



## Saudi Parents Perceptions towards Some Child Abuse and Neglect Related Factors

Fayez Saud Alreshidi<sup>1</sup>, Eman Mohamed Alshammary<sup>2</sup>, Faris Mohamed Alshammary<sup>3</sup>, Maaly Mohammad Alshammari<sup>3</sup>, Fai Mohammad Alshammari<sup>4</sup>, Fatmah Fahad Alreshidi<sup>1</sup>, Ebtehaj Saud Almughais<sup>1</sup>, Meshal Khunfur Alrashdi<sup>5</sup> and Hussain Gadelkarim Ahmed<sup>6,7\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Family Medicine, College of Medicine, University of Hail, Hail, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

<sup>2</sup> College of Medicine, University of Hail, Hail, Saudi Arabia

<sup>3</sup> College of Pharmacy, University of Hail, Hail, Saudi Arabia

<sup>4</sup> Clinical Nutrition Department, College of Applied Medical Sciences, University of Hail, Hail, Saudi Arabia

<sup>5</sup> Family Medicine Department, Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Hospital, MOH, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

<sup>6</sup> Department of Pathology, College of Medicine, University of Hail, Hail, KSA

<sup>7</sup> Department of Histopathology and Cytology, FMLS, University of Khartoum, Sudan

\*Corresponding e-mail: [hussaingad5@gmail.com](mailto:hussaingad5@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The impact of childhood abuse and neglect may remain beyond adulthood. This study aimed to assess Saudi parent's perceptions towards some child abuse and neglect related factors. **Methodology:** This was a descriptive study involved a cross-sectional survey of 400 Saudi parents. The sample was collected during Feb 2019 to Feb 2020. All responded parents were at the age of 20 years or older. **Results:** When manipulating parent's gender and perception towards child abuse associated factors, fathers were more aware of child abuse and neglect related factors than mothers. **Conclusion:** Saudi parent's perceptions towards child abuse and neglect related factors are high. Mothers, particularly younger ones need more efforts to improve their awareness towards some child abuse and neglect related factors.

**Keywords:** Child abuse, Neglect, Parents, Fathers, Mothers, Saudi Arabia

### INTRODUCTION

The harmful and penetrating effects of child abuse and neglect on a person can end into adulthood, but its impact can remain on an individual's life [1]. Many children exposed to emotional, sexual, and physical and other various forms of child abuse and neglect. Consequent psychopathology among the common difficulties confronted in various clinical settings. Children who experienced the uppermost proportions of abuse, present a particular complexity in the clinical assessment, which differ according to the specific caregiving environment. Management of psychopathology related to child abuse is mostly multimodal needs to take into account a diversity of exterior factors that may disseminate or impair symptoms [2].

For effective and successful child prevention settings, there should be an educational program to increase the knowledge of child abuse and neglect related risk factors. The influence of father-child abuse and neglect related

risk factors were not significantly different from the effects of mother's risk factors. It was well documented that child maltreatment is resolute by multifaceted risk domains, particularly parent-related risk factors. Such domains are essential in the prevention and reduction of child abuse and neglect [3].

Though child maltreatment is a common public problem and well recognized worldwide, wide spectrum addressing of this issue is still emerging in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia [4]. Though there are limitations in concrete data related to child abuse and neglect [5], studies assessed the physician in Saudi primary health centers indicated positive perception, best attitude, and respectable knowledge. Unfavorable, most of the child maltreatment still underreporting by these physicians as a consequence of many barriers including community traditions, unclear reporting strategy [6]. However, many gaps regarding child abuse and neglect in Saudi Arabia still need to be fulfillment by various researches, to stimulate further effective measures towards child maltreatment in the country. Thus the present study aimed to assess Saudi parent's perceptions towards some child abuse and neglect related factors.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a descriptive study involved a cross-sectional survey of 400 Saudi parents. The sample was collected during Feb. 2019 to Feb. 2020. All responded parents were at the age of 20 years or older. Parents were randomly selected from the general community regardless of social class, economic status, or education level. A purposeful questionnaire was designed and information was obtained during a personal interview. Besides demographical data such as age, gender, residence, education level, social class, family income, and family type, the questionnaire also included questions: Do you think to prohibit students' going to schools is a type of neglect; Do you think to prohibit child taking treatment is a type of neglect; Do you think that child clean lessness is a type of neglect; Do you think to prohibit child playing is a type of neglect; Do you think that child clean lessness is a type of neglect; Do you keep your child aware about sensitive parts of his/her body; parents need to know kids friends; Do you keep your child alone with strangers; Do you seriously listen to your kids when he/she want to talk about sensitive issues.

#### Ethical Consent

Each participant was asked to sign a written ethical consent before the interview.

#### Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using SPSS software. Frequencies and percentages were produced.

### RESULTS

Data from 400 Saudi parents (225 (56.2%) females and 175 (43.8%)) was interpreted. Most participants were at the age range 20-30 years followed by 31-40, and 41-50 years old representing 215 (53.8%), 108 (27%), and 59 (14.8%), in this order as shown in Figure 1.

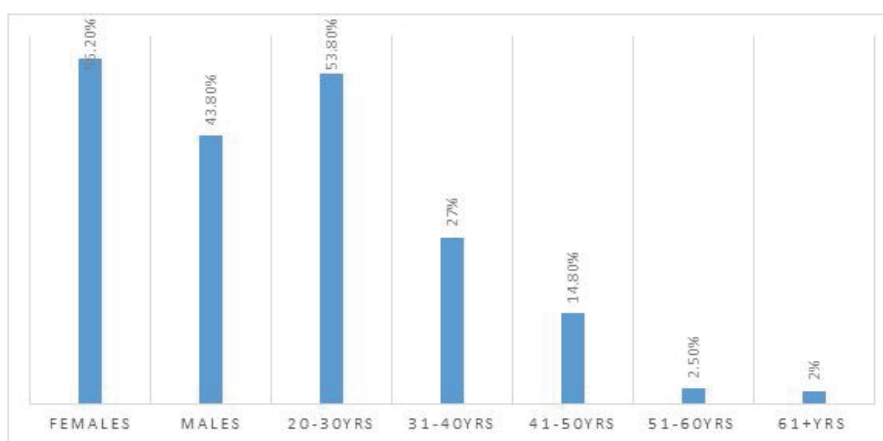


Figure 1 Description of the study subjects by age and gender

Table 1 and Figure 2, summarized the distribution of the study subjects by education and perception about child abuse associated factors. Only 11/400 (2.8%) consider that “prohibit students’ going to schools isn’t a type of neglect”. Out of the 11 parents, 7/11 (63.6%) were with  $\leq$  Secondary level of education.

About 13/400 (3.3%) parents believe that “prohibit child taking treatment isn’t a type of neglect”. Out of the 13 parents, 7/13 (53.8%) were with  $\leq$  Secondary level of education.

About 6/400 (1.5%) parents believe that “child clean lessness isn’t a type of neglect”. Out of the 6 parents, 3/6 (50%) were with the university level of education.

About 24/400 (6%) parents believe that “prohibit child playing isn’t a type of neglect”. Out of the 24 parents, 12/24 (50%), 8/24 (33.3%) were with university and postgraduate level of education, respectively.

On asking the parents “Do you keep your child aware about sensitive parts of his/her body?”, 22/400 (5.5%) don’t know, and 8/400 (2%) answered “No”. Out of these 30 parents, 19/30 (63.3%) and 9/30 (30%) were with university and  $\leq$  Secondary level, respectively.

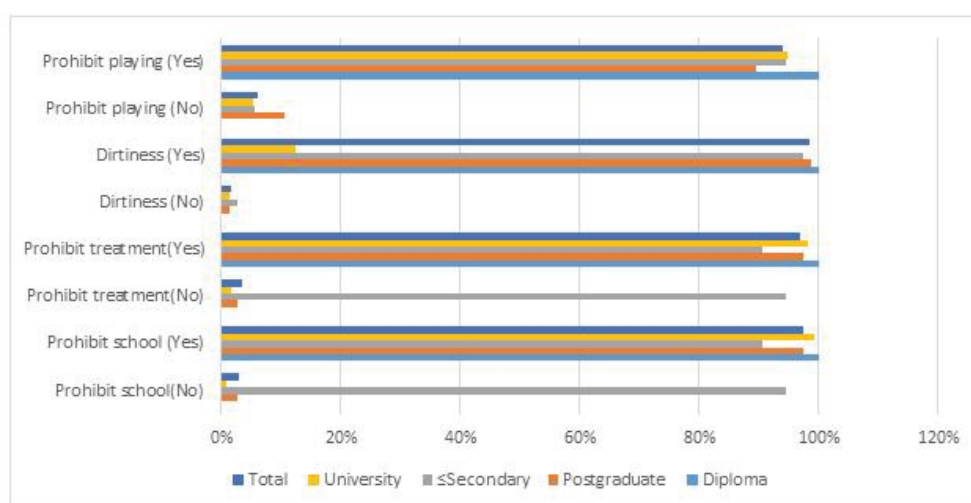
On asking the parents “Parents need to know kids friends?”, 3/400 (0.8%) don’t know, and 11/400 (2.8%) answered “No”. Out of these 14 parents, 6/14 (42.8%) and 5/14 (35.7%) were with  $\leq$  Secondary and postgraduate levels, respectively.

On asking the parents “Do you keep your child alone with strangers?”, 20/400 (5%) don’t know, and 74/400 (18.5%) answered “Yes”. Out of these 94 parents, 55/94 (58.5%) and 21/94 (22.3%) were with University and  $\leq$  Secondary level, one-to-one.

On asking the parents “Do you seriously listen to your kids when he/she want to talk about sensitive issues?” 3/400 (0.8%) don’t know, and 7/400 (1.8%) answered “No”. Out of these 10 parents, 4/10 (40%) and 3/10 (30%) were with postgraduate and  $\leq$  Secondary level, in that order.

**Table 1 Distribution of the study subjects by education and perception about child abuse associated factors**

Category	Variable	Diploma (N=17)	Postgraduate (N=77)	$\leq$ Secondary (N=74)	University (N=232)	Total (N=400)
Do you think prohibit students’ going to schools is a type of neglect	No	0	2	7	2	11
	Yes	17	75	67	230	389
Do you think to prohibit child taking treatment is a type of neglect	No	0	2	7	4	13
	Yes	17	75	67	228	387
Do you think that child clean lessness is a type of neglect	No	0	1	2	3	6
	Yes	17	76	72	29	394
Do you think to prohibit child playing is a type of neglect	No	0	8	4	12	24
	Yes	17	69	70	220	376
Do you keep your child aware of sensitive parts of his/her body	Don’t know	0	2	7	13	22
	No	0	0	2	6	8
	Yes	17	75	65	213	370
Parents need to know kids friends	Don’t know	0	0	2	1	3
	No	0	5	4	2	11
	Yes	17	72	68	229	386
Do you keep your child alone with strangers	Don’t know	2	5	2	11	20
	No	14	62	53	177	306
	Yes	1	10	19	44	74
Do you seriously listen to your kids when he/she want to talk about sensitive issues	Don’t know	0	2	0	1	3
	No	0	2	3	2	7
	Yes	17	73	71	229	390



**Figure 2** Parents by education and perception about child abuse associated factors

Table 2 and Figure 3, summarized the distribution of the study subjects by parent's gender and perception about child abuse associated factors. On asking parents "Do you think to prohibit students' going to schools is a type of neglect", out of the 11 answered "No", 7/11(63.6%) were females.

On asking parents "Do you think to prohibit child taking treatment is a type of neglect", out of the 13 answered "No", 8/13 (61.5%) were females.

On asking parents "Do you think that child clean lessness is a type of neglect", out of the 6 answered "No", 4/6 (66.7%) were females.

On asking parents "Do you think to prohibit child playing is a type of neglect", out of the 24 answered "No", 14/24 (58.3%) were females.

On asking parents "Do you keep your child aware about sensitive parts of his/her body", out of the 22 answered "Don't know", 11/22 (50%) were females and 11/22 (50%) were males, hence, out of the 22 answered "No", 4/8 (50%) were females and 4/8 (50%) were males.

On asking parents "parents need to know kids friends", out of the 3 answered "Don't know", 2/3 (66.7%) were females, hence, out of the 11 answered "No", 6/11 (54.5%) were males.

On asking parents "Do you keep your child alone with strangers", out of the 20 answered "Don't know", 10/20 (50%) were females and 10/20 (50%) were males, hence, out of the 74 answered "Yes", 43/74 (58%) were females and 31/74 (42%) were males.

On asking parents "Do you seriously listen to your kids when he/she want to talk about sensitive issues", out of the 3 answered "Don't know", 2/3 (66.7%) were females, hence, out of the 7 answered "No", 4/7 (57%) were males.

**Table 2** Distribution of the study subjects by parent gender and perception about child abuse

Category	Variable	Males (N=175)	Females (N=225)	Total (N=400)
Do you think prohibit students' going to schools is a type of neglect	No	4	7	11
	Yes	171	218	389
Do you think to prohibit child taking treatment is a type of neglect	No	5	8	13
	Yes	170	217	387
Do you think that child clean lessness is a type of neglect	No	2	4	6
	Yes	173	221	394
Do you think to prohibit child playing is a type of neglect	No	10	14	24
	Yes	165	211	376

Do you keep your child aware of sensitive parts of his/her body	Don't know	11	11	22
	No	4	4	8
	Yes	160	210	370
It's important for parents to know kids friends	Don't know	1	2	3
	No	6	5	11
	Yes	168	218	386
Do you keep your child alone with strangers	Don't know	10	10	20
	No	134	172	306
	Yes	31	43	74
Do you seriously listen to your kids when he/she want to talk about sensitive issues	Don't know	1	2	3
	No	4	3	7
	Yes	170	220	390

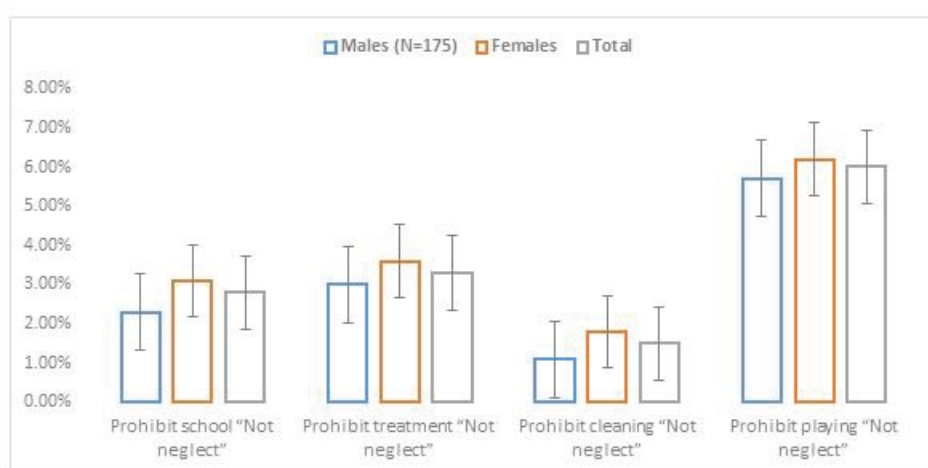


Figure 3 Parent gender by perception about child abuse

The distribution of the study population by age and perception about child abuse associated factors was abbreviated in Table 3. An elevated number of parents with negative perception toward child school right were observed at age range 31-40 years followed by 41-50 years representing 5/11 (45.5%) and 3/11 (27.3%), in this order. Negative perception toward child treatment right was predominant among parents >40 years, representing 10/13 (77%).

Negative perception toward child clean ness right was predominant among parents 41-50 years, representing 5/6 (83%).

Negative perception toward child playing right was predominant among parents 20-30 years followed by 41-50 years, representing 12/24 (50%), and 6/24 (25%), correspondingly.

On asking the parents “Do you keep your child aware about sensitive parts of his/her body?”, Most of those answered “don’t know” or “No” were found at the age group 20-30 years constituting 17/30 (56.7%).

On asking the parents “It’s important for parents to know kids friends?”, Most of those answered “don’t know” or “No” were found at the age group 31-50 years constituting 8/11 (72.7%).

On asking the parents “Do you keep your child alone with strangers?”, most of those answered “don’t know” were found at the age group 20-30 years followed by 31-40 years constituting 8/20 (40%) and 12/20 (60%), respectively. On the other hand, most of those answered “Yes” were found at the age group 20-30 years followed by 31-40 years constituting 34/74 (46%) and 21/74 (28.4%), one-to-one.

On asking the parents “Do you seriously listen to your kids when he/she want to talk about sensitive issues?”, Most of those answered “don’t know” or “No” were found at the age group 31-40 years constituting 4/10(40%).

**Table 3 Distribution of the study subjects by age and perception about child abuse associated factors**

Category	Variable	20-30 years	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+	Total
Do you think prohibit students' going to schools is a type of neglect	No	1	5	3	0	2	11
	Yes	214	103	56	10	6	389
Do you think to prohibit child taking treatment is a type of neglect	No	5	5	2	1	0	13
	Yes	210	103	57	9	8	387
Do you think that child clean lessness is a type of neglect	No	1	0	5	0	0	6
	Yes	214	108	54	108		394
Do you think to prohibit child playing is a type of neglect	No	12	3	6	2	1	24
	Yes	203	105	53	8	7	376
Do you keep your child aware of sensitive parts of his/her body	Don't know	10	6	2	2	2	22
	No	7	0	0	1	0	8
	Yes	198	102	57	7	6	370
It's important for parents to know kids friends	Don't know		0	1	2	0	3
	No	2	4	3	0	2	11
	Yes	213	103	54	10	6	386
Do you keep your child alone with strangers	Don't know	12	8	0	0	0	20
	No	169	79	44	8	6	306
	Yes	34	21	15	2	2	74
Do you seriously listen to your kids when he/she want to talk about sensitive issues	Don't know	0	2	0	1	0	3
	No	2	2	0	1	2	7
	Yes	213	104	59	8	6	390

## DISCUSSION

The limited literature on the matter of child abuse and neglect in Saudi Arabia, necessitate the multidimensional research addressing both caregivers and the community. As joint efforts, the present aimed to assess Saudi parent's perceptions towards some child abuse and neglect related factors. Collectively the Saudi community showing superior perception and better awareness towards child abuse and neglect related factors.

In the present study, only 2.8% of the studied parents, allude that "prohibit students' going to schools isn't a type of neglect". Education and going to school is regarded as part of the human right that has provided children with several rights [7]. Only 3.3% of parents consider that "prohibit child taking treatment isn't a type of neglect". This matter has a particular complexity, argument on whether vaccination should be made compulsory via law or it is for the parent to decide for their child. Legislating to render vaccination compulsory rises contradictory disputes. Legal duress may impinge on parent's right to pick out the best decision for their child. Debate is on the protection of a child against serious preventable diseases that rationalizes impinge on these rights [8]. Another issue in this contest is a parent's appeal to discontinue their child treatment in cases with momentous prognostic improbability and/or in cases with contradictory estimations within the medical team [9].

About 6% of the parents believe that "prohibit child playing isn't a type of neglect". Playing is an essential component among the factors required for the appropriate development of the children [10].

On asking the parents "Do you keep your child alone with strangers?", 5% answered "don't know", and 18.5% answered "Yes". Messaging with persons known only in the internet "stranger" in certain conditions is considered as interpersonal victimization. Involving kids in internet risky behaviors is more influential in explaining victimization than individual behavior alone [11].

When manipulating parent's gender and perception about child abuse associated factors. Males were more aware of child abuse and neglect related factors than females, which magnitudes more efforts slanted towards mothers.

Concerning age, negative measures were frequently related to the younger population in the present study. It is generally assumed that younger mothers are more likely to be involved in physical abuse. In a study using the mother's age at the time of birth, younger mothers have more frequencies of child abuse. Extended families, as well as, minority families' children were also reported to be at greater risk of child abuse [12].

Nevertheless, the present study provides enormous information for designing suitable future research, as well as

suitable community evidenced-based strategies to prevent child abuse, it has some limitations including its cross-sectional setting and qualitative procedures.

### CONCLUSION

Saudi parent's perceptions towards child abuse and neglect related factors are high. Mothers, particularly younger ones need more efforts to improve their awareness towards some child abuse and neglect related factors.

### DECLARATIONS

#### Acknowledgment

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#### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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