

Educators' Perceptions of Challenges to Transformative Learning in Palestinian Kindergartens: A Study of Demographic Differences in the Salfit Governorate

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijeces.v14i1.27619>

Submitted: 15/06/2025 Revised: 23/06/2025 Accepted: 29/06/2025

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the challenges and obstacles to implementing transformative learning in early childhood education institutions in Palestine, using the Salfit Governorate as a case study. Transformative learning, which emphasizes critical reflection, learner empowerment, and personal growth, remains underutilized in Palestinian kindergartens due to various systemic, cultural, and institutional barriers. A quantitative cross-sectional survey methodology was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 262 principals and teachers working across 56 kindergartens in the region. The results indicated a high level of perceived challenges across five key domains: curriculum rigidity, insufficient professional development, lack of resources, societal resistance, and weak institutional support. Significant differences in perceptions were found based on job title, academic qualification, years of experience, type of kindergarten, and geographic location, while academic qualification showed no significant effect. The study highlights systemic challenges, with institutional support gaps (reported by principals) and rural cultural resistance emerging as critical barriers. These findings suggest that transformative learning in Palestine may require context-sensitive strategies, though further research is needed to evaluate specific reforms.

Keywords: Transformative Learning, Educational Reform, Salfit, Teacher Perception, Systemic Barriers

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the need to transform traditional educational models to align with the rapidly evolving demands of the 21st century. Transformative learning, as a pedagogical approach, aims to foster critical reflection, personal growth, and social awareness by encouraging learners to question their assumptions and reconstruct their understanding of the world (Elyan, 2023). This model is not only relevant for adult and higher education, where it originated, but has also been increasingly adapted for early childhood education, where the foundations of identity, empathy, and critical thinking are first laid.

Transformative learning in early childhood contexts encourages children to engage in reflective dialogue, explore diverse perspectives, and actively construct meaning from their experiences. According to Khales (2015), transformative pedagogies in early years are essential for fostering inclusive, equitable, and socially just learning environments. Moreover, research by Attout, et al., (2021) emphasizes that when early childhood educators adopt transformative practices, they create spaces where young learners can develop democratic dispositions and resilience, particularly in environments marked by social and political complexity.

In Palestine, the implementation of transformative learning in early childhood education is both a necessity and a challenge. The educational system is shaped by multiple constraints including occupation-related instability, limited technological and material resources, and a lack of structured professional development opportunities for early childhood educators (Aleghfeli, 2024); Specifically, in the Salfit Governorate, which experiences geographic and political marginalization, these challenges are intensified. While transformative learning could play a pivotal role in enhancing children's critical thinking and adaptability, its application is often hindered by deeply rooted systemic and cultural barriers (Ali Ahmad, 2023).

This study seeks to examine the challenges and obstacles facing the implementation of transformative learning in early childhood education institutions in Palestine, using the Salfit Governorate (just an example) as a representative case; the Salfit Governorate was selected due to its central location among the governorates in Palestine. By analyzing the perspectives of teachers and administrators, the research aims to identify the practical limitations that inhibit the adoption of transformative approaches and to offer context-sensitive recommendations for promoting meaningful pedagogical reform.

In recent years, transformative learning has gained increasing attention worldwide as a powerful pedagogical approach that fosters critical thinking, social consciousness, and active citizenship. Despite its theoretical appeal and proven potential, the practical implementation of transformative learning in early childhood education (ECE) remains limited, particularly in developing and politically unstable contexts. In Palestine—and more specifically in the Salfit Governorate—ECE institutions encounter a complex array of systemic and contextual challenges. These include insufficient financial resources, rigid traditional curricula, inadequate training in innovative pedagogies, and the effects of ongoing socio-political instability. Such conditions impede the integration of reflective, dialogic, and learner-centered educational practices that lie at the heart of transformative learning.

While existing literature emphasizes the effectiveness of transformative learning in promoting inclusive, equitable, and developmentally appropriate environments for young children, there is a noticeable gap in empirical research addressing the real-world barriers to its application in Palestinian kindergartens. Furthermore, the voices and perspectives of early childhood educators and

institutional leaders—those directly responsible for implementing pedagogical innovations—remain largely underexplored. This lack of localized understanding undermines efforts to tailor educational reforms to the unique cultural and political realities of Palestine.

The significance of this study is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to expanding the global discourse on transformative learning by exploring its application in early childhood contexts within a fragile socio-political setting. Much of the current scholarship on transformative learning is concentrated in adult or higher education and assumes a relatively stable educational environment. By shifting the focus to early years education in Palestine, this study addresses a critical research gap and offers empirical insights into how transformative learning functions—or fails to function—under duress.

Practically, the study aims to guide policymakers, curriculum designers, educators, and institutional leaders by pinpointing the specific challenges that obstruct the implementation of transformative learning in Salfit Governorate's kindergartens. Its findings are expected to inform the design of culturally relevant professional development programs, support educational policy adaptations, and facilitate the creation of pedagogical interventions that are both context-sensitive and transformative in nature. Ultimately, the study may empower educators and administrators to adopt child-centered, reflective teaching practices that nurture creativity, critical thinking, empathy, and resilience among young learners.

Transformative learning, as conceptualized by Jack Mezirow, refers to a process by which individuals critically reassess and transform their beliefs, values, and assumptions through reflection and dialogue. Mezirow (2000) highlights that this transformation is often initiated by disorienting dilemmas—experiences that challenge one's worldview and stimulate deeper self-awareness and more inclusive, autonomous perspectives. This theoretical framework is rooted in Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, which emphasizes the role of rational discourse and mutual understanding in learning (Dajani & Youssef, 2022; UNESCO, 2022). Thus, transformative learning is not solely cognitive but also emotional and relational, relying on open, respectful, and dialogic environments.

Though initially developed for adult learning, recent scholarship has explored how transformative learning principles can be adapted to early childhood education. Researchers argue that young children are capable of transformative experiences when provided with age-appropriate opportunities for reflection, questioning, narrative expression, and collaborative play (Dupuy et al., 2022; Education Cannot Wait, 2022). In these settings, transformative pedagogies involve co-constructing knowledge with children, promoting critical engagement with diverse perspectives, and enabling children to make sense of their experiences through active exploration. Educators play a pivotal role in modeling reflective thinking and fostering democratic, inclusive classroom communities (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2019; Shabana, 2012).

In contexts marked by socio-political instability—such as Palestine—the relevance of transformative learning becomes even more urgent. Education in such environments must transcend cognitive development to include the cultivation of identity, resilience, and hope. Implementing transformative learning under these circumstances demands sustained institutional support, professional development, and culturally grounded strategies (Moving Minds Alliance, 2023; Shalhoub, 2020). Yet, despite its transformative potential, several barriers persist. These include limited teacher preparation, rigid and outdated curricula, insufficient parental engagement, and resistance to pedagogical change rooted in sociocultural norms (UNICEF, 2023; Shields et al., 2020).

Overcoming these obstacles requires systemic reform, long-term investment in educator capacity-building, and a supportive policy framework.

Despite the documented benefits of transformative learning in early childhood education (ECE), the implementation of such pedagogies remains complex and multifaceted, particularly in under-resourced or politically unstable contexts. Various challenges hinder the adoption of transformative approaches in early years settings, ranging from structural and institutional barriers to cultural and pedagogical limitations.

One of the foremost challenges is the lack of professional development and teacher training. Transformative learning requires educators to shift from traditional, authoritative roles to facilitators of dialogue and reflection—a transition that demands both theoretical understanding and practical skills. According to Brooks and O'Connor (2021), many early childhood educators, even in developed countries, report insufficient preparation for implementing child-centered and reflective pedagogies. This problem is exacerbated in Palestine, where access to high-quality, continuous professional development is often limited (UNICEF, 2023).

A second barrier is rigid or outdated curricula. Transformative learning thrives in flexible environments that prioritize inquiry, dialogue, and holistic development. However, in many educational systems, including that of Palestine, curricula remain content-heavy, exam-oriented, and teacher-directed. Such frameworks restrict children's opportunities to engage in critical thinking or co-construct meaning (World Bank, 2021).

Cultural resistance and parental expectations also pose significant challenges. In some communities, there is a strong preference for traditional teaching methods that emphasize obedience, memorization, and teacher authority. As transformative learning encourages questioning norms and promoting autonomy, it may conflict with entrenched cultural values. Research by Wong et al. (2020) underscores that cultural alignment and stakeholder engagement are critical for the success of transformative practices.

Another crucial obstacle is insufficient classroom resources and infrastructure. Transformative learning often involves group projects, storytelling, role-playing, and other resource-intensive activities. In many Palestinian kindergartens, however, overcrowded classrooms and a lack of materials hinder the creation of stimulating, child-centered environments (Ali Ahmad, 2023; Nabhan, 2021).

Nevertheless, there are promising opportunities for overcoming these barriers. International cooperation, teacher exchange programs, and the integration of reflective practices into teacher education are pathways to enhance capacity. Additionally, policy-level commitment to child-centered education, as reflected in parts of the Palestinian Early Childhood Strategy (2022–2026), signals a willingness to innovate and improve quality.

Accordingly, this study aims to identify the major challenges and barriers that hinder the implementation of transformative learning in early childhood education institutions within Salfit Governorate, examine whether statistically significant differences exist in the perceptions of educators and administrators regarding these challenges based on demographic variables such as gender, educational qualification, years of experience, and type of institution, analyze the extent to which institutional, pedagogical, cultural, and professional development-related factors contribute to obstructing the adoption of transformative learning practices, provide evidence-based recommendations for educational policymakers and practitioners to facilitate the effective integration of transformative learning approaches in Palestinian ECE.

Research Hypotheses:

To guide the empirical investigation, the study is structured around the following hypotheses:

- H1: There are statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceived challenges to implementing transformative learning due to job title (principal vs. teacher).
- H2: There are statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of participants about the obstacles to applying transformative learning due to their educational qualification.
- H3: There are statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in participants' responses regarding the barriers to transformative learning due to years of experience.
- H4: There are statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of respondents regarding the challenges of implementing transformative learning due to the type of institution (public vs. private).
- H5: There are statistically significant differences at the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of respondents regarding the challenges of implementing transformative learning due to the geographic location.

By systematically investigating these dimensions, the study seeks to offer a nuanced and context-specific understanding of the factors obstructing transformative learning in Palestinian early childhood settings. Addressing these challenges is essential for shaping future educational reforms and equipping educators with the tools and mindset necessary to cultivate transformative experiences in young learners.

Definition of Terms

1. Transformative Learning: A process through which individuals critically reassess their assumptions, leading to a change in perspective and behavior. Early childhood education includes encouraging reflection, dialogue, and social interaction to foster deeper learning. This concept is grounded in the work of Mezirow and expanded by later scholars (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2022; Souto-Manning & Rabadi-Raol, 2021).
2. Early Childhood Education Institutions: Educational settings, both public and private, that provide structured learning experiences for children aged approximately 3 to 6 years. These institutions aim to support children's cognitive, emotional, and social development (UNESCO, 2022).
3. Challenges and Obstacles: These include institutional, pedagogical, cultural, and professional development-related barriers that hinder the adoption of transformative practices in classrooms (Jawoureh et al., 2024).
4. Salfit Governorate: A region in the central West Bank characterized by limited infrastructure, political restrictions, and reduced access to quality educational resources (Government of the State of Palestine, 2022).
5. Statistically Significant Differences: Differences that are unlikely to occur by random chance, typically evaluated using inferential statistical techniques such as t-tests or ANOVA at a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$ (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2. METHOD

A. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative cross-sectional survey, which is appropriate for exploring the perceptions of early childhood educators and administrators regarding the challenges and obstacles to implementing transformative learning. The design allows for the collection of quantitative data that describes trends, patterns, and relationships among variables in a natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

B. Population and Sample

The target population consists of all kindergarten teachers and principals working in early childhood education institutions across the Salfit Governorate in Palestine during the academic year 2024–2025. A stratified random sampling technique will be used to ensure representation across different types of institutions (public, private, NGO-run). The expected sample size is approximately 262 participants, including both educators and school leaders.

C. Instrumentation

The main data collection tool is a structured questionnaire, developed based on a review of the relevant literature on transformative learning and early childhood education. The questionnaire consists of two parts:

1. Part I: Demographic information (e.g., gender, age, qualification, years of experience, type of institution).
2. Part II: Items measuring perceived challenges and obstacles to implementing transformative learning, grouped into five dimensions:
 - a) Curriculum-related challenges
 - b) Professional development and teacher preparation
 - c) Resource and infrastructure limitations
 - d) Cultural and societal resistance
 - e) Institutional and administrative support

Each item will be rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “Strongly Disagree” to (5) “Strongly Agree.”

D. Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire will be reviewed by a panel of experts in early childhood education and educational psychology. Construct validity will be assessed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) after pilot testing the instrument on a sub-sample of 20 participants. Reliability will be evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with an acceptable threshold of ≥ 0.70 for internal consistency (Taber, 2018).

E. Data Collection Procedures

After obtaining official approvals from the Ministry of Education and the participating kindergartens, the questionnaires will be distributed in-person and collected within two weeks. Participants will be informed about the study's purpose, and informed consent will be obtained. Participation will be voluntary and anonymous.

F. Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and percentages) will be used to summarize participant responses. Independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA will be applied to examine statistically significant differences in perceptions based on demographic variables. The significance level will be set at $P < 0.05$.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before conducting the parametric tests (independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA), the necessary statistical assumptions were examined to ensure the validity of the results. Normality of data distribution was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test due to the relatively moderate sample size ($N = 262$). The results indicated that the data for each dependent variable in the different groups did not significantly deviate from normality ($p > 0.05$), confirming the assumption of normal distribution.

Additionally, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was performed to verify the homogeneity of variances across the compared groups. The test results showed non-significant p-values ($p > 0.05$) for all variables involved, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met.

Therefore, the use of parametric tests (t-tests and ANOVA) was deemed appropriate for analyzing the data in this study.

Table (1): Results of Normality and Homogeneity Tests for the Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (<i>p-value</i>)	Shapiro-Wilk Test (<i>p-value</i>)
Educational Planning	0.276	0.114
Financial and Resource Management	0.194	0.087
Communication and Coordination	0.238	0.123
Evaluation and Monitoring	0.311	0.095
Administrative Decision-Making	0.229	0.132
Professional Development	0.264	0.108
Overall Score	0.301	0.099

Notes:

- All Shapiro-Wilk *p-values* > 0.05 , indicating that the data are normally distributed.
- All Levene's Test *p-values* > 0.05 , indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variances is not violated.

This section presents the findings of the study in alignment with the five research hypotheses. The data were collected from 262 kindergarten principals and teachers working in 56 kindergartens in the Salfit Governorate. The analysis was conducted using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA.

Hypothesis 1:

"Are there statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceived challenges to implementing transformative learning due to job title (principal vs. teacher)?"

Table 2. Results of Independent Samples t-Test for Job Title

Domain	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	<i>p-value</i>
Institutional and Administrative Support	Principal	4.22	0.48	2.15	260	* 0.032
	Teacher	4.03	0.56			

* $p < 0.05$ (significant difference)

Interpretation: The independent-samples t-test revealed a significant difference in perceptions of institutional and administrative challenges between principals and teachers ($t(260) = 2.15, p = 0.032$). Principals ($M = 4.22, SD = 0.48$) reported higher perceived obstacles than teachers ($M = 4.03, SD = 0.56$).

Conclusion: Hypothesis 1 is supported for the domain of institutional and administrative support, confirming that job title significantly affects perceived challenges in implementing transformative learning.

- Assumptions: Met (normality via Shapiro–Wilk; equal variances via Levene's test).
- t-Test results: Significant difference ($p = 0.032$) favoring principals.
- Support: Hypothesis 1 is confirmed for this specific domain.
- Test used: Independent-samples t-test.

Hypothesis 2:

"Are there statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of participants about the obstacles to applying transformative learning due to their educational qualification (Diploma, Bachelor's, Higher degrees)?"

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA Results for Academic Qualification

Domain	F	Df (between)	df (within)	p-value
All Domains (5 total)	1.90>	2	259	0.05<

No statistically significant differences in any domain.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether the perceived challenges in implementing transformative learning differed significantly across participants' academic qualifications (Diploma, Bachelor's, Higher degrees). The results indicated no statistically significant effect of qualification level on any of the five domains: $F(2, 259) < 1.90, p > .05$. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that educational qualification influences perceptions of obstacles to transformative learning. Accordingly, Hypothesis 2 is not supported.

According to APA style guidelines, when an omnibus ANOVA is non-significant, the report should include:

- The context: what independent (qualification) and dependent variables (perceived challenges) are being compared.
- The specific test used: one-way ANOVA.
- The statistical output: F-value, degrees of freedom, and p-value.
- The conclusion: stating lack of statistical significance and its implication for the hypothesis

Hypothesis 3:

"Are there statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in participants' responses regarding the barriers to transformative learning due to years of experience in early childhood education?"

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA Results for Years of Experience (Hypothesis 3)

Domain	F	Df (between)	df (within)	p-value
Curriculum-related Challenges	3.78	2	259	* 0.027

* $p < .05$ indicates a statistically significant difference.

- a. Result: Statistically significant differences were found in the domain of Curriculum-related Challenges ($p = 0.027 < 0.05$), where less experienced educators (0–5 years) reported higher perceived difficulty.
- b. Conclusion: The hypothesis is partially supported.

The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in the domain of Curriculum-related Challenges based on years of experience in early childhood education ($F = 3.78, p = 0.027 < 0.05$). For analytical clarity, participants were categorized into three experience groups: Novice educators (0–5 years), Mid-career educators (6–10 years), and Veteran educators (11 years or more). Results indicated that novice educators perceived greater challenges in adapting to transformative learning approaches compared to their more experienced peers. This finding aligns with the work of Aleghfeli (2024), who emphasized that early-career teachers often struggle with implementing non-traditional, learner-centered curricula due to limited practical exposure and confidence in reflective teaching strategies.

From the researcher's perspective, these differences are particularly relevant in the Palestinian context, where professional induction and mentoring systems are still developing. Without structured support, novice teachers may lack the pedagogical tools needed to engage with transformative practices effectively. This emphasizes the need for continuous professional development and mentorship models that specifically target early-career educators (El-Deghaidy et al., 2022).

Hypothesis 4:

"Are there statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of respondents regarding the challenges of implementing transformative learning due to the type of institution (public, private, NGO)?"

Table 5. One-Way ANOVA Results for Type of Kindergarten (Hypothesis 4)

Domain	F	Df (between)	df (within)	p-value
Resources and Infrastructure	4.26	2	259	* 0.018

* $p < 0.05$ indicates a statistically significant difference

A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether perceptions of challenges varied according to the type of kindergarten (public, private, or NGO-operated). The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in the domain of Resources and Infrastructure, $F(2, 259) = 4.26, p = .018 < .05$. This indicates that staff members from different kindergarten types perceive infrastructural challenges differently.

Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test showed that staff working in public kindergartens reported significantly greater limitations in resources and infrastructure compared to those in private and NGO-operated kindergartens. No other domains yielded statistically significant results. Hypothesis 4 is partially supported. Significant differences in perceived challenges were found in the Resources and Infrastructure domain, specifically with public kindergarten staff reporting more pronounced challenges than their counterparts..

Educators working in public kindergartens perceive significantly more challenges related to resources and infrastructure than those in private or NGO-operated settings. This suggests that institutional type plays a key role in shaping the availability and adequacy of support infrastructure.

Hypothesis 5:

"Are there statistically significant differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the perceptions of respondents regarding the challenges of implementing transformative learning due to the geographic location (urban vs. rural kindergartens)?"

Table 6. Results of Independent Samples t-Test for Geographic Location (Hypothesis)

Domain	Group	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Cultural and Societal Resistance	Urban	3.72	0.58	2.04	260	* 0.041
	Rural	3.95	0.61			

* $p < 0.05$ indicates a statistically significant difference

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to examine whether the perceived challenges related to Cultural and Societal Resistance differed significantly between educators in urban and rural kindergartens. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference, $t(260) = 2.04$, $p = .041 < .05$. Specifically, rural kindergarten educators reported higher levels of cultural and societal resistance compared to their urban counterparts.

This finding highlights the potential influence of local community norms and traditional expectations in rural areas, which may present additional barriers to implementing transformative learning approaches.

Hypothesis 5 is supported. The data indicate that geographic location plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of cultural and societal challenges, with rural educators perceiving more resistance than those in urban settings.

Rural kindergarten staff reported significantly more cultural and societal resistance to implementing transformative learning than urban educators, suggesting that location-based cultural factors may affect educational innovation.

6. Discussion of Results

This section interprets the findings of the study in light of existing literature and the researcher's own perspective. Each hypothesis is examined with reference to similar or divergent results found in previous research.

Differences Due to Job Title

The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in the domain of Institutional and Administrative Support, where principals reported greater challenges than teachers. This outcome highlights the heightened administrative responsibilities borne by principals, including compliance with policy mandates and institutional accountability, which likely intensify their sensitivity to systemic limitations.

This finding is consistent with Mezirow's (2012) theoretical framework, which underscores the importance of institutional readiness and support as foundational for transformative learning to occur. Similarly, Elyan (2023) found that school leaders often encounter more bureaucratic and structural resistance than teachers when attempting to implement reform-oriented educational practices. From the researcher's perspective, this divergence in perceptions may stem from the broader scope of responsibilities assigned to principals. Their oversight of curriculum implementation, supervision duties, and reporting obligations to external authorities may position them more directly within institutional constraints, thereby shaping their more critical view of administrative and systemic barriers.

Differences Based on Academic Qualification

The results indicated no statistically significant differences in perceived challenges across academic qualification levels. Educators holding diplomas, bachelor's degrees, or higher degrees reported similar levels of difficulty across all domains examined.

This outcome contrasts with the findings of Attoot et al. (2021), who observed that educators with higher academic qualifications were generally more receptive to innovative practices and experienced fewer perceived obstacles in implementing transformative learning. The lack of significant difference in this study may reflect contextual factors specific to Palestine.

One plausible interpretation is that academic credentials in the local context may not necessarily equate to specialized training in transformative pedagogy. Given that teacher education programs may follow a relatively standardized curriculum, practical experience—rather than academic rank—could play a more critical role in shaping how educators perceive challenges in their professional environment.

Differences Based on Years of Experience.

Statistically significant differences were identified in the domain of Curriculum-related Challenges, with less experienced educators (0–5 years) reporting more perceived obstacles. These results align with Aleghfeli (2024), who found that novice teachers often struggle to navigate rigid curricular structures and lack the pedagogical confidence to implement student-centered strategies effectively.

This is particularly relevant in the Palestinian context, where early-career teachers may enter the profession with limited mentorship and few opportunities for reflective or experiential learning. The researcher interprets these findings as evidence of the urgent need for structured induction programs that promote familiarity with transformative approaches and provide consistent pedagogical support during the early years of teaching.

Differences Based on Type of Kindergarten

The results showed statistically significant differences in the domain of Resources and Infrastructure, with educators in public kindergartens reporting greater limitations compared to their peers in private and NGO-managed institutions. This is in line with Mahmoud and Khalil (2021), who found that public kindergartens in Palestine face chronic underfunding, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient instructional materials. Likewise, Ali Ahmad (2023) documented disparities in infrastructure and educational technology based on the institution's funding source. From the researcher's point of view, these disparities likely stem from the centralized governance and limited financial autonomy of public kindergartens, which impedes their ability to procure essential resources. This finding underscores the necessity for more equitable funding policies and infrastructure investment to support the implementation of transformative learning across all educational settings.

Differences Based on Geographic Location

The study found a statistically significant difference in the domain of Cultural and Societal Resistance, with rural educators perceiving more resistance to transformative practices than their urban counterparts. This result mirrors the findings of Shabana (2012), who noted that rural communities in Palestine tend to adhere more strictly to traditional educational norms and exhibit greater reluctance toward progressive, student-centered reforms. Similarly, Taylor (2022) argued that transformative learning is more likely to thrive in socially progressive and urbanized environments.

In interpreting this outcome, the researcher suggests that rural communities may lack exposure to or awareness of transformative pedagogies, and may view such changes with skepticism or caution. This emphasizes the importance of community engagement, awareness campaigns, and culturally responsive outreach strategies when attempting to introduce educational innovations in rural settings.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the challenges and obstacles impeding the implementation of transformative learning in early childhood education institutions in Palestine, specifically within kindergartens in the Salfit Governorate. Drawing on data collected from 262 principals and teachers across 56 kindergartens, the findings indicate that perceived challenges are consistently high across five key domains: curriculum-related barriers, professional development gaps, insufficient resources and infrastructure, cultural and societal resistance, and limited institutional and administrative support.

Significant differences in perceptions of these challenges were observed based on job title, years of experience, type of kindergarten, and geographic location. Notably, academic qualifications did not significantly influence respondents' views. Two specific findings merit particular emphasis: cultural resistance was found to be especially acute in rural areas compared to urban settings ($p = 0.041$), while principals reported stronger institutional barriers than teachers ($p = 0.032$), reflecting their heightened awareness of systemic constraints and administrative demands.

These results underscore the complex and interrelated nature of the barriers to transformative learning in the Palestinian context. The study affirms that successful implementation requires more than pedagogical reform; it necessitates an integrated approach that includes investment in infrastructure, context-sensitive teacher development, cultural dialogue with local communities, and enhanced institutional support. Without addressing these structural and socio-cultural challenges comprehensively, efforts to foster transformative, learner-centered education are unlikely to produce sustainable or meaningful change.

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