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Mothers' knowledge & perception about child sexual abuse in Jordan

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Abstract: Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious problem causing physical, social and psychosocial harm. To understand the Jordanian mothers' efforts to prevent CSA, we assessed the mothers' general knowledge about CSA, their perceptions, knowledge about signs and symptoms of CSA and their knowledge about prevention practices of CSA in relation to their demographics. A cross-sectional descriptive design was used with a convenient sample of 488 mothers. The data was collected using a self-reported questionnaire consisting of 52 items. Descriptive and parametric and nonparametric statistical procedures were employed. Almost all mothers in the study were Muslim and married. Half of the mothers had post-secondary education and only 36% were employed. The study revealed that the majority of mothers were knowledgeable about CSA and its prevention practices. Though only 17% of mothers had started practicing some of the CSA preventive measures when their children were young (1-4 years of age) and less than half (48.8%) had started when their children were 4-6 years of age. Three quarters (74%) of the mothers indicated that educating children about CSA can prevent it. Only 37.7% knew about laws regarding CSA in Jordan and less than half of mothers knew about social organizations that provide services for children who suffered from sexual abuse. Mothers who had a high income or a high level of education or were employed had a higher awareness of CSA and recognized signs and symptoms of CSA more than other mothers.