



## Research Article

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# Challenges Facing Early Childhood Education in Developing Countries

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## Abstract

*The environment where the child is educated must offer different opportunities for children through which they will be helped in their social and emotional development, in accordance with their age and level of development. The physical and social environment affects the behavior of both, the educator and the child. By owning the environment and taking control of the classroom space, the educator and the child fulfill the need to feel capable of responding to any demand or challenge they face. Being a country in transition, Kosovo faces various challenges in terms of providing a suitable environment for education according to standards for children at an early age. The research focuses on early care and education institutions and how they provide adequate conditions in terms of physical and social environment and what are the differences between public and private institutions. The study was carried out with heads of nursery, kindergartens and preschool institutions, as well as, with educators and parents (N = 137). Precisely, ten public and ten private institutions were included in the study. The study was carried out in 8 municipalities or about 1/3 of the municipalities of Kosovo. The results of the study show that 74.1% of the institutions are satisfied with the physical spaces. However, there are significant differences between public and private institutions. The results of the study show that there is a higher satisfaction with 90% of public institutions with physical spaces compared to private ones which is 57%. Regarding social activities carried out in public and private institutions, the results show that there are no significant differences ( $p=0.129$ ).*

**Keywords:** children, educators, physical, social, pedagogical environment, parents

## 1. Introduction

Despite the fact that we live in the age of digital technology, when one depends on the use of information and nanotechnologies, it is still necessary to maintain the harmony of life. Harmony for a person is a balance of feelings, emotions, physical forces and social events (Zhitnaya et al., 2019 pg. 1). As such, it is necessary that physical and social environment offers children different experiences, through which they will be helped in their social, physical and emotional development,

in accordance with their age and level of their development. Martin et al. (1999:78) assert that: The physical environment of the classroom has an impact on both teacher behavior and student behavior. By possessing the appropriate physical classroom environment and taking control of the classroom space, the teacher fulfills the need to feel capable of responding to any request or challenge with which facing (1999:78).

After the year 2000, Kosovar society faced the lack of institutions, inadequate physical infrastructure, lack of human and legislative capacities, which would provide care and education in early childhood. In the past, in a typical traditional family, the main actors in care-taking and educating children were parents. However, the transition process has effected this norm. Nowadays institutions have an important role in care-taking and educating children at an early age, except their parents and families.

Around 60% of the total population of Kosovo live in rural areas. Most of them do not have access to early education institutions (nursery and kindergartens), and this represents a special challenge for the country.

Access to early childhood education programmes is limited, with only 15 per cent of children age 3-4 years attending an early childhood education programme. The most vulnerable groups are also most deprived of these education opportunities, with just 1 in 10 children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and among those from rural areas, attending an early education programme (UNICEF, 2019-20).

This exclusion of children in early education directly affects the interaction with peers, socialization and overall development of the child. The lack of nurseries and kindergartens is present in the cities, too. However, there are also institutions that are overcrowded with children, creating an unsuitable environment for education. According to official statistics, the number of children in daycares (0-5 years old) and preschools (5-6 years old) in 2020-2021 was 31,179, of which 24,196 were in the public sector, or 77.6%, while the private sector included 6,983 children, or 28.9% (ASK & MASHTI, 2021). The demands for enrolment of children in early childhood care institutions in urban areas are high and this situation has caused a significant number of institutions (public and private) to exceed their capacities. The lack of a suitable environment becomes even more subtle in those institutions that have adapted residential or other facilities to nurseries - kindergartens and preschools, not all of which manage to meet the minimum norms and standards that provide child care and education. This relation is best described by Grantham-McG et al. (2007), who state that brain development is modified by the quality of the environment.

Another important issue faced by early education institutions is the pedagogical aspect, i.e. the lack of educational plans, the failure to apply contemporary methodologies, the lack of qualified staff and the lack of continuous teachers/educators' training with contemporary methodologies which makes quality education difficult. However, it is worth noting that "in modern conditions the use of art pedagogy as one of the educational resources that ensure the successful individual development of the child and contribute to his/her positive socialization encounters a number of difficulties" (Zhitnaya, et al., 2019 pg. 1). Childcare or preschool education has been used as an intervention strategy to improve the lives and development of specific groups, particularly children living in deprived circumstances. Children from deprived family backgrounds often experience particular difficulties at school. They enter school with fewer academic skills than their more privileged peers, and they often lag behind in their cognitive development during the later school years (Stipek & Ryan, 1997). Malaguzzi believed that children from birth "speak" hundreds of languages - painting, modeling, dramatization, dance and much more - and the task of adults is not to drown out all these languages and give them only one - speech, but to learn how to combine them and find in them, ultimately yourself, your way (Zhitnaya et al., 2019 pg. 1). It is possible to support these "one hundred languages" that Malaguzzi speaks if appropriate conditions are created. The first and foremost of them is the freedom of expression of the child.

Creating a suitable physical and social environment is a challenge, especially for developing countries, as is the case with Kosovo, as a new-developing country. As such, this study is focused on

early care and education institutions in Kosovo. More precisely, this study aims to reveal facts if these institutions provide adequate conditions and if they fulfill the criteria of physical and social environment and what are the differences between public and private institutions.

It is hoped that the study findings will provide enough evidence regarding early care and education institutions in Kosovo as a developing country, and recommendations offered will offer new ideas on application of various approaches that enhance early care and education institutions in both sectors, private and state ones. In addition, it is hoped to provide suggestions to institutions when implementing educational programs in order to maximize the 21st century's children's demands.

### 1.1 *The importance of appropriate environment in early childhood*

There are different definitions regarding early childhood education. The most accepted is the definition that includes children up to the age of eight. In terms of child's life, early childhood education is considered as the period from birth to eight years of age (Campbell, 1990). Grotewell and Burton (2008) also shared this definition as they elaborated it accordingly, as the time span between zero and eight years old. However, by school terms, early childhood education includes group settings for infants through elementary school grade three (Campbell, 1990). In addition, Gonzalez-Mena (2008) states that early childhood education is a special branch of education serving with children from infancy to elementary grade level of three. Certainly, we also agree with this definition of the aforementioned authors however, our study is focused on early child education of 0-6 years old. The importance of the early childhood education, how it affects further development, and which components must be met to ensure a quality early education are some of the issues that have attracted the attention of researchers for a long time and are the aims of this study. Over the past 20 years, the importance of early childhood education has dramatically expanded around the globe. Early childhood education has been viewed by many scholars as being a crucial part of a child's development. This situation is complementary with research results based on long term effects of early education to later life (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008). To have a quality early education, first of all we need to ensure a quality physical and social environment where all actors will feel comfortable, interact with each other and develop together. According to Azzi-Lessing (2009), infrastructure provides bases for education system. Once the deficiencies related to infrastructure occur, this may trigger other problems as well. In the study of Aktan and Comert (2007), one of the source-problems related to pre-school curriculum implementation is the (un)availability of school facilities. According to the study conducted by Gundogan (2002) in-service trainings that school administrators organised is not enough to abreast pre-school teachers with the current trend of the early childhood curriculum.

The most popular theories of child development, such as those of Piaget, Erikson, or Vygotsky, promote the need for children's interaction with the environment, with peers, or with adults (Mooney, 2013). When they manage to accomplish goals that are acceptable to their peers, they develop what Erikson calls the sense of initiative. Vygotsky states cognitive development stems from social interactions from guided learning within the zone of proximal development as children and their partner's co-construct knowledge. For Vygotsky (1978), the environment in which children grow up will influence how they think and what they think.

When discussing about preschool education in Kosovo, it is organized in public preschool institutions (children of the age groups 0-3 years and 3-6 years); private preschool institutions (0-6 years old); public-private preschool institutions (0-6 years old), Community-Based Centers - QBK (0-6 years old), pre-primary classes, and within primary schools (for children aged 5-6 years old) (Aliu – Gashi et al. 2021). The inclusion of more children in preschool education, inability to hire more educators, and creating necessary and suitable spaces for this level of education are some of the challenges at the municipal level for effective implementation of preschool education (Gashi & Plakolli, 2016). A well-ordered and safe physical environment gives the child the opportunity to play,

explore and discover (Kulla, Zisi & Ikonomi, 2017). Optimal child brain development requires a stimulating environment, healthy food, and social relationships with people who are attentive to their needs. Unsafe conditions, negative relationships and the lack of educational opportunities during the first years of life can cause children to lose the opportunity that this period of development offers which can have irreversible consequences (Kulla et al., 2017). In the last decade, Early Childhood Development (ECD) has become a high priority for the government of Kosovo. Moreover, Kosovo has a relatively well-established legal framework supporting early childhood development (World Bank, 2021).

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research design

Based on the study aims, it was organized in three phases: Phase one: designing the questionnaire for preschool institutions, Phase two: field work/interviews and data collection, and Phase three: data analysis and interpretation.

### 2.2 Sample and sampling

The research was carried out with three target groups: a) managers of preschool institutions, b) educators and c) parents of children enrolled in preschool institutions (public and private ones). The total number of 137 participants. The study was carried out with 20 public and private institutions (50% public), in 8 municipalities of Kosovo (Prishtina, Obiliq, Mitrovica e Jugu, Drenas, Fushë Kosovë, Lipjan, Ferizaj, Suharekë). That is, about 1/3 of the municipalities of the country.

Regarding the heads of preschool institutions, the distribution of the sample was equal: 50% of the sample covered state institutions and 50% covered private ones. 89% were females. That is, the majority of employees in preschool institutions are female educators. See the Table 1.

**Table 1:** Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	N	%
Male	14	10.14
Female	124	89.86
<b>Age</b>	N	%
20-30	38	27.34
31-40	51	36.69
41-50	26	18.71
51-60	18	12.95
60+	6	4.32
<b>(Job) Position</b>	N	%
Director	20	14.6
Educator	82	59.85
Parent	35	25.55
<b>Education levels</b>	N	%
Primary	1	0.73
Secondary	15	10.95
Higher (university studies)	121	88.32

Moreover, regarding parents' participation in the study, 60 % were female parents and 40% male parents.

### 2.3 Instruments, data collection procedures and analysis

The study was carried out through the questionnaire, which enabled empirical data collection. The questionnaire comprised two parts: the first part contained questions about demographic and social characteristics of the respondents, and the second part contained professional questions regarding physical and social environment of early childhood education. The questionnaire was carried out face to face in preschool institutions with the above-mentioned target groups (managers, educators and parents of children enrolled in preschool institutions).

The data collected were summarized and analyzed by utilizing STATA: Statistical software for data science and then the study continued with the descriptive, comparative, analytical, correlational, regression analyses.

In order to understand the institution's physical environment, we obtained five indicators: how satisfied they are with the physical spaces, the internal and external physical environment, security and food preparation and serving services. Meanwhile, how much the social component is fulfilled in the institution was understood through indicators: social activities initiated by children, working in groups with children, social interaction, or toy corner(s) within institution(s).

The study was carried out under the direction of the author and supported by two colleagues in the field. It was authorized by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology of the Republic of Kosovo (MEST) and carried out by KIC Planners for the needs of drafting the guide for the construction of kindergartens and nurseries in Kosovo. The same has been completed, changed and developed by the authors.

### 2.4 Cronbach's alpha

From the analysis in Table 2, we can understand that Cronbach's alpha is 0.8427, which expresses a high level of internal consistency of the variables.

**Table 2:** Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on standardized	No. of items
0.8427	0.8427	16

## 3. Results

The study aimed to explore what are the main challenges of preschool education in the framework of the physical environment and social activities from the perspective of the management of preschool institutions, educators and parents. Through the realization of the questionnaire with management, educators and parents, the latter had the opportunity to answer questions including narrative form where they had the opportunity to express themselves freely about their experiences.

### 3.1 Infrastructure and physical environment

Both adults and children seek a suitable environment to fulfill their needs, the need to be alone or in company, with commitment, rest and where they feel safe and valued as a contributing member of a community (Erlehta et al., 2012). In modern socio-cultural conditions, when there is a continuous process of reforming the entire education system, preschool education has also gained significant changes. Work in the field of preschool education is currently being built on the basis of recently adopted regulatory documents (Zhitnaya et al., 2019 pg. 1). In Kosovo, in the last decade, several important legislative and strategic documents have been drafted that lead to the improvement of preschool education, but the situation on the ground has room for improvement. The average child-educator ratio is 12 to 1. The child-educator ratio in private institutions is higher at 3-4 children in all

age groups of children. Most preschool institutions accept children from the age of 06 months. However, the usable internal physical surface of preschool facilities is 7.55 m2 per child (7.37 m2 for public institutions and 7.73 m2 for private ones). Both Teresa Strong-Wilson and Julia Ellis write that space is the third teacher of the child. Attention is drawn to how everything around can be thoughtfully organized; in Reggio pedagogy, the role of the environment is rethought - it acts as a key source of educational provocation, motivates children to learn and search creatively (Zhitnaya et al., 2019).

On the other hand, the research shows that only 48% of institutions have special parking for staff needs, 34.8% of all interviewed institutions have adequate access to parking for people with special needs, 37% completely agree that there is special access in institutions for children, administrative entry and economic entry.

Regarding the physical environment in Kosovar institutions, private and state ones, Table 3 succinctly presents the data needed.

**Table 3:** Differences between public and private institutions regarding the need for physical space

	<i>Public institutions</i>	<i>Private institutions</i>	<i>Significant differences</i>
<b>Your institution needs physical space</b>	N	N	Chi-square
<i>I completely agree</i>	51	14	P=0.000
<i>I partially agree</i>	30	13	
<i>I do not agree</i>	2	10	
<i>I don't agree at all</i>	5	12	
<b>Are you satisfied with the security system in your institution</b>	N	N	Chi-square
<i>I completely agree</i>	30	28	P=0.000
<i>I partially agree</i>	27	20	
<i>I do not agree</i>	7	0	
<i>I don't agree at all</i>	19	0	
<b>Are you satisfied with the areas where food is prepared and served</b>	N	N	Chi-square
<i>I completely agree</i>	27	44	P=0.000
<i>I partially agree</i>	47	3	
<i>I do not agree</i>	3	0	
<i>I don't agree at all</i>	8	0	
<b>Your facility has sufficient lighting</b>	N	N	Chi-square
<i>I completely agree</i>	55	44	P=0.011
<i>I partially agree</i>	24	4	
<i>I do not agree</i>	6	1	
<i>I don't agree at all</i>	3	0	

Based on the results of the chi-square test for the indicators taken for analysis, there are significant statistical differences regarding the four indicators and between public and private institutions. The results show that 74.1% of the institutions are satisfied with the physical spaces (internal and external). Regarding satisfaction with the security system in the institution, 76.6% affirm that they are satisfied with the security system and 87.05% are satisfied with the areas where food is prepared and served. The majority affirm (91.36%) that they have sufficient lighting in the internal spaces of the institution. About half of the institutions have a lack of wardrobe space (41%). Regarding the adequacy of the internal and external stairs of the institution, 51.8% claim that the stairs are suitable. On the other hand, 24.6% completely agree and 34.1% partially agree that the noise is present inside the institution which is the result of external factors (traffic, etc.). Reviews on ECEC for infants and toddlers (Dalli & Rockel, 2012; Dalli et al., 2011; Trevarthen et al., 2003) emphasise that environments

need to be calm, quiet, and not over-stimulated and allow uninterrupted sleep, comfort and feeding. Furthermore, they need to offer a rich environment with things to explore, and facilitate a range of activities including physical movement, dance, storytelling, drawing, and painting. Regarding the external environment of institutions, about half (47.4%) fully agree and a third (31.4%) partially agree that their institution needs green areas where children can play and develop social activities.

It is argued that appropriate environments for children have to match each stage of development. For example, for infants and toddlers, space must be designed so that it offers many opportunities for physically exploring materials. For preschoolers, who begin to use objects in more complex situations, materials which offer opportunities for role play and the use of more complex language become increasingly important. Children should have spaces big enough for their needs, materials should be stored accessibly and the organisation in learning areas is seen to be an effective way to stimulate engagement with materials in play (Utrecht University, 2014, pp 56).

**Table 4:** Correlation analysis

	Your institution needs physical space	Your institution needs internal space	Your institution needs an external space	Are you satisfied with the security system in your institution	While preparing food in the kitchen, there is an aroma in the bedroom and living room
Your institution needs physical space	1				
Your institution needs internal space	-0.2292	1			
Your institution needs an external space	-0.2604	0.5568	1		
Are you satisfied with the security system in your institution	0.0339	0.3711	0.3361	1	
While preparing food in the kitchen, there is an aroma in the bedroom and living room	-0.2432	0.6523	0.5881	0.4318	1

The results of the correlation coefficient show that the variable that has a positive relationship with the physical spaces of the institution is security in the institution ( $r=0.03$ ), therefore, with the increase in security, the need for physical space also increases. While the other three independent variables have a negative relationship with the need for physical surface of preschool institutions. The physical environment of ECEC settings is considered to be one of the structural factors that enable good quality care and education. Indoor and outdoor spaces, learning materials and equipments which are appropriate and stimulating, safe and protective, impact on children’s learning opportunities, their physical activity, and their health and safety (Dalli & Rockel, 2012; Dalli et al., 2011).

In order to have a deeper analysis of institutions, we also performed the regression analysis with the same variables as in the correlation analysis. See the table;

**Table 5:** Regression analysis

<b>Prob&gt;F</b>		<b>0.0035</b>		
<b>R Square</b>		<b>0.1166</b>		
		<b>Robust</b>		
Your institution needs physical space	Coefficients	Standard Error	t	P value
Your institution needs internal space	-0.026	0.029	-0.89	0.374
Your institution needs an external space	-0.591	0.041	-1.46	0.148
Are you satisfied with the security system in your institution	0.741	0.034	2.15	0.033
While preparing food in the kitchen, there is an aroma in the bedroom and living room	-0.078	0.045	-1.72	0.088

Based on the analysis of the coefficient of determination (R-squared), the need of preschool institutions for physical spaces is explained by 11.66% of the selected variables. Of the four independent variables, two are significant: security ( $P < 0.05$ ) and food preparation in the kitchen, there is a smell in the bedroom and in the living room with a 10% significance level, while the other two variables do not show a statistically significant impact significant ( $P > 0.05$ ).

### 3.2 Involvement of children in social activities

Preschool institutions need a good organizational structure, positive work environment, didactic materials and planning. The results of the research show that 96% of the institutions have lesson/education plans designed by experts of the field, and parents. Effective early development requires high-quality teaching and learning. A good teacher can create a learning environment where a child can develop effectively and holistically, regardless of the circumstance or the facility in which they are placed. An advantage that is noted (76% strongly agree) is the exercise of activities initiated by the children themselves, where 93% strongly agree that they encourage children to think, reason, experiment, ask questions. 87% strongly agree that there are various activities for children in groups, so that they benefit from a wider perspective by sharing knowledge, ideas and opinions and give children the responsibility to work together, share materials-toys and solve problems among themselves (93% strongly agree). Another element is the involvement of parents in activities within the classroom, and in this regard 62% fully agree that parents are also involved in activities. Also, 86% strongly agree that they allow children to help, tidy and maintain the room. An issue that has not yet received attention in Kosovar society is the issue of educators' visits to children's families, and from the findings of the research, only 17.5% fully agree that they make visits, while the majority do not practice family visits. Regarding the monitoring of the child's development, 73% fully agree on writing a report on the child's development, that is, they constantly monitor the child's development. Regarding the possibilities of using the toy corner indoors or outdoors (yard-garden), 72% completely agree that they have these possibilities. These activities certainly help the child in psycho-social, physical development, interactions, socialization, etc., therefore these spaces are very necessary. Most institutions take children outside in all seasons, at least once a day.

About half (45%) of the interviewees fully agree that the groups of children with one educator are large and this negatively affects group's social and educational activities. With regards to the effects of group size on social-emotional outcomes, Zachrisson, Backer-Grøndahl, Nærde, & Ogden, 2012 used data from the Norwegian Developmental Study in a Norwegian report (not peer reviewed) to investigate group size as a predictor of social skills, aggression and oppositional behaviour in three year-olds. They found that larger group sizes were linearly associated with lower levels of teacher reported social skills, but not with externalising behaviour. Additionally, they found no relationship between group size and parent reported social skills or externalising behaviour (Utrecht University, 2014, pp 56).

**Table 6:** Differences between public and private institutions regarding the exercise of social activities

	Public institutions	Private institutions	Significant differences
<b>Practice child-initiated activities</b>	N	N	Chi-square
I completely agree	67	39	P=0.129
I partially agree	13	9	
I do not agree	4	0	
I don't agree at all	5	1	
<b>Organize children into groups so that they gain a broader perspective by sharing knowledge, ideas and opinions</b>	N	N	Chi-square
I completely agree	78	42	P=0.793
I partially agree	5	4	
I do not agree	0	0	
I don't agree at all	5	3	



	Public institutions	Private institutions	Significant differences
<b>Give children the responsibility to work together, share materials-toys and solve problems among themselves</b>	N	N	Chi-square
I completely agree	82	45	P=0.748
I partially agree	11	3	
I do not agree	1	0	
I don't agree at all	4	0	
<b>In your institution there is a children's playground (inside and outside)</b>	N	N	Chi-square
I completely agree	53	46	P=0.00
I partially agree	28	1	
I do not agree	2	1	
I don't agree at all	6	1	

To understand the statistical differences between variables and institutions (public - private) the chi-square test was utilized. Based on the results (chi-square test) there are significant statistical differences between public and private institutions and children's playground (indoor and outdoor), while other variables do not have significant statistical differences (see Table 5).

**Table 7:** Correlation analysis

	Social activity	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Social activity</b>	1					
1. Organize children into groups so that they gain a broader perspective by sharing knowledge, ideas and opinions	0.4337	1				
2. Give children the responsibility to work together, share materials-toys and solve problems among themselves	0.3668	0.7715	1			
3. Let the children help in arranging and maintaining the environment of the room	0.5251	0.4851	0.2633	1		
4. In your institution there is a children's playground (inside and outside)	0.2781	0.3344	0.2392	0.2698	1	
5. Children in all seasons go out at least once a day in open spaces (courtyard)	0.5621	0.4027	0.2362	0.3760	0.4190	1

The correlation coefficient enables to understand the relationship between social activity and independent variables. The coefficients presented in Table 7, show that all variables have a positive relationship with social activity. Independent variables on the dependent variable (social activity) are presented via regression analysis.

**Table 8:** Regression analysis

<b>Prob&gt;F</b>			<b>0.0000</b>	
<b>R Square</b>			<b>0.4656</b>	
			<b>Robust</b>	
<b>Social activity</b>	<b>Coefficients</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>t</b>	
1. Organize children into groups so that they gain a broader perspective by sharing knowledge, ideas and opinions	-0.087	0.120	0.470	
2. Give children the responsibility to work together, share materials-toys and solve problems among themselves	0.290	0.170	0.091	
3. Let the children help in arranging and maintaining the environment of the room	0.420	0.162	0.011	
4. In your institution there is a children's playground (inside and outside)	-0.023	0.085	0.782	
5. Children in all seasons go out at least once a day in open spaces (courtyard)	0.501	0.173	0.005	

The OLS Robust model was chosen for analysis, which has an explanatory capacity of 46.56%. Based on the analysis of the coefficient of determination (R-squared), the social activity of children in preschool institutions includes organization of children in groups, sharing of games, helping children in arranging and protecting the environment, the corner game(s) inside and outside the institution(s)

and outings in open space once a day for children in every season. Of the five independent variables, three are significant (children's help in arranging and maintaining the environment, going outside for children in each season at the 5% level of significance, sharing games is significant at the 10% level). The other two variables ( children's grouping and division of games) do not show a statistically significant impact on the social activity of children in preschool institutions.

#### 4. Discussions

Research shows that the challenges of early childhood education from the point of view of physical and social environment are different and they naturally affect the quality of education, and the overall development of the child. According to Teresa Strong-Wilson and Julia Ellis, the child's third teacher is the space. In Reggio pedagogy, the function of the environment is rethought; it serves as a vital source of educational stimulation, pushes kids to study, and inspires them to search imaginatively. Attention is focused to how everything nearby might be wisely managed. The physical and social environment are the basic factors to provide a quality education and help the overall development of the child. The physical environment and children's behavior have a positive, statistically significant link ( $r=.18$ ), according to the meta-analysis van Liempd, Fukkink, and Leseman. Studies that concentrated on the purposeful spatial design of the classroom had a bigger impact size ( $r=.29$ ). Social behavior had a bigger impact size ( $r=.25$ ) than cognitive behavior.

The results of the research show that 74.1% of the institutions are satisfied with the internal and external physical spaces. There are significant statistical differences between public and private institutions. The degree of satisfaction with physical spaces for public institutions is 92%, while in private institutions the degree of satisfaction is 55%. Based on these findings, the study is in line with Martin et al. (1999:78) who claim that "The physical environment of the classroom has an impact on both teacher behavior and student behavior. By possessing the appropriate physical classroom environment and taking control of the classroom space, the teacher fulfills the need to feel capable of responding to any request or challenge he or she faces".

The results of the research show that there are no statistical differences between public and private institutions regarding social activities. It is well acknowledged that successful learning in the future depends on the development of young children. Good early learning programs give children the chance to develop socially, cognitively, spiritually, physically, and emotionally as they prepare them for adulthood.

#### 5. Conclusions

From the data of the relevant institutions, it can be easily concluded that the degree of inclusion of children in early education institutions (0-5 years old) is low, while the inclusion of the 5-6 year old age group has had significant progress in the last decade.

The large number of requests for inclusion in preschool institutions, especially in urban areas, has caused a significant number of institutions (public and private) to exceed their hosting capacities (physical space). This situation has caused many private institutions to adapt houses or other premises to carry out the activities of preschool institutions, which do not even remotely meet the norms and standards necessary to provide care and education for children.

Preschool institutions do not meet the standards of internal physical space according to the norms and standards that determine the necessary physical space according to age groups. The lack of suitable physical environment is more pronounced in private institutions. That is, about half of the private institutions do not meet the criteria for providing early childhood care and education services.

The issue of the security system in institutions is good. Also, the facilities where food is prepared and served in most institutions are in good condition. In general, the institutions have good natural lighting. There is a marked lack of outdoor spaces and toy corners where children can spend part of their time for recreation, education and socialization. This situation is more serious in private institutions.

To sum, the issue of implementing social activities remains pleasing in all institutions. The development of child-initiated activities, collaboration and team work, gives children the responsibility of sharing, working together and cooperation among one another. However, the large number of children monitored by a single educator leads to difficulties and challenges to manage social and educational activities. As such, the Ministry of Education, schools, kindergardens, teachers and educators, parents and other relevant stakeholders need to trigger more often this issue and trumpet the design of appropriate physical and social, interactive environment, appropriate for the 21st child's intellectual development.

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