

## Kindergarten Programs And Children's Sexual Education Awareness In The Context Of The UN Convention On The Rights Of The Child

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### Abstract

This study examines the role of the kindergarten program in the College of Education at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University in Saudi Arabia in enhancing pre-service kindergarten teachers' awareness of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for children. The study is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), with particular focus on Article 34. CSE is understood as an age-appropriate, science-based educational process that aims to protect children from abuse by strengthening their awareness of their bodies and their rights. The study addresses the gap between the recognized importance of CSE as a child right and the limited integration of its concepts in teacher preparation programs. Using a descriptive research design, a questionnaire was administered to 300 students. The findings show low levels of CSE awareness among the students and indicate a limited role of the program in promoting such awareness. The study identifies very high challenges in promoting pre-service teachers' awareness of CSE. These challenges include content design issues, faculty readiness, cultural sensitivity, institutional resistance, and limited understanding of the role of the UNCRC in child protection. In alignment with Saudi Vision 2030, the study calls for comprehensive reforms that involve curriculum development, faculty training, awareness initiatives, and stronger integration of UNCRC principles to better prepare future teachers for preventive and protective responsibilities.

**Keywords:** Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Kindergarten program, Pre-service teachers, Child protection, Teacher preparation

### INTRODUCTION

Sexuality education for children is a critical issue that requires educators to possess accurate knowledge of its timing, challenges, needs, principles, and appropriate pedagogical approaches. It demands clear awareness, as it is a vital topic in contemporary society. Sexuality education is not limited to biological information. It is a comprehensive process that aims to cultivate values, ethical understanding, and self-awareness in children regarding their bodies and relationships in ways that align with their age and developmental stage. Its purpose is to protect children and equip them to face future challenges with confidence and security.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) serves as the most prominent international legal framework guaranteeing the rights of children worldwide. It

includes principles and articles that establish the necessity of providing children with awareness and information related to sexuality education to ensure their protection and empowerment. The need for sexuality education derives from several articles in the Convention, most notably Article 34, which mandates protection from exploitation and abuse. Article 34 states: “States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.” (UNCRC, n.d., p. 13). Achieving this protection requires equipping children with age-appropriate knowledge and skills that help them recognize risky situations, understand bodily boundaries, and report violations. Effective sexuality education is a core preventive tool in this regard (United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2019).

In this context, Lee et al. (2023) argue that awareness of sexuality education can be strengthened through the dissemination of accurate knowledge to build a supportive societal culture for children. Such efforts require sensitive and deliberate strategies that consider cultural and social values and target different groups with appropriate messages. Weinreich (2011) identifies key objectives for promoting sexuality education: encouraging communities to establish healthy communication channels, correcting misconceptions, empowering educators with tools and knowledge, and enhancing children’s awareness of bodily rights and self-protection. These objectives help create a supportive environment that encourages schools and religious and community institutions to assume a positive role. Halbaoui and Rabahi (2021) highlight the importance of early sexuality education in shaping children’s gender identity, either strengthening alignment with the mother’s gender or contributing to identity confusion. Collier-Harris and Goldman (2016) conclude that comprehensive sexuality education should be provided to all children of varying ages to support their well-being and sexual health.

Garg et al. (2020) present strategies for effectively promoting sexuality education awareness through tailored messages directed at different community groups. These include: (1) Families, by enhancing children’s confidence and preparing them for developmental stages through workshops and accessible parent guides (booklets and websites). (2) Teachers and educators, by emphasizing the importance of integrating sexuality education into curricula in age-appropriate ways and fostering safe, supportive environments through specialized training and structured educational materials. (3) Community and religious leaders, by demonstrating the compatibility of responsible sexuality education with ethical and religious values and by highlighting religious texts that support modesty, protection, and awareness through dialogue sessions, workshops, and collaborative awareness materials. (4) Children and adolescents, by focusing on their right to knowledge using positive messages presented through illustrated stories, animations, educational games, interactive applications, and school or youth center workshops.

Omar and Alkhateeb (2019) emphasize the need to strengthen sexuality education awareness for children in Saudi Arabia and ensure proper understanding of its components as an early intervention strategy to address issues of violence and sexual harm. Banunnah (2021) also stresses the importance of discussing sexuality education professionally to avoid unstructured efforts, given the sensitivity surrounding child sexual abuse and its ethical and cultural implications. Sexuality education directly affects the safety of children and the privacy and stability of Saudi families. Banunnah reports that 91% of Saudi parents and teachers support integrating sexuality education into school curricula. Alqahtani and Kadasah (2022) examines the level of sexuality education provided to protect children from gender identity confusion at King Saud University. The study recommends enhancing the awareness of mothers and pre-

service kindergarten teachers, noting that sexuality education is an investment in children's futures. It protects them physically and psychologically and equips them to develop as confident, responsible individuals capable of forming healthy relationships. The study also proposes integrating selected sexuality education topics into kindergarten college and school curricula.

Within this context, the kindergarten program in the College of Education stands as one of Saudi Arabia's leading institutions responsible for preparing and qualifying future kindergarten teachers. As a center for scientific and research expertise, the College contributes to fostering creativity and innovation and is entrusted with developing the nation's human capital. Promoting awareness of sexuality education represents an investment in the future of children and society. It builds understanding, strengthens knowledge, and helps create safe and supportive environments for future generations. The kindergarten program at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University may face various challenges in preparing students to understand sexuality education for children. As a cornerstone in training a new generation of teachers capable of shaping children's development, the program must respond to the growing recognition of sexuality education as an essential component of holistic development and protection. These challenges extend beyond academic content to include cultural, social, and practical dimensions.

### **Research Problem:**

The research gap emerges from the challenges that kindergarten programs face in preparing their students to understand sexuality education for children. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes curriculum revision, faculty training, collaboration with governmental and community entities, and the provision of supportive practical training environments. The ultimate goal is to graduate competent and confident teachers capable of protecting children and providing them with accurate knowledge about their bodies and relationships.

In Saudi Arabia, sexuality education for children remains highly sensitive. Although awareness of the importance of protecting children from sexual harm is increasing in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, explicit engagement with sexuality education in educational institutions, including kindergarten programs in colleges of education, continues to face major challenges. This represents a clear and significant research gap. The key features of this gap in the Saudi context include:

A. Despite the existence of standards for kindergarten teachers related to child health and safety, which were issued, including Standard 17.22.6, which emphasizes ensuring children's safety and identifying types of abuse, including sexual abuse, and following formal reporting procedures, and Standard 19.22.6, which includes identifying children's rights, and Standard 20.22.6, which includes applying ethical practices and complying with national and international agreements related to child rights protection (Education and Training Evaluation Commission, 2020), these standards lack practical implementation. They are not fully integrated into kindergarten curricula. Program plans lack specialized courses on sexuality education, resulting in the absence of theoretical frameworks and practical guidelines for age- and culture-appropriate instruction. Consequently, students do not receive clear guidance.

B. There is a scarcity of direct studies on sexuality education in kindergarten programs. Existing studies address the importance of kindergarten as a developmental stage or focus on teacher preparation in general, and some discuss child protection (Alwadei & Almansour,

2024). However, studies that specifically examine the role of kindergarten programs in preparing students to promote awareness of comprehensive sexuality education—biological, psychological, social, and preventive—within curricula or practicum training in Saudi Arabia are nonexistent (Omar & Alkhateeb, 2019).

C. Available studies highlight general challenges in teaching sexuality education in Saudi schools (Shakuri & Alzahrani, 2023) or address the topic from a broad Islamic perspective without focusing on teacher preparation mechanisms in early childhood programs (Alzarah, 2024).

D. There is a research gap concerning actual awareness levels among kindergarten students and in-service teachers, and how they respond to children's sexuality-related questions or abuse situations. Noh and Abu Bakar (2023) report a significant lack of knowledge and skills among teachers, who often feel unprepared or uncomfortable addressing such topics. Saudi-specific research remains limited.

E. Integrating sexuality education in ways that align with Saudi values remains underexplored. There is a need for in-depth studies and practical proposals on integrating concepts such as body awareness, personal boundaries, privacy, and reporting abuse into kindergarten curricula in a manner that is fully consistent with Islamic and societal values while maintaining scientific accuracy and preventive importance (Ali, 2019).

Addressing these research gaps can significantly advance teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia. It ensures that children receive the knowledge necessary to protect themselves and grow in a safe and healthy environment while respecting cultural norms. This study seeks to contribute to this goal.

In light of the above, the research problem can be expressed through the following questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of the concept of sexuality education for children among female students in the kindergarten program (future teachers)?
2. What is the role of the kindergarten program in promoting and disseminating awareness of sexuality education for children?
3. What is the role of the kindergarten program in enhancing awareness of sexuality education for children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child?
4. What challenges may face the kindergarten program in promoting sexuality education awareness for children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

### **Research Objectives:**

This study aims to identify the role of the kindergarten program in enhancing pre-service teachers' awareness of sexuality education for children in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The objectives are to:

- i. Identify the program's role in promoting safe sexuality education for children based on the principles of the Convention, particularly Article 34 concerning protection from sexual exploitation.
- ii. Identify the program's role in disseminating safe sexuality education concepts for children in accordance with the Convention.
- iii. Examine the challenges the program may face in developing sexuality education awareness initiatives, such as cultural factors or resource limitations.
- iv. Assess the extent to which curricula and training programs integrate age-appropriate sexuality education concepts.

### **Research Significance:**

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to preparing a generation of female teachers who are knowledgeable about sexuality education, capable of protecting children, and able to raise community awareness within clear legal and ethical frameworks. It also highlights the central role that kindergarten programs in Saudi colleges of education play in achieving Vision 2030. The study's significance includes:

#### **1. Theoretical significance:**

- i. Bridging the research gap by providing local studies on the role of kindergarten programs in enhancing sexuality education awareness, particularly from pre-service teachers' perspectives.
- ii. Strengthening the link between theory and practice by connecting the Convention on the Rights of the Child—especially Article 34—to the realities of kindergarten.
- iii. Enriching educational literature by offering strategies and mechanisms for promoting sexuality education awareness in teacher preparation curricula.
- iv. Recommending that educational institutions comply with child protection provisions in the Convention, particularly the right to protection.
- v. Recommending evaluation of curriculum alignment with international child rights standards.
- vi. Identifying students' needs and determining their awareness levels and anticipated challenges.

#### **2. Practical significance:**

- i. Improving educational practice by supporting the development of training programs on age-appropriate sexuality education.
- ii. Empowering future teachers by developing skills that enable them to design learning activities that meet children's psychological and preventive needs and increase their confidence in addressing sexuality-related topics scientifically and safely.
- iii. Enhancing community awareness by enabling students to act as ambassadors who promote understanding among families and school communities.
- iv. Protecting children from risks such as sexual harassment and exploitation by teaching basic concepts like body rights and personal boundaries.
- v. Addressing cultural barriers by offering balanced recommendations that align scientific sexuality education with religious and social values.
- vi. Strengthening community engagement by involving students in awareness initiatives targeting parents.

### **Research Terms:**

- i. Kindergarten Program at the College of Education: A specialized program offered by an educational institution that prepares preschool female teachers and delivers comprehensive pedagogical curricula (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2020). For the purposes of this study, it refers to the program offered at the College of Education at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, where female students are trained to become kindergarten teachers capable of meeting children's needs and supporting their holistic development (physical, cognitive, psychological, social, and sexual).
- ii. Awareness of Sexuality Education for Children: A structured educational process that provides individuals with scientific knowledge, experiences, and attitudes related to sexual culture and identity, enabling them to address sexual issues realistically and achieve psychological well-being within prevailing social and ethical norms (Alzarah, 2024).

Operationally, it refers to the role of female students in the kindergarten program in offering accurate scientific knowledge, responding to children's questions, and presenting essential information about various sexuality-related topics in simplified forms that help children adapt to future sexuality-related situations.

iii. Enhancing Awareness of Sexuality Education for Children: Defined operationally as employing targeted strategies to disseminate accurate knowledge about age-appropriate sexuality education in ways that align with community culture and ensure children's protection from misconceptions or exploitation.

iv. Convention on the Rights of the Child: An international treaty that protects children's rights (UNICEF, 2019).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Sex education for children is a critical topic. It is a continuous process that contributes to shaping the child's character and supporting their ability to address life challenges with stability, judgment, and balance.

### **Promoting Awareness of Sexual Education for Children:**

Several studies and scholarly works have addressed the concept of sexual education for children (Alzarrah, 2024; Alwadei & Almansour, 2024; Noh & Abu Bakar, 2023; Tahoun et al., 2020; Omar & Alkhateeb, 2019). These sources indicate that sexual education for children is:

i. A comprehensive process aimed at providing children with scientific information, appropriate experiences, and healthy attitudes related to sexual matters in line with their physical, physiological, cognitive, emotional, and social development (Alzarrah, 2024).

ii. Intended to enable children to adapt effectively in sexual situations and address related issues responsibly (Alwadei & Almansour, 2024).

iii. A value-based approach that raises children's awareness of bodily changes, provides accurate information, and instills values of modesty aligned with religious teachings to prevent deviant behaviors (Noh & Abu Bakar, 2023).

iv. Focused on human development, reproduction, healthy relationships, identifying abuse, resisting peer pressure, and understanding the concept of consent (Tahoun et al., 2020).

v. A multidimensional developmental process that supports the child's physical, psychological, social, and moral growth (Omar & Alkhateeb, 2019).

vi. A protective mechanism, as early age-appropriate sexual education equips children with knowledge about their bodies, privacy, and their right to refuse inappropriate touch (Alwadei & Almansour, 2024). This early intervention functions as a first line of defense against harassment, abuse, and psychological harm. It enables children to understand their bodies, boundaries, and consent, thereby reducing vulnerability to exploitation.

Studies by Tahoun et al. (2020), Abu Al-Khair (2017), and Ghanem (2015) emphasized that children must be educated in ways appropriate to their age. Sexual education does not embarrass children; its impact is often positive, such as refusing inappropriate physical contact and promptly informing parents when exposed to harmful behavior. Other studies (Zeuthen & Hagelskjær, 2013; Walsh et al., 2012; Walker & Milton, 2006; Ahmed & Aldhafeeri, 2003) indicated that preventing sexual abuse is complex and requires preventive programs that increase children's sexual awareness.

Findings from Omar and Alkhateeb (2019) highlighted high rates of sexual abuse among children in Saudi society. Noh and Abu Bakar (2023) recommended integrating sexual

education concepts into kindergarten curricula consistent with Saudi Islamic culture. According to Ibrahim (2013), studies show that 65% of preadolescent children lack sexual information, 13% possess distorted knowledge, and 5% have no information at all. Children who receive accurate age-appropriate answers to their sexual questions are less likely to engage in sexual play. Makol-Abdul et al. (2023) found that 7.96% of parents agreed with teaching sexual education consistent with religious values, and 9.91% supported children learning about physical, psychological, and social developmental changes. Opara et al. (2010) reported that more than 80% of mothers believed children need sexual education, while only 5.9% had good knowledge of the concept. Hamadi (2017) confirmed the necessity of early sexual education in kindergarten to support positive attitudes and awareness.

Accordingly, kindergarten programs in colleges of education play an essential role in preparing pre-service teachers to promote sexual education awareness among children in a scientific, safe, and culturally appropriate way. This requires an integrated methodology combining academic, practical, and ethical components. Students in kindergarten programs must receive adequate preparation and training to ensure that sexual education is delivered systematically rather than randomly. They must acquire the knowledge and skills needed to implement age-appropriate educational programs and contribute to carefully designed curricula. Cai (2023) indicated that effective sexual education in kindergarten programs reduces sexual behaviors among children. Studies by Hassan (2025), Farantika et al. (2024), Al-Attar (2019), and Kcbik (2012) agreed that kindergarten programs serve as key educational institutions through which children can obtain scientifically accurate sexual information, using developmentally appropriate dialogue strategies. Other studies (Tahoun et al., 2020; Ali, 2019) recommended integrating sexual education concepts into curricula at all educational stages using age-appropriate scientific approaches. Al-Attar (2016) stressed that sexual education must be taught by teachers capable of selecting appropriate terminology, persuading learners, and understanding their developmental characteristics.

It is therefore evident that kindergarten programs in colleges of education have a critical role in preparing pre-service teachers and providing curricula that promote sexual education among children. Kindergarten children exhibit natural curiosity and exploratory tendencies, along with early developmental signs related to sexuality, making proper sexual education particularly important. Rising global rates of child sexual abuse and ongoing threats to moral and social values further underscore the need for protective education. Meeting this need requires enhancing sexual education awareness, applying the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and adopting strategic social marketing approaches aimed at influencing behaviors, attitudes, and orientations for societal benefit. This involves cooperation among all stakeholders, long-term sustainability, and strict adherence to ethical and legal principles that prioritize community welfare while respecting autonomy, privacy, and cultural sensitivities (Binney & Brennan, 2011). This approach requires precise audience identification and persuasive messaging supported by genuine engagement, dialogue, and personal experiences (Gordon, 2011).

Given the sensitivity of sexual education in many societies, particularly in Saudi society, kindergarten programs in colleges of education bear responsibility for advancing awareness and implementing effective social marketing strategies. Teachers must shift from merely transmitting information to acting as facilitators who collaborate with families and local communities to build awareness and develop solutions. Effective campaigns should target

parents, teachers, and children using customized, age-appropriate, scientifically accurate messages designed to encourage open dialogue in environments free of stigma and ridicule. Communication strategies must prioritize trust-building and ongoing, honest interaction that respects children's questions and ensures message consistency and continued engagement. Shin et al. (2024) found that community workshops, digital platforms, social media, and community applications are effective channels for facilitating discussions and sharing information, helping overcome geographic barriers. Virtual meetings and webinars expand participation and allow individuals with physical constraints to engage. Collaboration with influential figures and community leaders is also essential for effective outreach and message amplification. Aljoupory and Aljoupory (2020) emphasized that effective promotion and social marketing of sensitive topics, including sexual education, require a comprehensive, multi-channel approach that strategically integrates traditional community engagement methods with modern digital platforms. The focus on participation and skill-building highlights the importance of involving communities as active partners in raising awareness. Here, kindergarten programs in colleges of education have a unique role in facilitating these multi-stakeholder engagements, drawing on academic expertise to develop culturally appropriate materials and leveraging community connections to ensure effective implementation.

#### **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:**

The role of kindergarten programs in colleges of education in promoting awareness of sexual education aligns directly with obligations stipulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC requires states to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation (Article 19), including sexual abuse. Article 34 specifically targets sexual exploitation, while Article 36 covers all other forms of exploitation. Article 39 obligates states to provide measures for the recovery and reintegration of child victims. Together, Articles 19, 34, 36, and 39 establish clear legal and ethical commitments to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

Sexual education aims to equip children with knowledge about their bodies, boundaries, and right to refuse. Without such foundational knowledge, children cannot effectively exercise their right to protection. This means that the protective mandate of the UNCRC necessitates practical tools enabling children to protect themselves. Sexual education is one such tool, enhancing child protection and reducing exposure to risk, offering a strong legal and ethical framework for implementation by states and institutions (Al-Anzi, 2018). The Convention's articles show that child protection (Articles 19, 34), health (Article 24), and education (Articles 28, 29) are interconnected rights. Effective sexual education delivered through educational systems contributes directly to children's health and significantly strengthens their ability to protect themselves from exploitation. In contrast, the absence of such education undermines these fundamental rights. Aslam et al. (2014) asserts that comprehensive education empowers children, enhances awareness, and supports the fulfillment of their rights to protection, health, and development. Table 1 illustrates some of the implications of sex education awareness for children in light of the Convention.

Table 1: UNCRC Articles Related to Child Protection and Sexual Education

Article	Text of the Article	Relevance to Sexuality Education / Child Protection
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6	The inherent right to life, survival, and development to the fullest extent possible	Indicates that sexuality education contributes to healthy, holistic development, including physical and psychological aspects.
19	Protection from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation	Provides a legal basis for teaching children about safety and bodily boundaries; sexuality education functions as a first line of defense against abuse.
24	The right to the highest attainable standard of health, including health education, family planning, and the elimination of harmful practices	Requires educating children about reproductive health and preventing harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriage.
28	The right to education	Provides the framework for including sexuality education as an integral component of comprehensive education.
29	Educational goals: developing the child's personality, abilities, and preparation for responsible life	Supports the inclusion of sexuality education as an essential element of holistic development, enabling children to understand their bodies and relationships.
34	Protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse	Obligates states to prevent illegal sexual activities, child prostitution, and pornography; sexuality education supports this by building awareness and prevention skills.
36	Protection from all other forms of exploitation harmful to the child's welfare	Reinforces the need to teach children how to identify any form of exploitation and protect themselves.
39	Physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of abuse	Highlights the importance of psychological support, which is strengthened by proper sexuality education that builds self-confidence after abuse.

Source: UNICEF (n.d.)

Based on the above, kindergarten programs in colleges of education are responsible not only for preparing teachers but also for preparing agents of social change in sensitive areas such as sexual education. These programs must establish and strengthen formal partnerships with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, the Ministry of Education, religious institutions, and both public and private sectors. These partnerships should focus on resource exchange, joint initiatives, and unified messaging on sexual education. Academic institutions can serve as coordination hubs, ensuring integrated efforts that support children's protection and development.

Integrating age-appropriate sexual education into kindergarten curricula is not optional; it is a necessity driven by social needs, digital-age challenges, and legal commitments under the UNCRC. Despite challenges related to societal perceptions and limited teacher training, the evolving role of kindergarten programs and their capacity to serve as collaborative centers for families, communities, and government provide a unique opportunity to address these issues effectively.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The study employed the descriptive method as the most suitable approach for achieving its objectives. This design enabled examination of the role of the kindergarten program at the College of Education, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, in promoting awareness of sexuality education for children in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Participants:** The study sample consisted of 300 female students enrolled in the kindergarten program at the College of Education during the first semester of the 2025–2026 academic year. The sample was selected using simple random sampling.

**Research Instrument:** A questionnaire was designed to assess the role of the kindergarten program at the College of Education, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, in enhancing awareness of sexuality education for children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, from the perspective of the students. The final instrument consisted of 40 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The questionnaire included four domains in addition to demographic information:

Domain 1: Awareness of the concept of sexuality education for children (8 items).

Domain 2: The program's role in promoting and disseminating sexuality education awareness (9 items).

Domain 3: The program's role in enhancing sexuality education awareness in relation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (9 items).

Domain 4: Challenges facing the program in enhancing sexuality education awareness (14 items).

**Validity and Reliability:** To examine the psychometric properties of the instrument, it was administered to a pilot sample of 50 students who were not part of the main study sample. Content validity was assessed through expert review by seven evaluators who provided feedback and suggestions. All comments were incorporated.

Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and split-half reliability. Table 2 presents the reliability coefficients.

Table 2: Reliability Coefficients of the Instrument

Domains	Cronbach's alpha	Split-half
Domain 1	0.63	0.72
Domain 2	0.71	0.79
Domain 3	0.75	0.88
Domain 4	0.82	0.82
Total	0.86	0.89

Table 2 indicates that the overall Cronbach's alpha for the instrument was 0.86, and the split-half reliability coefficient was 0.89, demonstrating acceptable reliability levels.

To assess item discrimination, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between each item and the total instrument score. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Coefficients and Significance Levels

Item	Coefficients	Item	Coefficients	Item	Coefficients	Item	Coefficients
1	0.823**	11	0.658*	21	0.674**	31	0.770**
2	0.682**	12	0.742**	22	0.632*	32	0.810**
3	0.667*	13	0.635*	23	0.795**	33	0.941**
4	0.541*	14	0.593*	24	0.674**	34	0.793**
5	0.657*	15	0.742**	25	0.632*	35	0.752**
6	0.739**	16	0.812**	26	0.751**	36	0.874**
7	0.724**	17	0.796**	27	0.874**	37	0.673**
8	0.635*	18	0.854**	28	0.673**	38	0.793**
9	0.657*	19	0.874**	29	0.832**	39	0.845**
10	0.751**	20	0.795**	30	0.823**	40	0.823**

Note. \*\* Significant at 0.01; \* Significant at 0.05

Table 3 shows that the correlation coefficients ranged from 0.54 to 0.94, all statistically significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels, indicating strong discriminative validity.

#### Criteria for Interpreting Mean Scores:

To determine the criteria for interpreting the mean scores of participants' responses, the study calculated category length by dividing the response range by the number of categories:  $4 \div 5 = 0.80$ . Based on this, the following classification was applied:

- 1.00–1.80: Very low
- 1.81–2.60: Low
- 2.61–3.40: Moderate
- 3.41–4.20: High
- 4.21–5.00: Very high

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the first research question, "What is the level of awareness of the concept of sexuality education for children among female students in the kindergarten program (future teachers)?", means, standard deviations, rank, and assessment levels were calculated for each item (see Table 4).

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the sample's awareness of the concept of sexuality education for children

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
1	I have good knowledge of the concept of sexuality education for children.	1.69	0.55	6	Low
2	I fully understand age-appropriate sexuality education for children.	2.73	0.73	1	Moderate

3	I believe that sexuality education for children is necessary in our society.	2.58	1.54	2	Low
4	Sexuality education is important for protecting children from harassment and exploitation.	1.75	0.66	5	Low
5	My main sources of information about sexuality education for children vary (courses, workshops, training programs, etc.).	1.98	0.71	3	Low
6	Sexuality education protects children from some psychological disorders that may result from sexual problems.	1.63	0.41	7	Very low
7	Awareness of sexuality education deepens children's sense of modesty, which positively contributes to society.	1.55	0.36	8	Very low
8	I have good knowledge of the concept of sexuality education for children.	1.87	0.96	4	Low
Weighted mean		1.97			Low

Table 4 shows that students' awareness of sexuality education for children was low, with a weighted mean of 1.97. This highlights the need to strengthen awareness among students in the kindergarten program. Item (2) ranked first with a mean of 2.73, followed by item (3) with a mean of 2.58, which states: "I believe that sexuality education for children is necessary in our society." Students reported limited sources of information on sexuality education (courses, workshops, training programs, etc.), with a low mean of 1.98. Students also lacked adequate knowledge of the concept of sexuality education (Mean = 1.87). While they recognized the importance of sexuality education in protecting children from harassment and exploitation, they still demonstrated weak conceptual understanding (Mean = 1.75). Knowledge of psychological disorders that may arise from sexual problems in childhood was also low (Mean = 1.63). Awareness of the role of sexuality education in fostering modesty and positively influencing the wider community was very low (Mean = 1.55).

These results indicate a substantial gap in students' understanding of the concept of sexuality education, requiring urgent intervention from the college to strengthen this dimension. As future teachers serve as the frontline in protecting children, such deficiencies suggest inadequate understanding of the concept's value for child protection under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The findings also indicate insufficient awareness of educational resources (courses, workshops, training), poor understanding of the link between sexuality education and protection from harassment and psychological trauma, and a superficial recognition of its importance without deep comprehension. These findings align with Noh and Abu Bakar (2023), who stressed the need to include sexuality education concepts in kindergarten curricula in accordance with the Islamic culture of Saudi society. Some pre-service teachers consider sexuality education necessary, yet their belief lacks knowledge-based support, which may affect future implementation. This supports Cai (2023), who reported that effective sexuality education in kindergarten institutions reduces sexual behaviors among children. The current study also aligns with Hassan (2025), Farantika et al. (2024), Al-Attar (2019), Kcbik (2012), who found that kindergarten institutions are essential environments for providing scientifically sound sexual knowledge appropriate to children's developmental

levels. Furthermore, the absence of a clear link between sexuality awareness and preventing sexual abuse, and the failure to recognize that childhood sexual trauma leads to psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, and behavioral disorders, reflect misconceptions that sexuality education contradicts religious or social values. This aligns with Lee et al. (2023), who emphasized promoting sexuality education through accurate public knowledge tailored to cultural and social contexts.

To answer the second research question, “What is the role of the kindergarten program in promoting and disseminating awareness of sexuality education for children?”, means, standard deviations, rankings, and assessment levels were calculated (see Table 5).

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of the program’s role in enhancing and disseminating awareness of sexuality education for children

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
1	The college offers programs or academic courses on safe sexual education for children.	1.05	0.22	9	Very low
2	The kindergarten program in the College of Education plays an effective role in promoting awareness of sexual education for children.	2.88	0.87	1	Moderate
3	The college employs effective methods to disseminate sexual education awareness to future teachers.	1.23	0.46	8	Very low
4	I believe the academic courses offered by the college sufficiently cover aspects of children’s sexual education.	1.66	0.87	4	Very low
5	The college offers workshops, seminars, or specialized lectures on children’s sexual education.	1.32	1.23	6	Very low
6	You participate in student activities or initiatives organized by the college that aim to raise awareness of sexual education.	2.71	0.69	2	Moderate
7	The college provides adequate educational materials (such as books, references, and presentations) related to children’s sexual education.	1.84	0.98	3	Low
8	The college sets clear objectives to enhance student awareness of the foundations of children’s sexual education.	1.47	0.68	5	Very low
9	The college offers programs or academic courses on safe sexual education for children.	1.26	0.62	7	Very low
Weighted mean		1.77			Low

Table 5 reveals that the program’s role in enhancing and disseminating awareness was weak, with a weighted mean of 1.77. Thus, the program must strengthen its contribution in this area. Item (2) ranked first (Mean = 2.88), followed by item (6) (Mean = 2.71), which concerns participation in student activities or initiatives related to sexuality education awareness

organized by the college. Item (7) ranked third (Mean = 1.84), which states that the college provides adequate educational materials (books, references, presentations) related to sexuality education for children. Item (4) ranked fourth with a very low mean of 1.66, indicating insufficient course coverage of sexuality education for children. Item (8) ranked fifth (Mean = 1.47), showing that the college does not set clear goals for students' awareness of sexuality education. The college's provision of programs or courses on safe sexuality education for children was very low (Mean = 1.26). The use of effective methods to disseminate sexuality education awareness among future teachers was also rated very low (Mean = 1.23). Finally, another item regarding the college's provision of sexuality education programs was also rated very low (Mean = 1.05).

These findings confirm that the program plays a limited role in promoting sexuality education awareness. This requires curriculum restructuring and the adoption of more effective strategies to adequately prepare teachers to educate and protect children. Indicators of this weakness include insufficient curricular integration, lack of a clear institutional vision, avoidance of the topic due to cultural sensitivity, absence of specialized faculty, and limited strategic planning. The college appears not to prioritize sexuality education despite its central role in child protection. Although some students participate in awareness activities, such participation is limited, inconsistent, and lacks systematic planning. The scarcity of educational resources further restricts learning opportunities.

These findings are consistent with Garg et al. (2020), who emphasized targeted strategies for strengthening sexuality education awareness. They also align with Omar and Alkhateeb (2019), who stressed the need to enhance awareness of sexuality education in Saudi Arabia as part of early intervention to address violence and sexual harm. The results are also consistent with Alqahtani and Kadasah (2022), who recommended strengthening mothers' and pre-service kindergarten teachers' awareness of sexuality education to support children's development and protection.

To answer the third research question, "What is the role of the kindergarten program in enhancing awareness of sexuality education for children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child?", descriptive statistics were calculated (see Table 6).

Table 6: Program's role in promoting sexuality education and its relation to the convention on the rights of the child

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
1	I have sufficient knowledge of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.	2.69	0.36	2	Moderate
2	I know the articles of the Convention that relate to protecting the child from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.	2.65	0.73	3	Moderate
3	The college links the concept of sexual education for children with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in its academic content and activities.	1.58	0.96	6	Low
4	I believe the college adheres to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child	1.75	0.48	5	Low

	in promoting safe sexual education for children.				
5	The college provides field training to raise children's awareness of community values and ethics in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.	1.98	0.87	4	Low
6	The college provides activities that introduce sexual concepts and facts to kindergarten children within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.	2.71	0.50	1	Moderate
7	The college plays an important role in enhancing students' understanding of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its relationship to sexual education.	1.36	0.48	9	Low
8	I have sufficient knowledge of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.	1.58	0.65	7	Low
9	I know the articles of the Convention that relate to protecting the child from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.	1.41	0.90	8	Low
Weighted mean		1.96			low

Table 6 shows that the program's role in enhancing awareness of sexuality education in relation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was low, with a weighted mean of 1.96. Item (6) ranked first with a mean of 2.71, indicating the availability of activities that present sexual concepts and facts to kindergarten children within the framework of the Convention. Item (7) ranked last with a very low mean of 1.36, showing weak institutional support for students' understanding of the Convention and its relation to sexuality education.

These findings underscore the need to strengthen students' understanding of the Convention and its connection to sexuality education by activating the program's role and providing awareness workshops. The separation between theoretical knowledge (the Convention) and practical experience (sexuality education) reflects limited curricular integration and insufficient expertise linking legal and pedagogical perspectives. Cultural sensitivity further complicates the issue, along with the absence of clear implementation mechanisms, weak infrastructure, limited use of digital tools, and lack of accessible scientific resources. The absence of a comprehensive strategic framework, limited resource allocation, and scarcity of partnerships with specialized institutions hinder program effectiveness.

These conclusions correspond with Banunnah (2021), who stressed the importance of addressing sexuality education professionally within legal frameworks, given the sensitivity of child sexual abuse and its implications for family and societal safety. The findings also align with Binney and Brennan (2011), who emphasized that promoting sexuality education requires adherence to ethical and legal principles that respect cultural sensitivities. They also align with Mohammed Al-Anzi (2018), who stated that sexuality education is a key tool for child protection, providing a strong legal and ethical basis for national implementation.

To answer the fourth research question, “What challenges may face the kindergarten program in promoting sexuality education awareness for children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child?”, descriptive statistics were calculated (see Table 7).

Table 7: Challenges facing the kindergarten program in enhancing awareness of sexuality education

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
First: Cultural and Social Challenges					
1	There are societal sensitivities and cultural barriers regarding the topic of sexuality education for children within Saudi society.	4.28	0.97	1	Very high
2	Sexuality education is often misunderstood or confused with negative concepts such as “talking explicitly about sex.”	4.18	0.87	2	High
3	I fear negative reactions from parents or the community when discussing sexuality education for children, which reduces my motivation to participate in awareness-raising activities.	3.55	0.63	3	High
Weighted mean		4.00			High
Second: Challenges Related to Content and Methodology					
4	Achieving a balance between providing children with sufficient information to protect them from exploitation and abuse, and avoiding excessive or age-inappropriate content, represents a major challenge in preparing suitable material.	4.84	0.71	1	Very high
5	I believe there is a shortage of faculty members adequately trained to teach sexuality education for children with sensitivity and effectiveness, which affects the quality of content provided to students and, consequently, their ability to promote awareness.	4.75	0.95	2	Very high
6	I believe there is a lack of educational and training resources aligned with the Saudi cultural and religious context, and which present sexuality education in a scientific, accurate, and socially acceptable manner for children and their parents.	3.38	0.64	3	Moderate
Weighted mean		4.32			Very high
Third: Institutional and Academic Challenges					
7	Academic courses may focus primarily on theoretical aspects, limiting opportunities for students to develop practical skills in	4.62	0.32	1	Very high



	effectively communicating about sexuality education with children or parents.				
8	The college lacks a comprehensive and organized marketing strategy for sexuality education awareness for children.	4.60	0.74	2	Very high
9	The college provides limited ongoing training programs for faculty members on the latest curricula and methods in sexuality education for children, how to integrate these into courses, and how to respond to students' sensitive questions regarding the topic.	4.55	0.41	3	Very high
10	The adoption of sexuality education for children as an essential component of the curriculum faces internal resistance within the college, whether from some faculty members or decision-makers who may be reluctant to address the topic.	4.44	0.68	4	Very high
11	The college faces budget constraints and limited resources needed to develop effective awareness programs, produce high-quality educational materials, and organize large-scale community events on sexuality education for children.	3.26	0.87	5	Moderate
Weighted mean		4.29			Very high
Fourth: Challenges Related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)					
12	The link between sexuality education as a key tool for child protection and the principles outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child may not be sufficiently or clearly established.	4.68	0.87	1	Very high
13	Full awareness of the CRC's provisions and their practical applications, particularly regarding protection from sexual abuse, may be limited among some students or even within the academic environment.	4.66	0.68	2	Very high
14	Translating the global principles of the CRC into educational and awareness-raising practices that fit local cultural contexts represents a challenge, especially with differences in cultural interpretations.	3.19	0.65	3	Moderate
Weighted mean		4.17			High
Overall weighted mean		4.21			Very high

Table 7 indicates significant challenges, with an overall weighted mean of 4.21 (very high). Content- and methodology-related challenges ranked first (Mean = 4.32). Balancing sufficient information for child protection without exceeding age-appropriate limits was the highest-

rated challenge (Mean = 4.84). The shortage of adequately trained faculty to teach sexuality education sensitively and effectively ranked second (Mean = 4.75). There was also a shortage of culturally and religiously appropriate educational resources (Mean = 3.38).

Institutional and academic challenges ranked second (Mean = 4.29). Courses heavily emphasize theory, limiting practical skills for communicating sexuality education to children and parents (Mean = 4.62). The college lacks a comprehensive awareness strategy (Mean = 4.60), and continuous training for faculty on modern sexuality education methods is limited (Mean = 4.55). Internal resistance from faculty or decision-makers also poses a barrier (Mean = 4.44). Budget limitations were moderately challenging (Mean = 3.26).

Challenges related to the Convention ranked third (Mean = 4.17), particularly insufficient linkage between sexuality education and child protection principles within the Convention. Cultural and social challenges ranked fourth (Mean = 4.00), showing the influence of social norms on students' ability to understand sexuality education's importance.

These findings indicate substantial barriers, including imbalanced content, lack of trained faculty, scarce educational resources, theoretical emphasis, lack of strategic planning, internal resistance, budget constraints, weak integration with the Convention, and cultural sensitivity challenges. These results align with Shakuri and Alzahrani (2023), who addressed sexuality education challenges in Saudi schools, and Alzarah (2024), who emphasized addressing sexuality education through an Islamic perspective. They also support Tahoun et al. (2020) and Ali (2019), who recommended integrating sexuality concepts across educational stages. The findings also agree with Al-Attar (2016), who stressed that sexuality education requires teachers capable of using appropriate language and knowledgeable about child development. Additional studies (Zeuthen & Hagelskjær, 2013; Walsh et al., 2012; Walker & Milton, 2006; Ahmed & Aldhafeeri, 2003) confirm the complexity of preventing sexual abuse and the need for preventive programs that strengthen children's sexual awareness.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of the Kindergarten Education Program in enhancing pre-service teachers' awareness of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) for children in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The findings show limited awareness of CSE among female students and a weak institutional role in promoting this awareness. They also indicate substantial challenges related to curriculum design, faculty preparation, cultural sensitivity, and limited understanding of the CRC's relevance to child protection. The study recommends revising the Kindergarten Program curriculum by integrating a dedicated course on safe and age-appropriate sexuality education, supported by accredited learning resources such as textbooks, videos, and teacher guides. It further recommends developing clear age-specific content standards and preparing program-specific guidance manuals. Strengthening institutional capacity is essential. This includes establishing a specialized unit for child-focused sexuality education, providing continuous professional development for faculty members, and involving experts in child protection and sexuality education. Practical training should be improved through field experiences and workshops that equip students with skills to address children's questions, recognize signs of abuse, and communicate sensitive concepts appropriately. Program policy should be supported by a strategic plan that embeds sexuality education within teacher preparation, allocates adequate resources, and creates structured awareness initiatives. The use of digital platforms and interactive learning tools can further

enhance accessibility and engagement. The study recommends building partnerships with child-protection organizations and relevant professional institutions to ensure consistent, culturally appropriate, and evidence-based approaches. Future research may explore the effectiveness of revised curricula, challenges in implementing CRC principles in educational settings, and the development of digital or instructional models that support safe sexuality education in Saudi kindergarten programs.

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