



Parenting Skills Training Needs of Families with Young Children in Saudi Arabia: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract

Parenting programmes have demonstrated effectiveness in improving child behaviour and preventing child abuse; however, limited evidence exists regarding the parenting support needs of families in Saudi Arabia. This study explored parents' training needs in parenting skills among parents raising children aged 2–9 years. It also examined contextual factors that influence the adaptation of the Parenting for Lifelong Health Programme for Young Children (PLH-YC) in the Saudi context.

A mixed-methods design was utilised. Quantitative data were collected from 248 parents using a questionnaire incorporating the Parenting Daily Hassles Scale, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 5 parenting trainers. Data were analysed to identify children's behavioural challenges, parental skill needs, and contextual influences on parenting and programme delivery.

Findings revealed that religion functions as a central framework shaping parenting beliefs and practices in Saudi Arabia. Parents reported behavioural challenges among children, including stubbornness, excessive use of smart devices, and a lack of responsibility. In addition, gaps in parenting knowledge and reliance on informal sources of advice highlighted the need for greater access to evidence-based parenting support. Trainers emphasised the importance of positive reinforcement, emotional communication, and parental role modelling, which strongly aligned with the PLH-YC framework. Factors influencing programme implementation included low father engagement, unrealistic parental expectations, and the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation.

The findings provide practical guidance for adapting PLH-YC and developing parenting interventions in the context of Saudi families.

Keywords: Child Behavioural Problems; Child Abuse; Parenting Interventions; Positive Parenting