The effectiveness of a training program in developing professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students

Ayman Sayed Said abd-Elmoti (PHD)

Associate Professor of Social Work Fields Department
Faculty of Developmental Social Work
Beni-Suef University

Mohamed Saad Ali Farag (PHD)

Associate Professor of Social Group Work Department
Faculty of Developmental Social Work
Beni-Suef University

Abstract:

This research is aimed at verifying the effectiveness of a training program in developing the professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students. The researcher adopted a quasi-experimental approach. The sample includes (22) social workers working with autistic students in Beni-Suef City (experimental group). The training program was implemented for three months through weekly sessions with the experimental group. The researcher used a professional performance scale that has four dimensions as shown: scientific knowledge and professional information, professional skills and abilities, the professional directions. and professional experiences. The results of the research training program succeeded to develop this professional performance.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Training Program, professional performance, Social Workers, school bullying, autistic students.

Introduction:

One of the categories that must be considered is students with autism, because of the increasing number of children who suffer from this disorder in different cultures and nationalities around the world. In every country of the world, there are many children suffering from autism disorder, and their percentage is constantly increasing gradually, which calls for more support and assistance that should be directed to these children.

The Autism Society of America (1999) has published a statistic showing that autism occurs at a ratio of 1:500 for children. The Detroit Medical Center in the United States also announced that autism affects four to five children out of every ten thousand children, and the incidence of males is 3: 4 times the females. While in our Arab environment so far, there are no statistics that accurately determine the percentage of autism disorder among children (Youssef. 2010. P.P. 587-588).

While in Egypt, The National Research Center explained that the number of people with autism in Egypt ranges between one and one and a half million, according to recent statistics, stressing that the rates of the disease are increasing rapidly globally (The National Research Center. 2022).

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) include autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, and pervasive developmental disorders not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS), conditions that can be distinguished

from other childhood disorders by the presence of impairments in social interaction and communication, and repetitive or stereotyped behaviours. (American Psychiatric Association [APA]. 2000)

Understanding different behaviours in the bullying process within a social group is of pivotal importance to understanding the onset, progression and possible intervention in the bullying process. Among the behaviours that have been distinguished in the bullying process (Olthof, et al. 2011. Pp. 339-359).

Regardless of the label of victim, bully or bully-victim, children with ASD are involved in higher rates of bullying experiences than peers without ASD. Children with ASD become easy targets for bullies due to their unique and uncommon social skills and their lack of understanding social cues. For example, unique and uncommon comments, a breakdown in initiating or maintaining conversational topics, or a displayed lack of interest in developing or maintaining peer relationships may lead students with these characteristics to be perceived negatively and more vulnerable to the attacks of bullies (Sofronoff, et al. 2011. Pp. 355-372).

Another issue that contributes to bullying experienced by students with ASD is the fact that sometimes these students may not be aware of their own victimization (Frith and Hill. 2004).

Suggested some children with ASD may not have the ability to accurately interpret bullying situations. They suggested that this may not only encourage the bullying behaviors to continue but also prevent the students from reporting it to adults. Adults and caregivers involved in the lives of children with ASD may need heightened awareness of these issues and be ready to take corrective actions to prevent and eliminate bullying episodes. Unfortunately, research is just beginning to report on mediators of bullying in children with ASD, the perceived seriousness of the bullying and the likelihood of intervention by bystanders and adults (Gordon, et al. 2013. Pp. 169-180).

The most common categories are verbal, physical, indirect or social/relational, and cyberbullying. Verbal aggression comprises nicknaming, gossip or verbal threats; physical aggression includes beating, and damage to property; relational/social aggression, or social exclusion, includes gossip or exclusion with the intention to damage social status and/or self-esteem (Gredler 2003.pp. 699−700; Wang, Iannotti, Luk, & Nansel, 2010. Pp. 2094−2100). All participants play an integral role by experiencing, engaging in, or reinforcing the aggressive behavior.

Peer bullying among school-aged children is a major public health problem (Due, et al. 2005. Pp. 128−132) and holds short- and long-term consequences for all involved.

To date, few studies have examined whether children and adolescents with ASD are at greater risk of having a dual status of being both victimized and a perpetrator of bullying. (Rowley, E, et al. 2012. Pp. 1126–1134) assessed bullying behaviour with a sample of 100 children with an ASD using parental and teacher responses to two items from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman. 1997. Pp. 581–586): ''often fights with other children or bullies them'' and ''picked on or bullied by other children''. Parents, but not teachers, reported elevated rates of their children bullying others (13.7%); however, both parents and teachers reported elevated rates for the children being victimized (33 and 11.6%, respectively). A major limitation of Rowley et al.'s study is that the SDQ was not designed specifically to assess bullying behaviour and the two items used fail to address specific types of bullying behaviour (e.g., social, verbal, physical).

This is what was confirmed by the study of (Ahmed 2015), where that study proved the validity of the main hypothesis, which is "There are significant differences between the study sample average grades on the social skills scale differences using the Task Centered Model before and after the intervention in the professional social workers give the program the difference diagnostic skill.

This was also confirmed by the (Mohammed 2016) study, which showed that there were statistically significant differences at the significance level (0.05) between the use of professional practice based on evidence in the social work and development of the Knowledge, skills and Values sides of specialists working with disordered- autistic children .

The Eroglua & Kilicb (2020) study also indicated that: Both the ASD and ID groups experienced more victimization through verbal and emotional bullying than the TD group. There was no significant difference in the frequency of bullying perpetration between the groups. All groups were victimized mostly by their own male classmates and in the absence of their teacher from the classroom. There was a positive correlation between bullying victimization and severity of ASD (Mehtap Eroglua, et al. 2020).

Social workers with knowledge of autism can be valuable contributors to client- and family-centered healthcare services. That

study utilized a qualitative design to explore pediatric hospital social workers' experiences and perceptions when working with children and youth with autism and their families. Interviews with 14 social workers in a Canadian urban pediatric hospital highlighted perceptions of the needs of families of children with autism in the hospital and challenges and benefits related to the role of social work with these families. Results suggest that pediatric social workers may benefit from opportunities to develop autism-relevant knowledge and skills (Rae Morris, et al. 2018).

Social workers take on many roles, including that of clinician, consultant, educator, and advocate. Because of these various roles, it is important that school social workers (SSWs) be knowledgeable about all facets of ASD, including the diagnostic process, the assessment process, and the range of evidence-based intervention efforts (Amanda Borling, et al. 2009. P. 3).

There is evidence that individuals with disabilities experience crime, particularly violent crime, at rates higher than individuals without disabilities, and that victims who have some level of intellectual impairment are at the highest risk of becoming a crime victim (Sobsey, et. al.1995).

Because individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are generally taught compliance from a very young age, have difficulty picking up social cues, and may also have intellectual disabilities, they can be easy targets for criminals. Social workers and counselors assisting a crime victim on the autism spectrum should have specific training on counseling individuals with developmental disabilities or seek the assistance of a trained autism expert (Carolyn Gammicchia, et al. 2005. P. 1).

The social work profession has not yet taken a leadership role in addressing the myriad of challenges that individuals on the autism spectrum encounter across the lifespan. we argue that social workers are well-equipped to engage in research and practice aimed at promoting full and meaningful inclusion in society, for individuals on the autism spectrum. We highlight short- and long-term goals that provide the social work profession with a framework to engage in research, practice, education, and advocacy aimed at supporting individuals on the autism spectrum and their families.

It is beneficial to work with a social worker who has an understanding of the characteristics and gifts that someone with ASD possesses and experience working with people with ASDs. The social

worker can work with the child or youth in processing friendship and relationships concerns, difficulties with social skills, mood and anxiety, and provide help in various life transitions and tasks (such as leaving high school, looking for work, developing intimate relationships, etc) (Kevin Stoddart. 2011. P. 1).

Importance:

1- The current study is one of few to examine the types of bullying behaviour and aims to developing professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

2- Young people with autism spectrum conditions (ASC) are widely reported by parents and teachers to be bullied by peers during their school years. Research in this area is still in its relative infancy with the majority of studies quantitative in nature. (Judith Hebron,1 Neil Humphrey1 and Jeremy Oldfield2. 2015. P. 185)

3- The current study is also one of the examine the agreement between parent and child reports of bullying behaviours with a special need's population.

4- The findings of the current study will add to an emerging body of research in this area and assist in the development of prevention and intervention programs for adolescents with ASD.

Study Objectives:

The study in hand targets at meeting the following objectives:

The main objective: verifying the effectiveness of a training program in developing the professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students. This main objective can then be divided into the following sub-objectives:

1- verifying the effectiveness of the training program in developing the professional knowledge of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students**.**

2- verifying the effectiveness of the training program in developing the professional capabilities and skills of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students**.**

3- verifying the effectiveness of the training program in developing the professional attitudes of social workers in

dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students**.**

4- verifying the effectiveness of the training program in developing the professional experiences of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students**.**

Study Hypotheses:

This study seeks to verify the validity of the following main hypothesis:

There are statistically significant differences between the pre-and post-tests of the experimental group in favor of the post-tests on the professional performance scale in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students. This is achieved through the following hypotheses:

1- There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the pre-and post-tests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of scientific knowledge and professional information.

2- There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the pre-and post-tests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of Professional skills and abilities.

3- There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the pre-and post-tests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of Professional attitudes.

4- There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the pre-and post-tests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of Professional experiences.

Concepts:

1- Effectiveness:

Effectiveness refers to analyzing the correlation between the findings and goals possibly met and the efforts exerted to accomplish them. (Bryman. 2017. P. 115) And Effectiveness in this sense refers to in therapeutic social work is the ability to assist the client to achieve the objectives of the intervention in a suitable timeframe (El Sokary. 2000. P. 169).

Effectiveness in this study is the ability of the training program to the development of the professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

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2- **Training Program:**

It is a purposeful and planned activity to achieve the goals of the training process during a specific period; it is the result of identifying the training needs of the trainees. Also, it is a process through which a mutual interaction among all elements of the training process is carried out. (Kadushin, et al. 2014. P. 59)

In the context of this study, a training program refers to the planned procedures designed in line with the needs of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students and aim to develop their professional performance through a set of selected theoretical knowledge and applied skills and methods related to professional performance according to a specific time plan.

3- **professional performance**:

A process that involves a range of educational activities and experiences aiming at increasing professionals' knowledge, professional attitudes, skills, and abilities to work and help people. (Bruce. 2018. P. 106)

In the study in hand, professional performance is a process that shows the capability of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students to perceive professional knowledge, potentials, skills, attitudes, and experiences that have the characteristic of persistence. Hence, the goal is to improve their ability to deal with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

4- **school bullying:**

The definition of school bullying is critical for its academic and practical implications. In his widely cited definition of bullying, (Olweus, D. 1993) identified three prominent characteristics featured in bullying behavior: Negative actions, repetition, and power imbalance.

Talab and Suleiman define victims of school bullying as students who are subjected to deliberate negative actions, whether these actions are physical, verbal or social, by other students who are stronger than them to control them (Talab, Suleiman. 2019. P. 2619).

school bullying in this study includes the following types of bullying: psychological, social, physical, verbal, cyber, sexual, and racist bullying.

5- **autistic students:**

National Society for Autistic Children defines autism as a severely incapacitating life-long developmental disability which typically appears during the first three years of life. It occurs in approximately five out of every 10,000 births and is four times more common in boys than girls. It has been found throughout the world in families of all racial, ethnic, and social backgrounds. No known factors in the psychological environment of a child have been shown to cause autism. (Edward, et al. 1977. Pp. 146-148).

It is a disorder in social relations with others resulting from the inability to understand emotional expressions, especially in expressing them in the face, or in language, and this affects social relations with the emergence of some typical behavioral manifestations (Khalifa, Saad. 2007).

Methodology:

The current study is a quasi-experimental study aiming to determine the impact of an independent experimental variable (effectiveness of a Training program) on a dependent variable (professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students). The study followed an experimental approach based on one group experimental group. Data were analyzed by using SPSS 26 version. The current research used both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data analysis.

The study used a Simple random sample survey of a population of (22) social workers working with autistic students at elementary and preparatory schools in Beni-Suef City.

The study was implemented from 1/9/2021 to 21/4/2022. The training program was implemented over three months through weekly sessions, and the study tools were represented in the professional performance scale.

Tools:

The professional performance scale has four dimensions as shown: the dimension of Scientific knowledge and professional information for social workers, which contains (14) items, the dimension of Professional skills and abilities of social workers which contain (14) items, the dimension of Professional attitudes for social workers which contain (14) items. The dimension of Professional experiences of social workers contains (14) items. In total the

professional performance scale contains (56) items. The scale used the triple Likert method and included the following options: agree=3; neutral=2; and disagree=1.

Validity, Reliability and Stability of the Scale:

1- **Content Validity:** the preliminary version of the scale was presented to (10) reviewers, who are specialists in social work and group work. They examined the professional performance scale and expressed their opinions on the stability of the scale items that contribute to the aims of the study To verify the content validity of the scale. In light of the arbitrators' review, the number of the scale statements reached 56.

2- **Internal Consistency:** Internal Consistency: the scale was applied in its final form to a sample of (5) social workers. The correlation coefficients were calculated by the index to which they belong. The correlation coefficients between the scale dimensions and the scale as a whole were calculated, the following table illustrates this.

Table (1): The correlation coefficients between dimensions.

Dimensions	Pearson Correlation
The Scientific knowledge and professional information	0.86
The Professional skills and abilities	0.84
The Professional attitudes	0.83
The Professional experiences	0.85
Total	0.85

Table (1) shows that all the professional performance scale dimensions for social workers relate to each other and correlate with the whole degree of the scale, with a statistically significant correlation at a significant level (0.01). They achieve a good level of confidence in the tool and reliability of the results, so the researcher can rely on it in the current study.

3- **Scale Reliability:**

Table (2): Results of the reliability of the professional performance scale for social workers using the Spearman-Brown correction and the Alpha Cronbach Coefficient.

Scale Dimensions	The Spearman-Brown	Alpha Cronbach Coefficient
Professional Performance Scale	0.85	0.86

The table above shows that most of the coefficients of the variables have a high degree of reliability, thus their results are reliable.

4- Stability Reliability:

The stability of the scale was calculated using the re-application method as one of the statistical methods for measuring the stability, which ranges between (-1, +1), where the scale was applied to (5) individual social workers and then re-applied at an interval of two weeks, and the correlation coefficient was calculated between The two applications were carried out using the Pearson correlation coefficient, where the total reliability coefficient was (0.85).

Training program:

The researcher prepared, designed and implemented the training program pursuing the system and role theories, which comprises inputs, transformative processes and outputs. The inputs included human resources (e.g. social workers, trainers and researchers), logistics (e.g. location, equipment, and technological methods), time, and governing rules. The transformative processes were represented in the training methods used, interaction, discussions, lectures and meetings conducted by the researcher. Eventually, the outputs were represented in providing social workers with knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience on the dimensions of their professional performance.

The training program involved the following framework:

1- Objectives:

The main objective of the training program is to develop the professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students, which is attained through the following sub-objectives:

a) Developing professional knowledge of social workers.
b) Developing professional capabilities and skills of social workers.
c) Developing professional attitudes of social workers.
d) Developing professional experience of social workers.

2- Foundations and criteria in terms of which the training program is designed:

a) Main objective and sub-objectives of the study.
b) Correlation between the training program goals and those of the institution in which it is applied.
c) Knowledge framework of the group work methodology.
d) A researcher's interviews with experts and specialists in dealing with towards autistic students.

e) A researcher's utilization of his/her knowledge and experience in assisting the experimental group (trainees) during the implementation of the training program.

3- Strategies:

- Persuasion
- Group interaction
- Knowledge presentation
- Cooperation
- Compression
- Team work

- Group experience reinforcement
- Social learning
- Encouragement
- Modeling
- changing attitudes

4- Techniques:

- Group discussion
- Role-play
- Self-learning
- Encouragement
- Flyers, hand-outs and illustrations

- Lecturing
- Symposia
- Field visits
- Exchange of experiences
- Connection

5- Content: The training program comprises three phases:
Elementary phase:

Here, the research population is examined, the application of the program in an institution is authorized, and a pre-assessment is applied.

Executive phase:

The training program besides its implications are practiced to develop professional performance of social workers working with towards autistic students (Those who are subjected to school bullying).

The training sessions (3 three-hour meetings a week) were

conducted along a duration of three months, which makes the total training hours 108.

The training program addressed a set of constituents and topics that would boost the professional performance of social workers functioning with towards autistic students (Those who are subjected to school bullying). The following is a summary of the activities included in the program in terms of intended timeline:

First month (2-10-2021 to 28-10-2021): the following areas were covered:

- Exposure of the experimental group to a pre-assessment.
- Professional knowledge of social workers engaging with towards autistic students.
- Professional capabilities and skills of social workers engaging with towards autistic students.

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- Professional attitudes of social workers engaging with towards autistic students.
- Professional experiences of social workers engaging with towards autistic students.

Second month (6-11-2021 to 2-12-2021): the following areas were covered:

- Discussing the tasks and duties of a social worker with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.
- Holding a discussion on how to build capacities in social workers.
- Presenting a range of professional experience social workers share.
- Presenting various experiences on the effective professional performance of social workers.
- Training in tackling school bullying issues towards autistic students (psychological, social, physical, verbal, cyber, sexual and racist bullying).

Third month (4-12-2021 to 30-12-2021): the following areas were covered:

- Presenting various models of institutions working with towards autistic students (Those who are subjected to school bullying) in some schools and countries.
- Explaining the professional skills that social workers are required to possess when in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.
- Training in situations related to intervention with towards autistic students.
- Presenting the needs and problems of towards autistic students.
- Discussing the qualities that should be available in a social worker who in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.
- Applying a post-assessment.
- Evaluating the training program.

The training program was designed in terms of many scientific methods that helped the researcher and trainees benefit from the training program contents. These methods include group discussion, lectures, brainstorming, workshops, behavioral modeling, and Power Point presentations.

Finally, the training program was executed as a result of the collaborative efforts of the researcher, experts, and leaders of the Education Directorate in Beni Suef city .

Closure phase:

At this point, a closing ceremony is prepared for the training program, in which the ups of the program and training activities are discussed with the members of the experimental group. Later, the researcher holds another meeting for the experimental group, in which he applies a post-assessment to identify the effect of the experimental variable, which is "the effectiveness of a training program" on the dependent variable, "the development of the professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students."

6- Skills on which the program is built:

a) Initiating social relationships.
b) Analyzing and observing actions and reactions of school bullying towards autistic students.
c) Managing meetings.
d) Time management and investment.
e) Utilizing institutional and societal capabilities.
f) Skill in individual and group interviews.
g) Professional assessment skill in in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

Results:

The study results are explained in terms of the demographic variables of the experimental group along with validating the study hypotheses, conducted by calculating the values of mean, standard deviation and applying T test to one sample as follows:

1- Demographics Characteristics of the study sample (Experimental Group)

Table (3) Social workers distribution according to Age: N= 22

Variables	Frequency	%	Mean	SD
21 - 30	4	18.18%		
31 - 40	9	40.91%		
41 - 50	6	27.27%	37.73	8.83
Over 50 year	3	13.64%		
Total	22	100%		

The data in table (3) refers to the age of social workers; period (31-40) at 40.91% is the highest, while the (over 50) age period increased by 13.64% is less than the age of the total sample.

Table (4): Social workers distribution according to Gender:N= 22

Variables	Frequency	%
Male	9	40.91%
Female	13	59.09%
Total	22	100%

The data in table (4) refers to social workers, according to gender that 59.09% female ratio is greater than the proportion of male 40.91% of the total sample.

Table (5): Social workers distribution according to Experience age: N= 22

Variables	Frequency	%	Mean	SD
1 – 5 year	5	22.73%		
6 – 10 year	7	31.82%		
11 – 15 year	6	27.27%	10.23	5.28
More than 15 years	4	18.18%		
Total	22	100%		

The data in table 5 refers to the experience age, it is clear that 31.82% of the sample proportion experience an age of (6-10) years, while 18.18% of the sample more than 15 years.

2- Results related to study hypotheses

Results of the main hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences between the pre- and post- tests of the experimental group in favor of the post-tests on the professional performance scale in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students, The following table presents the related results:

Table (6) Differences between the pre- and post- tests of the experimental group in favor of the post-tests on the professional performance scale:

Professional Performance Scale						
Measure	Mean	SD	T value	T(Table)	Level of Significance	Effect Size Eta Sq
Pre-test	26.05	6.871	21.120	2.518	Significant (0.01)	.830
Post-test	42.24	9.368				

Based on the above table, it is evident that calculated T value (21.120) is larger than that of tabulated T (2.518) at the significance level of 0.01. Yet, the impact factor value (ETA) is .830. This implies that the experimental group witnessed significant differences that led to developing their professional performance after being exposed to the training program. Given this, it is normal to accept the major null hypothesis: there are statistically significant differences between the average scores of the experimental group before and after the application of the training program regarding professional

performance development of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

Results of the first sub-hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the pre- and post-tests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of scientific knowledge and professional information, the following table presents the related results:

Table (7) Differences between the mean scores of the pre-and post-tests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of scientific knowledge and professional information:

Scientific Knowledge and Professional Information						
Measure	Mean	SD	T value	T(Table)	Level of Significance	Effect Size Eta Sq
Pre-test	25.43	3.376	18.546	2.518	Significant (0.01)	.697
Post-test	40.49	4.955				

Based on the above table, it is evident that calculated T value (18.546) is larger than that of tabulated T (2.518) at the significance level of 0.01. Yet, the impact factor value (ETA) is .697. This implies that the experimental group witnessed significant differences that led to developing their academic and professional knowledge after being exposed to the training program. Given this, it is normal to accept the first sub-hypothesis: there are statistically significant differences between the average scores of the experimental group before and after the application of the training program regarding the development of academic and professional knowledge of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

Results of the second sub-hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the pre- and posttests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of Professional skills and abilities, the following table presents the related results:

Table (8) Differences between the mean scores of the pre-and post-tests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of Professional skills and abilities:

Professional Skills and Abilities						
Measure	Mean	SD	T value	T(Table)	Level of Significance	Effect Size Eta Sq
Pre-test	25.23	4.211	17.799	2.518	Significant (0.01)	.568
Post-test	41.45	5.149				

Based on the above table, it is evident that calculated T value (17.799) is larger than that of tabulated T (2.518) at the significance level of 0.01. Yet, the impact factor value (ETA) is .568. This implies that the experimental group witnessed significant differences that led to developing their professional potentials and skills after being

exposed to the training program. Given this, it is normal to accept the second sub-hypothesis: there are statistically significant differences between the average scores of the experimental group before and after the application of the training program regarding fostering professional potentials and skills of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

Results of the third sub-hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the pre and posttests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of Professional attitudes, The following table presents the related results:

Table (9) Differences between the mean scores of the pre and posttests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of Professional attitudes:

Professional attitudes						
Measure	Mean	SD	T value	T(Table)	Level of Significance	Effect Size Eta Sq
Pre-test	24.35	4.609	18.597	2.518	Significant (0.01)	.761
Post-test	44.05	7.009				

Based on the above table, it is evident that calculated T value (18.597) is larger than that of tabulated T (2.518) at the significance level of 0.01. Yet, the impact factor value (ETA) is .761. This implies that the experimental group witnessed significant differences that led to developing their professional attitudes after being exposed to the training program. Given this, it is normal to accept the third sub-hypothesis: there are statistically significant differences between the average scores of the experimental group before and after the application of the training program regarding fostering professional attitudes of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

Results of the fourth sub-hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the pre and posttests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of Professional experiences; The following table presents the related results:

Table (10) Differences between the mean scores of the pre and post-tests in favor of post-tests on the dimension of Professional experiences:

Professional Experiences						
Measure	Mean	SD	T value	T(Table)	Level of Significance	Effect Size Eta Sq
Pre-test	21.46	4.596	17.676	2.518	Significant (0.01)	.717
Post-test	41.32	7.174				

Based on the above table, it is evident that calculated T value (17.676) is larger than that of tabulated T (2.518) at the significance level of 0.01. Yet, the impact factor value (ETA) is .717. This implies

that the experimental group witnessed significant differences that led to developing their professional experience after being exposed to the training program. Given this, it is normal to accept the fourth sub-hypothesis: there are statistically significant differences between the average scores of the experimental group before and after the application of the training program regarding fostering professional experience of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

Accordingly, the results of the pre/post assessments applied to the experimental group indicate the presence of statistically significant differences in favor of the post one after applying the experimental variable to members of the experimental group, which reflects the efficacy of the training program in boosting the professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

Discussion:

The study findings validated both the main hypothesis and the sub- hypotheses, which implies the effectiveness of the training program in developing the professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students. This is evidently seen in the various outputs that appeared in the performance of social workers during the implementation period.

In addition, the program provided a great deal of professional knowledge in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students: laws and legislations for the autistic students, requirements and needs of this group, which was shown by a study (Gredler 2003; Wang, Iannotti, Luk, & Nansel. 2010) that argued that training programs and courses can lead to increasing the knowledge of social workers Further, the training program contributed to providing social workers with many professional capabilities and skills concerning addressing autistic students, including communication, problem-solving and decision-making. These findings were in accordance with those of a research (Ahmed. 2015), stressing that social workers, intervening with autistic students groups, are entitled to acquire specific skills which should match the nature of the group they work with in terms of their professional and scientific capabilities.

Similarly, the findings indicated that social workers acquired a variety of modern trends in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students. many studies (Rae Morris, et al. 2018 & Mehtap Eroglua, et al. 2020) highlighted the importance of

educating social workers modern trends in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

More, the study findings stressed the importance of professional experience gained by social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

This is fulfilled through experience integration of social workers as well as years of expertise in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students. Supporting this, one research (Mohammed. 2016) emphasized that a social worker is required to attend several training courses and conferences in order to attain plenty of experiences concerning the intervention with autistic students.

Based on this, it is possible to come to the conclusion that the study findings resulted in the introduction of a set of outputs: determining the professional performance dimensions of social workers and the effectiveness of the training program in fostering the professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students.

To conclude, it is obvious that the study findings have greatly enriched the group work method as a discipline as shown in both validating the efficacy of the training program in developing the professional performance of social workers in dealing with the negative effects of school bullying towards autistic students and determining four dimensions of professional performance of social workers, in contrary to previous studies that did not tackle such dimensions. This was noticed in the discussions, interactions, lectures and workshops that the training program handled.

And social workers should take responsibility to protect children with special needs against peer bullying, as their risk for peer bullying is higher than for TD students.

According to the researcher, the success of the program besides the fulfillment of the study objectives and outputs can all be attributed to the proper preparation of the program, the availability of different resources, the variety of training methods applied in the training program, and discussing possible hardships and resolving them rapidly.

Study Limitations:
- Difficulty of administrative procedures to accept the application of the study in the institution.
- Social workers are preoccupied with administrative work in the schools.

- Administrative procedures slowed in the Education Directorate in Beni Suef.

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