran, Surah Albalad).

In addition, current trends have drawn a lot of attention to child upbringing in kindergartens, and scrutinizing what is introduced to them, then creating material that help them gain knowledge, skills, trends, tendencies, values, habits and behaviours that help them live in this society, adapt, and understand the environment in which they live according to the recent developments in it (Ilyas – and Murtafha, 2005, p.11).

Kindergartens are defined as that learning institution specialized in children aged between four to six years. It is characterized by its organized playing activities that allow children to express themselves. It also trains them on life and work together in an environment, supplying them with necessary tools, syllabi, and programmes that allow them to grow (Tariq, 2008, p. 19). Kindergartens are also known as a learning institution where children - from three to six years - are received and prepared for the primary schooling and for gaining developed education expertise more than those gained in crèche (Kreeman, 2004, p.16).

According to that the researcher can define kindergartens as an educational learning establishment which has received accreditation from the higher education according to certain criteria which can receive children from three to six years. Thus it is the first small community following the family in which a purposeful learning and holistic care are given, through a number of programmes aiming at sharpening the child's personality and ensuring the growth at the physical, mental, and societal levels.

First: Research Aim:

The aim of the study is to show the distribution of kindergartens in in Basra. This is done through studying the discrepancies in distribution of kindergartens and its objective and locational indexes.

Second: Research Problem:

Kindergartens are one of the learning institutions and being a major factor among those responsible for the social development. When kindergarten services are suitable as well as well planned, the society then can make positive changes towards a better future. Thus, research problems are as follows:

- This stage looked upon as being essential by parents, since it is not obligatory within the education system?
- Is the distribution of kindergartens enough for Basra people?

Third: Research Hypothesis:

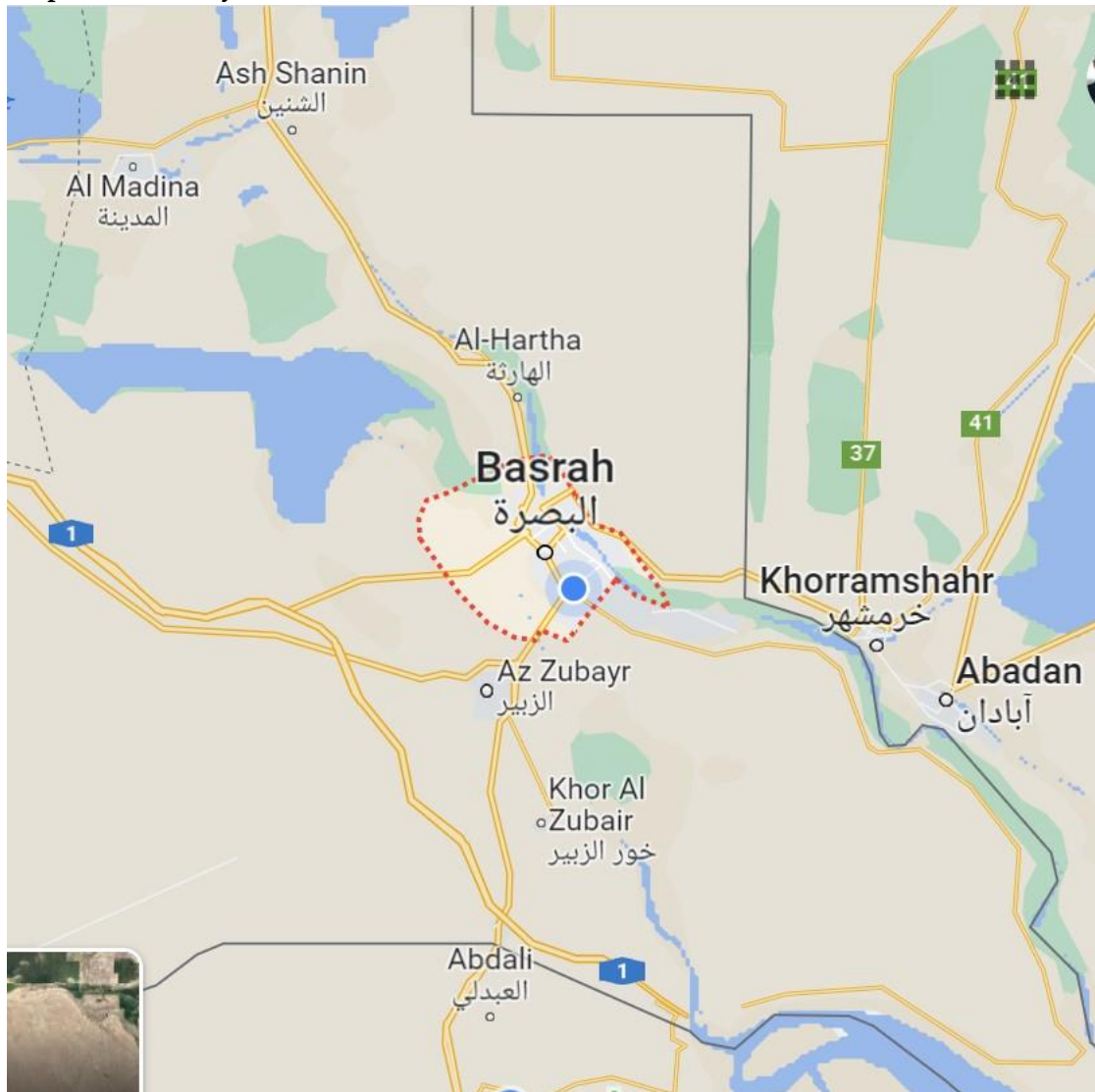
This research hypothesises that official authorities are not interested in kindergartens and their development, that is why parents have turned to the private sectors which were prosperous since 2003.

Fourth: Research Limitations:

This section deals with two limitations: the first related to place and the second related to time. As regard the first, the research limits itself with the administrative boundaries of Basra. This city is located in the south of Iraq between the latitudes 27,30 ° - 47,51 ° north, and between the longitudes 47,45 ° - 47,51 ° east, geographically extending from Saraji river to the south, Shatt Al-Arab to the east, Abu Skheir to the north and Shatt Al Basra to the west, with 10737 hectare. This is equal to 107 square kilometre – as shown in maps (1) and (2). The city involved 54 residential quarters.

As regards time limitation, the study included available data related to kindergartens in 2022.

Map (1), Basra City



Map (2) Residential Quarters in Basra



Fifth: The Research Study

In order to achieve research objectives, three issues were discussed: the first is concerned with the children's distributions in kindergartens, the second is related to gender distributions together with the number of institutions and cadre, while the third is focused on the significance of kindergartens for the society. Findings and recommendations will follow.

1- Children's Distributions According to Size in Kindergartens:

This stage is regarded as one of the most important stages in education, since it contributes to the age of the child. Therefore, kindergartens help children - from four to five years - grow (Al-Taif, 2009, p. 162). Kindergartens are looked upon as being the first learning experience for the child which aims at completion for the family role (Bardis, 1982, p. 8), where children do (the preparatory and kindergarten phases). This is a vital stage in child's growth where his/her personality starts to form

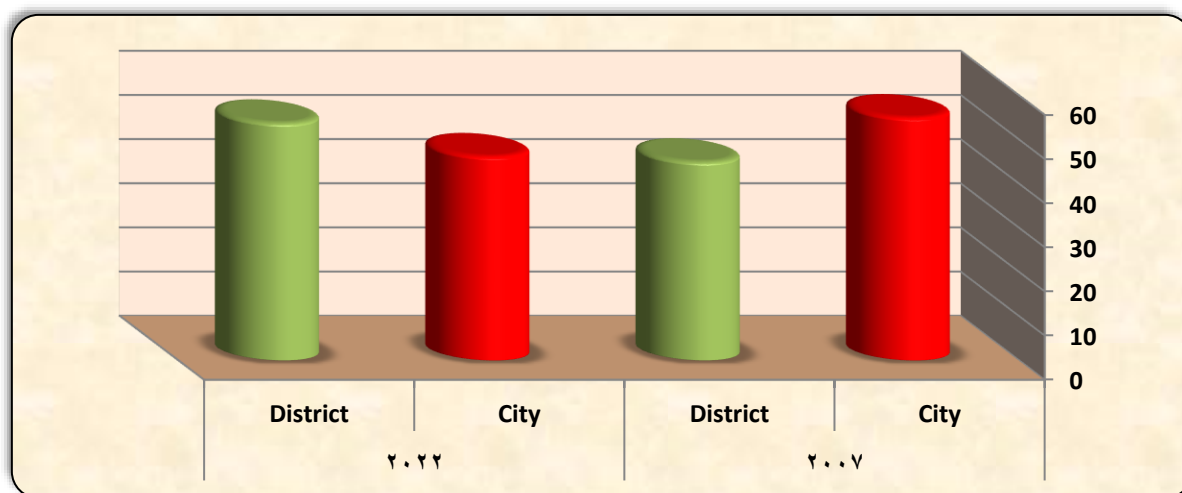
which in turn affects their future habits, tendencies and cognition. Studies show that 50% of children’s cognitive abilities are formed in the first four years (Ahmed, 1990, p.316). Since joining kindergartens is not obligatory, some people do not pay attention to it. It is worth noting here that kindergartens are certified in Iraq in (1974/1975), where learning was free of charge (Al-Enzy, 1997, p. 156). The fact that kindergartens are not obligatory and that most of mothers wee houseleeks should not belittle their value. It is of importance to note that the first kindergarten in Basra was inaugurated in Al-Mithaq area after (34) years of establishing the first primary school in the city. However, it seems that inaugurating kindergartens has a strong link to top the social and economic states, and how well developed certain society is (Al-Hadi, 2023).

Examining Table (1) and Figure (1), we can realize the slight change in the number of kindergartens between the years (2007- 2022) in Basra. The number in 2007 was only (33) in the centre of the city- which is 55% of all kindergartens in the governorate which amount to (60), whereas the number in the district is (27), amounting to 45% of the total number of kindergartens.

Table (1)
The Distribution of Children in Kindergartens in Basra City and Province for (2007-2022)

Year	Location	Number of Kindergartens	Percentage	Number of Children				
				Males	Percentage	Females	Percentage	Total
2007	City	33	55	3522	34.9	2307	22.9	5829
	District	27	45	1272	12.6	2990	29.6	4261
	Governorate	60	100	4794	47.5	5297	52.5	10090
2022	City	30	46.2	3868	22.1	4068	23.2	7936
	District	35	53.8	4628	26.4	4947	28.3	9575
	Governorate	65	100	8496	48.5	9015	51.5	17511

Figure (1)
The Slight Change in the Number of kindergartens in Basra city and Basra District for 2007-2022



But according to the data collected in 2022, the number of Kindergartens is (30) in the centre, rating 46.2% out of all the total number in the whole governorate which is (65). However, the number in the district was (35), rating 53.8% of all the total of kindergartens in the whole governorate. What is noticed here there was a decrease in the number in the centre of the city by (5). This could be explained by the fact that some kindergartens have moved out of their original region – which is something that could either be related to the dispute on the ownership of building or the contract termination.

Going back to Table (1) and Figure (2), a discrepancy can be noticed in the number of children in the city centre and district. The number of pupils according to 2007 data is (5829) pupil in the city centre (which is 57.8% according to Figure 2) out of the total number in the governorate which is (10090), while the number in the district (4261) (which is 42.2%) of the whole number in the governorate.

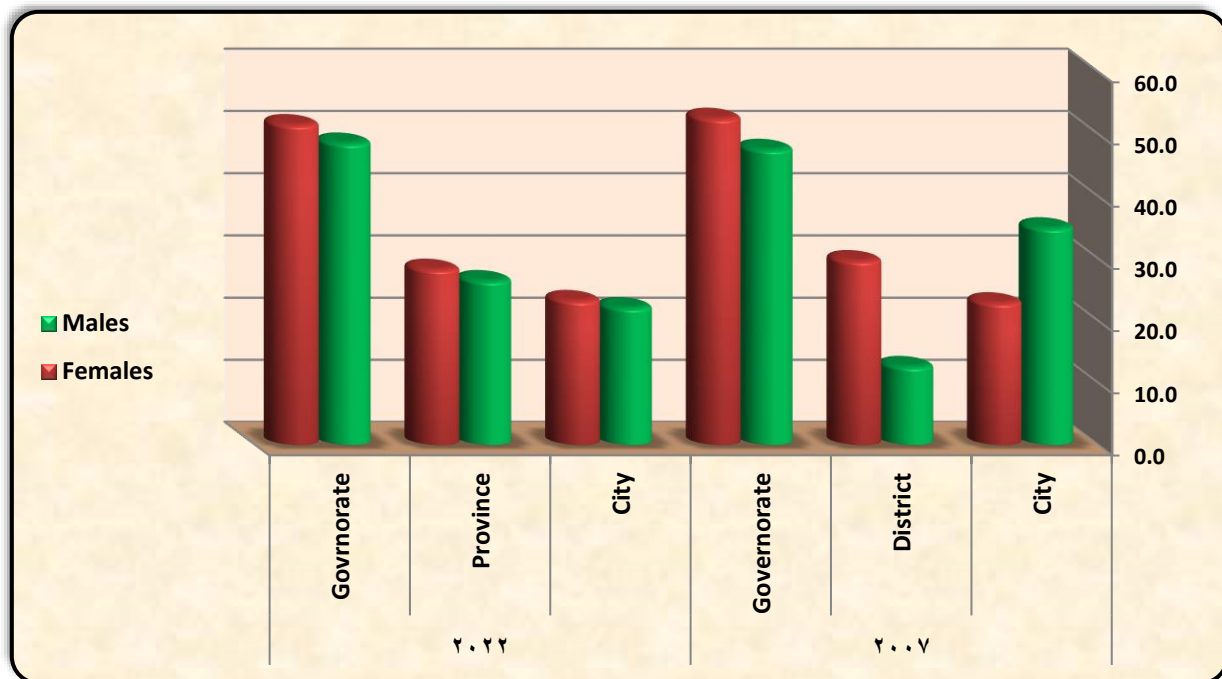
2- Gender Distribution of Children in Kindergartens in Basra

Gender data collected in 2007 showed that the number of males in the city centre was (3522), rating 34.9% out of the total number of pupils in the governorate, while the number of females was (2307), rating 22.9% of the total number in the governorate. As regards the district, the number of males was (1272), rating 12.6% out of the total in the governorate whereas the number of females was (2990), rating 29.6% of the total number in the governorate. As for the total number of males in the whole governorate was (4794), rating 47.5%, while that of females (5297), rating 52.% of the whole number in the governorate.

However, data gathered in 2022 shows that the number of pupils in kindergartens reached (7936) in the city centre, rating 45.3%, out of the number of kindergarten pupils in the governorate which is (17511). The number also increased in the district to reach (9575), rating 54.7% of the total number of pupils in the governorate. Interestingly, this increase in the number of kindergarten pupils in 2022 data could be attributed to the social awareness of the significance of this learning experience in the children’s lives.

Figure (2)

Children’s Distribution According to Gender Between the Years (2007-2022)



The number of males in Basra centre is (3868), rating 22.1% of their total number in the governorate, which was (17511). The number of females is (4068), rating 23.2% of their total number in the governorate. As for the district, the number of males was (4628), rating 26.4% of the total

number in the governorate, while the female number was (4947), rating 28.3% of the total number in the governorate. However, the number of males in the whole governorate reached (8496), rating 48.5% of the total in the governorate, whereas female number reached (5015), rating 51.5% of the total number in the governorate.

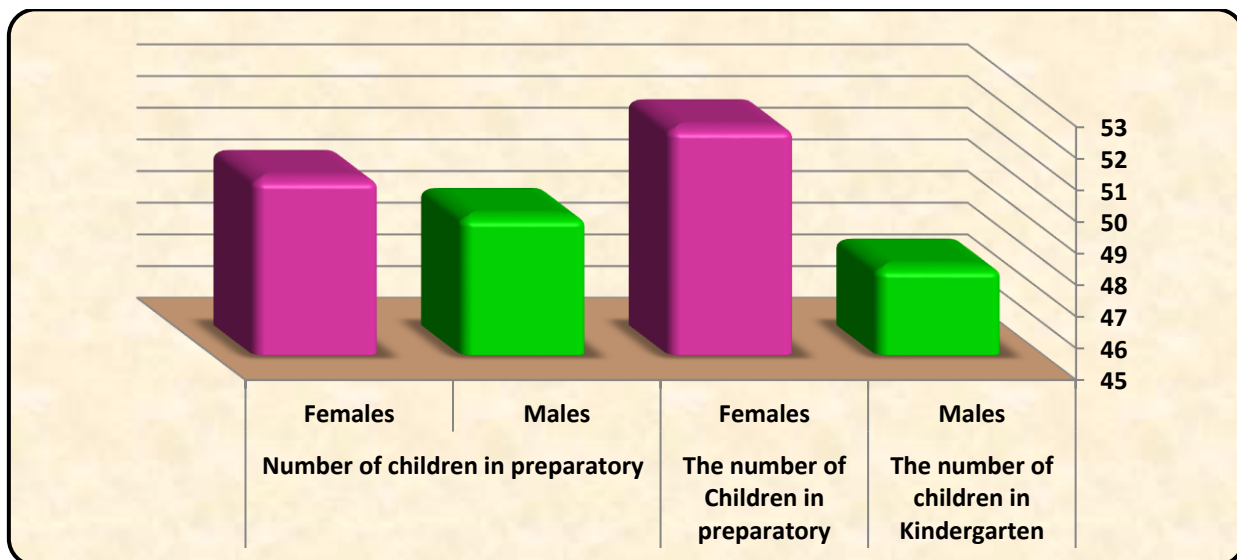
Examining the above data, it can be concluded that the number of children enrolled in kindergartens in the whole Basra - be it in the city centre, district or in the governorate – has been risen between the years 2007-2022.

It is worth noting here that kindergarten stage is composed of two sub-stages: kindergarten and preparatory. Table (2) and Figure (3) show a discrepancy between the number of children in kindergarten stage and their numbers in the preparatory stage (which is the second sub-stage in the kindergarten stage). The number of children in kindergarten sub-stage is (3406). The number of males was (1628), rating 47.8%, while the number of females (1778), rating 52.2% out of the total number in the governorate. However, the number of pupils in the preparatory sub-stage was (4530). (2240) out of them were males, rating 49.4%, while (2290) were females, rating 50.6% of the total number. What can be noted here is that the number of pupils in the preparatory sub-stage is larger than that in the kindergarten sub-stage. The reason behind this is that most children do not enrol in the kinder-garten sub-stage due to their attachment to their families. The number of those missing this sub-stage is (543).

Table (2)
Gender Distribution of Children and its Discrepancies in Basra for 2022

Number of female teachers	Number of sections					Number of Children									
						preparatory					Kindergarten				
	Total	%	Preparatory	%	Kindergarten	Total	%	Females	%	Males	Total	%	Females	%	Males
237	130	53.8	70	46.2	60	4530	50.6	2290	49.4	2240	3406	52.2	1778	47.8	1628

Figure (3)
Gender Distribution of Children and its Discrepancies in Basra for 2022



As was shown in Table (2), the number of female teachers in Kindergartens according to 2022 data reached (237) distributed to kindergartens in the city, while the number of sections in kindergartens was (60), rating 46.2% of the total number of sections. The number of sections for the preparatory sub-stage was (70), rating 53.8% of the total number of sections.

3- The Social Significance of the Spread of Kindergartens

The following factors are behind the spread of kindergartens (Mkhtari, 2017, p. 251).

1. The small size of buildings which did not allow child to play freely inside them.
2. The shrinkage in the size of family where grandparents are no longer available for children to play with.
3. Tendency of women to work outside and become (multi-tasked) house which made it difficult for them to look after their children in the way they should.
4. The length of distance between workplace and home which caused women to stay the whole day at work away from their kids.
5. Promotion of kindergarten culture where kindergartens are looked upon as being a pre-school stage.

Thus kindergartens are regarded as playing a complementary role alongside family which help in child bringing up and child social adaptation. So, kindergartens play a positive impact on the child – an environment where kids interact among themselves and also with the staff working in it. Education in kindergartens will not be humanistic unless it took into consideration the children’s humanistic needs where kid join from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds which are enriched by children’s interaction and adaptation with others. Thus, this stage is no more than a complementary to embryo’s stage and at the same to a pre-stage to the educations that follows. Therefore it is the foundation upon which the life of the person is established. This is because it is sensitive and flexible periods that allows children to learn and develop their skills. Thus, kindergarten stage is the essential for it is the time that is characterized by activity and mental growth (Nabhan, 2009, p.25). Through this time, children get skills and experiences.

In summary, kindergartens aim at creating good people grown in a kind and loving environment. they also help creating suitable conditions for children to achieve their needs. They are the environment where children build their personalities and receive their social values (from Islamic perspective). Thus, it is significant that certain materialistic, technical factors are available there because working in a kindergarten setting should be characterized by harmony and congruency; otherwise the aims will not get achieved.

Conclusions:

This study was concerned with kindergartens in Basra as for the years 2007 and 2022, where a comparison was drawn between these years through the limitations surrounding the city and the province. The following conclusions were drawn:

1. The number of kindergartens was to (33) in 2007 but dropped to (30) in 2022. This is due to the joining of some kindergartens together, whereas their number in the province risen in 2022, compared to 2007.
2. The number of female learners was higher than males in 2022, which amounted to (4068, 3868) respectively. However the number of males was higher in 2007 compared to females, amounting to (3522, 3207) respectively.
3. It is important that the early learning criteria is included in kindergarten's syllabi.
4. The research stressed the significance of female teachers in kindergartens to be qualified to deal with kids at this stage and be more kind and understandable to them. This is due to the sensitivity of this stage in their life, where teachers are regarded as the substitute mothers for them.

Recommendations:

1. Conduct a thorough study of the curriculum used in kindergartens and try to apply recent methods used in developed countries.
2. Make kindergarten stage obligatory for four years kids due to its importance in creating their personality and in preparing them for schools.
3. The aim of establishing kindergartens should focus on learning and educating children of four to five years. The focus should not be materialistic (monetary) as is the case with some private kindergartens that uses syllabi and teaching methods that have no relation to the kindergarten stage.
4. Establish kindergartens for four years children in all Basra cities.

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Interpretation of results: **Zainab Majid Hamid Majid**

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