

## Children's Interest in Dinosaurs and Dinosaur Museums

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### ABSTRACT

Museums, exhibits, and displays regarding dinosaurs are a key influence in children's development, creating understanding, knowledge, and awareness of the natural world around them, and even influencing their future career choices. Therefore, a study into dinosaur-related museums/exhibits and their links with children's preferences for dinosaurs would be an important step toward understanding the impacts of museums/exhibits on children and their future career choices. Unfortunately, upon preliminary literature reviews, there is little information and studies concerning this subject in Thailand, leading to the formation of this research. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to explore opinions and attitudes regarding dinosaurs and dinosaur museum exhibits in kindergarten, primary, and secondary school students, and the pursuit of future career choices, through a quantitative research, using online questionnaires as a tool. Acquiring data from 518 Thai students in kindergarten (n=40), primary (n=262), and secondary (n=216) from 30 provinces, covering all regions of Thailand.

**Keywords :** Dinosaur, Dinosaur Museum, Survey, Children, Preference, Paleontology

### INTRODUCTION

Many studies use dinosaurs as a medium to help children learn and study, with many research using dinosaur-related topics and tools to attract children in experiments (Chi & Koeske, 1983; Gobbo & Chi, 1986; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003; Hutchings et al, 2007). On top of this, many researchers also use dinosaur museum exhibits to conduct experiments on children's knowledge (Crowley & Jacobs, 2002; Palmquist & Crowley, 2003; Palmquist & Crowley, 2007). This led to an assumption that children are interested in and attracted to dinosaurs. As reported that children aged four to five years old are more interested in dinosaurs than other subjects (Leibham *et al.*, 2005) and that children tend to learn better using dinosaur-related sources (Pila *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, an interest in dinosaurs may lead to an interest in Paleontology and dinosaur-related careers and to support children who like dinosaurs, access to resources such as museums is important. Presently, there are multiple museum exhibitions such as animatronics, models, and real fossils, which museums have intended to use to attract children and visitors. Furthermore, since the 1980s, dinosaur exhibits, especially the more modern animatronic exhibitions, have increasingly become the focus of many museums, becoming one of the most popular exhibits, and even gaining the museum an increase in the number of visitors (Carpenter, 1997; Tunnicliffe, 2000; Salmi, Thuneberg & Vainikainen, 2016).