

# Child Abuse and School Violence among Preparatory School Children in Assiut Governorate

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## Abstract:

Child abuse is a major pediatric problem with deleterious short and long term effects that last into adulthood. The World Health Organization estimates that 40 million children aged below 15 years fall victims to violence each year, even though abused children tend to keep quiet, rather than reporting it. The phenomenon of widespread violence among schoolchildren becomes an issue that generates enormous public concern and has become a focus of prevention in nursing. Besides, every child has a right to be protected from harm and to feel safe and secure in an education environment. **The aim** of this study is to detect child abuse and school violence among preparatory Schoolchildren in Assiut Governorate. A cross-sectional descriptive **design** was used in carrying out this study. This study was carried out in (4) districts of Assiut governorate; Assiut and Manflot (North Assiut), El-fath (East Assiut), and El-Ghanyiem (South Assiut) districts which were selected randomly from a list of geographical districts to constitute Assiut governorate. The main city and one village were selected randomly from each of the selected districts; the total sample size was 1247 preparatory students from first, second, and third grade, of both sexes and their age ranged between 13 to 15 years old recruited through the multi- stage random sampling technique. Data were collected during the period from the beginning of November 2013 to the end of April 2014 through using **the following tools**: 1) - A simple questionnaire which was developed by the researcher to collect relevant information and 2)-A child abuse scale which was adapted from El-bheary and Abodeef Child abuse scale (2003) to assess the types and severity of child abuse. **The results** of this study revealed that, the majority (88.5%) of the studied children was subjected to mild sexual abuse, followed by mild physical abuse (81.6 %), followed by less than two thirds (63%) of them faced mild emotional abuse while about one third of them suffered of moderate emotional abuse and only a small percentage (3.4%, 3.3%, 2.6%) experienced severe emotional, physical or sexual abuse at schools respectively. Highly statistically significant differences were found between the exposure of studied children to physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, their and their parents' characteristics, and their gender, grade level in preparatory schools, birth order, their mothers' occupation and family size. The present study **concluded that**, preparatory school children in Assiut Governorate were subjected to different forms of mild violence at schools in both urban and rural areas that all schools need to pay attention to. Unfortunately, mild sexual abuse was the most prevalent form of violence among studied children in preparatory schools. Girls tend to be the main victims of all types of violence at schools. Some characteristics of studied children and their parents were associated significantly with all types of abuse. Large family size (more than 6 members) was foremost associated significantly with all types of abuse. The study **recommended** close supervision of the students at schools, especially girls, and developing an extensive afterschool program, such as different sports, club and social activities.

**Key Words:** Child abuse, School violence, Child right

## **Introduction:**

Child abuse is one of the most prevalent traumatic experiences among children. Even though, children who are abused tend to keep quiet, rather than reporting it (UNICEF, 2015 and Stith, et al., 2009). According to the World Health Organization, child abuse includes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect and negligent treatment and exploitation (WHO, 2016 and Abbasi, et al., 2015). The yearly prevalence of child abuse reported in some developed countries was that, the prevalence of severe physical abuse varied from 4 to 16% while the prevalence of psychological abuse varied substantially across countries (10% in some developed countries) (Akmatov, et al., 2011).

Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, violence against children has increasingly been viewed as a violation of their fundamental human rights, in particular of their right to physical safety and psychological security and well-being (Rukundo, 2009). The phenomenon of violence spread strongly and its seriousness lies in the leak of violence inside the walls of schools that serves as places of education and instills values, principles and morality (The Egyptian Centre for Human Right, 2013).

Violence against children, in its different forms, is widespread in Egypt. Surveys demonstrate that the use of corporal punishment in schools may compromise the already very fragile learning process and, in many cases, drive children out of school (UNICEF, 2007). Corporal punishment is any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Mostly, that involves hitting (smacking, slapping, spanking) children, either with hands or with an implement (UNICEF, 2015).

School violence is any deliberate act that harms or threatens to harm a student, teacher or other school officials and interferes with the purpose of school. The different types of physical violence were kick, beat, slap, and pull hair among girls, pull cloths, use sticks or stones and sharp instruments among boys while the commonest forms of non physical violence were verbal victimization or call name, stealing and spitting (Ez-Elarab, et al., 2007). School violence has an impact on the social, psychological and physical well being of both students and staff and disrupts the teaching-learning process through fear, absenteeism (Selekman, et al., 2013 and Johnson, 2009).

Violence against children is unacceptable in any form, no matter what the circumstances are. Violence threatens children very survival and undermines their development. It erodes family structures, affects community's cohesion, jeopardizes education and consumes precious national resources. Freedom from such violence is a fundamental right- a right that leaders in Egypt, as in other countries, have promised to safeguard for all children, everywhere and at all times. However, violence is often condoned-or at least tolerated-as a way to instill discipline, to teach children appropriate behavior, to exploit them or to reinforce power relations. Violence against children is often hidden from view- a source of shame that neither the perpetrator nor the victim are willing to reveal. Many perpetrators are a parent, teacher or anyone else who should be protecting them (UNICEF, 2015).

The phenomenon of widespread violence among school-age children become an issue that generate enormous public concern and has become a focus of prevention in nursing (The Egyptian centre for human right, 2013). Violence against children in Egypt, and the continued beliefs on its value as a form of discipline require a concerted national response; clear national measures, as well as positive alternative discipline. This should be accompanied by strenuous efforts to promote social behavioral change among adults and children and also they need programs for prevention, protection and awareness (UNICEF, 2015).

### **Significance of the Study:**

The death of an 11-year-old boy is drawing attention to corporal punishment in Assiut schools, where victimization and exposure to violence has increased dramatically among school children. The World Health Organization estimates that 40 million children aged below 15 years fall victims to violence each year (WHO, 2014). Early identification, intervention and continued follow up are valuable strategies to prevent or decrease the impact of exposure to violence; therefore, this study was done to detect child abuse and school violence among preparatory school children in Assiut Governorate.

### **Aim of the Study:**

The aim of this study is to detect child abuse and school violence among preparatory schoolchildren in Assiut Governorate.

## **Subjects and method:**

### **Research Design:**

A cross-sectional descriptive design was used in carrying out this study.

### **Research Setting:**

This study was carried out in (4) districts of Assiut governorate; Assiut and Manflot (North Assiut), Elfath (East Assiut), and El Ghanyiem (South Assiut) districts which were selected randomly from a list of districts according to geography to constitute Assiut governorate. The main city and one village was selected randomly from each of the selected districts; from Assiut district, the selected city was Assiut and Dronka village, from Manflot district, Atamna village, from Elfath district, El Massara village, and from El Ghanyiem district, Aolad Mohamed village. After that, one public preparatory school for males and one for females were selected randomly from each city and each village. From Assiut, Taha Hanafy preparatory male school, Hoda Sharawy preparatory female school; from Dronka, Dronka preparatory male and female schools; from Manflot, Moheb Aub preparatory male and female schools; from Atamna, Eltaleaa preparatory male and female school; from Elfath, Mahmud Ateaa preparatory male school in Massara and Gad Elwahy preparatory female school; from El Ghanyiem, El Ghanyiem preparatory male and female schools, and from Aolad Mohamed, Omr Ebn Elkatab preparatory male and female schools. Afterwards, one class was selected randomly from each of the three academic years in each school.

### **Sampling:**

The study sample was recruited through the multi-stage random sampling technique. The total sample size was 1247 preparatory students from first, second, and third grade, of both sexes and their age ranged between 13 to 15 years old.

### **Tools of Data Collection:**

Two tools were used to collect the required data for this study:-

#### **1-A simple questionnaire:**

This was developed by the researchers in an Arabic form to collect relevant information and it included:-

- a)-Characteristics of the studied students as (sex, grade level and birth order).
- b)-Characteristics of the studied students' parents as (age, educational level, occupation, residence, family size and marital status).

## **2-Child abuse scale:**

It was adapted from Child abuse scale developed by Elbheary and Abodeef, (2003) to assess types and severity of child abuse and it was applicable for child age from 12 years and above. It includes 28 items which was modified by the researchers to 22 items. This scale consists of three subcategories; first category is to assess physical abuse and is composed of (5) questions, second category to assess emotional and negligence abuse composed of (12) questions and third category to assess sexual child abuse composed of (5) questions and the scoring system were reversed for (5) questions .The subjects responds on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = does not apply /or not, 2= rarely; 3 = occasionally 4 = often and 5= used a great deal). The scoring system of this scale was as follows; from 40 to < 50 was mild abuse, from 50 to < 60 moderate abuses and from 60 to < 70 sever abuse.

## **Method:**

An official permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Ministry of Education in each district in Assiut governorate and director of each preparatory school after explaining the purpose of the study. They were reassured about the confidentiality of the information.

### **Pilot Study:**

A pilot study was carried out on 10% (125) of preparatory students from all schools and grades, to test clarity and applicability of the study tools and to estimate the time needed to collect data. They were excluded from the sample.

### **Field of Work:**

The study was conducted over a period of six months; from the beginning of November 2013 to the end of April 2014. Data were collected three days per week from 9.00 AM to 1.00 PM; interviewing the studied children was conducted according to their chosen class in each school to collect data. Each interview took about 20 to 25 minutes. The study was conducted at the morning shift in all schools. Tools were reviewed by a jury

of experts in pediatric nursing, psychiatric nursing, community nursing and medical fields to test its contents' validity and the reliability was assessed for the second tool; child abuse scale by measuring its internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient method which was (0.97)

### **Ethical Consideration:**

A written informed consent was provided by a parent of each of the students participating in the study. Parents were secured that data will be confidential and used only for the research purpose.

### **Data Analysis:**

The obtained data were coded, analyzed and tabulated using SPSS version 16.0 statistical software packages. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages for qualitative variables, means and standard deviations for quantitative variables. P values < 0.05. Levels are considered statistically significant.

## Results:

**Table (1):** Characteristics of the studied children

Items	(n= 1247)	
	No	%
<b>Child sex:</b>		
Male	745	59.7
Female	502	40.3
<b>Mean age:</b>	14.3 ± 0.37	
<b>Grade level:</b>		
First	332	26.6
Second	363	29.1
Third	552	44.3
<b>Birth order:</b>		
First	242	19.4
Second	209	16.8
Third	160	12.8
Fourth	343	27.5
Fifth or after	293	23.5

**Table (2):** Characteristics of the studied children parents

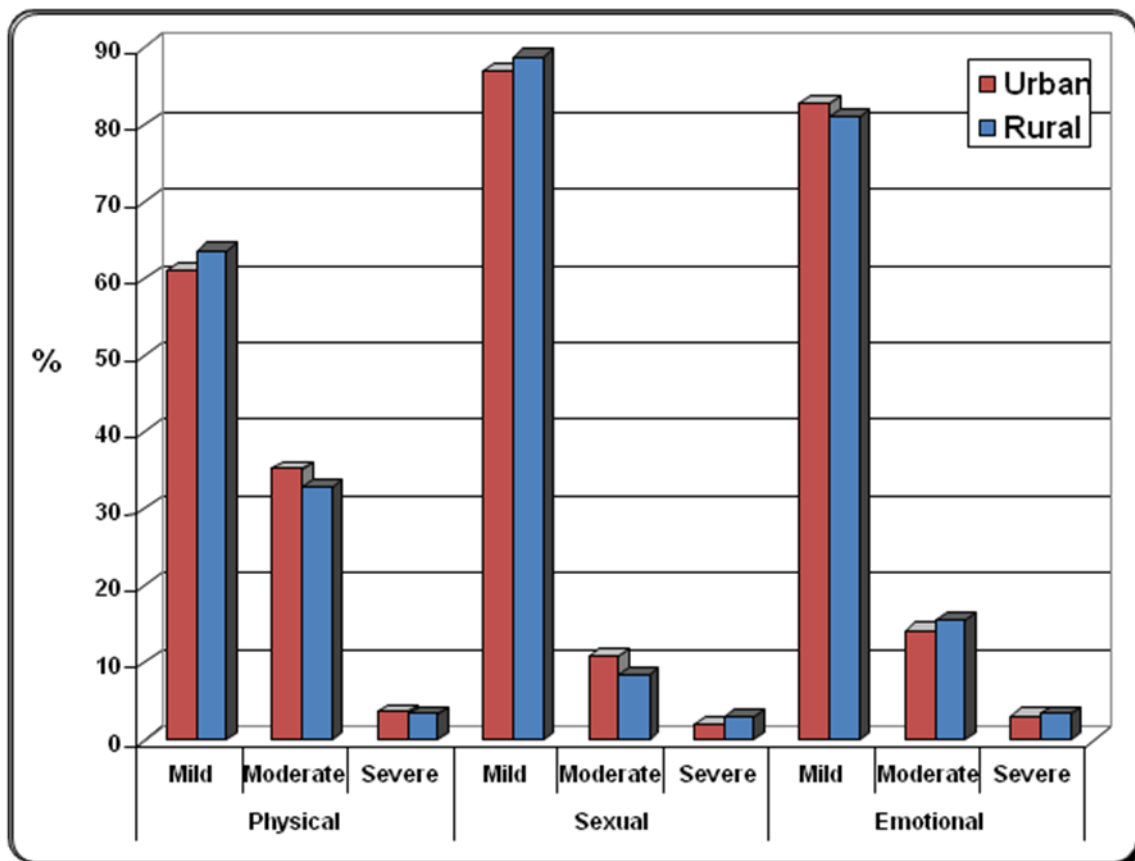
Items	(n= 1247)	
	No	%
<b>Father age: (n= 1202)</b>		
< 40 years	143	11.9
40 - < 60 years	727	60.5
> 60 years	332	27.6
<b>Father education:</b>		
Illiterate	261	20.9
Read & write	199	16
Basic education	359	28.8
Secondary	236	18.9
University or higher	192	15.4
<b>Father occupation :</b>		
Employee	358	28.7
Farmer	332	26.6
Free business	117	9.4
Skilled worker	151	12.1
Unskilled worker	203	16.3
Not work	26	2.1
Retired	60	4.8
<b>Mother age: (n= 1241)</b>		
< 40 years	734	59.1
40 - < 60 years	416	33.5
> 60 years	91	7.3
<b>Mother education:</b>		
Illiterate	645	51.7
Read & write	154	12.3
Basic education	223	17.9
Secondary	126	10.1
University or higher	99	7.9
<b>Mother occupation :</b>		
Employee	100	8
Housewife	1147	92
<b>Family size :</b>		
3 – 5 members	338	27.1
6 – 7 members	465	37.3
8 or more	444	35.6
<b>Residence:</b>		
Urban	303	24.3
Rural	944	75.7
<b>Marital status :</b>		
Married	1189	95.4
Divorce	9	0.7
Separate	49	3.9

45 fathers and 6 mothers were died



**Table (3)** Types and severity of child abuse among studied children  
(n= 1247)

Types of child abuse	Severity of child abuse					
	Mild		Moderate		Severe	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
<b>Physical abuse</b>	1017	81.6	189	15.1	41	3.3
<b>Emotional abuse</b>	786	63	418	33.5	43	3.4
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	1103	88.5	111	8.9	3.3	2.6



**Figure (1)** Types of child abuse in urban and rural areas in Assiut governorate

**Table (4)** Relation between characteristics of studied children, their parents and physical abuse

Items	Physical abuse						P-value
	Mild (n= 1017)		Moderate (n= 189)		Severe (n= 41)		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
<b>Child sex</b>							29.796
Male	571	76.6	142	19.1	32	4.3	(0.000)*
Female	446	88.8	47	9.4	9	1.8	
<b>Grade level</b>							21.293
First	297	89.5	31	9.3	4	1.2	(0.000)*
Second	291	80.2	56	15.4	16	4.4	
Third	429	77.7	102	18.5	21	3.8	
<b>Birth order:</b>							3.521
First	198	81.8	34	14	10	4.1	-0.898
Second	171	81.8	32	15.3	6	2.9	
Third	129	80.6	27	16.9	4	2.5	
Fourth	273	79.6	57	16.6	13	3.8	
Fifth or after	246	84	39	13.3	8	2.7	
<b>Father education:</b>							10.186
Illiterate	215	82.4	39	14.9	7	2.7	-0.424
Read & write	170	85.4	24	12.1	5	2.5	
Primary	164	84.1	27	13.8	4	2.1	
Preparatory	128	78	31	18.9	5	3	
University or higher	147	76.6	35	18.2	10	5.2	
<b>Mother education:</b>							7.031
Illiterate	534	82.8	93	14.4	18	2.8	-0.722
Read & write	124	80.5	23	14.9	7	4.5	
Primary	91	79.1	21	18.3	3	2.6	
Preparatory	91	84.3	12	11.1	5	4.6	
University or higher	76	76.8	18	18.2	5	5.1	
<b>Mother occupation :</b>							6.116
Housewife	942	82.1	166	14.5	39	3.4	-0.191
Employee	75	142.2	23	55.6	2	2.1	
<b>Family size :</b>							15.823
3-5 members	252	74.6	72	21.3	14	4.1	(0.003)*
6-7 members	393	84.5	60	12.9	12	2.6	
8 or more members	372	83.8	57	12.8	15	3.4	

**Table (5)** Relation between characteristics of studied children, their parents and emotional abuse

Items	Emotional abuse						P-value
	Mild (n= 786)		Moderate (n= 418)		Severe (n= 43)		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
<b>Child sex:</b>							0.039 (0.981)
Male	468	62.8	251	33.7	26	3.5	
Female	318	63.3	167	33.3	17	3.4	
<b>Grade level</b>							33.294 (0.000)*
First	214	64.5	115	34.6	3	0.9	
Second	262	72.2	90	24.8	11	3	
Third	310	56.2	213	38.6	29	5.3	
<b>Birth order:</b>							25.358 (0.001)*
First	172	71.1	63	26	7	2.9	
Second	133	63.6	72	34.4	4	1.9	
Third	103	64.4	52	32.5	5	3.1	
Fourth	182	53.1	144	42	17	5	
Fifth or after	196	66.9	87	29.7	10	3.4	
<b>Father education:</b>							.6.366 (0.784)
Illiterate	157	60.2	94	36	10	3.8	
Read & write	125	62.8	67	33.7	7	3.5	
Primary	131	67.2	58	29.7	6	3.1	
Preparatory	99	60.4	57	34.8	8	4.9	
Secondary	155	65.7	77	32.6	4	1.7	
University or higher	119	62	65	33.9	8	4.2	
<b>Mother education:</b>							12.638 (0.245)
Illiterate	403	62.5	221	34.3	21	3.3	
Read & write	97	63	54	35.1	3	1.9	
Primary	72	62.6	39	33.9	4	3.5	
Preparatory	79	73.1	24	22.2	5	4.6	
Secondary	82	65.1	40	31.7	4	3.2	
University or higher	53	53.5	40	40.4	6	6.1	
<b>Mother occupation :</b>							13.742 (0.008)*
Housewife	736	64.2	375	32.7	36	3.1	
Employee	49	52.1	39	41.5	6	6.4	
<b>Family size :</b>							41.664 (0.000)*
3-5 member	166	49.1	157	46.4	15	4.4	
6-7 members	315	67.7	140	30.1	10	2.2	
8 and more	305	68.7	121	27.3	18	4.1	

**Table (6)** Relation between characteristics of studied children, their parents and sexual abuse

Items	Sexual abuse						P-value
	Mild (n= 1103)		Moderate (n= 111)		Severe (n= 33)		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
<b>Child sex:</b>							3.061 (0.216)
Male	651	87.4	70	9.4	24	3.2	
Female	452	90	41	8.2	9	1.8	
<b>Grade level :</b>							19.546 (0.001)*
First	301	90.7	25	7.5	6	1.8	
Second	337	92.8	22	6.1	4	1.1	
Third	465	84.2	64	11.6	23	4.2	
<b>Birth order:</b>							36.295 (0.000)*
First	226	93.4	10	4.1	6	2.5	
Second	185	88.5	16	7.7	8	3.8	
Third	145	90.6	6	3.8	9	5.6	
Fourth	286	83.4	51	14.9	6	1.7	
Fifth or after	261	89.1	28	9.6	4	1.4	
<b>Father education:</b>							13.198 (0.213)
Illiterate	226	86.6	28	10.7	7	2.7	
Read & write	178	89.4	17	8.5	4	2	
Primary	177	90.8	17	8.7	1	0.5	
Preparatory	140	85.4	19	11.6	5	3	
Secondary	214	90.7	16	6.8	6	2.5	
University or higher	168	87.5	14	7.3	10	5.2	
<b>Mother education:</b>							23.005 (0.011)*
Illiterate	576	89.3	61	9.5	8	1.2	
Read & write	137	89	13	8.4	4	2.6	
Primary	100	87	11	9.6	4	3.5	
Preparatory	96	88.9	10	9.3	2	1.9	
Secondary	109	86.5	7	5.6	10	7.9	
University or higher	85	85.9	9	9.1	5	5.1	
<b>Mother occupation :</b>							56.146 (0.000)*
Housewife	1018	88.8	104	9.1	25	2.2	
Employee	82	87.2	7	7.4	5	5.3	
<b>Family size :</b>							28.846 (0.000)*
3 – 5 member	274	81.1	47	13.9	17	5	
6 – 7 member	427	91.8	27	5.8	11	2.4	
8 and more	402	90.5	37	8.3	5	1.1	

**Table (1):** Shows characteristics of studied children. The findings of the present study revealed that more than half of the students (59.7%) were males and about forty percent (44.3% ) of them were females, and their mean age were (14.3 ± 0.37 ), more than one fourth (26.6%, 29.1%) of them were in third, first and second grade levels of preparatory schools respectively. Concerning child birth order, the highest percentage of the studied children (27.5%) was ranked as the fourth child while only 12.8 % of them ranked as the third child in their families.

**Table (2):** Describes characteristics of studied children's parents. It was found that, 60.5% of their fathers' age ranged between 40 - < 60 years old; while 59.1% of their mothers' ages were less than 40 years. Regarding parents' educational level, it is noted that more than half of their mothers were illiterate and only (7.9%) of them had a university degree or higher while (28.8%) of their fathers had basic education and (15.4%) had a university degree or higher. As regards parents' occupation, it was observed that the vast majority (92%) of their mothers was housewives and the rest (8%) were employees while (28.7%) of their fathers were employees, (26.6%) were farmers and only (2.1%, 4.8%) of them were unemployed or retired respectively. Regarding the parents' marital status, family size and residence, it was found that the vast majority (95.4%) of them was married, more than two thirds (75.7%) of them were from rural areas and more than one third of them (37.3%, 35.6%) had more than 6 members in their families respectively

**Table (3):** Depicts the types and severity of child abuse among studied children. The results of the current study reveal that, the majority (88.5%) of studied children were subjected to mild sexual abuse, followed by mild physical abuse (81.6 %), followed by less than two thirds (63%) of them underwent mild emotional abuse while about one third (33.5%) of them suffered of moderate emotional abuse and 3.4%, 3.3%, 2.6% of them faced severe emotional, physical or sexual abuse respectively.

**Table (4):** Represents the relation between characteristics of studied children and their parents and physical abuse. Highly statistically significant relations were found between studied children physical abuse and their characteristics regarding their gender and grade level in preparatory schools. Also there were statistically significant relations between child physical abuse and their parents' characteristics regarding family size (P= 0.003). It is clear that female students were more subjected to mild physical abuse (88.8%) than males (76.6%) and that children in first grade level of

preparatory schools were exposed more to mild physical abuse (89.5%) than second and third grade levels (80.2%, 77.7%) respectively. As regards family size, children who live in families with 6 to 7 members were also considerably more subjected to mild physical abuse (84.5%) than those consisted of 3 to 5 members (74.6%). No statistically significant differences were found related to child birth order or parents' educational levels and occupations.

**Table (5):** Illustrates the relation between characteristics of studied children and their parents and emotional abuse. The results reveal that there were highly statistically significant relations between studied children emotional abuse, their and their parents' socio-demographic characteristics related to their grade levels in preparatory schools, birth order and family size respectively, while a statistically significant difference was found related to their mothers' occupations ( $P=0.008$ ). It was observed that studied children who were in second grade level of preparatory schools were considerably more subjected to mild emotional abuse than those in first and second grade levels (64.2%, 56.2%) respectively. Regarding birth order, mothers' occupations and family size, it was found that studied children who were with rank of first and fifth child or after in their families were more subjected to mild emotional abuse than others (71.1%, 66.9%) respectively. Also, studied children whose mothers were housewives were considerably more subjected to mild emotional abuse (64.2%) than those of employees; and children who live in families that consists of more than 6 members were also more subjected to mild emotional abuse (68.7 %, 67.7%) respectively.

**Table (6):** Demonstrates the relation between characteristics of studied children and their parents and sexual abuse. Highly statistically significant relations were found between studied children sexual abuse, their and their parents' characteristics related to their grade levels in preparatory schools, birth order, their mothers' occupations and family size ( $P=0.001$ ,  $P=0.000$ ,  $P=0.000$ ,  $P=0.000$ ) respectively, while a statistically significant relations was found related to their mothers' educational levels ( $P=0.011$ ). It is notable that studied children who were in second grade level of preparatory schools were considerably more subjected to mild sexual abuse (92.8%) than those in first and second grade levels and studied children who were with rank of first child in their families were considerably more subjected to mild sexual abuse (93.4%) than others. As regards their mothers' educational levels, occupations and family size, also studied children whose mothers were illiterate and housewives were considerably more subjected to mild sexual abuse (89.3%, 88.8%) respectively, than those whose mothers were

educated or employees. Finally, children who live in families with 6 -7 members were also more subjected to mild sexual abuse (91.8%) than others.

## **Discussion:**

Early years of life are the most significant in building a foundation for all future development as acquisition of positive sense and the ability to trust others (Frances, et al., 2014). Violence against children in schools is a feature of the "everyday violence" that violates children's human rights and causes them to suffer. While violence against children takes place in different settings, children who are abused tend to keep quiet, rather than reporting it (UNICEF, 2015 and Share, et al., 2013). Children's physical aggression in schools is important not only because the harm it inflicts, but also because it has short and long term consequences. Being exposed to violence may impair a child's capacity for partnering and parenting later in life, continuing the cycle of violence into the next generation (Finkelhor, et al., 2010 and Ez-Elarab, et al., 2007). Therefore, this study was done to explore child abuse and school violence among preparatory school children in Assiut Governorate.

The results of the current study reveal that more than half of studied children were males and about forty percent of them were females, 44.3% of them were in third grade level and more than one fourth were in first and second grade levels of preparatory schools. These findings are consistent with Abdallah, et al., 2015 and Share, et al., 2013 who found that, more than half of studied children were males, and Akmatov, et al., (2011) who showed that male children were at higher risk of all forms of child abuse. This higher risk is due to the high expectations boys bear, compared to girls, because boys are seen as future family breadwinners, especially in developing countries like Egypt. The findings also agree with Rutkowski, et al., (2011) who found that boys report more violence than girls in 33 of 41 countries, and with Ez-Elarab, et al., (2007) who indicated that the percentage of violent children was decreasing by advance of school grade. Concerning the child's birth order, the highest percentage of the studied children was ranked as the fourth child in their families. This finding was in consistence with Share, et al., (2013) who found that more than half of the studied students were the first or second child in their families in a similar study.

As for studied children parents' characteristics, about sixty percent of studied children's fathers aged between 40 - < 60 years old, while near sixty percent of their mothers' age were less than 40 years. These findings were in disagreement with Share, et al., (2013) who found that nearly half of the fathers aged from 31 to 40 years, one third of them aged from 41 to 50 years and fourteen percent were above 50 years, while more than half of the mothers aged from 31 to 40 years and one quarter aged less than 30 years old. Regarding the parents' educational level, it is noted that more than half of studied children's mothers were illiterate and only (7.9%) of them had a university or a postgraduate degree, while near one third of their fathers had a basic education and (15.4%) with a university or a postgraduate degree. These results were in contrast to Abdallah, et al. (2015) who found that only 36.1% of the fathers can read and write compared with the mothers who were (42.2%). Fathers with university education were 33.9% compared with the mothers who were (18.3%) of the studied children. These findings can be explained by the fact that the majority of the mothers were from rural areas where education of girls is still not of an importance in Assiut Governorate.

As regards parents' occupation, it was observed that the vast majority (92%) of their mothers were housewives while 28.7% of their fathers were employees and 26.6% were farmers. These results are in agreement with Afifi, et al., (2003) who found that most mothers were housewives (91.4%) in a similar study in Beni Suef, and with Douglas and Finkelhor, (2008) who stated that unemployment and financial difficulties are associated with increased rates of child abuse. Regarding the parents' marital status, family size and residence, it was found that the vast majorities (95.4%) of them were married, more than two thirds of them were from rural areas and more than one third of their families consisted of more than 6 members. These findings go on line with Ibrahim, et al., (2008) who reported that people living in high crowded places tend to be more violent and abusive.

The findings of the present study reveal that preparatory school children in Assiut Governorate were subjected to different forms of mild violence at schools in both urban and rural areas. Unfortunately, mild sexual abuse was the most prevalent form of violence among studied children in preparatory schools, where the majority of them were subjected to mild sexual abuse, followed by mild physical abuse, followed by less than two thirds (63%) of them faced mild emotional abuse, while about one third of them underwent moderate emotional abuse and only 3.4%, 3.3%, 2.6% of



them suffered of severe emotional, physical or sexual abuse respectively. These findings were in accordance with Afifi, et al., (2003) who reported that sexual abuse is often hidden within families and may not be revealed until the victim speaks of it later in life; also, parents might not be aware of the occurrence of sexual abuse or might refrain from mentioning it while disagrees with Ba-Saddik and Hattab, (2012) who found that emotional abuse was the most prevalent type of child abuse among pupils in basic school education where pupils reported high rates of emotional abuse (55.2%) at least once in their school lifetime in a cross –sectional study in Aden Governorate, Yemen. It also disagrees with Mekheimer, (2011) who found that physical abuse is the most common type and emotional abuse is the second among primary school teachers in the rural community in a study in Dakahlia Governorate, Egypt.

Regarding physical abuse, highly statistically significant differences were found between studied children physical abuse and their characteristics regarding their sex and grade level in preparatory schools. Also, there were statistically significant differences between child physical abuse and their parents' characteristics regarding family size. Unsurprisingly, female children were more subjected to mild physical abuse compared to males; and children in first grade level of preparatory schools were exposed more to mild physical abuse than second and third grade levels. These results were consistent with EL-Bcheraoui, et al., (2012) who showed that older students were less likely to report being slapped around. This can be also explained by that, Egyptian families tend to be more protective towards girls than boys. As regards family size, children who live in families with 6-7 members were also considerably more subjected to mild physical abuse than those with 3-5 members. No statistically significant differences were found related to child's birth order, parents' educational levels, occupations and the student's exposure to physical abuse.

As regards emotional abuse, highly statistically significant differences were found between studied children emotional abuse, their and their parents' characteristics related to their grade levels in preparatory schools, birth order and family size, while a statistically significant difference was found related to their mothers' occupations. Studied children who were in second grade level in preparatory schools were considerably more subjected to mild emotional abuse than those in first and second grade levels. Regarding birth order, mothers' occupations and family size, it was found that studied children who were with rank of first and fifth child or after in

their families were more subjected to mild emotional abuse than others, also studied children whose mothers were housewives were considerably more subjected to mild emotional abuse than those whose mothers were employees; children who live in larger families (more than 6 members) were also more subjected to mild emotional abuse. These findings are almost similar to that of EL-Bcheraoui, et al., (2012) who showed that pupils living in extended families have higher odds of reporting being emotionally abused at schools. This could be interpreted as follows: living in crowded homes, these children spend long hours of the day playing outdoors, observing and imitating aggressive and violent behaviors; this affects their relationship with their teachers and makes them at higher risk of emotional abuse. Furthermore, it is well known that early adolescence is often a time of increased emotional sensitivity. On the other hand, the present study is in disagreement with Afifi, et al., (2003) who reported that children of mothers who work outside the home were at higher risk of emotional abuse than those of housewives. No statistically significant differences were found between child's sex, parents' educational levels and the student's exposure to emotional abuse.

Overwhelmingly in this study, mild sexual abuse was the most prevalent form of violence among studied children in preparatory schools. Highly statistically significant differences were found between studied children sexual abuse, their and their parents' characteristics related to their grade levels in preparatory schools, birth order, their mothers' occupations and family size, while a statistically significant difference was found related to their mothers' educational levels. Studied children who were in second grade level of preparatory schools were considerably more subjected to mild sexual abuse than those in first and second grade levels; and studied children who were with rank of first child in their families were considerably more subjected to mild sexual abuse than others. As regards their mothers' educational levels, occupations and family size, also studied children whose mothers were illiterate and/or housewives were considerably more subjected to mild sexual abuse than those whose mothers were educated or employees. Finally, children who live in families with 6 -7 members were also more subjected to mild sexual abuse than others. These findings were almost in accordance with Ibrahim, et al., (2008) who revealed that the mother's education has an effect on the majority of child abuse risk where there was an association between the mother's educational level and the child's exposure to all forms of abuse. The findings are in contrast with Mansour, et al., (2010) who studied sexual abuse among Egyptian students

and found that 13% of the students reported suffering of sexual abuse, and also with Share, et al., (2013) who reported no statistically significant differences between the parents' level of education and the students' exposure to sexual abuse.

### **Conclusion:**

The present study concluded that preparatory school children in Assiut Governorate were subjected to different forms of mild violence at schools in both urban and rural areas that all schools need to pay attention to. Unfortunately, mild sexual abuse was the most prevalent form of violence among studied children in preparatory schools, where the majority of them were subjected to mild sexual abuse, followed by mild physical abuse, followed by less than two thirds of them underwent mild emotional abuse while about one third of them faced moderate emotional abuse and only little percent of them experienced severe emotional, physical or sexual abuse at schools respectively. Girls tend to be the main victims of all types of violence at schools. Some characteristics of studied children and their parents were associated significantly with all types of abuse. Large family size (more than 6 members) was foremost associated significantly with all types of abuse.

### **Recommendations:**

In the light of the findings of this study, the following is recommended:-

- 1- Close supervision of the students at the schools, especially girls, is essential for prevention and early management of violent incidents.
- 2- Strengthening protective factors against child sexual abuse by increasing knowledge about sexual abuse and protective behaviors.
- 3- Developing extensive afterschool programs such as different sports, club and social activities.
- 4- Incorporating "violence awareness training" as a part of schools' core curriculums to teach students how to defend themselves when faced with threats of abuse and better ways to deal with their anger, frustrations and other ill-feelings.
- 5- Further researches are needed to investigate predisposing factors and the relationship between teachers' and students' perspectives on school violence.

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