

**AWARENESS OF PROFESSIONAL
WORKERS AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS
TOWARD CHILD ABUSE**

Thesis

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AWARENESS OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS TOWARD CHILD ABUSE

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ABSTRACT

Abuse and neglect of children represent an important psychosocial and health problem worldwide. The aim of this study was to assess awareness of professional workers at governmental primary schools toward child abuse. The study carried out using a descriptive cross sectional design, conducted in four governmental primary schools located in El-Mansoura city. The subjects were constituted of four different groups: 115 teacher, 30 social workers, 30 doctors and 30 female nurses. All groups were subjected to self administered questionnaire. The main findings of the study were: low proportion of the professional workers had correct knowledge about child abuse. School physicians had a higher perception and showed greater capability of identifying indicators of maltreatment. Regarding notification behavior in abuse situations, nurses were the most willing to notify about situations of abuse. A training program for professionals working is recommended. Such a program should also motivate professionals to report cases. Policy-makers should consider legislation mandating the reporting of cases of maltreatment, and ensuring sufficient protection to the reporters.

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INTRODUCTION

Children are the most precious part of the nation's life, and the biggest promise for the future. Their survival development and protection are basic responsibility of the family, community and the government (**UNICEF, 1998**).

The WHO defined *child abuse and neglect*, as all forms of physical and or emotional ill treatment. Also included in the definition is, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial and other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relation or responsibility, trust or power (**WHO, 2002**).

Children may suffer single type of abuse or a combination of several forms, physically abused children are also often neglected and emotionally abused (**Lissauer & Clayden, 2001**).

A work concerned with child abuse in USA, done by the National Network for Childcare revealed that, every day, five children are murdered by a parent or caregiver, child abuse kills more children than do other accidents as falls, shocking, food suffocation or fires at home (**Stevenson, 1999**).

In Egypt, few studies were carried out to investigate the problem of child abuse. A study conducted by **Nashed (1991)**, revealed that, the incidence of sexual abuse was 0.62% and 3.85 % in the high and low socioeconomic classes respectively, whereas the incidence of physical abuse was 33.95% and 44.55 % in the same classes. Another study was conducted to explore the late psychiatric sequela of childhood sexual abuse, about 27.75% of sexually abused children have psychiatric symptoms in adulthood (**Sayed et al, 1998**).

Professionals and others involved in the care of children have the duty to help children grow up in healthy environments with dignity and free from abuse (**UNICEF, 2001**). Nurses can share in the management and prevention of child abuse through identifying children who are at high risk of being abused. Also, by promoting community awareness, participating in continuing educational programs with professionals who are in direct contact with children and planning effective treatment measures (**Shives, 1998**).

The recognition of maltreated children relies in part on the willingness of professionals who come in contact with children [*physicians, nurses, social workers and teachers*] to accept that the condition exists. Also, the professionals who

come in contact with children need to be trained to recognize all components of child maltreatment namely; *its patterns, predictors, and indicators*. This will ensure that high risk maltreated children will be detected and managed appropriately. An effective and successful training program should be preceded by an educational needs assessment in order to be tailored accordingly (**WHO, 1998**). With this perspective this study was under taken.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to assess the awareness of the professional workers in governmental primary schools toward child abuse.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CONCEPT AND DEFINITION

Abuse of children is a widespread social problem, that encompasses various acts of commission or omission that may result in a significant morbidity and mortality (**Dicky, 1998**). Many children die or are being temporary or permanently injured each year as a result of abuse (**Rosdahl, 1999**).

Child abuse was defined as “deliberately inflicted injury” (**Meadow and Smithbells, 1991**). In 1992, the “Kansas Child Abuse Council” made a comprehensive definition that included “any physical or emotional injury, physical or emotional neglect or sexual act inflicted upon a child by a caregiver (**Townsend, 1996**).). Child abuse also defined as “the willful infliction of physical injury or mental anguish and the deprivation by the caregiver of essential services”. Or any act of commission or omission that harms or threaten to harm a child. (**Varcarolis, 1994; Hoff, 1995**).