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## Early Childhood Female Teachers' Awareness of the Child Abuse Protection System

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#### Early Childhood Female Teachers' Awareness of the Child Abuse Protection System

مدى وعي المعلمات الطفولة المبكرة بنظام حماية الطفل من الايذاء

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## Early Childhood Female Teachers' Awareness of the Child Abuse Protection System

### Abstract

This research aimed to investigate female kindergarten teachers' awareness of the child protection system in Saudi Arabia. To achieve such objective, the author used the descriptive approach to give a detailed description of the variables of the study. The sample of the study included (633) female teachers. Results revealed that 94.9% of the teachers were aware of the protection system in Saudi Arabia and the laws of child abuse punishment. It was also found that most prevalent types of abuse were psychological abuse by 58.5%, followed by physical abuse by 22.9%, negligence by 10.3%, sexual abuse by 6.3%, and finally exploitation by 1.7%. These results were against the reports of Family Safety, which stated that negligence was the most common type of abuse among children. Results also indicated that 64.1% of the female teachers preferred to ask for help from a family member to report abuse and 10.1% preferred to call the police. Drawing on the findings, the pedagogical findings have been discussed.

*Keywords:* childhood, female teacher, awareness; abuse, Child Protection System.

## مدى وعي المعلمات الطفولة المبكرة بنظام حماية الطفل من الإيذاء

### مستخلص البحث

تهدف هذا الدراسة إلى تقصي وعي معلمات رياض الأطفال بنظام حماية الطفل من الإيذاء في المملكة العربية السعودية. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، استخدم الباحث المنهج الوصفي لكي يقدم وصفا عميقا لمتغيرات الدراسة. وقد اشتملت عينة الدراسة على (633) معلمة. كما أظهرت نتائج الدراسة بأن 94.9% من المعلمات كانوا على دراية بنظام حماية الطفل من الإيذاء في المملكة العربية السعودية وبقوانين عقوبة الإساءة للأطفال. كما أظهرت الدراسة أن أكثر أنواع الإيذاء انتشاراً كانت الإيذاء النفسي بنسبة (58.5%)، يليه الإيذاء الجسدي بنسبة (22.9%)، والإهمال بنسبة (10.3%)، ثم الإيذاء الجنسي بنسبة (6.3%)، وأخيراً الاستغلال بنسبة (1.7%). وهذه النتائج مختلفة عما ورد في بلاغات الأمن الأسري، والتي ذكرت بأن الإهمال سجل أعلى حالات الإيذاء عند الاطفال. كما أشارت النتائج إلى أن 10.1% من المعلمات يفضلن طلب المساعدة من العائلة عند تعرض الأطفال للإيذاء بدلا من اللجوء إلى الشرطة. وبناء على هذه النتائج تمت مناقشة النتائج والتوصيات التربوية.

*الكلمات المفتاحية: وعي المعلمات، الطفولة المبكرة، نظام حماية الطفل، الإيذاء.*

## Introduction

Children are the largest segment of the Saudi society in which Vision (2030) is concerned. Studies have reported seriousness of domestic violence and various types of abuse of children. Therefore, attention should be paid to children and reduce the phenomenon of violence and its health and psychological effects on children. The problem of pluralism of the concepts of child abuse is controversial, which leads to the lack of clarity of the scope, limitations, and size of the phenomenon, and therefore this phenomenon needs more studies. The researcher has considered the pre-primary education teachers' knowledge of the child protection system crucial since it is a sensitive stage. Not only that, knowledge of the types of abuse and reporting procedures in case of violence against a child in the classroom is essential. Based on this point of view, the problem of the current study is stated in the following key question: How well are the early children's teachers aware of the child protection system?

The importance of the study lies in dealing with the sensitive issue of child abuse, which is one of the topics that needs further studies because of the importance of this age, as it is the stage of personal formation of the child. The study has been conducted in response to the general policy of the state and the launch of a new organization (i.e., Council of Family Affairs), which emphasizes the importance of forming a healthy family. This study aimed to give a vivid picture to decision makers in Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior of how to follow up the child on campus and propose preventive programs in case of violence against children through investigating the extent of the early children female teachers' awareness of the system of child protection.

### Islamic Law and Abuse

Islamic law (Sharia) has taken care of social rights, including the rights of the child due to the importance of childhood. This importance stems from

the fact that childhood is the stage of need and dependence because the child always needs care in all his/her physical, psychological, and social affairs. All children have rights, including the right to protection from violence, exploitation, and abuse. Islam is always keen to give the child his/her rights and provide the best care through advising parents, caregivers, and society to keep safe and protect their children, and give them their rights, especially the right to protection.

In 1923, the World Federation for the Protection of Children adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The agreement was adopted by the United Nations in 1989 and Saudi Arabia participated in its signing on condition that the articles do not violate the Islamic Shari'a (Al-Swaigh, 2003; Crosson- Tower, 2002). In 1974, the Child Abuse Protection and Treatment Act (CAPTA) was created in response to many children suffering from abuse and negligence (Stein, 1984). The law has also been amended seven times since its legislation and the most recent version was in 2010 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011).

In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Social Affairs by a decree of the Council of Ministers No. 332 dated 19/10/1434AH crowned by the Royal Decree No. 52 dated 2012 stated that the Minister of Social Affairs shall issue the Executive Regulations of the Protection from Abuse Act, followed by the Executive Regulations of the Child Protection Law approved by the Council of Ministers by Resolution No. (50) dated 2014. The Executive Regulation of the Protection from Abuse Act includes eighteen (18) articles, which aim at:

1. Defining child's protection system and abuse and its types.
2. Ensuring the protection of children against abuse of all kinds mentioned in the system.
3. The rights of children to protection as well as prohibitions related to protection.
4. Providing necessary assistance, treatment, shelter, and social,

psychological, and health care for children.

5. The perpetrator must be punished and dealt with according to the necessary legal action against him or her.
6. Raising awareness among members of the community about the concept of abuse and its consequences

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines abuse as the inability to provide an appropriate and encouraging environment for the development of the child so that he or she can develop himself/herself in all different areas, in line with his/her personal and community environment (2004). Behaviors that restrict or diminish child's natural freedom include cynicism, blame, defamation, intimidation, threats, discrimination, or any other form of ill-treatment. These behaviors lead to frustration and cause harm to the child's healthy development, physically, mentally, spiritually, morally, and socially. Child abuse is defined, in the Saudi Arabian Child Protection System and the Saudi Child Protection System as every form of child abuse, exploitation, or threat, including:

1. Physical abuse: The child has been harmed or physically abused.
2. Mental abuse: The child has been ill-treated, which may cause him or her psychological or health damage.
3. Sexual abuse: The child has been subjected to any kind of assault, abuse, or sexual exploitation (Council of Ministers, 2013).

The child is defined, in the Executive Regulations of the Child Protection Law, as every human being below the age of 18 years. The system also defines types of abuse as negligence, exploitation, and threat. The system defines negligence as absence of provision of the basic needs of the child or failure in achieving them, including physical, health, emotional, psychological, educational, intellectual, social, cultural, and security needs.

The threat of child abuse is defined as any act or statement made by

a person towards the child, which is likely to create fear inside the child or some threat, aiming to harm him/her. It is likely that the source of the threat can threaten the child of any kind of physical, psychological, or sexual abuse. The system also defines exploitation as the person's use of a child in the legitimate and illegitimate work, exploiting his/her young age, recklessness, lack of maturity, and lack of experience.

Saudi Arabia lacks statistics and studies on abuse since cases of abuse were not recorded until 2004. According to statistics of the National Society for Human Rights, (its establishment was from 2004 to 2011), (95) cases against children, including (80) Saudi and (15) non-Saudi cases were received in 2011. While the annual report of the National Family Safety Program (1438-2016) has recorded (188) cases and unfortunately the number has been doubled, as shown in the table below, and perhaps this can be understood from its positive aspect, indicating the increase of the awareness of individuals about the types of violence and reporting. See Table (1)

**Table 1**

*Distribution of cases of domestic violence against children*

Year	Cases of Violence against children
2004	-
2009	72
2010	82
2011	188
2012	202
2013	180
2014	348
2015	422
2016	692
2018	1006
2019	1010
2020	1899

(Cited in Annual Report of Achievements of Family Safety Program, 2016, p. 12)

The annual report of the National Family Safety has recorded (837)



cases (2016, p. 16). The report has shown that negligence and physical abuse has been the most frequent cases, followed by sexual and psychological abuses. According to the Annual Reports of Achievements of National Family Safety Program, negligence was ranked first in 2018 and 2020, followed by physical abuse (Annual Report of Achievements of Family Safety Program, 2016, 2018, 2020). See Table (2)

**Table 2***Percentage of types of child abuse*

Type	2016		2018		2020	
Abuse	Cases No.	Percentage	Cases No.	Percentage	Cases No.	Percentage
Negligence	333	51.5%	407	40.4%	686	36.1%
Physical abuse	218	33.7%	342	33.9%	602	31.7%
Sexual abuse	177	27.4%	87	8.6%	230	12.1%
Psychological abuse	109	16.8%	170	16.9%	381	20.1%

**Types of Abuse****1. Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse of children is one of the most dangerous phenomena that stands in the way of social progress that threatens its consistency due to its wrong socialization. Therefore, attention should be taken through finding a system for protecting children. Physical abuse is manifested in injuries on some parts of the body, accidental burns, bruises, head and brain injuries, whose symptoms are fainting, internal bleeding, flogging and beating with sharp instruments, burning, biting, recurrent fractures of the child, stuttering of the child in speech and stumbling in a striking way (Al-Tayyar, 2009). Physical abuse is also linked to the depth of the injury and the risk of death (Estroff et al., 2015). Physical abuse (physical violence) is defined by the United Nations (2011) as the inclusion of fatal and nonfatal physical violence, including:

- a. All forms of physical punishment and all other forms of torture, ill-treatment, or inhuman or degrading punishment

b. Physical bullying and abuse by other adults or children

Physical punishment is also defined as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to inflict a certain degree of pain or harm, no matter how severe it is. Most forms of punishment include beating children ("buffeting", "slapping" or "beating on the buttocks") by hand or with a tool such as a whip, stick, belt, shoe, or spoon, etc. This type of punishment may also include, for example, kicking or shaking children, scratching, tweaking, biting, plucking hair, punching the ears, forcing children to remain in an uncomfortable position, burning, or forcing children to eat certain substances (United Nations, UNICEF, 2007, p.12).

## 2. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is the exploitation of the child to satisfy the sexual desires of older persons. Examples of such case are showing genitalia or pornography to children, undressing the child, unusual touch of the body to seduce and persuade him or her to sexual practices and immoral acts such as profanity or sexual action (rape) (Al-Sharbati, 2006, p. 96).

## 3. Psychological Abuse

The abuser intentionally inflicts psychological harm on the child through various practices such as continuous criticism, persistent hatred, rejection of the child and lack of tenderness, love, and attention, conflicting attitudes towards the same behavior, threatening and intimidation of expulsion from the house, continuous psychological stress, and differentiation of treatment between him/her and his/her peers (Al-Sharbati, 2006; Al-Tayyar, 2009). Al-Sayegh (2003, P. 37) defines psychological abuse as the constant abuse of the child's psyche, by showing rejection, isolation, intimidation, ridicule, comparison, shouting, cursing, and other forms of abuse of the child's mental and emotional health in different stages of life of children.

#### 4. Negligence

Negligence is manifested in the lack of health care, attention to the cleanliness of the body, lack of satisfaction of the emotional needs of the child, the lack of basic education of the child, and non-issuance of identity documents (Al-Sharbaty, 2006; Al-Tayyar, 2009). The Executive Regulation of the Child Protection in Article (3) has stressed certain types of abuse that are considered negligence, such as keeping the child without family support, absence of identity documents, failure to complete proper health vaccinations, causing disruption to education, abuse, sexual incitement or sexual exploitation of children, exploiting the child financially, in criminality, or begging, and discriminating against him for any racial, social, or economic reasons. Al-Sayegh (2003) defines negligence as recurrent deficiencies, or failure to provide health, emotional, educational care, and security for the child's development.

#### 5. Exploitation

Exploitation is one of the types of child abuse. Article (8), section (2) of the Executive Regulations of the Child Protection Law stipulates that a child has the right to be protected from economic exploitation and involving children in performing any work that is dangerous, impedes his education, or be detrimental to his/her health, physical, mental, moral, or social development. Article (9) of the Executive Regulations of the Child Protection Law has stressed the prohibition of sexual exploitation of children, exposing them to any form of sexual exploitation, or trafficking children into crime or begging.

### Previous Studies

Several studies have been conducted at a national level (Al-Eissa et al., 2016; Al-Fareh, 2012; Alghamdi & Saleheen, 2016; Al-Rashidi, 2013; Al-Shehri, 2006; Al-Tayyar, 2009; Jalal, et al., 2019; King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, 2015; Ro'ayah Center for Social Studies, 2010,

2009; Siham , 2012; The Ministry of Social Affairs, 2006) and at an international level (Ahmed, et al., 2021; ; Bhargava & Ahamad, 2015; Bollinger et al., 2012; Bollinger et al., 2012 ; Falkiner et al., 2017; Katz et al, 2011; Marothiya et al., 2019; Milaniak & Widom, 2015; ; Naixue et al., 2005; Sathiyaraj & Jayaranman, 2013; Watts & Mcnulty, 2013).

Jalal et al. (2019) have conducted a study on barriers to implementing learning from child protection training in Saudi Arabia, retrieving data from 26 professionals from different disciplines in Saudi Arabia. They found that the barriers have been classified into customs and traditions, organizational, administrative, and staff-related barriers and challenges in contact with families. They have also found that these barriers could be tackled in co-ordination through policy, legislation, awareness campaigns and service development.

Almuneef et al., (2016) have studied children who have been abused and neglected in Saudi Arabia, collecting data from patient files during the period 2009-2013 obtained from the Child Protection Center based in King Abdul Aziz Medical City. After reviewing (220) cases of child abuse and negligence, the study has found that physical abuse was the most common type of abuse (42%), followed by negligence (39%), sexual abuse (14%), and emotional abuse (4%). The study has argued that child abuse and negligence are a public health problem in Saudi Arabia, which calls for an effective preventive strategy.

Al-Eissa et al., (2016) have studied the prevalence of child maltreatment in Saudi Arabia for children aged 15-18 years. The study has found that sexual abuse has been the lowest type of abuse whereas psychological abuse has been the highest. The researchers have also noted that the rate of parental abuse and negligence has been significantly higher for girls and the rate of sexual abuse has been greater for boys. The researchers have recommended to pay more attention to the impact of adolescent abuse, especially among girls. In addition, the program for the

prevention of sexual abuse among boys should be targeted.

The Ministry of Social Affairs under the supervision of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (2015) has conducted a comprehensive national study on parents, school workers, social protection workers, experts, policemen and hospital staff, aiming to investigate the national strategy for prevention and response to domestic violence in Saudi society and identify the causes of violence in Saudi society. It has been found that among the causes of domestic violence has been family disintegration and the absence of laws against those who practice violence, as well as some misconceptions about women, children, the elderly, and domestic workers.

Al-Rashidi (2013) has studied the social factors that have led parents to practice verbal violence towards children, targeting (300) parents. It was found that the living conditions of the family and punishment of the children from the school director have an impact on the practice of verbal violence

Siham (2012) has conducted a study on parental abuse and its relationship to aggressive behavior in fifth year primary school students (N=200), following the descriptive approach. Findings have revealed a relationship between the abuse by the father in various types (physical/verbal abuse- negligence- deprivation) and aggressive behavior in the fifth-grade students. The author has not found a relationship between maternal abuse of various patterns and aggressive behavior of students.

Al-Fareh (2012) has studied the concept of physical and psychological abuse and negligence among parents in the Saudi society in five regions of the Kingdom (Riyadh, Makkah, Eastern Province, Asir, and Tabuk). The researcher has utilized a survey of (1150) mothers and fathers. Findings have shown statistically significant differences in the parents' conception of physical and psychological abuse, depending on the age of the children.

Ro'ayah Center for Social Studies in Al-Qassim (2010, 2009) has studied domestic violence, covering many areas of the Kingdom. It has been

found that (41%) of the respondents have indicated that severe reprimand is so widespread in a form of verbal violence, followed by mockery, incitement, insults, and cursing. It has been also found that physical violence and verbal violence have been at the forefront of the patterns of domestic violence by (83%).

Al-Tayyar (2009) has studied the abuse of children in the Saudi family and its factors and effects on a sample of children(N=477). The author has found that the verbal abuse has been more common among majority of the children than physical abuse.

Al-Shehri (2006) has examined the psychological, social, and physical characteristics of abused children in Saudi Arabia, targeting (56) children who have been abused and registered in hospitals. The most prevalent forms of abuse have been social abuse (27%), followed by negligence (26.4%), psychological abuse (25%), physical abuse (13.9%), and finally sexual abuse (7.9%).

The Ministry of Social Affairs (2006) has carried out a study on abused children in different associations. The study has found out that the children aged 6 years have come in the first place in the list of abused, followed by children at the age of eight (9%), seven (8%), and finally those are in the age of eleven to thirteen (6%). The study has also found that the children who have not exposed to verbal and physical abuse ranked first among the respondents (33%), followed by physical abuse (27%), verbal abuse (18%), and finally children who have been exposed to all types of abuse (4%).

Ahmed, et al., (2021) have studied the efficacy of teacher's role in prevention of children from abuse, using an interview and secondary data. The findings have revealed that the effectiveness of teachers' role in preventing child sexual abuse. It has been found that that awareness on the part of general public is required while counseling teachers and parents,

which is important in the prevention of such heinous crimes.

Marothiya et al. (2019) have investigated the primary school teachers' awareness of children's rights and protection in Ludhiana, Punjab, India, targeting (120) teachers. The authors have utilized descriptive approach (checklist for children's rights and protection). The study has found that rural and urban teachers have been more familiar with certain provisions under the Child Sexual Protection Act. Besides, no statistically significant relationship between the variables with respect to teachers' awareness of their social and personal characteristics.

Falkiner et al. (2017) have examined barriers that prevented teachers from reporting child abuse and whether teachers consider it necessary to question a child about abuse before deciding whether to report it or not. The researchers have used a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews with teachers. The study has found that training on reporting is inadequate, and inconsistent. Teachers have faced obstacles to identify and report child abuse.

Milaniak and Widom (2015) have studied children who have been subjected to physical abuse, sexual exploitation, and negligence inside and outside the home and comparing them with children who have not been abused, included (676) children in the experimental group and (520) in the control group. The authors have found that abusing children had a negative effect on their behavior and they became violent to others.

Bhargava and Ahamad (2015) have examined parents and school teachers' awareness of children's rights and the adherence to the standards of the National Committee for the Rights of Children in India. It has been found that many schools were not aware of the standards related to the protection of children set by the National Commission of Indian schools. It has been recommended that schools should implement the rights and protection of children and spread awareness of rights among children.

Similarly, Sathiyaraj and Jayaranman (2013) have examined primary school teachers' awareness of children's rights in the Tiruchirappalli district of Tamil Nadu. It has been found that awareness differed according to teachers' level. It has been found despite awareness; it has not been reflected in practice.

Watts and McNulty (2013) have examined the nature of the relationship between physical abuse and sexual exploitation and its impact on the child's future crime, using a longitudinal study on a sample of both sexes. The study has found that physical abuse and sexual exploitation in childhood are predictors of crime in adolescence regardless of sex.

Bollinger et al., (2012) have investigated perceptions and awareness of society about child protection strategies and their effectiveness in reducing sexual abuse. The population of the study has consisted of participants of more than 18 years (N=111). The study has found that the participants were not well-informed about child sexual abuse records and laws. A number of participants have appreciated the importance of having punitive strategies against sexual offenders.

Katz et al. (2011) have studied current practices and policies towards child protection in China. The study population has included stakeholders (164) and children (N=15), using qualitative approach based on interviews. It has been found that the most respondents identified abuse as acts that cause apparent physical harm and psychological consequences. In ordinary family life, the beating was seen as a mean of disciplining the child rather than ill-treatment, because it was widely accepted that "beating is a form of care and education". Most police reports have revealed that most cases of "negligence" or poor parenting were the result of parents' involvement in work. For teachers, physical punishment, beating, and reprimand of students were seen as beneficial to students, as long as there is no serious



harm. Furthermore, the interviewees have felt that the teachers did not show any extreme actions towards the students.

Scrutinizing the conceptual and empirical literatures has shown that child abuse is the focus of attention of several studies. Al-Saud (2001, 2005), Ministry of Social Affairs (2006), Ro'ayah Center for Social Studies (2009), Al-Fareh (2012) have reported high number of cases of children subjected to violence, namely physical abuse, followed by other abuses, while Al-Anqari (2004), Al-Tayyar (2009), and Al-Rashidi (2013) have shown that the verbal abuse was the highest among other types of abuses. Center for Combating Crime (2005), Al-Eissa et al., (2016) indicated that psychological abuse has recorded the highest. Al Shehri (2006), and Almuneef (2016) have found that negligence was highest among other types of abuse.

All studies have emphasized the importance of raising children and providing a strategy for the protection of children. Studies have also found that the younger children have been exposed to higher incidence of violence (Al-Saud, 2001; Al-Yousef et al., 2005; Al-Saud, 2005). Besides, Al-Jibreen (2005) has differentiated between abuses according to gender, exploring that females are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, while boys are more vulnerable to physical abuse (Al-Jibreen, 2005).

Based on these studies, the author has developed the theoretical framework of the study. The novelty in this study lies in examining the issue of abuses in the situation of the state and private pre-primary education, targeting female pre-primary teachers, offering new date about this new important topic.

### Research questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. How well are the early childhood female teachers aware of child abuse protection?

2. To what extent the female teachers are aware of the procedures for reporting abuse from the perspective of the female teachers?
3. Are there statistically significant differences about knowledge of the protection system between the female teachers and the female teacher trainees?

### Limitations

This study was confined to the extent of early childhood female teachers' and teacher trainees' awareness of the system of child protection in public and private schools in Riyadh, using a quantitative method (i.e., a questionnaire).

### Method

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the descriptive approach was used, which provided an accurate quantitative description of the phenomenon under study (Obeidat et al., 2011). This section is concerned with description of the sample, research procedures and validity and reliability.

### Data collection

The author used a validated and reliable questionnaire to collect the data targeted by the study. The author distributed the questionnaire to the female teacher and teacher trainees, ensuring the confidentiality of their responses. They were informed that their responses would be anonymous and used solely for a research purpose.

### Sample

The population of the study included all the female teachers and teacher trainees of pre- primary education in the state and private female schools in Riyadh(N=633). The questionnaires were distributed to 1033 teacher trainees and teacher. (633) questionnaires were filled completely

and 400 were incomplete, which are excluded from analysis. Note that the regular teachers at the schools supervised the teacher trainees in the targeted schools See Table (3).

**Table 3**  
*Distribution of Questionnaire*

Participants	Frequencies	Percentage
Female Teacher trainee	589	93.0
Teachers	25	3.9
Total	614	97.0
Not shown	19	3.0
Total	633	100.0

Table (3) shows that most of the participants were female teacher trainees (93.0%), while the percentage of teachers who supervised the teacher trainees was (3.9%). Note that 3.0% didn't respond to the job variable, noting that each school has only one female teacher, who supervises teacher trainees.

### Validity and reliability

Validity is defined as the extent to which scores generated by an instrument measure a characteristic or a variable they are intended to measure for a specific population (Mellinger & Hanson, 2017). The author considered that the questionnaire included all the items that measured the variables of the study on the one hand and ensured the clarity of its items on the other hand (Obeidat et al., 2001). Besides, the questionnaire was reviewed by referees to maintain face validity to ensure the consistency of the questionnaire (i.e., the items of sections are accurate and relevant) and absence of overlap between the sections and items of questionnaire. Further, the author calculated Pearson Correlation Coefficients between each item of the questionnaire and the total degree of the questionnaire. See Table (4).

**Table 4***Pearson correlation coefficients of the questionnaire*

Item No.	Correlation coefficient	p-value	Item No.	Correlation coefficient	p-value
1	.384	0.01	16	.541	0.01
2	.342	0.01	17	.348	0.01
3	.340	0.01	18	.340	0.01
4	.422	0.01	19	.401	0.01
5	.480	0.01	20	.322	0.01
6	.461	0.01	21	.553	0.01
7	.550	0.01	22	.425	0.01
8	.382	0.01	23	.352	0.01
9	.334	0.01	24	.240	0.01
10	.505	0.01	25	.614	0.01
11	.417	0.01	26	.639	0.01
12	.441	0.01	27	.651	0.01
13	.433	0.01	28	.362	0.01
14	.433	0.01	29	.537	0.01
15	.535	0.01	30	.388	0.01

Table (4) shows that the correlation coefficient values of the items of the questionnaire, which are statistically significant at 0.01.

### Reliability test

To measure the reliability of the tool of the study, the researcher used Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) equation to confirm the reliability of the tool of the study. The Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient of reliability was (0.73), which is a good degree of reliability. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered 'acceptable' in Social Science research.

### Statistical methods

To achieve the objectives of the study, several appropriate statistical methods were used using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS):

1. Pearson correlation coefficient for measuring internal consistency.
2. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability measurement.
3. Frequencies, percentage, and arithmetic means to know individuals' responses to the items of the questionnaire and its section.

4. T-test for measuring differences in the mean scores of the protection system attributed to the educational stage (kindergarten and primary school female teachers).
5. Analysis of variance . ANOVA to find out the differences in the mean scores of the knowledge of the protection system attributed to the variable of education offices in Riyadh (North, South, East, West, and Central).

### Design of the questionnaire

Drawing on the conceptual and empirical literature of relevance to abuse, the author designed the sections and items of the questionnaire. As for the measurement, the responses to the statements of the scale were designed according to a three-point Likert Scale. The author specified the value of each Likert Scale category (the lowest and highest levels) by calculating the range ( $3-1 = 2$ ), then dividing it by the number of categories of the scale to get the correct category value i.e. ( $2/3 = 0.66$ ). This value was added to all the values of the categories to determine the length of every category. The value of each category is as follows:

1. 1-1.66 disagree
2. 1.67-2.33 neutral
3. 2.34-3.00 agree to some extent

### Findings

This section was organized according to the research questions. The first question dealt with the early childhood female teachers' knowledge about the protection system that protected children from abuse. The analysis revealed that 94.9% of the respondents knew about child protection system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while 4.4% did not know about child protection system and 0.6% did not answer the question. See Table (5).

**Table 5**  
*Knowledge about production system*

Responses	Frequencies	%
No	28	4.4
Yes	601	94.9
Total	629	99.4
Not shown	4	.6
Total	633	100.0

As for the early childhood female teachers' awareness of abuse, it was found respondents' awareness, which was manifested in their agreement on the items of the section of awareness of abuse. The mean scores of these items ranged from 2.45 to 3.00. The total mean for all items of the questionnaire (M= 2.89) confirmed the participants' awareness of the types of abuse that are listed in the table below. See Table (6).

**Table 6**  
*Early childhood female teachers' awareness*

Items	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	M	SD
1. Causing harm by anyone would infuse oneself with fear	14 2.2	31 4.9	588 92.9	2.91	0.36
2. Inability to defend herself	93 14.7	161 25.4	378 59.7	2.45	0.74
3. Exposure to any inappropriate action or statement	7 1.1	26 4.1	598 94.5	2.94	0.29
4. Exposure to ill-treatment	6 .9	11 1.7	614 97.0	2.96	0.23
5. A parent's harm to dignity and feelings of the his or her child.	6 .9	31 4.9	596 94.2	2.93	0.29
6. A parent's harm to dignity and feelings of the his or her child alone or in front of others	9 1.4	21 3.3	602 95.1	2.94	0.29
7. A family member's discipline in the form of cruel or degrading physical punishment.	10 1.6	14 2.2	609 96.2	2.95	0.29
8. The member of the family's discipline of the child using degrading words or isolating the child	9 1.4	38 6.0	585 92.4	2.91	0.33
9. A family member's discipline of the child by leaving the child in a room alone	23 3.6	144 22.7	465 73.5	2.7	0.53
10. Negligence of a child to satisfy emotional needs of the parents	10 1.6	60 9.5	562 88.8	2.87	0.38

Items	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	M	SD
11. Parents' disinterest of school punishment of a child (negligence)	12 1.9	49 7.7	572 90.4	2.88	0.37
12. Preference of one parent for sex to another	11 1.7	45 7.1	576 91.0	2.89	0.36
13. The use of offensive words that degrade dignity or lead to contempt of a child.	6 .9	12 1.9	615 97.2	2.96	0.24
14. One parent caused a dropout of his or her a child.	20 3.2	58 9.2	555 87.7	2.85	0.44
15. One parent instills ideas of intolerance and hatred in minds of children.	9 1.4	17 2.7	607 95.9	2.94	0.28
16. Lack of health care for the child in case of illness	4 .6	20 3.2	602 95.1	2.96	0.24
17. Involving the child in any action that does not protect sensitive areas.	1 .2	4 .6	627 99.1	2.99	0.11
18. Exposing the child/ adolescent directly or indirectly to criminal media material that violates morality.		2 .3	629 99.4	3	0.06
19. A threat of beating is considered an abuse.	23 3.6	140 22.1	470 74.2	2.71	0.53
20. Sexual assault is an abuse.	3 .5	1 .2	628 99.2	2.99	0.14
21. Negligence is considered an abuse.	6 .9	30 4.7	597 94.3	2.93	0.28
22. Child's exploitation is considered an abuse.	5 .8	21 3.3	606 95.7	2.95	0.25
23. psychological negligence is considered an abuse?	2 .3	29 4.6	489 77.3	2.94	0.26
Total mean				2.89	

Regarding early childhood female teachers' knowledge about types of abuse that are punishable by law, the teachers' responses revealed that they agreed on all items of relevance to types of abuse that are punishable by law. This finding was manifested in the mean scores of the respondents' responses ( $M=2.45 - 3.00$ ), which referred to the response of agreement. The total mean scores of items ranged from 2.89 to 3.00, which confirmed that the participants agreed that they are all aware of the types of abuse that are punishable by law. See Table (7).

**Table 7***Teachers' awareness of the types of child abuse punishable by law*

No.	Items	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	M	SD
1.	Exploitation of children in violence and the promotion of terrorism	621 98.1	5 .8	2 .3	2.99	0.14
2.	Exploitation of children in social media	518 81.8	87 13.7	24 3.8	2.79	0.50
3.	Failure in enabling the child to enjoy his or her legally and recognized rights such as identity papers, vaccination, and education	568 89.7	45 7.1	14 2.2	2.88	0.38
4.	Child employment under the age of fifteen	445 70.3	160 25.3	20 3.2	2.68	0.53
5.	Use of the child in the production or circulation of drugs	615 97.2	12 1.9		2.98	0.14
6.	Displaying audio, visual or printed materials that stimulate children passion or lust	579 91.5	45 7.1	5 .8	2.91	0.31
7.	Illegal sexual exploitation of a child by a parent	622 98.3	3 .5	2 .3	2.99	0.13
Total Mean					2.89	

As for the childhood female teachers' knowledge about common patterns of violence in the Saudi society, findings revealed that the most common types of abuse in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were psychological abuse by 58.5%, followed by physical abuse (22.9%), negligence (10.3%), sexual abuse (6.3%), and finally exploitation (1.7%). See Table (8).

**Table 8***Types of abuse of children in Saudi Arabia*

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Psychological abuse	370	58.5
Sexual abuse	40	6.3
Physical abuse	145	22.9
Negligence	65	10.3
Exploitation	11	1.7
Total	631	99.7
Not shown	2	.3
Total	633	100.0



The early childhood female teachers' knowledge about the child support line number revealed that 56.1% of the respondents knew the number of the child support line while 43.3% did not know the child support line number. See Table (9).

**Table 9***Teachers' awareness of the child support line number*

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
No	274	43.3
Yes	355	56.1
Total	629	99.4
Not shown	4	.6
Total	633	100.0

Regarding the female teachers' knowledge about whether the identity of the victim should be confidential or not, findings revealed 89.3% of respondents knew that the identity of the victim should be confidential while 8.7% did not know. See Table (10).

**Table 10***Teachers' knowledge about the victim's identity*

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
No	55	8.7
Yes	565	89.3
Total	620	97.9
Not shown	13	2.1
Total	633	100.0

The responses to the second question, which was on the procedures followed in reporting abuse from the perspective of the female teachers revealed that 64.1% preferred to talk to a member of the family to ask for help. Besides, 21.0% of the respondents preferred to try to fix the matter with the person who committed the violence, 10.1% preferred to call to the police whereas 3.3% did not prefer to react to the abuse suffered by the child. See Table (11).

**Table 11***Procedures followed in reporting abuse*

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Nothing	21	3.3
Trying to fix it with the person from whom the violence came	133	21.0
Talk to someone within the family to ask for help	406	64.1
Call the police	64	10.1
Total	624	98.6
Not shown	9	1.4
Total	633	100.0

The finding also revealed that different opinions on the competent authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that should receive reports of abuse. 39.7% of respondents believed that the competent authority in Saudi Arabia for receiving reports of domestic abuse were all the bodies of relevance, followed by the Human Rights Association (26.1%), the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (17.4%), Family Safety Program (8.1%), police (4.4%), and Council of Family Affairs (0.9%). Finally, 2.7% believed that there was no competent authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to receive reports of domestic abuse. See Table (12).

**Table 12***Competent authorities responsible for reporting abuse*

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Ministry of Labor and Social Development	110	17.4
Police stations	28	4.4
Human Rights Association	165	26.1
Family Safety Program	51	8.1
Family Affairs Council	6	.9
All of them	251	39.7
N/A	17	2.7
Total	628	99.2
Not shown	5	.8
Total	633	100.0

As for the third question (i.e., Are there statistically significant differences in knowledge of the protection system between female teachers

and female teacher trainees?), findings revealed that statistically significant differences were not detected about knowledge of the protection system between the female teachers and the female teacher trainees. See Table (13).

**Table 13***T-test*

Educational Stage	No.	Mean	SD	T-value	Sig.
Teacher	356	.9579	.20118	330	0.741
Teacher trainees	273	.9524	.21335		

## Discussion

The empirical data revealed the early female teachers' awareness of abuse, types of abuse and strategies of reporting abuse. The findings also revealed absence of statistically significant differences between the awareness of female teachers and female teacher trainees.

Findings revealed that (94.9%) of the teachers were aware of the protection system in Saudi Arabia and had knowledge of the types of abuse that are 'punishable by law'. This finding shows female teachers' awareness, which should be utilized by stakeholders to enhance the role of teachers in preventing abuse. In the same vein, Ahmed et al. (2021) found that the effectiveness of teachers' role in preventing child sexual abuse, recommending that counseling of teachers and parents is crucial in the prevention of such awful crimes

It was also found that the most prevalent types of abuse were psychological abuse (58.5%), followed by physical abuse (22.9%), neglect (10.3%), sexual abuse (6.3%), and finally exploitation (1.7%), which is unlike the report of National Family Safety Reports (2018, 2020), which stated that negligence was the most common type of abuse among children, followed by psychological abuse. The bodies of relevance to types of abuse in Saudi

Arabia should consider these findings, giving each type of abuse the attention it deserves. The Psychological abuse was ranked first among other types of abuse, which means a lot of attention should be given by bodies of relevance, disseminating awareness among teachers and parents to create awareness of the negative effects of this type of abuse on children (Al-Sayegh, 2003). This type of abuse might be considered a type of discipline by teachers and parents, so that awareness campaigns on psychological abuse should be organized by bodies of relevance. The Physical abuse was ranked second according to the respondents, which may lead to wrong socialization. Almuneef, et al. (2016) found that physical abuse was the most common type of abuse (42%), calling for an effective preventive strategy for such type of abuse. Due attention should be taken to such type of abuse through finding a system for protecting children from physical abuse, which may be practiced by teachers and parents as a type of discipline.

The results of the current research are like Al-Eissa et al., (2016) and as Al-Zahrani (2003), who found that the abuse of the child did not only create bad psychological and physical effects on them but may qualify them to practice the same violence that they have suffered against others Similarly, Ana (2011) found that children who are victims of violence and physical, psychological, and sexual abuses perpetrate violence against other people.

The current research also found that 51.2% of the participants have knowledge of the Child Support Line, a special line for the National Guard Family Safety Program. On the other hand, 46.8% of kindergarten and early childhood teachers did not know Child Support Line (116111). The findings indicated that teachers' knowledge of confidentiality in the case of child abuse was also increased. The lack of knowledge of the female teachers can be attributed to the lack of clarity of guidelines for reporting child abuse (Lambie, 2005) or fear (Bryant & Milsom, 2005; Kenny, 2001). Therefore, competent authorities should raise the awareness of abuse and its types as

well as the strategies to deal with abuse among female teachers. It was also found that, as Table (2) shows, the incidence of violence increased in 2018 compared to 2009, which might be due to the community's awareness of how to report. The female teachers' awareness may be attributed to Saudi Arabia's issuance of a child protection system, which is governed by the Islamic law. Besides, Saudi Arabia signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognized the human rights of children and covered the four broad categories of child rights: survival, development, protection, and participation.

The findings showed that that a high percentage of female teachers' support of the child's asking for help from family by 64.1% compared to reporting to the police by (10.1%), which may be due to the nature of the Saudi family, which prefers to address such problems within the family. Jalal, et al., (2019) found that among the barriers of implementing learning from child protection training are customs and traditions and challenges in contact with families, which can be tackled through policy and legislation, awareness campaigns.

Finally, the present research found that there were no statistically significant differences between the teacher and teacher trainees' knowledge about the protection system.

### Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and the Family Safety Program, as well as the Council for Family Affairs (Children Committee) should activate their role in raising awareness against child abuse and educating all workers in the field of child abuse and how to report abuse. The competent authorities of child abuse should raise the awareness of different types of abuse among the members of the society to enable them to deal with such types of abuse appropriately. Training courses on awareness of types of abuse should be organized by competent authorities, targeting parents and teachers to equip

them with knowledge and skills to deal with and report different types of abuse. Further studies are required, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods to get a clear image child abuse of in terms of reasons, challenges, and solutions.

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