

## Picture-Based Program for Raising Awareness of Preschool Children Regarding Self-Protection from Sexual Harassment

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### Abstract:

**Background:** Sexual harassment is a significant real public problem that can seriously affect any child regardless of gender and occurs at all socioeconomic levels. **Aim of the study** was to evaluate the effect of picture-based program on awareness of preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment. **Subjects & Methods: Design:** A quasi-experimental research design was utilized. **Setting:** The study was conducted in four governmental nursery schools at Zagazig city. **Subjects:** A sample of 92 preschoolers randomly selected from east and west educational administrations. **Tool of data collection:** A structured interview questionnaire consists of two parts; socio demographic characteristics of children, and awareness of preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment. **Results:** The study results revealed that there was a statistically significant differences in children's total mean scores of awareness regarding self-protection from sexual harassment pre-post program. Before implementation of the program, total mean score of awareness was  $5.50 \pm 2.94$  compared to  $10.83 \pm 2.42$  at the post-program phase. The multivariate analysis identified that preschool children's gender and living with both parents were the statistically significant independent positive predictor of their awareness score. Conversely, child's age, residence, birth order and social class were negative predictors. **Conclusion:** The program's implementation was shown to be successful in raising preschool children's awareness regarding self-protection from sexual harassment. **Recommendation:** Implementing the developed program on a larger scale in the study settings and in similar ones to confirm its beneficial effects in addition to further studies for developing more specialised children-centered interventions to empower children with self-protection skills in order to protect Egyptian children from the threat of sexual harassment.

**Keywords:** Picture-based, Self-protection program, Preschool children, and Sexual harassment.

### Introduction

Children are the future generation that their existence has to be preserved. Children of today are the adults of tomorrow and must grow up in a secure and caring environment. According to Egypt Census 2017, children under the age of 17 years constitute 40 % of the total population. A large proportion of the Egyptian population. <sup>(1)</sup> Unfortunately, children are the frequent victims experiencing sexual, physical, or emotional harassment, which represents a serious and complicated public health issue. By witnessing so many cases of sexual harassment against children and its deteriorating effect, nation's generation will experience the devastation. <sup>(2)</sup>

Sexual harassment is any action, behaviour, or gesture that is sexually

inappropriate and causes others to feel humiliated, embarrassed, uncomfortable, or unsafe. <sup>(3)</sup> It can take the form of verbal, nonverbal, physical, or visual displays of sexual interest. Verbal sexual harassment includes teasing, making jokes that smelt of sex, unwanted dating invitations. While non-verbal sexual harassment includes unwanted sex movements, genital flashing, and flirtatious facial expressions. Rape and touching another person's body are examples of physical sexual harassment. <sup>(4)</sup> Children of any age or gender may be the victims of this crime, however most of those victims are females who are the targets of male offenders. Harassment can occur to anyone in the community and is typically committed by someone the victim knows. <sup>(5)</sup>

It is estimated that sexual harassment accounts for 1% of the world's disease burden; this percentage cuts across all social, ethnic, religious, cultural, economic, and educational levels in all communities worldwide. <sup>(6)</sup> Studies show that 30% of children are sexually abused before the age of 6, despite the fact that child sexual harassment has a very secretive nature and many cases are never reported. <sup>(7)</sup> Those preschool children high vulnerability for being sexually harassed is due to they are younger, weaker, and unable to defend themselves against craftier older offenders, they are more easily intimidated and are less likely to recognise the wrong doing of the abusers. In addition, harassment usually occurs in private areas with the harassers being the children's caregivers. <sup>(8)</sup>

Sexual harassment cause considerable dysfunctions and severe negative consequences on the victimized children as anxiety and depression; threaten physical or emotional well-being; causing age-inappropriate sexual behavior and behavioral problems in addition it also affect the families, social environment and the entire society. <sup>(9)</sup>

Child sexual harassment may be caused by numerous factors, the most important of which include inappropriate and stressful parent-child interactions and behaviors, economic and cultural problems, child personality traits and lack of parenting skills. However, children's lack of proper sex education may be the most significant factor. <sup>(10)</sup> Therefore, it is recommended that children should be taught the names of their organs and how to prevent further harassment in the event of abuse during the preschool period, and it is also advised that children learn that they are not have to do anything an adult tells them to do. The preschool children in need for reinforcing that children should respect each other, and it is inappropriate to touch another person's private parts. Also, reminding children to always tell parents or another trusted adults if anyone ever touches his or her private parts. <sup>(11)</sup>

Self-protection skills can be effectively taught to children are as early as three years

or when they are developmentally ready to learn the right names of their organs especially private areas. Thus, teaching self-protection skills are starting at home with the parent and progresses from preschool to high school. <sup>(12)</sup> <sup>(13)</sup> Self-protection skills help children to stay safe from being sexually abused. The focus of sexual self-protection is to train children to effectively identify subtle indicators of abuse, respond correctly to the abusive situations or threats and report the situation to the parent or trusted adults. <sup>(14)</sup> Additionally, children should be aware of some safety rules in daily interactions with people around and know how to distinguish between safe touch, unsafe touch, and confusing touch; and the child should say "No" when they feel threatened or scared by bad behaviors of strangers; and the child also needs to know how to escape. <sup>(15)</sup> <sup>(11)</sup>

Nurses can screen and educate the preschoolers through children-centered interventions and program, conveying knowledge of concepts and strategies proposed to be helpful to avoid sexual harassment by giving them the necessary information regarding sex and sexual identity, teaching them the three R's (recognize, resist, report), as well as other concepts as the perpetrators can also be well-known people, and shaping their attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding sexuality. <sup>(16)</sup>

### **Significance of the study**

In Egypt, many children are subjected to various forms of harassment which is never acceptable. Harassment of children is frequently concealed since it is a source of shame that neither the perpetrator nor the victim wants to reveal. <sup>(17)</sup> According to Goal 16.2 of the Egypt Vision 2030 Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs), children have a right to be protected from all forms of violence, in particular, neglect and abusive treatment. Thus, protection of children against harassment is considered a crucial contemporary goal that begins from infancy. <sup>(18)</sup>

There are previous Egyptian studies implemented educational intervention for mothers to protect their children from sexual harassment. <sup>(19)</sup> <sup>(20)</sup> <sup>(21)</sup> However, the children spend a considerable time apart from

their mothers and need to know how to stay safe and how to protect themselves from potential harassment situations especially the perpetrators are often known to the child. Due to the scarcity of the programs that targeting children, the current study aimed to evaluate the effect of picture-based program of on awareness of preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment in response to the Egypt vision 2030.

### Aim of the study

The present study aimed to evaluate the effect of a picture-based program on awareness of preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment.

### This aim is fulfilled through the following objectives:

- Identify awareness of preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment.
- Develop and implement a picture-based program for raising awareness of preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment.

### Research hypothesis:

- Awareness of the preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment improved after the implementation of the program.

### Subject and methods

**Research design:** A quasi-experimental research design (pretest and posttest) was utilized to carry out this study.

**Setting:** This study was conducted at four nursery schools randomly selected from Zagazig city through multistage random sampling technique as follow:

**Stage 1:** The researchers list all nursery school at East and West educational administrations of Zagazig City (34 and 40 nursery schools, respectively).

**Stage 2:** From the available nursery schools, the researchers randomly selected two nursery schools from East administration (Abd El Latif Hassanien & Gazeerat Al Sa'ada

nursery schools) and two nursery schools from West administration (Al Taiba & Kafr Al Ashraaf nursery schools).

**Stage 3:** In this stage, two classes were randomly from the selected nursery schools.

**Stage 4:** All names of children in the selected classes were put in a jar and the researchers randomly selected the participants according to the predetermined sample size.

**Sample:** A sample of 92 preschool children selected randomly from the above mentioned nursery schools.

### Sample size calculation

The sample size was 92 preschool child, it was calculated by software Epi-info package at level of confidence 95%, margin of error 5% and power of test were 80%, assuming average knowledge regarding sexual harassment among preschool children is 26.0% <sup>(17)</sup> from 9486 preschool children assigned to all nursery schools at Zagazig city, and the least percentage of improvement after the intervention program.

**Tool of data collection:** A structured interview questionnaire in Arabic language was developed by the researchers after reviewing the related literature. It contains two parts as follow:

**Part I:** Socio-demographic data of the participants: This part is filled by mothers and used to assess demographic characteristics and social class of the children. It entails questions about age, sex, residence, birth order of the child. It also contains data about parent's age, educational level, occupation, family income, family size, crowding index and social class. Social class is based on **EI-Gilany et al.** <sup>(22)</sup> with total score of 48, classified to high  $\geq 70\%$ , medium  $< 70\% \geq 40\%$  and low  $< 40\%$ .

### Part II: Awareness of preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment

This part is developed by the researchers in a pictorial form as it consists of 15 pictures to assess children's awareness of self-protection from sexual harassment. It

contains three domains and each domain entails number of pictures, these domains are;

▪ **Recognition of Privacy domain:**

This domain consists of four pictures (Pictures 1, 2, 3 and 4) to measure the children's recognition of their bodies privacy including knowing that their bodies are very precious and belong to them only, knowing private areas in their bodies, the fact that no one has the right to see or touch these private parts of the body and who is permitted to perform private activities as bathing and clothing.

▪ **Innocent and Inappropriate Touch domain:**

This domain consists of four pictures (Pictures 5, 7, 8 and 10) which assess the child's understanding the difference between innocent and inappropriate touch, as well as how to say "no" when someone touches you inappropriately or when a harasser pressures you with candy or gifts as a request for any inappropriate physical contact.

▪ **Reactions to sexual harassment situations domain:**

It measures the child's awareness of safety rules on how to confront sexual harassment situations. It includes seven pictures (Figure No. 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15) that show how the child should behave to respond when encountering harassment behavior and dangerous situation as when someone offers him or her a candy or a gift without parent's permission; when a relative or stranger tries to touch private body parts; when a stranger asks the child to go somewhere with him without consulting parents; when someone either relative or stranger hold the child and kiss him or her and ask not to tell parents, and reporting the situation to parents or trusted person.

**Scoring system:**

The studied children's answers were compared with the model key answer, one score was given for correct answer and zero score was given for wrong answer and unknown answer. According to the studied

children's responses, a total score < 50 % was considered as unsatisfactory awareness (Less than 7.5 points), while a score of  $\geq 50\%$  - < 75% was considered partially satisfactory awareness (from 7.5 to less than 11.25 points) and  $\geq 75\%$  was considered as satisfactory awareness (From 11.25 to 15 points).

**Content validity and reliability**

The tool was revised by three experts in the fields of community and pediatric nursing; no content modification was made in accordance with the panel's judgment on the clarity of sentences, appropriateness of content, and sequence of items. Reliability of the tool was approved by Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, which was performed to confirm its internal consistency, and its value was 0.90.

**Pilot study**

Prior to beginning data collection, a pilot study was conducted on 8 children (10% of the total sample), in order to ascertain the study tool's feasibility, objectivity, applicability, clarity, sufficiency, and internal consistency as well as to identify any potential flaws in the methodology or instrument. Those children in the pilot study were included in the main sample size as there were no modifications.

**Field work:**

The fieldwork was carried out within the period of four months, starting from February 2022 to the end of May 2022.

**Educational interventional program:**

The researchers designed a picture-based program which is age-appropriate to the preschool children and built on their actual capabilities and needs. This program was carried out through the phases of preparatory, assessment, planning & implementation, and evaluation phases.

**Preparatory phase:**

It involves reviewing the recent relevant national and international literatures using textbooks, periodicals, internet, and online

journals in the different aspects concerning sexual harassment in preschool children for preparing the tools of the study.

#### **Assessment phase:**

This phase involved securing the official permissions from directors of the nursery schools after formal letters from Faculty of Nursing, Zagazig University. Then the researchers interviewed the children and their parents mainly mothers to collect pretest. At the beginning of interview, the researchers welcomed the children and their parents, explained the purpose, duration, and activities of the study, and obtained their consent. After then, a pre-test was administered to assess studied children's awareness regarding self-protection from sexual harassment. The socio-demographic part of the questionnaire was answered by mothers. The data collected during this phase served as the basis for subsequent comparisons to assess the program's effectiveness. Each questionnaire required an average of 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

#### **Planning phase:**

Based on the findings obtained from the data analysis of the assessment phase, and relevant literature, the researcher developed the program sessions contents according to the children's' needs and the study aim. The program's goals and objectives were created in the form of a booklet using the identified needs, prerequisites, and inadequacies.

#### **Implementation Phase:**

The program was conducted through six main interactive learning sessions for small groups (5-10) of preschool children in the four nursery schools. The length of each session was variable according to children's responses and active participation, as well as the time available, and the content of each session. However, to ensure exposure of all children to the same learning experience, all children received the same content using the same teaching methods, media, and same activities. To start with the initial session, the objectives of the program were clarified. Besides, the children and their parents were

informed concerning the sessions' time, the stages of the study, content, and extent. Each session began by a summary regarding what was provided during the preceding session and objectives of a new one, taking into consideration the use of simple language to suit the level of understanding of the children.

Demonstration, role-playing, stories and reinforcement were all used as teaching methods. Different teaching materials were also used such as videos, benches besides pictures for more understanding. The researchers motivated and reinforced the children by rewarding and supporting them to encourage the child, foster learning and enhance active participation. The researchers used different ways of communication with the children to build trust relationship and encourage them to report any sexual harassment that occurred without fear for their mothers or school managers. Skills practice/role play was used to identify probable threats of harassment situations and how to react with it by using physical and verbal active techniques. The researchers were available two days/ week from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. A copy of the educational program booklet was given to each child and the nursery schools at the end of the educational intervention. Parents mainly mothers participate as partners in program implementation for more assurance of the children and empowered them by increasing their awareness to prevent child harassment that ensures enduring improvements in children's awareness.

#### **Evaluation phase:**

The post-test was administered immediately after the implementation of the program to evaluate the effectiveness of this program by comparing the change in children's awareness regarding self-protection from sexual harassment with the pretest.

#### **Administrative and ethical considerations**

The Zagazig University Faculty of Nursing's Scientific Research Ethics Committee provided official approval. Official letters from the educational administrations was approved. Parents of the studied children

were given a thorough explanation of the study's objectives before providing their informed consent. Through randomization, each child had an equal chance of taking part in the study. A code number assigned to each child was carefully used to ensure the confidentiality of the obtained data and anonymity. The children in the study participated voluntarily, and this was supported by the fact that they were made aware of their right to discontinue the study at any time. Finally, the data gathering and program implementation processes did not interfere with the flow of work in the study settings.

### Statistical analysis

Data entry and statistical analysis were done using SPSS 23.0 statistical software package. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages for qualitative variables, and means and standard deviations and medians for quantitative variables. Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the reliability of the developed scales through their internal consistency. Qualitative categorical variables were compared using chi-square test. Whenever the expected values in one or more of the cells in a 2x2 tables was less than 5, Fisher exact test was used instead. Spearman rank correlation was used for assessment of the inter-relationships among quantitative variables and ranked ones. In order to identify the independent predictors of awareness, multiple linear regression analysis was used and analysis of variance for the full regression models was done. Statistical significance was considered at p-value <0.05.

### Results

**Table 1** reveals that, the preschoolers' age ranged between 3 and 6 years, with mean  $4.53 \pm .83$  years and 54.3 % of them were females. As displayed, 62 % of the preschool children were from rural area and 93.5 % of them were living with both parents. Regarding birth order, 37% of them had last birth order ranks.

**Table 2** shows that 67.4 % of the

preschool children's fathers aged above 35 years, with a mean of  $29.9 \pm 4.08$  years, whereas 62% of fathers had secondary education. Regarding fathers' job, 52.2% of them were employee. As for the mothers, their age ranged between 20 and 39 years, with a mean of  $29.9 \pm 4.08$  years. About 62% of the mothers had secondary education and 76.1 % were house wives. For 47.8 % of the families, the monthly income was just enough for daily needs and 70.7 % of them consisted of 5-6 members. Whereas, the crowding index was less than two persons per room in 93.5 % of the families and 60.9 % of them had high social class.

**Table 3** reveals that the mean score of recognition of privacy domain increased from 2.13 (SD = 1.52) in the pretest to  $3.86 \pm .38$  (SD = 2.7) in the posttest with statistically significant difference ( $p < .000$ ), which indicates a statistically significant improvement after the program.

Regarding awareness about innocent and inappropriate touch, **Table 3** indicates that the mean score increased from .19 (SD = .42) in the pretest to 2.4 (SD = 1.96) in the posttest, with statistically significant difference ( $p < .000$ ). In terms of awareness about reaction to sexual harassment, **Table 3** reveals a statistically significant difference in scores between pretest and posttest ( $p < .000$ ). The mean score increased from 3.17 (SD = 1.47) in the pretest to 4.53 (SD = .65) in the posttest, which indicates a statistically significant improvement.

Also, it is evident in **Table 3** that there was a statistically significant differences in children's total scores of awareness regarding self-protection from sexual harassment pre-post program. Before implementation of the program, the total mean score of awareness was  $5.50 \pm 2.94$  compared to  $10.83 \pm 2.42$  at the post-program phase which indicates significant improvement in the preschool children's awareness' regarding self-protection from sexual harassment.

**Figure 1** illustrates that 60.9 % of the participants had unsatisfactory awareness pre-intervention compared to 4.4% after the

intervention. Whereas, 55.4 % of the preschool children had satisfactory awareness regarding self-protection from sexual harassment after implementation of the intervention.

According to **Table 4**, the multivariate analysis identified that the prevention program, preschool children's gender and living with both parents were the statistically significant independent positive predictor of their awareness score. Conversely, child's age, residence, birth order and social class were negative predictors.

## Discussion

The present study developed and implemented sexual harassment self-protection program targeting preschoolers due to the scarcity of such programs. This is due to that parents cannot always fully monitor and care their children 24 hours a day to protect them and unfortunately harassment may still occur because parents believe that their children have been left with trusted persons. This is corroborated by previous studies of **Yu et al.** <sup>(23)</sup> ; **Wulandari et al.** <sup>(13)</sup> ; **Russell et al.** <sup>(24)</sup> and **Rumble et al.** <sup>(25)</sup>, and **Rahimi Khalifeh Kandi et al.** <sup>(11)</sup> which emphasized that it is imperative to empower preschool children by teaching them self-protection measures to offend themselves against any sexual threats.

The present study hypothesis was that awareness of the preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment will be improved after the implementation of the program. This hypothesis was supported by the current study results which indicated that preschool children's awareness was increased when comparing pre-program with post-program mean scores, indicating improvement. These findings are in agreement with the previous studies which indicated that teaching the children to identify possible situations of abuse and learning to use of self-protection skills against sexual harassment can help to raise their awareness and subsequently minimize these antisocial behaviors in a society. <sup>(26) (17) (10) (27)</sup>

Furthermore, the current study multivariate analysis confirmed that the implementation of the program proved to be an independent positive predictor of the preschool children's awareness scores, which indicated the success of the program. This is certainly attributed to the appropriate design of the content and process of the program which was developed on a picture-based format to be applicable to and built upon the age and social circumstances that preschoolers would encounter in the real world, enhancing active participation and interactions of the children.

These findings are consistent with the previous Egyptian study of **Aboelmagd et al.** <sup>(17)</sup> who found that preschoolers' knowledge and practices regarding prevention of sexual harassment have been improved after educational program carried out in Damanhour and Minia nursery schools. Similarly the Turkish study of **Citak Tunc et al.** <sup>(28)</sup> showed that the body safety training program increase the child sexual abuse prevention and skills of self-protection in Turkish preschool children. Likewise, **Rahimi Khalifeh Kandi et al.** <sup>(27)</sup> demonstrated that educational programs implemented to teach children how to defend themselves against sexual abuse can significantly lower the rate of harassment and abuse among children.

Also, in agreement with the aforementioned study results, **Gubbels et al.** <sup>(29)</sup> revealed that educating and training children to be aware of sexual abuse can lessen the incidence of abuse in children, which may subsequently reduce the risk of emotional and psychological disorders later in life. This knowledge and awareness include learning about the sexual abuse, behaviors of sexual predators, empowerment skills and preventive programs. Additionally, **Rahimi Khalifeh Kandi et al.** <sup>(11)</sup> recommended that children's books should contain educational materials on self-protection against sexual abuse. These materials include recognizing appropriate and inappropriate touch, resistance methods, and notifying a trusted adults about sexual abusive situation.

On contrary, the previous Egyptian study of **Yossif and Elbahnasawy** <sup>(20)</sup> found that there was no significant difference between pre and post implementation of sexual harassment preventive program regarding participants' agreement that such educational programs will help in prevention of child sexual harassment as the participants believe that the only way to prevent child sexual harassment is when authorities put restrictive laws against the child's harasser and the community at large must take active role in such prevention.

Concerning recognition of privacy domain, the program has been shown to be successful in raising preschool children's awareness of the privacy of their bodies, which was significantly increased after the program, indicating improvement. This success is of great importance since the child must learn that his or her body is theirs and no one is allowed to embarrass them. Consistently, a similar study conducted in Turkey by **Kemer et al.** <sup>(30)</sup> developed a training program based on creative drama method to learn preschool children about body recognition and body safety for prevention of child sexual abuse and found a statistically significant improvement in the children's awareness of recognize parts of the body and body safety techniques after the program. Also, **Aboelmagd et al.** <sup>(17)</sup> showed significant improvement of preschooler's knowledge regarding sense of private body parts after sexual harassment preventive program and **Citak Tunc et al.** <sup>(28)</sup> found statistically significant pretest-posttest differences between scores for the subscales of appropriate and inappropriate recognition.

Thereby, **Yu et al.** <sup>(23)</sup> emphasized on the importance to establish family boundaries as well as the privacy of each member in the family should be respected as dressing, taking a bath, sleeping, or engaging in other private activities. Such safe environment in which the child grow and appropriate behaviors of their family members help in easily sharing anything that makes the child uncomfortable or afraid with trusted persons.

The present study showed a statistically significant increase in preschool children's awareness of innocent and

appropriate touch after the program, indicating improvement which is consistent with the previous studies of **Walsh et al.** <sup>(31)</sup>, **Jin et al.** <sup>(32)</sup> and **Rahimi Khalifeh Kandi et al.** <sup>(11)</sup> which reported that teaching the children self-defense skills and how to reject unwanted touching or sexual conversations from others help to protect themselves against inappropriate sexual requests. Thus, **Yu et al.** <sup>(23)</sup> emphasized on the importance that parents should avoid referring to their children's genitalia in slang and should make them aware of any abuse so that they can distinguish between suitable and inappropriate touch. The children should also be made aware that no one has the right to touch their bodies or force them to touch the bodies of adults or other children.

In terms of reaction to sexual harassment domain, the current study findings revealed statistically significant difference scores in pretest and posttest, indicating improvement in the awareness of the studied children about how to encounter sexual harassment situations. This finding might be due to the effectiveness of the intervention on teaching the children how to encounter in real harassment situations. Consistently, the studies of **Citak Tunc et al.** <sup>(28)</sup> in Turkey and **Maleki et al.** <sup>(33)</sup> in Iran, found a statistically significant pretest-posttest differences between scores for the subscale of say, doing, telling and reporting skills as a reaction of preschool children to sexual harassment situations. In similar line, **Rahimi Khalifeh Kandi et al.** <sup>(11)</sup> demonstrated that the child must firmly reject any unwanted behavior by saying no says no firmly to any unwanted behavior and that they can talk to their parents or other trusted adults if upsetting something happens to them. However, **Alsaifet al.** <sup>(26)</sup> found that teaching children how to defend themselves from sexual abuse may be their first exposure to sexual concerns and may therefore result in incorrect monitoring of child sexual assault.

This is also in agreement with **Aboelmagd et al.** <sup>(17)</sup>. Likewise, **Yu et al.** <sup>(23)</sup> emphasized on the importance of teaching children to say no in order to defend themselves against the inappropriate demands from others. Additionally, **Jordan et**



al. <sup>(10)</sup> suggested that teaching children about sexual issues as sexual difference and various forms of sexual abuse besides self-protection strategies against sexual harassers can help to reduce these antisocial behaviors in a society. Whereby, **Leung et al.** <sup>(34)</sup> revealed that six to seven years children who had training in strategies of self-protection in cases of sexual abuse can protect themselves than those who had no training, signifying the value of education in knowledge of children. Therefore, parents, teachers, educators and anyone with a role in education can contribute significantly to the sexual education of children through planning and practical measures.

The present study multivariate analysis demonstrated that preschool children's gender was a statistically significant positive predictor of their awareness score. However, **Rahimi Khalifeh Kandi et al.** <sup>(27)</sup> found that there is no significant difference between the boys and girls in ability to identify unreasonable sexual contact. Boys and girls showed significantly different levels of resistance to inappropriate sexual demands, with girls showing a higher rate of resistance, but boys showing more awareness of sexual abuse and self-protection strategies. Additionally, about 58% of girls discuss this issue with someone they can trust.

The present study showed that living with both parents was the statistically significant independent positive predictor of preschool children's awareness score. This finding could be due to supportive environment in which children live and also granted that children educated by their parents also frequently exposed to preventive information in their natural environment, thus offering a series of possible booster sessions to enhance further rehearsal and skill reinforcement. In this line, **Kenny et al.** <sup>(12)</sup> showed that preschoolers retain more information about appropriate genital terminology when taught by their parent therefore, parental involvement, opportunities for practice, repeated exposure, and concepts like identification of potentially abusive situations, age-appropriate sex education, and body safety skills should all be included in

self-protection programs to achieve the best results.

In this study, age was found to be a statistically significant negative predictor of children's awareness scores, i.e. older children have better awareness. This finding could be due to the known fact that the higher the age, the better the cognitive abilities are. Moreover, self-protection skills should be taught when children are developmentally ready and able to understand the medical names of their genitalia. In agreement with this finding, **Kenny et al.** <sup>(12)</sup> demonstrated that older children gain more knowledge in learning than younger children in numerous studies that examined effect of age on knowledge gains from sexual abuse education programs. Likewise, **Yu et al.** <sup>(23)</sup>, who emphasized that child's age is a significant factor in determining their knowledge of sexual issues and that older children have appropriate awareness and training on self-protection strategies. As well, **Rahimi Khalifeh Kandi et al.** <sup>(27)</sup> found that children between the ages of 9 and 11 had greater knowledge than children between the ages of 6 and 8, except when the child had learned the essential information from their parents. However, **Tirtawinata** <sup>(4)</sup> concluded that children can protect themselves from adult sexual harassment when they have proper knowledge and attitude towards sex organs in young age as early as three.

According to the findings of the present study's multivariate analysis, birth order and social class were statistically significant negative predictors of preschool children's awareness scores. This is supported by **Baker et al.** <sup>(35)</sup> who showed that risk factors for child abuse include low parental literacy, crowded households, limited social relationships, addiction, inability of parents to control behaviors of family members, social isolation of the family, and conflict between family members. In a similar vein, **Yu et al.** <sup>(23)</sup> indicated that culture and family income play a significant role in better educating exceptional children, and the need of these children to have access to the proper education program to protect themselves

against rape and sexual abuse is not to be discounted.

Finally, despite the fact that child sexual harassment is a controversial issue, hundreds of parents still chose to stay silent about it because they were embarrassed or scandalized to discuss their children's harassment situations. Therefore, in addition to teaching parents how to protect and safeguard their children and defend their rights against harassers, special focus is being devoted to teaching preschool children themselves self-protection skills since those children are more vulnerable to harassment.

### **Conclusion**

According to the study's findings, it was concluded that preschool children's scores in all domains of awareness were significantly increased after the program. The

study intervention led to statistically significant increase in total scores awareness of the preschool children, indicating improvement. Thus, the program's implementation was shown to be successful in raising preschool children's awareness regarding self-protection from sexual harassment.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made in light of the findings of the present study:

- Implementing the developed program on a larger scale in the study settings and in similar ones to confirm its beneficial effects and to reach more generalizable findings.
- Further studies for developing more specialized interventions to empower children with self-protection skills in order to protect Egyptian children from the danger of sexual harassment.

**Table (1): Demographic characteristics of studied preschool children (n=92)**

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percent
<b>Preschool children's Age/ years:</b>		
3-4	47	<b>51.1</b>
5-6	45	<b>48.9</b>
Mean ± SD	4.53 ± .83	
Rang	3 – 6 years	
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	42	<b>45.7</b>
Female	50	<b>54.3</b>
<b>Residence :</b>		
Rural	57	<b>62.0</b>
Urban	35	<b>38.0</b>
<b>Birth order of the child</b>		
Single	2	<b>2.2</b>
The first	29	<b>31.5</b>
The middle	27	<b>29.3</b>
The last	34	<b>37.0</b>
<b>Live with</b>		
Both of parents	86	<b>93.5</b>
One of parents	6	<b>6.5</b>

**Table (2): Demographic characteristics of the family of studied preschool children (n=92)**

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percent
<b>Father's Age:</b>	30	<b>32.6</b>
25-	62	<b>67.4</b>
35-		
	Mean $\pm$ SD	34.74 $\pm$ 4.59
	Rang	25– 45 years
<b>Father's Educational level:</b>		
Illiterate	7	<b>7.6</b>
Basic	5	<b>6.5</b>
Secondary	57	<b>62.0</b>
University	22	<b>23.9</b>
<b>Father's job:</b>		
Worker	44	<b>47.8</b>
Employee	48	<b>52.2</b>
<b>Mother's Age:</b>	45	<b>48.9</b>
20-	47	<b>51.1</b>
30-		
	Mean $\pm$ SD	29.9 $\pm$ 4.08
	Rang	20– 39 years
<b>Mother's Educational level:</b>		
Illiterate	8	<b>8.7</b>
Basic	8	<b>8.7</b>
Secondary	57	<b>62.0</b>
University	19	<b>20.7</b>
<b>Mother's job:</b>		
House wife	70	<b>76.1</b>
Work	22	<b>23.9</b>
<b>Family income:</b>		
Not sufficient & loan	42	<b>45.7</b>
Just sufficient to daily needs	44	<b>47.8</b>
Sufficient & saving	6	<b>6.5</b>
<b>Family size :</b>		
< 5	25	<b>27.2</b>
5-6	65	<b>70.7</b>
$\geq$ 7	2	<b>2.2</b>
<b>Crowding index:</b>		
<2	86	<b>93.5</b>
2+	6	<b>6.5</b>
<b>Social class:</b>		
Medium	<b>36</b>	<b>39.1</b>
High	<b>56</b>	<b>60.9</b>

Table (3): Total awareness of studied preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment pre –post the program (n=92)

Items		Pre (n=92)		Post (n=92)		$\chi^2$	(p-value)
		No	%	No	%		
<b>Domain 1</b> Recognition of Privacy	Satisfactory	36	39.1	80	87.0	47.61	<b>.000**</b>
	Partial satisfactory	0	0.0	12	13.0		
	Unsatisfactory	56	60.9	0	0.0		
Total mean score out of 4 Mean $\pm$ SD		2.13 $\pm$ 1.52		3.86 $\pm$ .38		t-test 10.71	<b>.000**</b>
<b>Domain 2</b> Innocent & Inappropriate Touch	Satisfactory	0	0.0	56	60.9	56.00	<b>.000**</b>
	Partial satisfactory	1	1.1	0	0.0		
	Unsatisfactory	91	98.9	36	39.1		
Total mean score out of 4 Mean $\pm$ SD		.19 $\pm$ .42		2.43 $\pm$ 1.96		t-test 11.07	<b>.000**</b>
<b>Domain 3</b> Reaction to Sexual Harassment	Satisfactory	0	0.0	2	2.2	45.63	<b>.000**</b>
	Partial satisfactory	36	39.1	84	91.3		
	Unsatisfactory	56	60.9	6	6.5		
Total mean score out of 7 Mean $\pm$ SD		3.17 $\pm$ 1.47		4.53 $\pm$ .65		t-test 6.69	<b>.000**</b>
Total awareness	Satisfactory	0	0.0	51	55.4	45.07	<b>.000**</b>
	Partial satisfactory	36	39.1	37	40.2		
	Unsatisfactory	56	60.9	4	4.4		
Total mean score out of 15 Mean $\pm$ SD		5.50 $\pm$ 2.94		10.83 $\pm$ 2.42		t-test 9.61	<b>.000**</b>

Figure (1): Comparison of total awareness among studied preschool children regarding self-protection from sexual harassment pre –post the program (n=92)

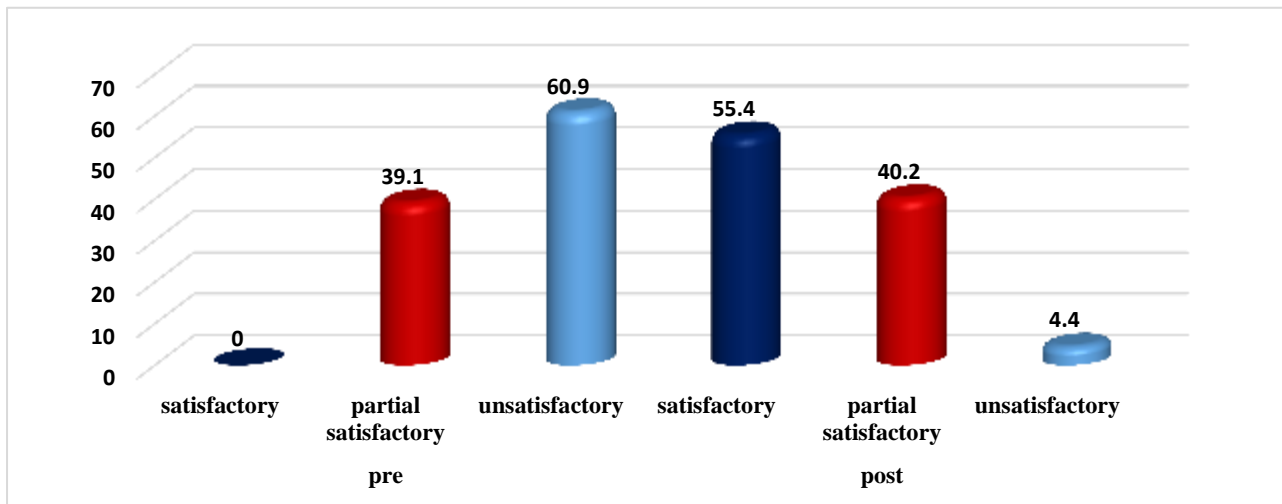


Table 4: Best fitting multiple linear regression model for the awareness score

Items	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	8.785	.458		19.195	.000
Program	.452	.007	.992	64.369	.000
Children age	-.016	.045	-.006	-.360	.719
Gender	.073	.075	.015	.972	.334
Residence	-.019	.078	-.004	-.242	.809
Birth order	-.078	.044	-.028	-1.769	.080
Living with both parents	.151	.152	.015	.992	.324
Social class	-.011	.011	-.017	-1.020	.310

R-square=0.98      Model ANOVA: F=595.33, p<0.001

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