Impact of Educational Habits on the Learning of 3–6 Year Old Children from the Perspective of Early Childhood Education Teachers

Miguel Pérez-Ferra 1, Rocío Quijano-López 2 and Inmaculada García-Martínez 1,*

1 Department of Pedagogy, University of Jaén, Campus las Lagunillas s/n, 23071 Jaén, Spain; mperez@ujaen.es
2 Department of Science Didactics, University of Jaén, Campus las Lagunillas s/n, 23071 Jaén, Spain; rquijano@ujaen.es
* Correspondence: igmartin@ujaen.es; Tel.: +34-953-212-018

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Abstract: Although early childhood education is crucial for development, it is considered less important than other educational stages. For this reason, we sought to understand teachers’ perceptions about the effects of educational habits on 3–6 year old children’s learning, in addition to their engagement and level of commitment to make families assume greater responsibility over their children’s acquisition of habits. Further, differences of opinion were examined according to age, teaching experience, and years of experience at the center. The instrument consisted of twenty variables and four dimensions: working habits and effort, environmental factors and personal hygiene, healthy diets, and collaboration and cooperation. The instrument was sent out via email. Non-probability convenience sampling was performed (n = 320). The methodology used a descriptive and cross-sectional study, incorporating correlational (Pearson correlation) and inferential analyses. Statistics included one-way ANOVA, statistical power, effect size, and Scheffé’s test for multiple comparisons. Educational habits were deemed to have a positive impact, which favored studying. Effects were accentuated in relation to hard work and effort towards learning, with these outcomes being associated with other measured variables. Teachers aged between 34 and 40 years old showed greater commitment and attributed more importance to these habits. Teachers who had been at the school for longer evaluated environmental and hygiene habits more positively.

Keywords: early childhood education; educational habits; learning; teachers

1. Introduction

Early childhood education is crucial to childhood development due to its all-encompassing and integral nature [1]. During this stage, the basis is set upon which children will later construct their knowledge and personality [2,3]. Likewise, it constitutes an “evolutionary” stage, which is decisive for establishing positive relationships amongst peers, orientated towards the acquisition of habits promoting teamwork [4], effort for learning, hygiene, and healthy habits [5].

Today, it is accepted relatively consistently that personality is a remarkable aspect of understanding how individuals perform in their educational environment. Therefore, personality represents the configuration of a set of habits, in this case exercised by a child, but manifesting its uniqueness. In the review carried out by Fullana-Noell [6] regarding the variables that explain academic performance, they identified attitudes as prebehavioral approaches. According to the Reasoned Action Theory, attitudes support the development and exercise of habits and learnings. Likewise, educational habit refers to a set of skills, abilities, and ways of approaching knowledge as part of an individual’s routine when learning [6]. The acquisition of educational habits in childhood is essential because it will foster...
moral, social, and emotional development of the child, promoting their autonomy and the acquisition of different learning experiences during their lives. Habits constitute the defined form of each person’s life [7]. They affect subsequent learning actions because the actions carried out by students do not depend on decisions made during this time but rather on consolidated habits, especially in children of early ages [8,9]. As a result, habits are considered as established mental schemes, which are learned by repetitive actions, schemes that facilitate and automate mental, affective, executive, or motor operations; consequently, this reality provides and reduces the processes that have to be carried out during the learning process. However, within this scope, they also promote issues such as responsibility and the exercise of positive actions for individual, social, cognitive, or affective development, among others.

The study is based on the socioconstructivist model, which articulates the relationship between theory and practice within the learning processes and guides the training action of teachers, a model that reports the current education law in Spain. It should be pointed out that in this model, learning is constructed by the student using observation, experience, and contact and relationship with “others”. This reality implies that social and environmental contexts are key factors in initiating learning. This means that environmental and personal hygiene habits are not only reinforced through the relationship between the environment and customs and habitual practices for caring for one’s own body, which facilitates the acceptance and approval of the “others” and consequently protects and improves self-concept and self-esteem, but also makes children aware of the need to care for the environment, which enables people to live free from illness. However, these habits also have another function, which is to encourage the exercise of actions that are automatized and promote the mitigation of cognitive, affective, or psychomotor impairment.

A second aspect of socioconstructivism is situated learning, tutoring, and cooperative learning, as well as peer tutoring. These aspects demand or facilitate specific habits related to cooperation and collaboration among students, as students themselves support their classmates in the face of their shortcomings; furthermore, they promote interaction with teachers, who are not providers of knowledge, but rather facilitators and dynamizers in these processes. Due to their personal knowledge of reality, collaborative work allows them to enrich and supplement their concepts; in addition, cooperative habits provide peer support for the development of instructional processes.

Healthy eating habits constitute a third factor that will eventually affect the effectiveness of learning, since a deficient diet that does not provide the nutrients required in appropriate quantities reduces the activity and receptivity by the brain. Certainly, the absence of the required consumption of specific foods for the adequate development of the morphological-psychological reality of students has a negative impact on the exercise of processes such as memory, learning, and behavior shown by children from 3 to 6 years old [10,11].

When we allude to educational habits, we are referring to the development of those stable mental schemes that foster the development of the individual’s personality as a human being; that is, in its specificity, but not in its uniqueness. The need to share these four types of habits is defined, within two parameters, socioconstructivism and the age range of 3 to 6 years, so we are talking about integrality. Furthermore, effort and work habits are educational habits. However, when we talk about these habits, attending to the peculiarities and characteristics of each child individually, we are referring to integrity for each person. This is the difference established between educational habits and habits of effort and personal work here. When we refer to work habits, we are not referring to the exercise of behaviors that acquire the condition of learned dispositions, which are exercised as routines, but rather they go beyond this and respond to the exercise of abilities involving, inevitably, a cognitive and affective development that goes beyond the merely routine—searching for information, selecting it, analyzing it, integrating it, etc. In this instance, these are cross-sectional issues of a higher order than other habits, in relation to the acquisition of learning [12].

With respect to the effort exerted by students to their learning, it is understood to be highly related to one’s interest and motivation in learning contents [13,14], methods used by the teacher (which is a product of their epistemological viewpoint) [15,16], and the learning style inherent to the child [17,18].
Taking into account the important role of imitation at this stage and the learning style oriented towards manipulation and experimentation in childhood, the figure of the teacher takes on a pivotal role as manager of students’ capacity to construct knowledge and attribute meaning. As children mature, these aspects are of vital importance for the acquisition of meaningful learning [6]. This underlines the importance of uncovering teachers’ perspectives regarding the development of determined habits in early childhood education, allowing children to acquire more autonomy and protagonism in their teaching and learning processes. For this, the contribution of teachers will be decisive in defining ideal conditions for the promotion of desirable educational habit acquisition amongst students. This is especially the case during the early childhood stage where methods appropriate to students’ different learning styles facilitate motivational and working processes.

Research studies have been developed on this topic which indicate the importance of stimulating children from early ages in order to lay down the basis of later learning. Several studies have found that the bases for subsequent academic learning are built and developed during childhood [19,20]. However, this stage is not only decisive from an instructional perspective. Rather, it is also when students develop civic, social, moral, and self-directed behaviors that will affect their social and linguistic skills, as well as their ability to cooperate with others [21].

With respect to the acquisition of teamwork habits during early ages, various research studies have shown that some factors influence early education student’s disposition towards working with peer groups [22]. Personality and communication skill development decisively contributes to the way in which students express themselves and are capable of establishing effective communication with classmates, enabling them to reach a consensus and seek shared goals [23]. Reasons for this included the emergence of opinions which emphasized a greater ease of dialogue, decision making, and the establishment of shared actions in order to reach common goals [24].

In order to underline the importance of the social dimension and the acquisition of effective communication patterns, several studies have sought to examine the communication and linguistic levels of young children, seeking pedagogical solutions to improve standards [16]. In relation to the acquisition and development of language, pedagogical models are found that encourage social participation as a form of learning. Incentivizing autonomy and critical skills at an early age significantly contributes to the way in which children relate with others, express themselves, and develop. Other studies have influenced learning through children’s intentional participation [17]. One such study found, amongst other findings, that children actively learned through games, by learning through observation and imitation. These can be seen as alternatives to traditional instruction. Children’s participation was encouraged through observation, active listening, and even them taking on a dynamic role. In this way, it can be suggested that these indicators surmise the learning curve of their children, demonstrating that observation and good listening drive learning. This is achieved by awakening students’ interests and motivations towards the topics being explored [18]. The importance of dramatization as a first-rate didactic resource must also not be ignored. Indeed, it enables learners to advance beyond cooperation and optimize inclusion processes, avoiding rejection amongst peers [25,26].

Environmental habit acquisition during infancy is another priority aspect for achieving sustainable education and taking care of the environment [15]. In this regard, promoting the development of ecological behaviors linked to recycling and the environment is becoming a priority at a global level. An example of this is the study developed by Postila [27] in Sweden. They used water as a means of investigation. Children aged between 3 and 5 years were introduced to concepts linked to water, and the time required to assimilate notions of the environment, contamination, and sustainable development. In this respect, there existed an underlying concern to incentivize habits of caring for the environment during the first years of life. This study reinforced the role of teachers as key players in establishing the suitable conditions for students to acquire these learnings and establishing bridges between academic contents and their real lives, in order to achieve greater significance when they learn. It was felt that the benefits of this would be seen in the meaning attributed to learning, thanks to an increasing connection with the environment as sustainability advances [28].
In the ambit of healthy dietary habits, a number of trends are seen to exist. In this way, research studies are highlighted which sought to unveil the acquisition of physical activity habits; studies oriented towards analysis of favorable dispositions towards the consumption of healthy habits, and those related with hygiene [29]. All these tendencies share that teachers are seen as facilitators and promoters in achieving these habits from early ages. Understanding that healthy habits are useful for the overall development of students, teachers must encourage their acquisition from their early ages. Specifically, in relation to physical activity, a systematic review conducted by Peden et al. [30] indicates that teachers play a fundamental role in the physical activity engagement of children within early childhood education settings. This study stresses the importance of collaboration between teachers and their previous professional formation. Such aspects have implications for student learning. With regards to the promotion of healthy consumption habits, studies exist such as that developed by Lee et al. [31], which analyzed physical activity levels and fruit and vegetable consumption in American children aged between 3 and 5 years old. Their findings revealed that fun and interactive sessions considerably increased the physical activity levels of children. With regards to nutrition, improvements were detected following program administration, although these were not significant.

All the previous studies placed within the context of children’s educational habits during their childhood have a common element. In all of them, teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that students acquire such habits. Considering the importance of this educational stage for children’s subsequent development [32,33], alongside the decisive role exercised by teachers over children’s learning acquisition, it is imperative to better understand good teaching practices which incentivize curiosity and interest within students. It will also be useful to uncover how to get them to acquire hygiene and health habits, whilst also promoting personal and interpersonal skills in order to establish relationships with classmates and cooperative working. Assuming that learning these habits will contribute to students’ integral development, it is time to examine how early education teachers relate with each other in order to successfully instill students with these habits. At the same time, this analysis should not ignore crucial aspects along the professional trajectory of teachers, which will promote a better understanding of the design of learning scenarios. This is the case with initial teacher training, major age milestones [34,35], the influence exerted by the culture at the school, and the teacher’s experience. In this way, the present research is proposed with the intention to analyze early education teachers’ perceptions about the impact of educational habits on the learning of children aged between 3 and 6 years old.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Design and Participants

A quantitative and cross-sectional study was performed, which was correlational and descriptive in nature [36], followed by a subsequent inferential stage. The descriptive study was carried out through perusal of means and standard deviations. The study population included 925 participants. All were teachers of the infant education stage in the area of Jaén, Spain. The sample was determined through non-probability convenience sampling, in which the researcher chose accessible participants [37]. A minimum sample of informants was included (n = 272), although the number of participants was 320, pertaining to 34.59% of the global population. A confidence interval of 95% was used with a precision range of 5%. It was possible to examine characteristics of the entire population with a degree of precision, with a reduced number of teachers being observed to represent it [38]. The distribution of demographic variables is presented in Table 1. We employed non-probability convenience sampling.
**Table 1. Sample distribution.**

| Demographic Variables | Categories/Intervals | Frequencies | Percentages |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Teacher’s age in years| 21 to 28             | 32          | 10          |
|                       | 29 to 33             | 77          | 24.2        |
|                       | 34 to 40             | 54          | 16.8        |
|                       | 41 to 65             | 157         | 49          |
| Teaching experience in years | <5                  | 85          | 26.2        |
|                       | 5 to 10              | 77          | 24.1        |
|                       | 11 to 15             | 49          | 15.3        |
|                       | >15                  | 109         | 33.4        |
| Time spent at the current center in years | <1                  | 86          | 26.9        |
|                       | 1 to 5               | 96          | 30          |
|                       | >5                   | 138         | 43.1        |

2.2. **Instrument**

The questionnaire was developed according to a literature review and the experience of participating researchers in the study topic. It was founded on an initial basis of forty items. Various questions were included which related to sociodemographic variables: age, teaching experience, and length of service at the current center. The purpose of this was to define the object sample and establish the potential existence of statistically significant differences as a function of reference variables. Five response options were provided, addressing relevance and consistency among items and objectives suggested [39]. Response options ranged between “totally disagree” (CD = 1) and “totally agree” (CA = 5).

The degree to which the trait evaluated by the scale is defined by each item (content validity) is determined by the suitability of the items to the trait being evaluated and suitability of its working for intended respondents. The 8 experts rejected 9 of the forty initial items. The final version of the questionnaire can be found in Table A1.

The extent to which the scale measures the trait it intends to evaluate was also defined (construct validity). This was examined through an identity correlation matrix; in other words, a matrix in which between-variable correlations are zero (Bartlett sphericity test) and original variables can be grouped according to determined factors (KMO (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin) test) [40]. This is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Variable factorization.**

| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett Test |
|--------------------------------------|
| KMO Test of Sample Adequacy          | 0.849 |
| Bartlett sphericity test             |      |
| Approximate chi-square               | 1007.358 |
| df.                                  | 780   |
| Sig                                  | 0 *   |

Note: * p < 0.05.

The factor solution incorporated 4 factors which grouped twenty of the thirty-one variables proposed, confirming content validity. Overall explained variance was 41.757% and the discriminant function was 0.5. This can be seen in Table 3.

Scale reliability determined according to informant opinions, evidenced overall internal consistency ($s = 0.850$), in addition to evidencing consistency for Factor-1 ($\alpha = 0.723$), Factor-2 ($s = 0.693$), Factor-3 ($s = 0.652$), and Factor-4 ($s = 0.612$). Examination of the standard deviation following elimination of each item did not suggest the suppression of any variable, as the standard deviation following elimination of any item was not greater than that of the overall instrument. Minimum and maximum standard deviations (item 38 = 0.828 < 0.846, item 32) were lower than that produced for the overall scale ($s = 0.850$).
Table 3. Final factor solution following rotation and total explained variance.

| Dimensions | Variance Explained by the Factor (%) | Items Integrated by Each Factor |
|------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Factor-1: Importance of developing working habits and effort towards learning (TEA). | 13.041 | 4, 17, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 33 |
| Factor-2: Learning implications of environmental and personal hygiene habits (AHP). | 10.284 | 1, 10, 23, 30, 40 |
| Factor-3: Contribution of healthy nutritional habits to the development of learning processes (HAS). | 9.550 | 5, 8, 20, 22 |
| Factor-4: Contribution of the habits of collaboration and cooperation between children to the development of instructive processes (HCC). | 8.882 | 7, 13, 31 |
| Total explained variance. | 41.757 | |
| Number of factors. | | 4 |

2.3. Procedure

For the application of the instrument, we contacted by telephone the management of different schools that teach children’s education in the area of Jaén. After a few days, we had a positive response from 23 schools with unequal participation. The teachers who accepted were informed of the purpose of the research and about the dissemination of the results, asking them by email for informed consent, while guaranteeing the confidentiality and anonymity of the evidence collected. We sent the scale by email to all individuals with confirmation of receipt, to avoid spam. Once the scale was completed, participants sent it to the researchers using the same procedure. Simultaneously to the sending of the scale, they were informed of the process to follow in its fulfillment.

2.4. Data Analysis

Correlational analysis was conducted through Pearson’s correlations, whilst inferential analysis was realized via one-way ANOVA of the 3 defined sociodemographic variables. Two of these variables had 4 response options, whilst one had 3 options. Parametric tests were used as data fulfilled assumptions of normality (Kolmogorov–Smirnov test) \( (p = 0.939 > 0.05) \) and homogeneity of variance (Levene’s test) \( ((t = 0.428), (p = 0.670 > 0.05)) \). An inferential study was conducted because, according to various experts in these types of studies, such analysis is appropriate when measurement scale items have at least 5 response options and options are considered to be measured at the quasi-interval level \([41,42]\).

For the inferential study, in cases where mean differences were statistically significant, Scheffé’s multiple comparison was used to determine potential mean differences at the “t” level of each factor. Further, effect sizes \((d) [43]\) and statistical strength \((1–\beta)\) were determined. Data coding and analysis were carried out using the statistical program SPSS-23.0 for Windows. A 95% confidence level was employed in the analysis, alongside a significance level of \( p < 0.05 \). For the correlational analysis, this was adjusted to 99% and \( p < 0.01 \).

3. Results

Results are presented under different sub-headings, attending to the objectives proposed by the present study.

3.1. Descriptive Study

Teachers considered it necessary to develop working habits and effort towards learning (Factor-TEA). There was a large amount of homogeneity in the responses, which ranged from “totally agree” to “agree” (Table 4). This resulted in a standard deviation of \( s = 0.403 \), from a potential
maximum of $s = 2.0$. Informants’ perceptions of the overall dimension fluctuated between “totally agree” and “agree” ($F_{[TEA]} = 4.21 \pm 0.403 = 4.61–3.81$). These views showed a somewhat smaller range, reflected in the variables of the extreme means of the dimension ($F_{[TEA-4]} = 4.76 \pm 0.452 = 5.00–4.31$), ($F_{[TEA-24]} = 3.64 \pm 0.684 = 4.32–2.96$), which ranged between “totally agree” and “moderately agree”.

### Table 4. Descriptive study.

| Variables                                                                 | Mean $\bar{X}$ | Standard Deviation ($s$) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| **Factor-1: Importance of developing work habits and effort towards learning (TEA)** |                |                          |
| Activities for developing habits related with effort, determination, and a job well done facilitate instruction ($F_{[TEA-4]}$). | 4.76         | 0.452                    |
| Reading habits in children favor cognitive development and autonomous learning ($F_{[TEA-17]}$). | 4.71         | 0.537                    |
| Writing is an essential activity for the cognitive and affective development, and contextual enriching of students ($F_{[TEA-24]}$). | 4.74         | 0.684                    |
| Games develop social habits which represent the continuation of good behavior and inhibition of inappropriate behavior ($F_{[TEA-25]}$). | 3.71         | 0.518                    |
| The development of work habits favors future acquisition of study habits ($F_{[TEA-26]}$). | 4.75         | 0.458                    |
| The responsibility to carry out proposed tasks stimulates interest for learning ($F_{[TEA-27]}$). | 3.68         | 0.548                    |
| I make activities more dynamic in order to develop reader habits ($F_{[TEA-28]}$). | 3.68         | 0.584                    |
| I propose activities so that students develop attention ($F_{[TEA-33]}$). | 3.64         | 0.628                    |
| **Factor-2: Learning implications of environmental and personal hygiene habits (AHP)** |                |                          |
| Personal hygiene habits positively impact upon the self-esteem and academic performance of children ($F_{[AHP-1]}$). | 4.34         | 0.755                    |
| Activities that recycle materials in the classroom promote a sense of responsibility and commitment amongst students ($F_{[AHP-10]}$). | 3.61         | 0.712                    |
| Carrying out classroom activities that develop appropriate consumption habits in relation to electricity and water, and use less contaminating packaging favors teamwork ($F_{[AHP-23]}$). | 3.21         | 0.729                    |
| Using any school situation, such as the use of packaging, aluminum foil etc., to teach students to recycle favors creativity, responsibility, and commitment ($F_{[AHP-30]}$). | 4.56         | 0.608                    |
| Motivating children to develop and refine sporting habits helps to develop teamwork, effort, and generosity ($F_{[AHP-40]}$). | 4.53         | 0.559                    |
| **Factor-3: Contribution of healthy dietary habits to the development of learning processes (HAS)** |                |                          |
| Raising awareness of families about the importance of following a healthy and balanced diet, favors health and motivation for anything students do ($F_{[HAS-5]}$). | 3.73         | 0.468                    |
| Proposing reflection activities with families and the exchange of experiences about accident prevention and health favors the habit development of their children ($F_{[HAS-4]}$). | 3.49         | 0.559                    |
| It is the responsibility of teachers to raise awareness amongst families about the consumption of unhealthy food and its negative implications on the physical, affective, and cognitive state ($F_{[HAS-20]}$). | 3.57         | 0.624                    |
| It must be the teacher’s responsibility to contribute towards the elimination of their student’s unhealthy dietary habits ($F_{[HAS-22]}$). | 3.42         | 0.669                    |
| **F-4: Contribution of the habits of collaboration and cooperation in children to the development of instructive processes (HCC)** |                |                          |
| Transversal activities must be organized in the classroom so that students put collaboration and cooperation actions into practice, and help each other to improve the classroom climate ($F_{[HCC-7]}$). | 3.62         | 0.582                    |
| Educational tasks for children to acquire basic skills and abilities whilst helping each other favors inclusion ($F_{[HCC-12]}$). | 3.42         | 0.684                    |
| With the children I teach, ICT helps teachers design activities which will develop the habits of collaboration and cooperation amongst peers ($F_{[HCC-31]}$). | 3.44         | 0.686                    |

In the same way, teachers indicated agreement with the learning implications of environmental and personal hygiene habits (Factor-AHP), although to a lesser extent than that seen with the first
dimension (F_{AHP} = 4.05 \pm 0.473 = 4.52–3.58). Nevertheless, differences between teachers’ opinions pertaining to the variables of this dimension are more accentuated. This is seen in the lower means and greater dispersion found in the low to medium-low range ((F_{AHP-30} = 4.56 \pm 0.608 = 5.00/3.88–2.95), F_{AHP-23} (\bar{X} = 3.21 \pm 0.729 = 3.94–2.48)). The consequence of this is that the lower mean decreases to include some opinions describing “disagreement”.

In respect to informants’ perceptions about the contribution of healthy nutritional habits to activating learning processes (Factor-HAS), teachers’ opinions ranged between “agree” and “moderately agree” (F_{HAS} (\bar{X} = 3.55 \pm 0.425 = 3.97–3.10)). Responses ranging between “agree” and “moderately agree” suggest that less importance is attributed by respondents to these habits, behavior which is also reflected within the variables themselves, in this case ranging from “totally agree” to “disagree” (F_{HAS-5} (\bar{X} = 3.73 \pm 0.468 = 4.00–3.26), F_{HAS-22} (\bar{X} = 3.42 \pm 0.669 = 4.00–2.75)).

Finally, teachers’ estimations in relation to the contribution of the habits of collaboration and cooperation amongst children to development of their instructive processes (Factor-HCC), were situated along the same line of agreement as the aforementioned dimension. This is seen in the mean and standard deviation produced for this dimension (F_{HCC} (\bar{X} = 3.49 \pm 0.533 = 4.00–2.96)). The means of the extreme variables of this dimension were situated around a similar interval (F_{HCC-7} (3.62 \pm 0.582 = 4.00–3.04), F_{HCC} (3.42 \pm 0.684 = 4.00–2.70)). In other words, responses were situated around “totally agree” and “agree”, following the same pattern as the previous two dimensions. Although, in relation to “environmental and personal hygiene habits”, the variable “carries out activities that develop appropriate consumption habits” was associated with perceptions which occasionally descended into “disagreement”.

3.2. Correlational Study

The stability and validity of the questionnaire enabled correlations to be defined between the different dimensions of the instrument. A confidence level of 99% was employed and a significance level of p < 0.01 (Table 5).

Table 5. Correlations between the dimensions of the instrument.

|       | TEA | AHP | HAS | HCC |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| TEA   | 1   | 0.467 | 0.467 | 0.478 ** |
| AHP   | 1   | 0.412 | 0.388 |
| HAS   | 1   | 0.285 |
| HCC   | 1   |

(1) TEA = work habits and eeffort towards learning; AHP = environmental habits and personal hygiene; HAS = healthy dietary habits; HCC = habits of collaboration and cooperation. (2) Null correlation = 0, very weak positive correlation = 0.01–0.19, weak positive correlation = 0.20–0.39, moderate positive correlation = 0.40–0.69, strong positive correlation = 0.70–0.89, very strong positive correlation = 0.90–0.99, perfect positive correlation = 1. (3) ** = p < 0.01.

Moderately positive correlations, though statistically non-significant, were found to reasonably link the different dimensions: (r_{TEA,AHP} = (0.467, p = 0.000 < 0.05), r_{TEA,HAS} = (0.467, p = 0.000 < 0.05), r_{TEA,HCC} = (0.478, p = 0.000 < 0.05)). These expressions agree that both environmental and personal hygiene habits, in addition to healthy dietary habits, contribute to the development of work habits and effort towards learning. This correlation was found to be even stronger in regard to the contribution of the habits of cooperation and collaboration in students to the development of work habits and effort towards working.

There is also a moderate positive correlation, although somewhat weaker, between the importance attributed by teachers to healthy dietary habits, and their association with personal hygiene habits for increasing favorable dispositions towards work and study (r = (HAS,AHP) = (0.412, p = 0.000 < 0.05)).
3.3. Differences Based on Demographic Variables

Secondly, the existence of potentially statistically significant mean differences between sociodemographic variables (teacher’s age, teaching experience, and length of service at the current center) and reported values for each of the dependent variables (educational habits) was examined. This was done by employing a one-way ANOVA, which permits determination of whether significant differences emerge through the comparison of means [44]. Statistical analysis was performed as indicated in the research design.

3.3.1. Differences as a Function of Teacher’s Age

Analysis showed that statistically significant differences exist between age and the TEA dimension \((F_{[3,96]} = 5.961, p = 0.001, p < 0.05)\), \((d) = 0.16,(1−β) = 0.95\). In this case, the impact of the demographic variable “teacher’s age” on the TEA dimension is small, although the null hypothesis is rejected in 95.5% of cases (Table 6).

Table 6. Analysis of variance as a function of the teacher's age (ANOVA).

| Variable | 21–28 Years | 29–33 Years | 34–40 Years | 41–65 Years | F(df) | p | (d)(1−β) |
|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|---|----------|
| TEA      | 3.873 ± 0.42 | 4.325 ± 0.28 | 4.6910 ± 0.17 | 3.901 ± 0.17 | F3,96 | 5.961 | 0.001 * | 0.16–0.95 |
| AHP      | 2.850 ± 0.46 | 3.874 ± 0.41 | 4.600 ± 0.35 | 3.740 ± 0.46 | F3,96 | 8.965 | 0.000 * | 0.22–0.99 |
| HAS      | 3.458 ± 0.41 | 3.500 ± 0.38 | 3.600 ± 0.52 | 3.587 ± 0.42 | F3,96 | 5.529 | 0.664 |
| HCC      | 3.111 ± 0.57 | 3.630 ± 0.39 | 4.602 ± 0.18 | 3.324 ± 0.59 | F3,96 | 10.350 | 0.000 * | 0.22–0.98 |

Note: (1) Work habits and effort towards learning = TEA; (2) environmental habits and personal hygiene = AHP; (3) healthy dietary habits = HAS; (4) habits of collaboration and cooperation = HCC. Cohen’s effect size \((d)\) = (small = 0.1–0.4, medium = 0.5–0.7, large = 0.8–1.0). Statistical strength \((1−β)\) = (small = 0.2–0.4, medium = 0.5–0.7, large = 0.8–1.0). Legend—Scheffe’s test: a. Unequal group sizes, b. comparison, * \(p ≤ 0.05\), = statistically significant differences do not exist, a statistically significant difference do exist.

With respect to the ANOVA analysis (AHP\(F_{[3,96]} = 8.896, p = 0.000, p < 0.05\), \((d) = 0.22, (1−β) = 0.99\)), statistically significant differences remained, rejecting the null hypothesis in 99.4% of cases. However, the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable remained small.

The third ANOVA did not reveal statistically significant differences between the HAS dimension and the demographic variable “teacher’s age” \((HAS \ F_{[3,96]} = 0.529, p = 0.664, p < 0.05)\).

The fourth ANOVA presents similar results to those previously discussed (HCC\(F_{[3,96]} = 10.350, p = 0.000, p < 0.05\), \((d) = 0.22, (1−β) = 0.98\)), reflecting statistically significant differences. In this case, the null hypothesis is rejected in 98.3% of cases but the effect remains small, indicating that the magnitude of the influence of the demographic variable “age” on the HCC dimension is small.

The post hoc Scheffe’s test did not evidence any statistically significant differences between the associations seen between the four categories of the sociodemographic variable “teacher’s age” and the dimensions (TEA = AHP = HAS = HCC). This is a typical finding when large sample sizes are used, as was the case in the present research study. However, it is relevant to indicate that those who reported an age within the range of 34 to 40 years old, reported stronger opinions in favor of the importance, implications, and contributions of these three dimensions with respect to the development of future learning.

3.3.2. Differences as a Function of Teacher’s Teaching Experience

Analysis of mean differences through one-way ANOVA identifies that no statistically significant differences are observed between teachers’ opinions (Table 7). Thus, the teacher’s years of teaching experience did not influence the way in which they evaluated the four dimensions of the questionnaire (TEA, AHP, HAS, and HCC).
which learning is developed. These habits are further consolidated by building interest in stories read for improving learning.

Other evidence notably related with environmental and dietary habits, cooperation, and collaboration. Other studies conclude that learning is quicker when dialogue reading is used [45]. Such routines are the building blocks upon which learning is developed. These habits are further consolidated by building interest in stories read by teachers or even through videos, these activities promoting cognitive development and sustainable knowledge. Such aspects come prior to the generation of motivation for learning. These perceptions coincide with the results of studies on narrative stimulation or the projection of videos for children. Both favored elevated indices of social participation, and affective and aesthetic development [23,45]. Other studies conclude that learning is quicker when dialogue reading is used [45]. Such routines are notably related with environmental and dietary habits, cooperation, and collaboration. Other evidence from the literature also achieved similar effects through learning experiences [6,25], outcomes which

3.3.3. Differences as a Function of Years of Service at the Current Centre

The analysis carried out indicated that statistically significant mean differences for the independent variable “years of service at the current center”, are only found in relation to the AHP dimension ((F(2,96) = 5.056, p = 0.036, p < 0.05), (d) = 0.21,(1−β) = 0.23). However, both the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable and the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis are reduced. As can be seen in Table 8, the null hypothesis was rejected in only 23% of cases.

### Table 7. Analysis of variance as a function of teaching experience (ANOVA).

| Variable | <5 Years | 5–10 Years | 11–15 Years | <15 Years |
|----------|----------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| TEA      | 3.693 ± 0.37 | 3.733 ± 0.32 | 3.858 ± 0.23 | 3.557 ± 0.49 |
| AHP      | 3.286 ± 0.49 | 3.400 ± 0.55 | 3.520 ± 0.33 | 3.377 ± 0.46 |
| HAS      | 3.519 ± 0.24 | 3.656 ± 0.37 | 3.600 ± 0.47 | 3.485 ± 0.45 |
| HCC      | 3.510 ± 0.49 | 3.680 ± 0.51 | 3.667 ± 0.40 | 3.352 ± 0.53 |

Note: (1) Work habits and effort towards learning = TEA; (2) environmental habits and personal hygiene = AHP; (3) healthy dietary habits = HAS; (4) habits of collaboration and cooperation = HCC.

### Table 8. Analysis of variance as a function of length of service at the current center (ANOVA).

| Variable | <1 Years | 1–5 Years | >5 Years | F(df) | p | (d)-(1−β) |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------|---|----------|
| TEA      | 3.667 ± 0.51 | 3.700 ± 0.34 | 3.694 ± 0.37 | F(2,97) = 0.056 | 0.946 | 0.23 |
| AHP      | 3.348 ± 0.52 | 3.300 ± 0.44 | 4.656 ± 0.47 | F(2,97) = 5.056 | 0.036 | 0.21–0.23 |
| HAS      | 3.546 ± 0.41 | 3.525 ± 0.50 | 3.576 ± 0.39 | F(2,97) = 0.127 | 0.881 |
| HCC      | 3.370 ± 0.59 | 3.578 ± 0.47 | 3.511 ± 0.54 | F(2,97) = 1.124 | 0.329 | 0.8–1.0 |

Note: (1) Work habits and effort towards learning = TEA; (2) environmental habits and personal hygiene = AHP; (3) healthy dietary habits = HAS; (4) habits of collaboration and cooperation = HCC. Statistical strength (1−β) (small = 0.1–0.4, medium = 0.5–0.7, large = 0.8–1.0). Legend—Scheffé’s test. b. Unequal group sizes, c comparison, * p ≤ 0.05, = statistically significant differences do not exist, ± statistically significant differences do exist.

The post hoc Scheffé’s test did not evidence the presence of statistically significant differences between the various dimensions of the sociodemographic variable “years of service at the current center” and the dimensions (TEA = AHP = HAS = HCC). However, teachers with more than 5 years of service at the center were firmer in their consideration of the relevance of environmental habits and personal hygiene for improving learning.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The conducted analysis poses a number of similarities between the opinions of teachers included in the present study and those found in the literature review, in relation to the way in which educational habits are developed in 3 to 6 year old students and its impact on their learning. This is particularly important as this life-stage is identified as being highly relevant for establishing relationships, working collaboratively, and promoting hygiene routines and healthy habits; aspects which are all supported by relevant literature [5,8,9,12].

According to the consideration of teachers, work habits and effort are the building blocks upon which learning is developed. These habits are further consolidated by building interest in stories read by teachers or even through videos, these activities promoting cognitive development and sustainable knowledge. Such aspects come prior to the generation of motivation for learning. These perceptions coincide with the results of studies on narrative stimulation or the projection of videos for children. Both favored elevated indices of social participation, and affective and aesthetic development [23,45]. Other studies conclude that learning is quicker when dialogue reading is used [45]. Such routines are notably related with environmental and dietary habits, cooperation, and collaboration. Other evidence from the literature also achieved similar effects through learning experiences [6,25], outcomes which
are corroborated by the analysis conducted in the present study. Highly favorable perceptions are seen—although it is noted that on some occasions, perceptions were even stronger amongst 33 to 40 year olds—according to the teacher’s experience, intellectual skill level, and with deeper reflection on unresolved topics of professional practice [35,46]. The multiplicity of strategies, resources, and educational tools oriented towards the acquisition of educational habits, reflects how important it is for teachers to seek methods and design learning situations oriented towards a comprehensive and sustainable education, which goes beyond the merely academic barriers.

In spite of the importance given to building certain basic structures that serve as a basis for subsequent integral learning, the present study shows less importance is given to dietary habits, personal hygiene and cleanliness, and sport, despite it being established that teachers promote the physical condition in order to increase effort towards learning, with this also being linked to improvements in self-esteem [21,25]. Agreement was also seen with the idea that recycling raises awareness about the need to take care of the environment. Such perceptions are likely favored by experiences which provide evidence of degradation leading to contamination [27]. Internalization of responsibilities heightens the significance of such learnings [28].

In accordance with reasons already presented in these conclusions, teachers aged between 34 and 40 years assign greater importance to these habits, in addition to teachers with more than 5 years of service at their current center. These individuals show total agreement with the need to develop these habits due to their impact on subsequent learning. Teachers who are well-rooted to their center tend to have a stronger sense of ethics and, as a result, are more committed to their students.

Healthy dietary habits, whilst being considered in a positive way, are considered to have a more moderate impact on learning improvement. Teachers who contribute towards the adequate physical development of schoolchildren, consider it necessary to raise awareness of the family and increase their personal teaching commitment. This equips them to carry out information and training activities on the benefits provided by following a healthy diet. Relevant to this, a healthy diet is assumed to be highly important by the Ministry of Education of the Board of Andalusia and is promoted through the “Healthy Life Habits” program. With regards to the acquisition of dietary habits, revisions such as that conducted by Cooke [47] have indicated that the dietary patterns acquired by children are subject to the familiarity they have with certain foods. These findings imply that the incorporation of healthy foods within the school diet, together with the elaboration of curricular materials and projects on specific foods, would serve to decrease reluctance amongst students to consume certain foods, instead normalizing their consumption.

The literature review highlighted the way in which the dietary habits acquired by children are related to the type of foods they habitually consume [48]. The present study evidences the importance given by teachers to promoting good general health, establishing significant relationships associating healthy life habits with effort, and hard-work towards learning. This is comparable to research studies on the positive influence of a balanced nutritional diet on student performance [4,31]. In addition to indicating the need to promote good general health, positive relationships have been uncovered between healthy life habits, and investing effort and hard-work in order to learn [49,50]. Other studies have related healthy dietary habits with environmental factors and personal hygiene. This is intuitive given that the physical and social environment in which the child is immersed influences their health behaviors [31]. Such references ratify the relationships found in the present study in relation to the importance acquired by the involvement of schools and families in the incorporation of healthy nutrition within the school and family diet. These actors also play an important role in the elaboration of curricular materials and projects on healthy foods. Such tools would reduce reluctance amongst students to consume certain foods and instead serve to insert them into their regular consumption habits, whilst at the same time permitting learning actions to be carried out.

It is notable that teachers’ opinions are almost uniform. Differences are not reflected as a function of age, the extent of immersion in the culture of the school, or professional experience. The impact of such factors on opinions relating to the habits examined in the present study was moderate.
According to the teachers consulted, the capacity of socialization is key amongst 3 to 6 year old schoolchildren. To this end, there is a need to carry out transversal activities in the classroom in order to facilitate collaboration and cooperation amongst children [25,32]. Communication skills are essential for communication between both teachers and children, and between children themselves, in order for them to both express themselves and set themselves goals [10,13,14].

It is considered that children learn especially through interaction with parents, teachers, and classmates, with added value being achieved for language learning and the development of positive dispositions towards the environment [33,34]. This confirms the relationship identified in the present research between collaboration and cooperation habits, hard-work and effort to learn, environmental habits, and personal hygiene.

Evaluations of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as a resource that favors the development of collaboration habits, despite being positive, were seen to be more moderate. Educational technology provides sustainability for integral education, acquiring educational habits among students, mainly from a social perspective. The development of traditional communication tools and the emergence of multiple interactive resources require educational technology and its knowledge to be embedded in the students’ educational habits. Previously conducted literature points to two aspects that could explain the uncertainty shown by teachers in this instance. On the one hand, teachers feel more comfortable working with homogenous groups, despite the fact that recent research studies have confirmed multi-tasking or game-type activities that allow children to make spontaneous choices, to be more effective [25,51,52]. Another reason for this discreet evaluation of ICT resources speaks to children’s mastery of digital skills. Clearly, an important factor will be whether or not children have limited skills for using mobile devices, or whether they have adequate mastery for combining communicative competencies with digital ones in the elaboration of materials [51]. The response to these two questions demands knowledge of both disciplines—didactic-psychological and digital skills. This facilitates the design of hypermedia tasks which are key for the socialization of students. Once again, teachers aged between 34 and 40 years provide more positive evaluations.

The present research demonstrates, therefore, that teachers attribute moderate to high importance to educational habits for the generation of learning processes, their impact on the development of such processes, and teacher commitment to make families assume greater responsibility over their children’s habits. Further, through certain opinions, some training deficiencies were inferentially derived regarding the use of ICT resources or the development of didactic actions for elaborating materials and organizing activities.

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**Appendix A**

**Table A1. Questionnaire.**

| Items                                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Los hábitos de higiene personal inciden de modo favorable en la autoestima y rendimiento académico de los niños y niñas. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2 Fomento la realización de actividades tales como la representación espontánea de personajes a través del propio cuerpo. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 3 Impulso experiencias manipulativas sobre construcción de palabras para adquirir aprendizajes sobre hábitos educativos. |   |   |   |   |   |
| Items                                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 Las actividades para desarrollar hábitos relacionados con el esfuerzo, la determinación para hacer y el trabajo bien hecho facilitan la instrucción. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 5 Concienciar a las familias sobre la importancia de llevar a cabo una alimentación sana y equilibrada, favorece la salud y la motivación por lo que hacen. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 6 Facilito situaciones de trabajo personal en las que el alumnado sea consciente de la importancia de realizar tareas correctamente. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 7 Se deben organizar actividades transversales en el aula para que el alumnado ponga en práctica acciones de colaboración, cooperación y ayuda entre iguales, para mejorar el clima de aula. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 8 Proponer actividades de reflexión y de intercambio de experiencias con familias sobre la prevención de accidentes y los hábitos de cuidado de la salud, favorece el desarrollo de hábitos en los hijos. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 9 Fomento en el aula actividades de reflexión y de acción de cuidado y respeto por el medio ambiente. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 10 Las actividades del reciclaje de materiales desde el aula, favorecen el sentido de responsabilidad y compromiso del alumnado. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 11 Promuevo situaciones lúdicas para aprender a respetar diversas formas de opinión, que faciliten la colaboración entre los escolares. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 12 Resalto la importancia de que todos tenemos los mismos derechos y deberes y nos debemos respecto mutuo. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 13 Las tareas educativa para que los niños/as adquieran habilidades y destrezas básicas en la ayuda entre iguales favorece la inclusión. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 14 Se desarrollan en clase tareas educativas tecnológicas para adquirir habilidades y destrezas básicas. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 15 Promuevo acciones que fomenten el deleite por la lectura. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 16 Hago realidad la realización de producciones escritas, tales como poesías, frases, historias, etc. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 17 Los hábitos de lectura favorecen en el alumnado el desarrollo cognitivo y el aprendizaje autónomo. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 18 Participo activamente en la iniciación y posterior desarrollo del proceso lector del alumnado. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 19 Son necesarias las TIC para potenciar el proceso de adquisición de hábitos adecuados a estas edades. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 20 Es competencia del profesorado concienciar a las familias de que la ingesta de alimentos no saludables repercute negativamente en el estado físico, afectivo y cognitivo. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 21 Una adecuada práctica de hábitos deportivos favorece el buen estado físico y evita futuras adicciones en los niños. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 22 Debe ser preocupación del docente contribuir a eliminar en sus alumnos hábitos alimentarios no saludables. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 23 Realizar en clase actividades que desarrollen hábitos para el consumo adecuado de energía eléctrica, agua, y uso de envases menos contaminantes favorece el trabajo cooperativo. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 24 La escritura es una actividad esencial para el desarrollo cognitivo, afectivo y enriquecimiento contextual del alumnado. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 25 El juego desarrolla hábitos sociales que representen las buenas conductas a seguir y se inhiban las no adecuadas. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 26 El desarrollo de hábitos de trabajo favorece en el futuro la adquisición de hábitos de estudio. |   |   |   |   |   |
Table A1. Cont.

| Items                                                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27 La responsabilidad para realizar las tareas propuestas estimula el interés por aprender. |
| 28 Dinamizo actividades para desarrollar el hábito lector.             |
| 29 Se ha de dedicar todos los días parte de la jornada escolar a la escritura. |
| 30 Utilizar cualquier situación escolar como el uso de envases, papel de zinc, etc., para enseñar a reciclar, favorece la creatividad, responsabilidad y el compromiso. |
| 31 Las TIC ayudan al profesorado a diseñar actividades para desarrollar hábitos de colaboración y cooperación entre iguales entre los niños que formo. |
| 32 Con mi modo de proceder favorezco el cuidado del medio ambiente por los alumnos. |
| 33 Planteo actividades para que el alumnado desarrolle la atención.     |
| 34 Es necesaria la realización diaria de actividades deportivas para el desarrollo integral del alumnado. |
| 35 La utilización de programas y juegos educativos interactivos es positiva para el desarrollo del proceso de aprendizaje. |
| 36 Favorizo que los escolares disfruten con sus propias producciones escritas, expresando sus pensamientos y gustos. |
| 37 Los hábitos de cuidado del cuerpo debe iniciarse desde las edades más tempranas. |
| 38 Me planteo el reciclaje de materiales como un reto para que los niños y niñas lo adquieran y desarrollen en su vida cotidiana. |
| 39 Priorizo la lectura en mi práctica docente como factor imprescindible para favorecer los procesos de aprendizaje. |
| 40 Motivar a los niños para desarrollar y afianzar hábitos deportivos ayuda a desarrollar el trabajo en equipo, el esfuerzo y la generosidad. |

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