

Child Maltreatment Prevention Readiness in Saudi Arabia

This study was conducted in Saudi Arabia in 2011 with the aim of assessing the country’s readiness for the prevention of Child Maltreatment (CM). Using a multidimensional tool developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with several organizations from 5 middle income countries: Saudi Arabia, Brazil, South Africa, Malaysia and Republic of Macedonia. “Key-informants”* who are decision makers, senior managers and legislators in the field of CM, and a group of “experts” from Saudi Arabia (SA) were invited to participate and give an objective assessment of 10 dimensions that measure the readiness for implementing large-scale evidence based CM prevention programs in SA.

Areas of strength & weakness as seen by key-informants and experts:

Results: 10 DIMENSIONS scale of 1-10:

First, the areas of strength:

1. The availability of knowledge & scientific data on child maltreatment for all professionals in the field.
2. The availability of some local prevention programs however they are not on national level.
3. The Existence of legislation and regulations, "while conducting the study in 2011, the law of protection from abuse was under study. It has been passed and approved later in 2013".
4. The political will to address the problem of child maltreatment.
5. Community support for the non-governmental organizations and availability of (civil society) resources.

Second, the area of weaknesses:

1. Society’s attitude towards child maltreatment.
2. Poor human and material resources.
3. Poor communication & links between institutions.

DIMENSIONS	Key informants	Experts
1. Attitudes towards child maltreatment prevention	4.1	1.7
2. Knowledge of child maltreatment prevention	6.5	5
3. Scientific data on child maltreatment prevention	6	5
4. Current program implementation and evaluation	2	5.3
5. legislations, mandates and policies on child maltreatment prevention	4.9	3.6
6. Assessment of the strength of the will to address child maltreatment problem in Saudi Arabia	5.4	5.9
7. Institutional links and resources	4.9	3.6
8. Material resources	3.6	2.9
9. Human and technical resources	1.9	1.7
10. Informal social resources (non-institutional)	4.1	6
Total	43	40.1

Conclusions and Recommendations:

1. Child Maltreatment Prevention Readiness in Saudi Arabia is considered medium readiness (43%) in comparison to the five other countries that conducted the study (28% Brazil - 66% of Macedonia).
2. Evaluation of Key-informants (43%) was very close to expert evaluation (40%) of Saudi Arabia’s Readiness to implement evidence-based child maltreatment prevention programs at a national scale.
3. The governments and other institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia must support the areas of strength ,and work towards improving areas of weakness.

* Key-Informants in Anthropological research are individuals selected according to certain criteria that includes: knowledge, compatibility, age, experience, reputation and position providing the researcher or research team with the needed information about their culture.