



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## The Role of the Algerian Family in the Development of Children's Abilities in Education and Training

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Oct 19, 2024 Accepted: Dec 7, 2024	This research paper examines the pivotal role of the Algerian family in the educational and developmental progress of children, with particular emphasis on the interplay between the family's social, demographic, and economic characteristics and its involvement in this area. The study specifically focuses on the first five years of a child's life, widely recognized as the most formative in shaping cognitive abilities and skill acquisition. The importance of early childhood education and training is underscored throughout the paper. To support the objectives of this study, data from the Sixth Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey were analyzed. The findings reveal statistically significant differences in the family's role in the educational development of the child, influenced by factors such as the family's socioeconomic status, residential location, parents' educational backgrounds, and geographical environment.
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### INTRODUCTION

The early years of childhood are of paramount importance in an individual's development, as this period lays the foundation for the formation of their personality, primarily within the family unit. The family serves as the first and most influential environment where a child acquires a wide range of experiences, which equip them with essential life skills.

Consequently, parents and other family members play a crucial role in fostering and enhancing the child's capabilities during these formative years, either directly or indirectly. They achieve this through various interactions with the child, utilizing specific behaviors and strategies, while simultaneously providing a nurturing and socially conducive environment.

The family is the primary, and in many cases, the sole entity responsible for cultivating the child's multifaceted abilities during this critical phase, with a particular focus on promoting education and learning (Zahra Abedelhak & Hana' Al-Felfali, 2014, p. 27).

In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the family's role is deemed fundamental and decisive in the protection and care of the child. It is instrumental in fostering the child's social upbringing and encouraging cognitive growth, creativity, and innovation from the earliest stages, starting at infancy (UNICEF, 2009).

The family represents the initial unit with which a child interacts, thus serving as the first emotional and social environment encountered. It significantly influences the child's educational and training development through various mechanisms, such as parenting styles, educational and recreational games, and intellectual activities that enhance language acquisition and cognitive abilities prior to the child's formal schooling.

This early stage is particularly crucial, as it marks the period during which cognitive development accelerates through activities such as exploration, inquiry, curiosity, and play. The behaviors exhibited by parents and family members at this stage can either promote or impede the child's social and emotional growth.

Psychologists emphasize the critical significance of the first five years of life, highlighting that this period has a lasting impact on shaping the individual's personality, worldview, goals, emotional development, and internal and external relationships. Therefore, it is essential to concentrate efforts on these formative years, as they represent the fastest period of growth and development in a child's life, influencing not only the child's present capabilities but also their future potential as an adult (Zahra Abedelkak & Hana' Al-Felfali, 2014, p. 27).

During this phase, each moment offers an opportunity for new learning and development, making it a crucial period for the child's acquisition of emotional, social, physical, intellectual, and linguistic skills. These early experiences undeniably shape their lifelong trajectory.

This study seeks to illuminate the family's role in fostering the educational and training capacities of young children, while also exploring the impact of socio-demographic and economic factors on this developmental process.

### **Research Problem:**

This study focuses on one of the most crucial stages of human development, early childhood, and seeks to address the following research questions:

- \_ Are there statistically significant differences in the development of young children's educational abilities based on the family's social status?
- \_ What socio-demographic and economic factors within the family influence the educational and training process of young children?

### **Study Objectives:**

The primary objectives of this research paper are to:

- \_ Identify the key factors that influence the educational and training development of young children.
- \_ Examine the types of supportive activities employed by families to educate, train, and enhance their children's capabilities.
- \_ Provide insights into potentially detrimental family activities that may hinder the educational and training development of young children.

### **STUDY METHODOLOGY:**

The research utilized a descriptive analytical approach, relying on data from the Sixth Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) conducted between 2018 and 2019 in Algeria. The survey was administered by the Ministry of Health, Population, and Hospital Reform in collaboration with the National Statistics Office, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and UNICEF.

It targeted various groups, including women of reproductive age (15-49 years) and children under the age of five. A two-stage stratified sampling method was employed, covering the seven regional

areas specified by the survey. In total, 35,111 women participated in the survey, of whom 5,688 had given birth to a live child within the two years preceding the survey, and 15,224 children under the age of five were included in the study. The data analysis was performed using SPSS version 25.

## **STUDY CONCEPTS:**

### **The Family:**

According to the Al-Mujam Al-Waseet dictionary, the family is defined as "a group of people related through marriage, blood, or adoption, living under one roof" (Ibrahim Anis et al., 1972, p. 17). More broadly, the family is described as "a group of individuals bound by marriage, blood, or adoption who live together as a unit" (Norbert Sillamy, 1980, p. 475).

For the purposes of this study, the family can be operationally defined as a social unit comprising the father, mother, and children. It is within this unit that the child receives the essential interactions necessary for learning, training, and social development, thereby shaping their physical, intellectual, and social growth.

### **Young Child or Early Childhood:**

The Oxford Dictionary defines a child as "a newborn human being, regardless of gender," while the Longman Dictionary extends the definition to "a young person from birth until the age of 14 or 15." Early childhood, in this context, refers to the period from birth until the onset of puberty. Specifically, this study defines a "child" as any individual under the age of five.

## **STUDY RESULTS:**

### **Early Childhood Education and Training:**

It is widely acknowledged that early childhood education, specifically pre-school education, plays a crucial role in enhancing a child's overall development. This stage enables children to acquire behaviors and skills that lay the foundation for their future success, both academically and personally, while facilitating their gradual integration into society.

In Algeria, pre-school education is not mandatory, though it is intended for children aged four to five. One of its main objectives is to promote socialization, foster independence, encourage appropriate behavior, and develop the foundational skills necessary for future learning. Typically, educational programs at this stage cover the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics (such as basic arithmetic), often through a combination of playful and artistic activities conducted at home or in nursery schools.

### **Education and Training by Demographic Variables:**

Data from the Sixth Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey reveal that only 14.3% of children aged 36 to 59 months attend pre-school education outside the home, such as in nurseries. This percentage shows a statistically significant gender disparity, with 13.5% of boys and 15.3% of girls attending pre-school. In contrast, the remaining 85.7% of children do not participate in formal educational programs outside the home.

For these children, education is either provided by a family member or, in many cases, no formal early education is provided at all. This high percentage suggests that various factors may restrict or prevent access to external educational opportunities for young children.

The percentage of children aged 36 to 47 months attending nursery schools is particularly low, at only 4.7%. However, this figure increases to 24.2% for children between the ages of 48 and 59 months.

As illustrated in Table 1, there are significant statistical differences based on the place of residence, urban versus rural areas. The proportion of children attending nursery schools is 19.3% in urban areas, compared to only 7.2% in rural areas, which is less than half the urban percentage.

This discrepancy indicates that children in urban areas are more likely to be enrolled in nursery schools than those in rural areas. This difference can largely be attributed to the higher employment rate of mothers in urban areas, coupled with the greater availability of nursery schools in these regions. In contrast, rural areas often face a shortage of such facilities. Additionally, families in urban areas tend to have a greater awareness of the significance of early childhood education.

**Table 1: Distribution of children aged 36-59 months attending pre-school education or training programs according to the Sixth Cluster Survey - Algeria**

		Number of Children	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	3173	13.5
	Female	2972	15.3
	Total	6146	14.3
Place of Residence	Urban	3608	19.3
	Rural	2538	7.2
Child's Age	36-47 Months	3120	4.7
	48-59 Months	3026	24.2

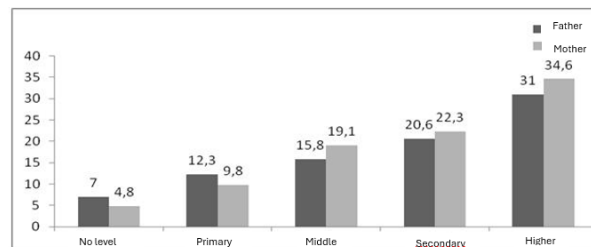
Source: Sixth Cluster Survey Database, Algeria 2019

**Early Childhood Education and Training According to Parents' Educational Level:**

Research in the fields of social and psychological sciences has consistently shown that the educational level of parents directly influences the likelihood of their children attending pre-school programs.

Data from the Sixth Cluster Survey (2019) confirm this trend, revealing that the probability of children attending pre-school increases with the parents' educational level. Among children aged 36-59 months, 25.6% of those whose mothers possess higher educational qualifications attend pre-school centers, compared to only 5% of children whose mothers have no formal education. A similar pattern is observed with fathers.

In a 1968 study, researcher Sheldon found that children of highly educated parents performed better on tests measuring creative thinking ability (Hamila Shadiha, p. 158). Likewise, a study by Kathleen and Ronald (1973) indicated that children with higher creative thinking abilities were more likely to have mothers with higher educational levels (Hassan Hilal, Mohamed Abdel Ghani, 1997, p. 44). These findings suggest that the educational level of parents has a profound influence on the cognitive development of their children, as it shapes their approach to parenting and fosters intellectual growth.



**Figure 1: Distribution of children aged 36-59 months attending pre-school educational or training programs and the parents' educational level according to the Sixth Cluster Survey - Algeria (%)**

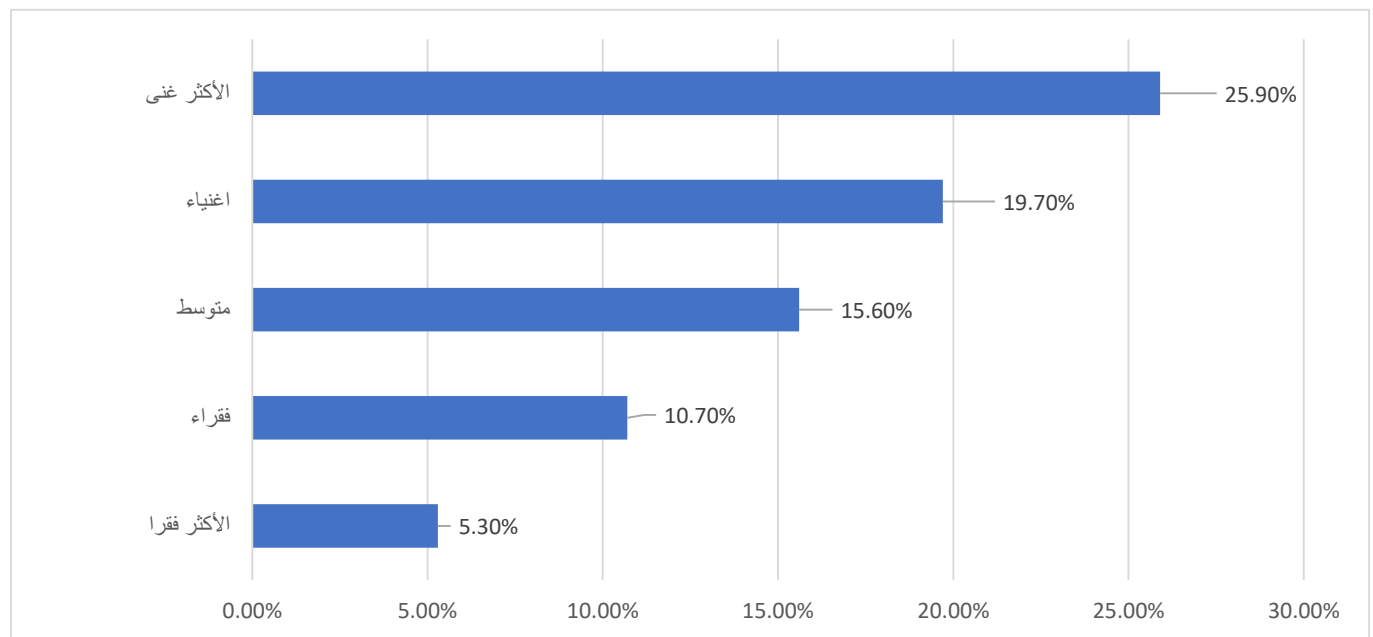
Source: Sixth Cluster Survey Database, Algeria 2019

### According to Family's Socio-Economic Status:

The results from the Sixth Cluster Survey indicate a clear disparity in the likelihood of children aged 36 to 59 months attending pre-school education, based on the socio-economic status of their families. Specifically, children from wealthier families are significantly more likely to attend pre-school, with 45.6% participation compared to only 16.4% among children from poorer families.

This finding aligns with the work of Molting (1959), who argued that parenting styles are strongly influenced by the family's socio-economic status. Parents from lower-income households are more likely to employ physical punishment, such as restricting the child's freedom and activities, whereas parents from middle-class families tend to adopt more guidance-oriented and mild disciplinary approaches.

Moreover, research by Abdel Halim Mahmoud (1974) found a significant positive correlation between children's creativity and the socio-economic status of their families. The study highlighted that children from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to engage in pre-school education, underscoring the role of family wealth in fostering early educational opportunities.



**Figure 2: Distribution of Children Aged 36-59 Months Attending Pre-School Educational or Training Programs and the Family's Socio-Economic Status According to the Sixth Cluster Survey – Algeria (%)**

**Source:** Sixth Cluster Survey Database, Algeria 2019

### Family Support for Educational and Training Activities:

The first five years of life are crucial for a child's cognitive development. The care, love, and learning children receive during this period significantly shape their developmental trajectory. To support this rapid growth, children require favorable conditions, including balanced and nutritious food, adequate sleep, and opportunities for both physical and intellectual stimulation.

In this context, the active involvement of adults, particularly family members such as parents, in the child's learning activities plays a critical role. Providing access to books, ensuring good health and hygiene, and offering a safe and emotionally supportive environment are key indicators of high-quality caregiving. It is essential to safeguard the child's physical and mental well-being, emotional security, and readiness for both social integration and formal learning. Furthermore, parents should

engage in teaching foundational skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic during these formative years.

The Fourth Cluster Survey collected data on various educational and training activities in which adults, particularly parents, engage with their children to foster early learning. These activities include reading books, viewing picture books, telling stories, singing, taking children on outings, playing, spending quality time with the children, doing arithmetic exercises, and drawing objects.

#### According to Demographic Variables:

The survey revealed that 61.4% of children aged 24 to 59 months had engaged in at least four educational or training activities within three days prior to the survey. These activities were aimed at preparing the children for school. Notably, 12% of children in this age group received support from their fathers in one or more educational activities, while a significantly higher proportion (42.4%) received such support from their mothers.

Regarding the educational level of parents, the father's involvement in educational activities varied from 62% for fathers with no formal education to 90% for those with higher education. Moreover, participation rates were noticeably higher in urban areas compared to rural areas, with 65.6% of urban fathers participating in these activities, compared to only 55.4% of rural fathers.

This disparity indicates that families in urban areas are more likely to engage in educational support activities, likely due to factors such as greater access to resources and higher levels of parental education.

#### According to Socio-Economic Status:

The results of the survey further revealed that the level of parental and adult family involvement in the educational and training activities of young children is closely related to the family's socio-economic status. Specifically, the overall participation of adult family members in supporting children's educational development ranged from 49% in the poorest families to 69.7% in wealthier families. Notably, father involvement in the child's learning and training activities also followed a similar trend, ranging from 67% in the poorest families to 89% in the wealthiest families.

The findings highlighted that while fathers tended to participate in fewer activities, typically limited to just two, other adult family members were more actively involved, engaging in an average of four distinct activities aimed at supporting the child's learning and development.

**Table 3: Distribution of Children Aged 36-59 Months and Family Member Involvement in Pre-School Education and Training Activities, by Family Socio-Economic Status According to the Sixth Cluster Survey - Algeria**

		Percentage of Children Whose Family Member Participated in Four or More Activities	Percentage of Children Whose Father Participated in One or More Activities	Average Number of Activities Family Member Participated In	Average Number of Activities Father Participated In
Socio-Economic Status of Family	Poorest	64.1%	67.4%	4.0	1.5
	Poor	74.1%	78.4%	4.4	2.0
	Middle	77.9%	79.8%	4.6	2.0
	Wealthy	85.4%	82.1%	4.9	2.1
	Wealthiest	91.8%	89.3%	5.2	2.3

**Source:** Sixth Cluster Survey Database, Algeria 2019

### Nature of Supportive Activities:

In terms of the nature of the supportive learning activities that adult family members engaged in with children aged 36-50 months, the survey identified the most common activities carried out within the three days preceding the survey. The most frequent activity was "naming and drawing objects," with 85.2% of children participating. The second most common activity was "taking children for a walk," at 85.1%. Other activities included "singing with children" (75%), "storytelling" (73%), and "reading and viewing pictures" (49%).

**Table 4: Distribution of Children Aged 36-59 Months and Nature of Supportive Activities, by Demographic Variables According to the Sixth Cluster Survey – Algeria**

Percentage of Children Aged 36-59 Months Whose Family Member Participated in Their Supportive Activities	Naming, Counting, and Drawing Objects	Taking Children for a Walk	Singing to Children	Storytelling	Reading or Viewing Pictures
Male	84.7%	86.1%	75.1%	73.5%	9.1%
Female	85.7%	84.0%	75.3%	73.1%	48.4%
Total	85.2%	85.1%	75.2%	73.3%	48.8%
Urban	87.6%	87.4%	80.1%	77.9%	55.7%
Rural	81.1%	81.2%	67.0%	65.7%	37.2%
36-47 Months	84.3%	85.9%	76.1%	72.1%	44.2%
48-59 Months	86.0%	84.2%	74.3%	74.6%	53.5%

**Source:** Sixth Cluster Survey Database, Algeria 2019

It is important to note that the differences in participation between boys and girls, as well as across age groups, are minimal. However, a significant variation exists based on the place of residence, particularly with respect to educational activities such as reading, viewing pictures, singing, and storytelling. In some cases, the difference between urban and rural children can exceed 15 percentage points, reflecting the greater availability of resources and parental engagement in urban areas.

Additionally, it is evident that the higher the educational level of the parents, especially the father, or the higher the family's socio-economic status, the greater the likelihood of family involvement in activities that support the child's learning, particularly in tasks like reading or viewing pictures and singing.

### Family Ownership of Educational Tools:

#### The Book:

Books are often considered one of the most valuable companions for a child's development. They are not only instrumental in fostering imagination and creativity but also play a critical role in enhancing memorization, listening skills, and vocabulary expansion. Books are among the first tools that allow children to explore and understand the world around them. Moreover, when books are available at home, children observe older siblings engaging with them, particularly during study time.

This not only supports their intellectual curiosity but also has a profound influence on shaping their future academic success.

The findings of the Sixth Cluster Survey, however, paint a concerning picture regarding the availability of books in the home. According to the survey, only 8.1% of children aged 0-59 months live in households that possess at least three children's books. The situation is even more dire for children living in households with ten or more books, a figure that drops to a mere 1%.

Furthermore, a stark contrast exists between urban and rural areas in terms of access to children's books. In urban households, 10.8% of children have access to at least three children's books, while only 4.4% of children in rural households enjoy the same benefit.

The survey also highlights that the availability of books correlates with the child's age. For example, 17% of children aged 24-59 months reside in households with at least three children's books. In contrast, only 2% of children aged 0-23 months benefit from the same level of access to books.

Additionally, the educational background of parents has a strong influence on the presence of children's books at home. The survey revealed that as parents' educational levels increase, so too does the likelihood of children having access to at least three children's books.

For instance, only 2% of children whose mothers have no formal education live in homes with at least three children's books, whereas 22% of children whose mothers have a high level of education benefit from this privilege. A similar pattern was observed with fathers: 4% of children whose fathers have no formal education have access to at least three children's books, compared to 21% for those whose fathers possess a higher level of education.

The socio-economic status of the family also plays a significant role in the availability of books. Among children from poor families, only 3% live in households with at least three children's books. In contrast, this percentage rises to 23% among children from wealthy families, demonstrating a 20 percentage point difference between the two socio-economic groups.

### **Play:**

The Sixth Cluster Survey further examined the role of play in early childhood development, revealing that 48.6% of children aged 0-59 months live in households with at least two toys. Notably, 74% of these toys were purchased from stores, while only 10% were homemade. Interestingly, there was no significant difference in toy ownership between urban and rural areas.

In urban households, 51.5% of children had at least two toys, whereas 44.8% of children in rural households had the same. Additionally, there were no gender-based differences in toy ownership, with 35% of both boys and girls possessing at least two toys.

However, the survey findings reveal statistically significant differences based on the educational level of the parents. Among children whose mothers have a higher level of education, 37% have two or more toys, compared to just 26% for children whose mothers have no formal education. This suggests that the educational level of the mother is directly linked to the availability of play materials in the household.

The socio-economic status of the family also influences the number of toys available to children. Children from wealthier families were more likely to own at least two toys, with 36% of children in wealthy families reporting toy ownership compared to 32% in poorer families. While the differences are not vast, they reflect the broader impact of economic factors on a child's access to educational resources such as play materials.

### **Inadequate Care:**

It is well-documented that leaving young children unattended or placing them under the care of other children increases the risk of accidents and injuries. In the 2019 Cluster Survey, two specific questions were posed to assess whether children aged 0-59 months were left alone during the week prior to the interview or were cared for by other children under 10 years old.

The results revealed that 12.5% of children were left alone for at least one hour, regardless of their age, place of residence, or the educational and socio-economic background of the parents. This finding highlights the vulnerability of children left without adult supervision, emphasizing the need for increased awareness and intervention to prevent potential harm.



### **Early Childhood Development:**

Early childhood development is a structured and predictable process through which children acquire the skills necessary to engage in increasingly complex behaviors, such as moving, thinking, speaking, perceiving, and interacting with others. This period of development is foundational to the child's future growth and shapes their overall trajectory as human beings. Critical components of early childhood development include physical growth, literacy and numeracy skills, emotional and social development, as well as a budding desire to learn.

To assess early childhood development in Algeria, the 2019 Sixth Cluster Survey utilized a development index composed of ten questions, each focusing on specific milestones that children should typically reach to be considered on track for development. This tool is crucial for shaping public policy by providing data on the state of child development in Algeria. Each of the ten items in the index examines the child's progress in four key areas, with the goal of understanding whether they are meeting age-appropriate developmental milestones. These areas include:

#### **A - Literacy and Numeracy Skills:**

Children are considered to be on track for development in this area if they can identify or name at least ten letters of the alphabet, read at least four simple and commonly used words, and recognize the names and symbols of numbers from 1 to 10. Successfully completing at least two of these tasks suggests that the child is making significant progress in their literacy and numeracy skills, which are foundational to future academic success.

#### **B - Physical Development:**

In terms of physical development, children are considered to be progressing appropriately if they can pick up an object from the ground using only two fingers, such as a ball or stone. Furthermore, it is important that the child does not suffer from frequent illness that impedes their ability to play. If these physical abilities are demonstrated, the child is seen as being on track for healthy physical growth and development.

#### **C - Social and Emotional Development:**

Social and emotional development is another critical area assessed in early childhood. Children are deemed to be on the right developmental path if they meet at least two of the following criteria:

- \_ The child interacts well with other children.
- \_ The child refrains from aggressive behaviors such as kicking, biting, or hitting others, and does not become easily distracted.

These milestones help determine the child's ability to manage emotions, develop interpersonal relationships, and exhibit socially appropriate behavior, which are essential for emotional well-being and social integration.

#### **D - Learning:**

Children are considered to be on track in terms of learning if they can effectively follow simple instructions or complete tasks independently when asked. The ability to learn through instruction and perform tasks with little guidance indicates cognitive development and preparedness for future academic challenges.

The "Child Development Indicator" is a crucial metric used to assess whether a child is progressing appropriately in various developmental areas. It is calculated based on the percentage of children who are on track in at least three out of the four developmental areas discussed earlier. According to the results for children aged 36-59 months, 76.8% of these children are considered to be on the right path for development.

This figure is higher for girls, with 74% of them being on track, compared to 67% of boys. Furthermore, children aged 48-59 months show greater developmental progress, with 74% on track, compared to 66% of younger children aged 36-47 months, as older children generally acquire more skills. Notably, the indicator is significantly higher for children enrolled in early childhood educational programs (85%) compared to those who are not attending any educational program (67%).

Regarding the place of residence, the survey found no significant differences between urban and rural areas, with 79.6% of children in urban areas and 72.7% in rural areas being on track. Similarly, socio-economic status did not show a large disparity, with children from wealthy families having 72% on track, compared to 72.7% from poorer families.

However, the study highlighted a gap in developmental progress based on parental education levels. Children whose mothers had no formal education had a lower percentage on track for development (66%) compared to those whose mothers had a higher level of education (75%). The same trend was observed for fathers, with 64% for those without formal education and 76% for those with higher educational attainment.

An analysis of the four developmental areas revealed that 89% of children are on track in terms of learning, while 96% are progressing well in physical development. However, literacy and numeracy skills are notably weaker, with only 29% of children on track in this area. Social and emotional development is better, with 71% of children meeting the expected milestones.

## **CONCLUSION:**

This study aimed to explore the role of the family in the educational and developmental growth of young children and to investigate the socio-demographic and economic factors influencing this development. The findings reveal that only 17% of children aged 36-59 months are attending nursery schools, with significant differences between urban and rural areas, as well as variations based on the parents' educational levels and socio-economic status.

It was also found that family involvement in supporting educational and training activities for children under the age of five is moderate (78%), with differences observed based on the place of residence, parental education levels, and the family's socio-economic status. These disparities need to be addressed by government agencies and family members to ensure more equitable access to early childhood education and developmental opportunities.

In terms of the nature of the activities that support child development, it was observed that naming, counting, and drawing activities were the most common. However, reading activities showed a deficiency, with considerable differences based on place of residence, parental education levels, and socio-economic status. This highlights the need for greater emphasis on reading at home, especially given its importance in early childhood development.

The availability of books in households remains a challenge in Algeria, with only 11% of children living in homes that own at least three children's books. This is a critical issue, as books play an essential role in fostering early literacy skills. Therefore, raising awareness about the importance of books and reading in early childhood education should be a priority for policymakers and community leaders.

In terms of play, the situation is relatively better, with 35% of children owning two or more toys. However, as with books, differences based on place of residence, parental education, and socio-economic status persist. These disparities suggest that greater efforts are needed to ensure all children have access to the developmental benefits of play.

The Early Childhood Development Indicator revealed that 70% of children aged 36-59 months are on track for development, with no significant differences based on socio-demographic or economic variables.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes that a child's upbringing begins long before school, with the care, education, and training provided by the family playing a pivotal role in their development. It is essential that this upbringing is balanced and comprehensive, addressing all aspects of the child's development.

Focusing on just one area while neglecting others could impede the child's overall progress, which may have long-lasting effects. Early childhood is the foundation of society, as children are the true wealth of any nation. It is also one of the most critical stages for shaping character and acquiring skills, especially during the first five years of life.

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