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**The Importance of Arab Parents'  
Perspective in Shaping and  
Developing ECE Methodologies to  
Increase Economical Efficiency and  
Social Consistency: The Montessori  
Method of Education**

**Nourhan Zehnie**

Development Studies Series  
Arab Planning Institute - Kuwait

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## **The Importance of Arab Parents' Perspective in Shaping and Developing ECE Methodologies to Increase Economical Efficiency and Social Consistency: The Montessori Method of Education**

### **Abstract**

This study provides an insight into Arab parents' perspective regarding the Montessori Method of education as the program of choice for their children. The study analyses the response of a sampling of 180 Arab parents with children enrolled in Montessori schools within several Arab countries. It considers several key factors relevant to the Montessori philosophy, educational method, values, and management in addition to a selected socio-economic factor. Results suggest Montessori parents are knowledgeable about Montessori's values, philosophy, curriculum, and management. This study provides a valuable resource for future studies as well as pertinent information useful for parents, educators, and administrators.

## 1. Background of the Study

### 1.1 Introduction

Since the beginning of this century with many educational reforms and the emergence of new educational methods and techniques which include learning-by-doing as well as virtual learning, reformers have been looking at education as a fundamental factor in the socio-economic growth of any country, looking seriously towards achieving sustainable economic development through human capital. They also looked at Early Childhood Education (ECE) as one of the major fields of education in which many countries should invest since it is the pillar of all further education. After the declaration of the 'Right of the Child' documents that was launched at the United Nations in 1987 and the declaration of 'Education for All' (EFA) was announced in the Dakkhar conference, Arab countries became more visibly involved in ECE. In the latest report on EFA released in 2015 it was announced that in 2012 184 million children were enrolled in pre-primary education worldwide, an increase of nearly two-thirds since 1999.

Looking at the history of Early Childhood Education in the world, we can notice that ECE is new. The regional conference on the ECE in the Arab World's 'Reality and Challenges' (2010) reports that due to the unstable, turmoil filled environments and situations in the Arab world, education in general and early childhood education in particular, was not a priority in the Arab governments' agendas as families were left to deal with this responsibility alone. However, due to the economic challenges of the modern world, governments were left with no choice but to provide services, care, and education for the children who were left behind while parents are at work. A report by UNESCO (2010) points that KGs in the Arab world, both private and public, mostly cater to children 4-6 years of age, with some KGs serving children 3-6 years of age. These are usually serviced and funded by NGOs. In the EFA Global Monitoring Report, (UNESCO, 2015) a rise in female enrolment and rural areas benefitted more from the ECE public programmes than the urban areas.

"Education in general raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances. In addition, it plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution," (Ozturk, 2001). A World Bank study found that economic growth rates during 1965-87 were especially high where there was a combination of a high level of education and macroeconomic stability and openness (Tilak, 1989).

One factor that attributed to this growth is expanded enrolment in early years education with longer schooling which has helped to reduce poverty in developing countries. This has helped nations to fight poverty by increasing overall productivity through intellectual efficiency of the labour force while ensuring that a country is competitive in world markets characterized by changing technologies and production methods.

In the World Bank Development Report of 2018 (WDR 2018)—Learning to Realize Education's Promise 2018—the president of the World Bank group gave an excellent example of how countries can pull themselves out of economic trouble by committing themselves to educating every single child which would eventually lead to successful economic development. "For individuals, education promotes employment, earnings, and health. It raises pride and opens new horizons. For societies, it drives long-term economic growth, reduces poverty, spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion," (Jim Yong Kim, 2018).

Nowadays, many educational methods have emerged giving the parents the power of choice in deciding their child's education.

Parents, being decision makers in their children's education, gain the power to change, shape, and reform schools' policies and programmes alongside governments. This involvement means they are the ones who are steering this shift in the reform. They have started to realize that education can provide a better quality to their lives, as a society and as individuals, and that it can be the key to increasing economic efficiency and social consistency.

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It is through education that countries can be competitive in the world market in line with the visible rapid changes in educational technological educational methods. By increasing the chances for advanced, well-structured education in the early years of life, parents and nations realise how much education can contribute significantly to nation building and interpersonal tolerance. This paper provides an insight into Arab parents' perspective regarding the enrollment of their children in early childhood education using a programme that caters to the well-being of their child as well as one that adopts the holistic approach to education including the physical intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual developments and needs. The goal of such a programme is educating a child to become a critical thinker, a problem solver, and independent. One who respects the self and others, and a continuous learner who upon entering a society has all these qualities which eventually become a factor in developing the country's socio-economic progress sustainability.

The Montessori Method of education is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children's learning processes in their environment. While the method is viewed as a child-centered approach, it incorporates a teacher-guided instruction and a curriculum that has a clear thorough academic component which makes it a unique philosophy and method. Montessori programme offers children opportunities to develop their potentials ready for life as engaged, competent, responsible, respectful, independent, problem solving and critical thinker citizens with an understanding and appreciation that learning is for life, in other words a normalized society.

This method was created by the brilliant Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952), a scholar of biology, psychiatry, anthropology, and medicine. Montessori is the only woman listed in history as a prominent leader in the philosophy of education besides her approach to education for peace. Through Montessori's studies of educational methods, she declared two principles as the foundation of the Montessori pedagogy: the universal characteristics of the human child, and the child as a unique, unrepeatable, respectable, and admirable individual to be unconditionally accepted as one of life's most marvelous expressions. The Montessori Method, as solid as it stands, has been time tested with over 110 years of success in diverse cultures and communities throughout the world. It has been translated to many different languages which made it a globally recognized form of education (Gutek, 2004).

Despite the success and the notable growth in the number of Montessori schools worldwide and in the Arab world, unfortunately, there is no formal statistics regarding the Arab world with little scholarly information or empirical studies on Montessori parents' perspectives regarding the Montessori's philosophy and method as the best programme for their child's education.

For a Montessori programme to be considered authentic it should incorporate multi-age groupings that foster peer noncompetitive, co-operative and individual learning with, uninterrupted blocks of work time, a guided choice of work activity, discipline based on freedom and respect, intrinsic motivation with no materialistic reward, mixed sexes and ethnic backgrounds, inclusion of at least one child with special educational needs and highly trained Montessori directors and directresses who are the keepers, custodian of the highly structured environment, facilitator and observers in the service of the child. A full complement of specially designed Montessori learning materials based on sensory-motor activities that are meticulously arranged and available for use in an aesthetically pleasing, child-sized furniture in a well-structured special layout environment. (Montessori, 1995)

In her philosophical scientific approach, she emphasized that the child possesses psychic powers (spiritual embryo) and an innate self-teacher that stimulates learning and intense motivation towards his own self-construction. She also added that children can absorb and assimilate and interpret many complex information through two creative sensitivities that she referred to as the absorbent mind and the sensitive periods (Lillard, 1972).

The Montessori Curriculum is defined as a framework which specifies learning outcomes and the knowledge and skills to be learned when teaching the method. It is divided into: Montessori philosophy and the Montessori methodology. Areas of learning are: Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, Language and Literacy, Cultural and environmental Subjects, Creative Subjects: Art and Craft, Music and Movement, Drama (Montessori,1964) Arabic Language and Literacy (Zehnie, 2001).

One of the Montessori's important pedagogical principles is her insisting that children and parents follow explicit regulations in her schools. She also expected parents to attend frequent parent-directress conferences to support their child's education as she was a great believer that schools are most effective when parents are involved in their child's education. Montessori emphasized that with true cooperation of school and home and with true understanding of how to meet the child's needs, the NORMALIZED child will emerge.

Montessori studied, observed and evaluated several Early Childhood Educational theories and philosophies of great educators and psychologists starting with Jean-Jack Rousseau, Johann Pestalozzi, Fredrick Froebel, and also studied the work of two French physicians and psychologists, Edward Seguin; and Jean Itard. These psychologists, physicians and philosophers have a significant formative influence on the development of her educational method in educating children from birth till adulthood (Gutek, 2004).

Due to the growing importance of Early Childhood Education in the child's life, parents started showing interest in identifying which programmes are most effective for their children's education and which instructional models or approaches work better for them. Parents are the ones who are responsible for the choice of their children's schools. This goes for a number of reasons, first, they know best which programme works best for their children's personalities and needs that meets their strengths and weaknesses. Second, they choose a school that goes well with their values and believes. Third, they believe that it is their divine duty to give the best holistic education to their children, and last, they want a school that builds shape their children's future endeavours, careers or family matters. Parents' choice may "stimulate educational reform and improvement" (Ogawa & Dutton, 1994).

The issue of choosing a Montessori school is still a complexed not clear issue for both parents; those who do not have their children in Montessori schools and those new parents who are looking for a school for their children (Vidojevic, 2018).

Nowadays, parents have different menus to choose from. The first on the list are the public schools, which caters for the majority of children all over the world, having various government-based curriculums with different models of education. Other type of schools are Independent schools, which caters to specific values, methodology and systems that accord with parents' desires, philosophies, and missions. (Carreiro & Shields-West ,2008).

Montessori view the child as the father of man and so of society. Her vision was to construct a peaceful and harmonious society, and this was one of the aims of Montessori values. She acknowledged that there needed to be parent training and society should allocate a higher proportion of its wealth to the support of parents during this time.

In conclusion the Montessori Method of education has stood strong for all these years because of its unique way in approaching children, as fully capable, independent human beings, who can be creative thinkers and problem solvers, intellectually and socially mature within a structured free environment based on the respect of self, respect of the environment and respect of others. The children thrive while they are self-learning under the supervision and guidance of the well-prepared teachers with the collaboration and involvement of the parents with the supervision of the very well-trained Montessori administrators. Parents' choice of education and their involvement in their child's

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education plays a major role in developing their children's self-esteem and confidence which eventually leads to intellectual and social maturity.

However, one could argue that it is because of Dr. Montessori's efforts to maintain the quality of schools that used her method of education that Montessori schools still exist today at the level and standard they do. There is no copyright protection for Montessori schools, anyone can open a school and call themselves a Montessori school. The only protection of quality lies in the school's hiring of teachers licensed by certified teacher training programs and the purchasing of materials designed by her.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Although the Montessori Method of education is more than 110 years old, the number of Montessori schools in the world and exponentially are on the rise and very much recognizable in the Arab world. Montessori philosophy and method can be somehow difficult or complex for parents to understand, even among parents whose children attend Montessori schools all over the world. It is unclear why parents decide to enroll their child in Montessori schools and little studies has examined this issue in comparison to other Montessori areas while little or no studies exist in the Arab world.

Given the fact that the interest in the Montessori Method of education is on the rise all over the world and also looking at researches that elaborate on the fact that parents' choice of ideal education can play a very valuable role in reforming and improving schools, the researcher chose to focus her study on why Arab parents choose Montessori as their ideal early childhood program for their children's education as there has been no study on this particular issue in the Arab world.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The study aims to examine Arab parents' perspective regarding the Montessori Method of Education as a program of choice for their Children.

### **1.4 Study Questions**

#### **Study Main Questions**

Based on parents' perspective; what are the most important reasons for choosing Montessori schools? These questions might be outlined in the following:

1. What are the major factors that play a role in the parents' decision to enroll his/her child in a Montessori school?
2. Does the Montessori philosophy play a part in the parents' decision to enroll his/her child in a Montessori school?
3. How much do parents believe that the Montessori values influence their child's future education.
4. Do the Montessori curriculum and methodology have an impact on the child's education in a Montessori system?
5. Do the Montessori school's administrative policy and strategy influence the parents' selection of the school?
6. Is there a statistically significant difference ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for choosing the Montessori education because of parents' age, income, and education.

#### **The Statistical Treatment**

In answering the questions of the study, the researcher will use a statistical treatment outlined in the following: Descriptive statistics (mathematical mean, and standard deviation) and One-way ANOVA.



## **1.5 Importance of the Study**

### **Theoretical Importance**

- Results of the study will add up to previous international studies and add a new study nationally.
- Studies in the Arab world are scarce regarding parents' school choice.
- Findings from this preliminary study provide a first glimpse into the perspective and beliefs of Montessori parents in the Arab world upon which future studies can be built.
- It will help examine why parents decide against enrolling their children in Montessori schools.

### **Practical Importance**

- Results of the study will shed a light on how parents think regarding early childhood education and what elements in the Method attract parents more and why.
- Montessori educators and administrators will benefit from further future research involving Montessori parents, particularly those schools that offer Montessori education, universities that teaches Early Childhood Education, researchers and Montessori trainers nationally and internationally.
- Results of the study will help school management to put emphasis and plan an educational program for parents regarding the system's methodology.
- Results of the study may also be helpful to parents who are beginning the process of school choice, whether at a preschool or school-age level.

## **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

- The geographical distances as there is no direct control over observing the collection of data from parents.
- The amount of knowledge parents know about the Montessori system of education.
- Misinterpretation of the purpose of the study.
- Not many authentic Montessori schools are available for the study as there is no direct monitor of the implementation of the method.

## **1.7 Delimitation of the Study**

- The study focused on Arab parents' perspective regarding the Montessori Method of Education as a program of choice for their children.
- The study focused on parents who have their children already attend a Montessori schools.
- The study took place in schools that host children aged 3-6 years of age.
- The study took place in an authentic Montessori schools that has a well-structured Montessori environment, equipped with Montessori didactic materials, children are vertically grouped and has quantified Montessori teachers.
- The study took place in different Montessori schools that have multi- Arab nationalities.
- The study took one whole scholastic semester 2017/2018 to complete.

## **2. Review of the Literature and Previous Studies**

### **2.1 Review of the Literature**

#### **2.1.1 Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the Arab World**

Looking at the history of Early Childhood Education in the world, we can notice that ECE has been in existence for 160 years while in the Arab world this interest started in the second half of the twentieth century. Such a thing indicates that ECE in the Arab world is considered to be new in comparison to the rest of the world. A report that was presented by Swayegh, Seham (2010) in the regional conference on the ECE in the Arab World's 'Reality and Challenges' held in Damascus, Syria in 2010. She reported that due to the unstable, turmoil environment and situations in the Arab world,

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education in general and early childhood education, was not a priority, families were left to deal with this responsibility alone. But, due to the economic challenges of the modern world, governments were left with no choice but to provide services, care and education for the children who were left behind.

After the declaration of the '**Right of the Child**' launched at the United Nations in 1987 and the declaration of "**Education for All**" (EFA) was announced in the Dakhkh conference in 2000, Arab countries became more visibly involved in ECE. In the latest report on EFA released in 2015, it was announced that in 2012, 184 million children were enrolled in pre-primary education worldwide, an increase of nearly two-thirds since 1999.

A report by the UNESCO (2010) points that there is an increase of children attending KGs with UAE at the top with 80 % enrolment rate followed by Kuwait that recorded 75% and Lebanon with 65%. In the EFA Global Monitoring Report, (UNESCO 2015) a rise in female enrolment in the Arab countries was noticed with the highest of 51% in Oman. Also looking at which areas benefitted more from the ECE public programmes rural areas scored high while 37% the urban areas scored low.

### **2.1.2 Parents Choice of Schools**

Why parents choose a particular method of education for their children and why researchers are studying the effect of parents' choice on education in general and on the child is still a new study worldwide. In fact, how and why do they choose a programme as the best programme for their children varies from culture to culture, country to country even from society to society It is noted that when parents choose a school for their children, their involvement in their child's education becomes evident and powerful which eventually has a positive impact on their child's presence at school. This will not only empower them, but it also gives their children a sense of security, confidence, motivation and high achievements (Ihmeideh, Khasawneh, Mahfouz & Khawaldeh, 2008).

### **2.1.3 Montessori School**

Montessori opened her first school, the Casa dei Bambini, or Children's House, in a large tenement at Via dei Marsi 58, in Rome's poverty-ridden San Lorenzo district, on January 6, 1907.

Montessori schools are different from other schools in many aspects. The classroom multi-aged environment reflects the calm, very busy aesthetic atmosphere. The school's environment has child sized furniture with natural colours and opened shelves where children can access the materials for freedom of choice and learn responsibility. The materials are real, mainly wooden with very natural colours all of which has a control of error to guide self-learning in the child. The class reflects and respect diversity and national cultures. The qualified teachers play a major factor in the Montessori school as they are always busy observing and adapting any situation through the constant observation of the child's sensitive periods while guiding and facilitating each individual child in the process of self-learning (Lillard,1996).

### **2.1.4 Parents at Montessori Schools**

Montessori schools have a distinguished inviting atmosphere where all staff are qualified at applying the Montessori approach in all their overall communications. Parents are welcomed at any time. Observation windows are accessible for any parent or visitor to look at the process of the hands-on work inside the classrooms. Andrews (2014) wrote about how Montessori schools help parents create new habits of mind. Montessori schools' programmes encourage parents to shift from One Truth to Many Truths, to move from Either/Or to Both/And, moving from Labelling to Identifying and from Problem Focus to Solution Focus. In doing so, parents will play a major role in their child's education and schools' assessment by visualising the philosophy of the education in their everyday habits regarding their children. In her research paper Vidojevic (2018) looked at the importance of educating parents in the Montessori method and philosophy due to the fact that the first two years of the child's life are the crucial years in his entire being.

### **2.1.5 Montessori Philosophy**

Montessori's philosophy was based on her conception of science, her observation of children and her extensive research in pedagogy and psychology. She considered the nature of the child as a metaphysical one, she even called the moment of birth in the child's life as spiritual embryo. She did set stages of development for the child and said that the child's education should grow out of and coincide with the child's own stages of development. Montessori key words for the success of any Montessori learning are' exploration, orientation, order, imagination, manipulation, repetition, precision, control of error leading to perfection, and communication, (Lillard, 1996, p. 11).

She talked about two creative sensibilities; the absorbent mind and the sensitive periods these sensitivities stimulate the child to perform certain actions in a specific time when the child is ready to master an action. Montessori believes there is a special connection between the hand and the mind (Montessori, 1912) as she believed that humans do not move at random.

Montessori introduced the concept of discipline that is based on freedom, through the vertically group setting, the qualified teachers, the very well-prepared environment, with no materialistic reward and specially designed materials, the child will reach self-learning and autonomy, leadership, problem solving and critical thinking where he can reach to the freedom of choice geared by his inner maturity and thus reaching normalisation. (Montessori, 1995).

### **2.1.6 The Montessori Curriculum**

Based on her philosophical theories, her scientific approach and on her observations, Montessori developed a methodology that put all these practices in place.

After studying the work of Seguin and Itard, she started building her own method based on the needs of the child. She established the home like classroom and started on her structured environment with qualified teachers that she called directresses. She started with the practical life everyday activities and then developed didactic materials designed to exercise children's motor and sensory skills which she stocked the prepared environment with them. She then started adding more activities in mathematics, environmental and cultural studies, nature and peace education with more creative skills added and many new resources. (Montessori,1995). New language syllabus emerged in the Montessori bilingual programmes that follow the methodology with additions required by the new Arabic language (Zehnie, 2001). She set a very structured programme for educators to implement the method in full.

Finally, Lillard (2007) touched on nine principles that have been put 110 years ago and the modern education still applies them to this date. The key words are: Movement and cognition, choice, interest, extrinsic rewards are avoided, learning with and from peers, learning in context, teachers' way and adult way, order in the environment, learning is easier when the child is in his sensitive periods.

### **2.1.7 Montessori Values**

Montessori's main aim when she applied this method was to create a child, the future man, who values peace, have self-identity, confident, a leader, respect himself, respect others, respect the environment and a continuous learner, in other words to apply her holistic peace education on all the universe by creating a normalized child. (Futrell, 1998). Individuals who are independent, critical thinkers, aware of social grace and courtesy and possess a continuous love of learning .Montessori believed that the adult s are the role models in any community and so, it is very important for parents to be aware of the values that are necessary for the growth of their children .A child's parents are not his makers but his guardians (Montessori, 1966, p. 215).

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### **2.2 Previous Studies**

Studies on this subject were scarce and mainly focused on comparison of different schools that offer Montessori education through parents' perspectives or general knowledge about the system. None has been done on the Arab parents' perspective regarding the Montessori method of education as a choice for their children's education.

**(Yousuf & Imran, 2018)** conducted a study on teachers and parents' perceptions about learning abilities and skills among children at Montessori classes in Pakistan. It highlighted the perception of Montessori teachers and parents on three main domains: internal abilities, behavioural skills and learning experience in the Montessori Method.

**(Ellis, 2017)** conducted a study on how do parents think and feel about early childhood Montessori education? Berkley University. The aim of this qualitative study is to provide a direct in-depth look at parents' thoughts and feelings about their family's experiences with a Montessori school.

**(Hiles, 2015)** conducted a study on measuring parents' perception and understanding of Montessori education. Pepperdine University. The objective of the research was to design, implement, and analyze a survey that measured parents' understanding of the Montessori principles and classroom practices. The survey was developed using the Montessori principles as the foundation.

**(Murray, 2012)** conducted a survey on public knowledge of Montessori education. in the United States. Kansas University. The study answered research questions regarding how much the public know about Montessori education, perceptions of Montessori education and the attitudes and demographic

**(Ihmeideh, Khasawneh, Mahfouz, Khawaldeh, 2008)** conducted a study on the New Workforce Generation: understanding the problems facing parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens, Amman, Jordan. This study aimed to investigate the problems facing parental involvement in Jordanian kindergartens from the parents' perspectives.

### **Researcher's Review**

Examining several qualitative and quantitative studies have shown support for the validity of Montessori's work and the benefits of using the Montessori method of education to support children's learning and development and the parents' part in understanding the method when choosing early education to their children (Yousuf & Omran, 2018; Ellis, 2017; Hiles, 2015; Murray, 2012).

Studies mostly centered on Montessori parents in specific schools; public, private chartered, magnet, ethnic and other, and how does this fit with their child' Montessori education. The researcher also found studies that tackled schools and parents' perspective regarding their child' early education (Ihmeideh, Khasawneh, Mahfouz, Khawaldeh, 2008).

Few scholarly articles were found by the researcher. They were based on one person's opinion and experiences. These articles tend to briefly mention what parents want in a preschool, why they love their child's school, and what misconceptions other parents have about Montessori education or on public understanding on what is Montessori (Hiles, 2015). Non-looked deeply on the wholistic Montessori factors in their studies except for Murray (2012). (Yousuf & Imran, 2018) focused on learning skills and behaviour, internal abilities background while (Ellis, 2017) relied on few parents' point of view through interviews.

The researcher, with many years of experience, does agree with many points from the previous studies; there is a public awareness of the name Montessori but the Montessori Method of education should be more clarified and simplified to the public and parents in general. Most studies on

Montessori parents' have centred on parents in the United States, Great Britain and the Far East but non-on the Arab parents' perspective regarding the Montessori methodology as a reason to put their children in a Montessori school. The researcher also, opted to take all the important aspects of the Montessori philosophy and methodology and break it into vital domains: general factors, philosophy, curriculum and methodology, values and administration, and socio-economic factors which she believes, makes the Montessori Method unique, in its wholeness.

### **3. Methodology and Procedures**

The purpose of this study is to look at why Arab parents choose Montessori education as the best method for their children.

#### **3.1 Population and Sample of the Study**

The population of this study is Arab parents whose children are enrolled in different schools that apply the Montessori Method of Education for a minimum period of three years and caters for children aged three to six years old.

The researcher used her years of expertise and knowledge in the Montessori Method to know the basic criteria of a Montessori school. Unfortunately, there is no official mandatory standardization to monitor all Montessori schools because Montessori did not leave any copyright on her system. Anyone can open a Montessori school.

Six schools from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Palestine were chosen. Those schools adhere to the basic criteria of Montessori's philosophy and methodology; a very well-prepared environment equipped with the essential practical life, sensorial, mathematics, languages, cultural and environmental apparatuses and creative activities. multi- aged groups, child- centred education, hands-on learning and qualified Montessori teachers.

A total of **180** parents out of 240 parents answered the questionnaires.

#### **3.2 Methodology and Procedure**

Due to the nature of the study, the researcher applied an open-ended survey using descriptive statistics, one-way analysis and variation test (ANOVA).

##### **3.2.1 Scale Development**

The researcher self -developed a questionnaire depending on her distinguished years of experience, being one of the pioneers in the Montessori Method of Education in the Arab world.

She also researched studies and surveys that tackled the subject of why parents choose the Montessori programme for their children's early years of education. Studies on this subject were very scarce but the most suitable ones were (Yousuf & Omran, 2018; Ellis, 2017; Hiles, 2015; Murray 2012; Ihmeideh, Khasawneh, Mahfouz, Khawaldeh, 2008).

##### **3.2.2 Validity and Reliability**

A questionnaire document was written in both English and Arabic to make sure that all parents understood it to avoid any misinterpretation.

The document has (6) questions divided into (54) points:

1. Major factors that play a role in the parents' decision to enrol his/her child in a Montessori school: (11 points).

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2. The influence of Montessori's philosophy on parents' decision to enrol his/her child in a Montessori school: (8 points).
3. Montessori's values on their child's future education: (10 points).
4. Montessori's curriculum and methodology have an impact on the child's education in a Montessori system: (14 points).
5. Montessori school's administrative policy and strategy influence the parents' selection of the school: (9 points).
6. Variables of the study (socio-economic): a) Age, b) Income, c) Education.

Parents are to respond to the points by choosing one of the five choices, according to Likert Scale response options (No importance, Neutral, Of some importance, Important, Of great importance).

Of great importance = 5 points. Important = 4 points. Of some importance = 3 points. Neutral = 2 points. No importance = 1 point.

The researcher's name was not added to the parents' questionnaire for credibility purposes as the researcher is a well-known figure in the Montessori field of education in the Arab world. A pilot study was done on ten parents in Jordan.

### **3.2.3 Statistic Treatment Plan**

To answer the question of the study 'based on parents' perspective; what are the most important reasons for choosing Montessori schools?' The data was processed through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), followed by statistically analysing it using the following statistical methods: descriptive statistics (mathematical mean, and standard deviation), One-way ANOVA.

## **4. Results of the Analysis**

Results are reviewed in the light of the questions of the study as follows:

Questions' code list.

### **4.1 Question One**

**What are the major factors that play a role in the parents' decision to enrol his/her child in a Montessori school?**

Table (1) presents descriptive statistics for factors behind enrolling child in a Montessori School.

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**Table (1): Factors for Enroling your Child in a Montessori School**

Factors for Enroling your Child in a Montessori School	Categories	1: No importance	2: Neutral	3:Of some importance	4: Important	5:Of great importance	Total
Montessori was my first choice	Count	7	21	34	56	62	180
	%	3.89	11.67	18.89	31.11	34.44	100
Very important for my child's future learning	Count	0	12	25	73	70	180
	%	0	6.67	13.89	40.56	38.89	100
The quality of the academic programme	Count	0	2	16	72	90	180
	%	0	1.11	8.89	40	50	100
The teachers' professional qualification	Count	1	5	16	76	82	180
	%	0.56	2.78	8.89	42.22	45.56	100
Student-teacher ratio	Count	1	8	14	81	76	180
	%	0.56	4.44	7.78	45	42.22	100
The school accepts diversity	Count	2	14	19	64	81	180
	%	1.11	7.78	10.56	35.56	45	100
It was recommended by friends and relatives	Count	19	41	42	43	35	180
	%	10.56	22.78	23.33	23.89	19.44	100
A trend in the community	Count	25	33	30	58	34	180
	%	13.89	18.33	16.67	32.22	18.89	100
School's reputation	Count	2	10	17	69	82	180
	%	1.11	5.56	9.44	38.33	45.56	100
Ideal Location	Count	8	19	31	61	61	180
	%	4.44	10.56	17.22	33.89	33.89	100
Caters a learning support programme	Count	7	15	25	72	61	180
	%	3.89	8.33	13.89	40.00	33.89	100

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Table (1) presents frequencies of respondents' answers and their counts. We can see clearly that the categories of important and great importance (4 and 5) especially are the most dominant for all the studied factors. For example, the quality of academic programme is of great importance by 50% and is according to 40% of answers, while it is also of some importance for 16 out of 180 respondents. The categories Neutral and "no importance" recorded a weight of only 1.11% and 0% respectively. Therefore, we can see that generally, these factors are important in determining the parents' decision to enrol a child in a Montessori school. The importance (categories 4 and 5) makes from 2/3 to more than 90% in all the studied factors except on the two factors "A trend in the community" and "It was recommended by friends and relatives" where the frequencies are almost fairly distributed between categories.

To distinguish how important these factors compared to each other, we need to further deepen the analysis and conducts an ANOVA test.

The factors Q1j are filtered and sorted by descending averages. Table (2) shows then the important factors are those with highest averages namely, Q13, Q14, Q15, to the least important Q17. According to ANOVA results,  $F=28.453$  is superior to  $F$ -critical ( $=1.835$ ). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. This implies that the means of the studied factors are not all equal. At least one of the means is different.

**Table (2): ANOVA one-way results for Q1**  
**Factors for enrolling your Child in a Montessori School**

ANOVA One Way Results for Q1						
Summary sorted by average from largest to smallest						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
Q13	180	790	4.389	0.485		
Q14	180	773	4.294	0.622		
Q15	180	763	4.239	0.674		
Q19	180	759	4.217	0.830		
Q16	180	748	4.156	0.948		
Q12	180	741	4.117	0.785		
Q111	180	705	3.917	1.161		
Q110	180	688	3.822	1.309		
Q11	180	685	3.806	1.320		
Q18	180	583	3.239	1.769		
Q17	180	574	3.189	1.640		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	298.57	10	29.857	28.453	0.000	1.835
Within Groups	2066.21	1969	1.049			
Total	2364.78	1979				



4.2 Question Two

**Does the Montessori philosophy play a part in the parents’ decision to enrol his/her child in a Montessori school?**

**Table (3): Montessori Philosophy**

Montessori Philosophy	Categories	1:No importance	2: Neutral	3:Of some importance	4: Important	5:Of great importance	Total
A well-prepared environment	Count	0	7	10	67	96	180
	%	0	3.89	5.56	37.22	53.33	100
Calm busy aesthetic classrooms	Count	1	1	5	73	100	180
	%	0.56	0.56	2.78	40.56	55.56	100
Multi-aged setting	Count	6	22	33	59	60	180
	%	3.33	12.22	18.33	32.78	33.33	100
Self- correcting materials	Count	1	7	22	64	86	180
	%	0.56	3.89	12.22	35.56	47.78	100
No materialistic reward	Count	4	22	32	46	76	180
	%	2.22	12.22	17.78	25.56	42.22	100
Individual self-directed approach	Count	0	6	14	52	108	180
	%	0	3.33	7.78	28.89	60	100
Normalization and reality	Count	0	10	22	72	76	180
	%	0	5.56	12.22	40	42.22	100
Discipline through structured freedom	Count	0	3	13	62	102	180
	%	0	1.67	7.22	34.44	56.67	100

Table (3) summarizes the Montessori philosophy described by eight factors, shows that these factors very importantly play a role in choosing Montessori school by parents to enrol their children. The categories ‘important’ and ‘of great importance’ are by far the most frequent answers reported by interviewers. This implies that the Montessori philosophy highly plays a part in the parents’ decision. To distinguish which of this philosophy’s determinants are important, we run an ANOVA analysis.

Similarly, table (4) presents the ANOVA one way for Q2 (Montessori philosophy). The factors Q2j are filtered and sorted by descendent averages. The table shows then the important factors are those with highest averages namely, Q22, Q28, Q26, to the least important Q23.

According to ANOVA results,  $F=15.861$  is superior to  $F\text{-critical} (=2.016)$ . Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. This implies that the means of the studied factors are not all equal. At least one of the means is different.

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**Table (4): ANOVA one-way results for Q2**

**Montessori Philosophy**

ANOVA One Way Results for Q2						
Summary sorted by average from largest to smallest						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
Q22	180	810	4.500	0.408		
Q28	180	803	4.461	0.496		
Q26	180	802	4.456	0.607		
Q21	180	792	4.400	0.588		
Q24	180	767	4.261	0.741		
Q27	180	754	4.189	0.735		
Q25	180	708	3.933	1.292		
Q23	180	685	3.806	1.275		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	85.227	7	12.175	15.861	0.000	2.016
Within Groups	1099.3	1432	0.768			
Total	1184.5	1439				

**4.3 Question Three**

**How much do parents believe that the Montessori values have an effect on their child's future education?**

According to the descriptive statistics reported in table (5) for the analysis of “values for future continuous education”, the components of the latter are of “great importance” (first category ranked) to parents by 73.3% for acquiring confidence and self-identity, 60.6% for initiative, 58.9% for leadership, 76.6 and 74.4% for respectively acquiring self-respect and respect for others, learning empathy by 62.8%, the respect of the environment by 70%, grace and courtesy by 59.4% and finally continuous learning by about 65.6%. The category “important” ranked second by 23 to 33% depending on the values for future continuous education, while other categories are of insignificant or null scores.

**Table (5): Values for Future Continuous Education**

Values for Future Continuous Education	Categories	1:No importance	2: Neutral	3:Of some importance	4:Important	5:Of great importance	Total
Confidence and self-identity	Count	1	0	4	43	132	180
	%	0.56	0	2.22	23.89	73.33	100
Taking initiative	Count	0	2	6	63	109	180
	%	0	1.11	3.33	35	60.56	100
Leadership	Count	0	3	7	64	106	180
	%	0	1.67	3.89	35.56	58.89	100
Respect of self	Count	1	1	4	36	138	180
	%	0.56	0.56	2.22	20	76.67	100
Respect of others	Count	0	1	4	41	134	180
	%	0	0.56	2.22	22.78	74.44	100
Learn empathy	Count	1	1	6	59	113	180
	%	0.56	0.56	3.33	32.78	62.78	100
Respect of the environment	Count	1	0	12	41	126	180
	%	0.56	0	6.67	22.78	70	100
Grace and courtesy	Count	0	2	13	58	107	180
	%	0	1.11	7.22	32.22	59.44	100
Continuous learners	Count	0	1	9	52	118	180
	%	0	0.56	5	28.89	65.56	100

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Table (6) emphasized these results by showing that the averages of all the values/factors range between 4.5 as the least to 4.7: values that are between the category 4 and 5 of ‘important’ and ‘great importance’ respectively. Deepening the analysis and filtering these values, show the averages that the most important values are respect of “self” and “others” and confidence and self-identity (Q34, Q35 and Q31).

**Table (6): ANOVA One Way Results for Q3  
Values for Future Continuous Education**

ANOVA One Way Results for Q3						
Summary sorted by average from largest to smallest						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
Q34	180	849	4.717	0.349		
Q35	180	848	4.711	0.285		
Q31	180	845	4.694	0.325		
Q37	180	831	4.617	0.439		
Q39	180	827	4.594	0.377		
Q36	180	822	4.567	0.415		
Q32	180	819	4.550	0.383		
Q33	180	813	4.517	0.430		
Q38	180	810	4.500	0.464		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	9.94	8	1.243	3.228	0.001	1.944
Within Groups	620.37	1611	0.385			
Total	630.31	1619				

**4.4 Question Four**

**Do the Montessori curriculum and methodology have an impact on the child’s education in a Montessori system?**

According to table (7), in which determinants on Montessori Curriculum and methodology are chosen by degrees of importance, we notice that these determinants are all ‘of high importance’. This means that the Montessori curriculum has some big impacts on the child’s educations especially through encouraging independent work, meets the child’s holistic needs, etc.

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**Table (7): Montessori Curriculum and methodology**

Montessori Curriculum	Categories	1:No importance	2: Neutral	3:Of some importance	4:Important	5:Of great importance	Total
Meets the child's holistic needs	Count	0	3	18	71	88	180
	%	0	1.67	10	39.44	48.89	100
Encourages independent work	Count	0	0	14	57	109	180
	%	0	0	7.78	31.67	60.56	100
Helps build the child's concentration	Count	0	4	14	61	101	180
	%	0	2.22	7.78	33.89	56.11	100
A clear child's progress report based on the child's individual abilities	Count	0	6	9	64	101	180
	%	0	3.33	5	35.56	56.11	100
Encourages self-discipline and builds self-learning	Count	1	2	9	66	102	180
	%	0.56	1.11	5	36.67	56.67	100
Works on individual potentials and sensitive periods	Count	0	5	12	62	101	180
	%	0	2.78	6.67	34.44	56.11	100
Works from concrete to abstract /simple to complex	Count	0	2	16	67	95	180
	%	0	1.11	8.89	37.22	52.78	100
Practical life materials important for developing the child's fine and gross motor coordination	Count	0	5	22	57	96	180
	%	0	2.78	12.22	31.67	53.33	100
Sensorial activities develop critical thinking and problem solving for future learning	Count	0	3	15	70	92	180
	%	0	1.67	8.33	38.89	51.11	100
A very strong math curriculum	Count	0	16	21	75	68	180
	%	0	8.89	11.67	41.67	37.78	100
A well-structured Language syllabus	Count	0	10	22	61	87	180
	%	0	5.56	12.22	33.89	48.33	100
Bilingual programme	Count	1	5	11	52	111	180
	%	0.56	2.78	6.11	28.89	61.67	100
Creative skills follow the Montessori philosophy on imagination and fantasy	Count	1	11	21	68	79	180
	%	0.56	6.11	11.67	37.78	43.89	100
Cultural & environmental studies are clearly integrated in the syllabus	Count	0	3	24	74	79	180
	%	0	1.67	13.33	41.11	43.89	100

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**Table (8) ANOVA one-way results for Q4  
Montessori Curriculum and Methodology**

ANOVA One Way Results for Q4						
Summary sorted by average from largest to smallest						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
Q42	180	815	4.528	0.407		
Q412	180	807	4.483	0.609		
Q45	180	806	4.478	0.486		
Q44	180	800	4.444	0.550		
Q43	180	799	4.439	0.538		
Q46	180	799	4.439	0.549		
Q47	180	795	4.417	0.490		
Q49	180	791	4.394	0.508		
Q41	180	784	4.356	0.532		
Q48	180	784	4.356	0.644		
Q414	180	769	4.272	0.568		
Q411	180	765	4.250	0.770		
Q413	180	753	4.183	0.821		
Q410	180	735	4.083	0.848		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	37.50	13	2.884	4.854	0.000	1.724
Within Groups	1489.17	2506	0.594			
Total	1526.67	2519				

To distinguish which of the Montessori Curriculum determinants are important, we run an ANOVA table (8) analysis. Analysis show that 6 out of 14 determinants of Montessori Curriculum are of high importance in the average.

#### 4.5 Question Five

**Do the Montessori school's administrative policy and strategy influence the parents' selection of the school?**

According to the answers of frequencies Table (9), the school policy and its strategy highly influence the parents' decision choice of the school. The degree of importance is more than 80% in all factors featuring such policy and strategy.

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**Table (9): Montessori School administrative policy and strategy**

Montessori School Management	Categories	1:No importance	2:Neutral	3:Of some importance	4:Important	5:Of great importance	Total
Very clear policy and mission statement	Count	0	5	17	61	97	180
	%	0	2.78	9.44	33.89	53.89	100
Open policy with parents	Count	0	5	12	64	99	180
	%	0	2.78	6.67	35.56	55	100
Highly skilled professional staff	Count	0	3	9	49	119	180
	%	0	1.67	5	27.22	66.11	100
Works towards' learning for life goal	Count	1	0	13	55	111	180
	%	0.56	0	7.22	30.56	61.67	100
Builds social development in the community	Count	1	3	8	64	104	180
	%	0.56	1.67	4.44	35.56	57.78	100
Believes that parents are the first and primary educator of the child	Count	1	1	17	72	89	180
	%	0.56	0.56	9.44	40	49.44	100
Follows professional management procedures that are based on the Montessori philosophy	Count	1	0	21	67	91	180
	%	0.56	0	11.67	37.22	50.56	100
Keeps up to-date with of new educational development	Count	0	1	14	64	101	180
	%	0	0.56	7.78	35.56	56.11	100
Warm inviting atmosphere	Count	0	0	2	44	134	180
	%	0	0	1.11	24.44	74.44	100

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**Table (10) ANOVA one way for Q5**

**Montessori School Administrative Policy and Strategy**

Anova one way						
SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
Q59	180	852	4.733	0.219		
Q53	180	824	4.578	0.446		
Q54	180	815	4.528	0.463		
Q55	180	807	4.483	0.508		
Q58	180	805	4.472	0.441		
Q52	180	797	4.428	0.548		
Q51	180	790	4.389	0.597		
Q56	180	787	4.372	0.525		
Q57	180	787	4.372	0.537		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	19.84	8	2.480	5.210	0.000	1.944
Within Groups	766.74	1611	0.476			
Total	786.58	1619				

Based on the ANOVA analysis table (10), we note that these factors are sorted by importance and the “warm inviting atmosphere” (Q59) comes first, while the “professional management” (Q57) is the least despite its importance suggested by descriptive statistics and values’ averages between factors. The Anova analysis rejects the equality of means which implies that the averages values/factors describing the school policy and management are at least different for some.

**4.6 Question Six**

**Is there a statistically significant difference ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for choosing the Montessori education because of parents’ age, income, and education?**



**Table (11): Variables**

<b>Parent's Age (years)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
20-30	68	37.78
31-40	73	40.56
41 and above	39	21.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

  

<b>Family Yearly Income</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
\$20.000- \$49.999	29	16.11
\$50.000- \$ 99.999	116	64.44
Greater than \$100.000	35	19.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

  

<b>Professional Level</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Diploma	18	10
Bachelor's Degree	97	53.89
Master's Degree	52	28.89
Doctorate Degree	11	6.11
Other Degree	2	1.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table (12) ANOVA One Way Results for Parents' Background Information**

Anova One Way Results						
SUMMARY Results						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
Q61	180	331	1.8389	0.5717		
Q62	180	366	2.0333	0.3564		
Q63	180	422	2.3444	0.6181		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	23.411	2	11.706	22.711	0.000	3.013
Within Groups	276.772	537	0.515			
Total	300.183	539				

According to Anova One Way Results for Parents' Background Information (first part of table 11), there is a statistical difference for choosing Montessori education based on parents' age, education and income. The p-value (the probability associated) to the null hypothesis is 0.000 inferior to the critical value of  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

## **5. Discussions and Recommendations**

### **5.1. Discussion of Analysis**

#### **5.1.1 Question One**

This first question in this survey centers on the major factors that play a role in the parents' decision to enrol their children in Montessori schools. Looking at table (1), the highest factor is the quality of the academic programme, with 50% of parents in favour. This is a great indicator that people do understand the Montessori methodology. To back this up, the Montessori philosophy of education is distinguished by having a full structured methodology with a structured syllabus that guides the teachers.

The next factor is the teachers' professional qualifications (45.56%). Parents pointing to that, also indicates that they are aware of the important role the teacher plays in the Montessori Method of education, as qualified teachers are one of the most important pillars in Montessori methodology (Montessori, 1976).

Parents show awareness of the importance of the child-teacher ratio (Avg= 4.239). Montessori encouraged the child-teacher ratio of 20-30 per (1) teacher and one assistant as Montessori's methodology gears towards child's own learning and independence. The school's reputation (Avg= 4.217) being an important factor for any private school in the Arab world as schools work hard to implement all international educational standards to keep up-to-date with the. Environment. "Very important for the child's future learning" (Avg=4.117) also scored of highly important' category. Studies showed that Montessori children performed better on standardized tests of reading and math and showed more advanced social cognition and executive control. They also showed more concern for fairness and justice. (Marshall, 2017).

Parents also were very clear about the points of accepting diversity (Avg= 4.156), catering a learning-support programme (Avg=3.917). Montessori is a great advocate for peace and most of her practical life activities encourage peace, respect of self, respect of others, empathy, diversity and most important inclusion of challenged children. (Oswald & Schulz-Benesch, 2002).

Looking at table (2) indicators, the lowest 'of great importance' factors are; Montessori being a trend in the community (Avg= 3.239) being recommended by relatives (Avg= 3.189) and being their first choice (Avg= 3.806). This indicates that parents are serious about choosing the Montessori school for their children and they study their choices when they start looking for schools for their children.

#### **5.1.2 Question Two**

Centered on the Montessori philosophy playing a part in parents' decision to enrol their children in Montessori schools. Looking at table (3), the highest three "of great importance" in the Montessori philosophy category that; calm busy aesthetic classrooms (Avg=4.500), discipline through structured environment (Avg=4.461) and the individual self-directed approach (Avg=4.456), while the least (of great importance) principle is the multi-aged setting (Avg=3.806). Other 'of great importance' points in descending order are: a well-prepared environment (Avg=4.400), self-correcting materials (Avg=4.261), normalization and reality (Avg=4.189) and no materialistic reward (Avg=3.933).

Parents highlighting on the calm, busy aesthetic environment shows the maturity and appreciation and good knowledge of the importance of calmness and beauty in the process of giving the chance to achieve more and collaborate with each other to maintain this beautiful joyful environment.

The second points to discuss are discipline and self-directed approach, two vital principles in the Montessori philosophy. The discipline in Montessori philosophy is a self-discipline model,

achieved through freedom not an imposed one. Parents giving this a high point shows the deep understanding of the unique way Montessori introduces disciplines their children.

Parents did not give high importance to the prepared environment which in fact is the major factor for all the other points mentioned in the philosophy to happen. This could be misunderstood, if the term was taken literally.

Normalization was given low priority in the category, could it be misunderstood by the parents or they did not in reality give it much importance. The normalized child is an independent one who loves to work and concentrate. He/she is a problem solver, a critical thinker, a socially active, disciplined, self-regulated, has self-directed engagement with the materials, and happy. (Futrell, K .H, 1998) which all parents and educators aim for with high approval from the parents in the survey.

The philosophy of no reward no punishment was at the bottom of the list and has significance difference with the top point. This indicates that parents do not give much emphasis on the effect of no reward philosophy to overall achievement of the children and motivation.

### **5.1.3 Question Three**

This question centers on how much parents believe that Montessori's values influence their child's future education. The results of table (5) showed that the most important values that parents believed in are the respect of self, the respect of others, confidence and self-identity. Montessori philosophy and methodology put emphasis on these practical life skills. Studies done by Lillard et al (2017) shows that Montessori children are more advanced socially and execute control over themselves and others and referred to justice and fairness positively when they share peer play.

The other important values in descending order are; continuous learner, empathy, taking initiative and grace and courtesy. To clear these points, Montessori always describes the child as the future man (Montessori, 1995). Surprisingly, Grace and courtesy did not get much rating. These activities cater for all the self-qualities that the parents put emphasis on in all the questionnaire, but when it was put under a broader concept, parents did not value it.

### **5.1.4 Question Four**

This question centers on the Montessori curriculum and methodology and its impact on the child's education in the Montessori system from parents' perspective .The Montessori methodology and curriculum; the practical life activities, the sensorial activities, mathematics, languages, (bilingual), creative skills and cultural and environmental activities, working from concrete to abstract, have some big impact on the child's education especially through encouraging independent work, meeting the child's holistic needs, helping in building concentration, encouraging self-discipline and self-learning, by using the sensitive periods as a guide with clear observational reports based on individual abilities.

Parents in table (7) chose 6 out of the 14 most important points in average and are inseparable according to the t-test. These points are: The method encourages independent work (Avg=4.528), the bilingual program (Avg=4.483), builds self-discipline and self-learning (Avg=4.478), the clarity of the individual child's progress report (Avg= 4.444), helps build concentration (Avg=4.439) and works on the child's potentials and the sensitive periods (Avg= 4.439).

A clear understanding was evident in parents showing a great need for their child to be independent and have self-discipline which the Montessori system delivers.

Parents gave priority for the principles of the methodology which indicates that they do understand how the principles of the method function and how they develop independence, self-learning and self-discipline. Parents giving priority to bilingual learning in the methodology proves

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that parents in the Arab world support the learning of two languages mainly (English and Arabic) and consider it a high priority.

Parents also gave priority to the importance of the progress reports that give an insight on the child's progress. Being a system that caters to individual 'follow the child' philosophy, each child has his/her own program according to their abilities and experiences.

Giving, 'of great importance' to the point on the curriculum being an important factor in building the child's concentration shows that they are aware of the importance not only of the direct aims but also of the indirect aims for the different didactic materials in the Montessori curriculum (Montessori, 1964).

The other points in descending order ; works from concrete to abstract/ simple to complex (Avg= 4.417), sensorial activities develop critical thinking and problem solving for future learning(Avg = 4.394), meets the child's holistic needs (Avg= 4.356), the practical life materials important for developing the child's fine and gross motor coordination (Avg= 4.356), the cultural and environmental studies are clearly integrated in the syllabus(Avg = 4.272), a well-structured language syllabus(Avg = 4.250), the creative skills follow the Montessori philosophy on imagination and fantasy (Avg = 4.183) and the very strong math curriculum (Avg= 4.083).

Parents understood the concept of the didactic materials in developing the skills of critical thinking and problem solving for future learning. The next point is that which the parents did not give much interest to 'of great importance' is the practical life activities.

The last four points centered on the academic curriculum the languages, the mathematics and the cultural and environmental studies and lastly the creative activities that are based on the Montessori philosophy regarding imagination and fantasy.

### **5.1.5 Question Five**

Does the Montessori's school administrative policy and strategy influence the parents' selection of school? According to the answers frequencies (Table 9), the school policy and its strategy highly influence the parents' decision choice of the school.

The first 'of great importance' were: the warm inviting environment (Avg=4.733), highly skilled professional staff (Avg=4.578), works towards learning for life goal (Avg=4.528), builds social development in the community (Avg=4.483), keeps up to date with the new educational development (Avg=4.472), open policy with parents (Avg=4.28), very clear policy and mission statement (Avg=4.3389), believes that the parents are the first and primary educator of the child (Avg=4.372), and follow professional management procedures based on Montessori philosophy (Avg=4.372).

Parents are very much aware of and understand the Montessori management which they strongly approve (80%). Looking at the analyses, all the points are close to each other in 'of great importance' with the distinction of the first point which is warm, inviting atmosphere ranks higher (Q9).

McKenzie (1994) mentioned that the most important skill that the school administration should acquire is being sensitive to the needs of other individuals and having a listening skill. It is not a surprise that this point was on top as we can see that the parents gave the aesthetic, calm busy environment top of the list.

Looking at all the other factors, we see that parents do understand and appreciate the administrative part in school's choice. Montessori emphasized that it is extremely important that the Montessori administration be familiar and comprehensive with the Montessori pedagogy and its practices. (McKenzie) 1994, discussed in her study the importance of staff and teachers'

empowerment as it loses its effectiveness if the staff does not have an instructional leader to keep them on track, well-informed and involved. Mindful leaders create meaningful opportunities for others to grow.

A clear policy and mission are also very important for parents as that give the clarity about every single detail of the school especially new parents. Parents as partners were not on the top of the list. Montessori method is something new in the Arab world, so, parents might feel not at ease to apply Montessori practices at home or rely on nannies to look after their child.

### **5.1.6 Question Six/ Variables**

This analysis illustrates Arab perspective regarding the Montessori method of education as a program of choice for their children. (180) parents participated in this study. Three demographic points based on socio economic background; age, income and professional qualification were examined.

Studying (table11) the significance of demographic differences; out of the 180 parents who participated in the study, 67 parents (37.22%) were between the ages of 20-30, 75 parents (41.6%) were between the age of 31-40 and 38 parents (21.1%) were between the ages of 40 and above. Regarding the Parents professional background, out of the 180 parents, 18 parents (10%) have Diploma, B.A holders were 97 parents (53.8%), master's degree holders were parents 53 (30%), Ph. D holders were 10 persons (5.5%) and finally other qualifications, 1 person (0.5 %). Finally, out of the 180 parents that participated in the study, 29 parents (16.1%) pointed to the yearly income of \$20.000-49.999, 116 parents (64.4%) pointed to the yearly income of \$50.000-99.999, and 35 parents (19.4%) pointed to the income that is greater than \$100.000.

Significant demographic differences were evident in age, educational level and yearly income. This study points that parents who chose to enroll their children in Montessori schools in the Arab world are of mature age (31-40). Usually, such individuals are well rooted and mature in their decision making and can realize and rationalize what kind of school they want to enroll their children in. Parents income (\$50.000-\$99.999) also indicates that parents are financially comfortable which makes paying the private school's high tuition fees feasible. Since all Montessori schools are in the Arab world, this requires that parents pay educational fees. Parents also have a high level of education (bachelor's Degree) which gives them an advantage by being more exposed to different experiences that make them more informative in their decisions (Murray, 2012).

### **5.2 Summary**

The study investigated the general factors for enrolling the children in Montessori schools in the Arab world.

This subject does not seem to exist in any previous studies in the Arab world. It was surprisingly notable that parents in the Arab world put their children in Montessori schools for specific reasons that show clear understanding of the Montessori philosophy and principles. Points in the survey were distributed among 'of great importance' (58.66%) 'very important', (37.44), and 'no importance' (7.78%). Parents showed a very distinguished way of looking at the educational method by highly pointing at the holistic side of the child's development as well as the academic. Parents chose a Montessori school for the quality of the academic programme, the bilingual programme, the self-discipline and the building of self-learning They greatly acknowledge the role of the Montessori qualified teachers and the child-teacher ratio. They chose a school for it strong academic programme

Parents appreciated the calm and aesthetic environment and discipline through the structured freedom. Respect of self, confidence and self-identity, respect of others and the environment were on the top rating which shows that Montessori parents consider respect as a major value over initiative, empathy and leadership.

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Parents appreciated the warm inviting atmosphere and the highly professional skilled staff who work towards the 'learning for life' goals, building social development in the community that keep up-to-date with new educational development.

The lower scores centered around the academic subjects, the integration programme, the vertical grouping, the self-correcting materials and the no-extrinsic reward.

Finally, the study carried a sense of pride and respect to the Montessori parents from the researcher. Parents understood the philosophy very well and all the questions that centered around the inner-self of the child, their response was strongly evident. They strongly believe that Montessori shapes the child to face the world armed with values of respect for others, self-learning, discipline, independence and learner to be the future man. When the researcher broke the concepts, the parents answered clearly but when the researcher gave a broader common vision of a concept it was not a priority for the parents. The school is a place where parents and children learn together.

In this study results agree with (Yusuf& Imran 2018; Ellis, 2017; Hiles, 2015; Murray, 2012) that parents have great value for the Montessori system of education. It also agrees with (Murray, 2012) that older parents with high income and high educational degree choose Montessori schools. Arab parents also, gave high importance to the environment which agrees with (Murray 2012; Yusuf& Imran, 2018) while scored low in (Hiles, 2015) study. Arab parents gave less importance to the concept of intrinsic reward, while (Murray, 2012) participants did not understand this concept while (Hiles, 2015) parents gave it a high score.

The highly qualified teachers were marked high by the Arab parents and by (Yusuf&Imran, 2018; Hiles, 2015; Murray, 2012) while participants had a mixed understanding in (Murray, 2012; Hiles, 2015) about her role inside the classroom. Parents chose Montessori school for many of the same reason's parents choose other schools in general (Hiles2015) but differ in cost and location.

Freedom of choice was clear for Arab parents, but it was misunderstood in (Murray, 2012) but scored low in (Yusuf& Imran,2018). Progress reports were very well understood by both the Arab parents and the (Murray,2012) participants. Freedom was very much clear for Arab parents while (Hiles,2015) parents did not give it credit. Arab parents agree with other parents on the self -learning, self-discipline, positive, calm, respectful environment (Hiles,2015; Ellis, 2017). Arab parents gave low score to mixed-age groups in this study and so did (Hiles,2015). Arab parents scored low on languages and Mathematics while (Ellis,2017) scored high especially math. The grace and courtesy and practical life scored low for Arab parents and (Yusuf &Imran, 2018) study. Arab parents also did not score high in the parental role in educating their children, and this also was evident also in (Ihmeideh, Khasawneh Mahfouz & Khawaldeh, 2008).

Some of the researcher's data support other researches. But, it added a lot of scholarly work about Arab Montessori parents' perception regarding the Montessori philosophy, by providing critical and vital points, which parents will consider when they want to choose a Montessori school for their children. As the researcher mentioned before, research on this topic is very limited and extant in the Arab world, thus her work gives important information that was not previously available. This research will help educators, parents, researchers and Montessori administrator as well as trainers and teachers.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

This study has uncovered several important insights about the reasons for which parents enrol their children in Montessori schools, despite the presence of other options.

- The Study findings suggest further studies to be made on the issue since Montessori schools are on the rise in the Arab region.

- It is also recommended that further studies to be done to know how much parents know about the actual methodology and mechanism that the Montessori materials represent.
- As longitudinal research on Montessori parents is very scarce, a longitudinal survey could be done on these parents after three years when their children move to junior level to observe the effect of the Montessori Method of education on their children's future learning.
- A study needs to be done comparing Montessori administrative styles with different schools to provide an insight on how parents distinguish the Montessori school's management and administration.
- Further studies to compare Arab traditional schools with that of Montessori need to be done.

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60 - تطوّر الإنتاجية ومساهمتها في النمو الإقتصادي لدول مجلس التعاون الخليجي

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61 - تطوير المؤسسات العربية من منظور اقتصاد المعرفة

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