



Play to Grow Together - EGYPT
Needs Assessment

Right to Play
March 2021

Introduction

Desk Review

Background

Bullying, or peer-to-peer violence, is a serious issue facing children and adolescents around the world with a significant impact on their mental, social, and physical well-being. Globally, around 1 in 3 students between the ages of 13 and 15 experience some form of bullying. Boys and girls are equally likely to experience bullying, but the types of bullying they engage in differ with violence among boys manifesting in physical and verbal ways and girls' bullying having a more social and psychological nature (UNICEF, 2018).

The Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) recognizes four types of bullying: (1) physical bullying; (2) psychological bullying; (3) sexual bullying; (4) cyberbullying. Of the three main drivers of bullying measured via GSHS, the most commonly reported driver in Egypt is *Race, nationality, or color* at (18.2%), followed by *Religion* (6.5%), then *Physical appearance* (2.5%) (UNESCO, 2019). Globally, the Middle East region has the third highest prevalence of bullying in schools overall, at 41.1%, and the third highest prevalence of bullying both among boys, at 45.4%, and among girls, at 33.4% (UNESCO, 2019).

Bullying has serious implications on a child's education and mental and social well-being. School bullying is associated with higher absenteeism (Celedonia, Wilson, El Gammal, & Hagra, 2013) and dropping out for fear of going to school (Hawker & Boulton, 2000). It also negatively impacts a child's sense of security and ability to make close connections with their peers. More extreme situations of bullying could also lead to poor mental health outcomes such as depression, loneliness, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Studies have demonstrated an inverse relationship between bullying victimization and perceived peer support. Adolescents strongly rely on their peers for social support, the presence of which has been tied to increased self-esteem, increased resilience, and better physical and mental health (Obeid, Sacre, Hallit, & Salameh, 2020).

On bullying and life skills

Violence in the education setting both feeds into and is fed by violence in society as a whole. School violence is not attributed to a single cause but a multitude of risk factors that result of the complex interactions between people and their environments from home to school and the rest of society with violence in one setting spilling over into another. “Knowledge on determinants and risk factors of bullying behavior is crucial for the identification of children at increased risk of becoming a bully or victim for proper implementation of prevention and control strategies. In Egypt, most of the studies regarding school violence were mainly among children in urban communities” (Galal, Emadeldin, and Mwafy, 2019, p. 2). Egypt also has one of the highest rates of children who never enter the schooling system as well as a high rate of early drop out, but reports on bullying and violence among children outside of formal educational setting is scarce (UNICEF, 2014).

Social skills were an important factor in predicting the likelihood of a child falling into one of the following categories: bully, victim, and bully-victim (victims of bullying who then go on to bully others). Both bullies and bully-victims have difficulties adhering to social rules and politeness as well as difficulties in differentiating their emotions. Children not involved in bullying were more likely to have higher social and emotional skills compared to those involved in it in some way (Habashy-Hussein, 2013). The odds that an individual engages in physical fights are 2.44 times higher in those who have been victimized and 1.26 times higher when the person is absent from school without permission. However, studies also show that having helpful friends and understanding parents are protective factors against engaging in fighting behavior (Celedonia, Wilson, El Gammal, & Hagra, 2013).

On utilizing sports to teach life skills

Life skills education includes behavioral, cognitive, psychosocial, and interpersonal competencies that would help, and it is often used to enhance adolescents' knowledge and skills to protect them from abuse and steer them away from risk taking behavior (UNICEF, 2015). Studies have shown that life skills are a strong catalyst for the development of positive behavior and the navigation of social and emotional challenges, such as conflict and peer pressure (Nasheeda, Abdullah, Krauss, and Ahmed, 2018). While some believe that mere participation in athletics leads to the development of different skills, studies have found that using physical education as a means to teach life skills requires more planning and intentional integration of life skills in children and adolescents' education for it to be effective. Life skills that can be taught through sports are transferable to other life situations, and they include problem solving, ability to perform under pressure, ability to set goals, time management, communication, and collaboration. Coaches must also demonstrate how different life skills learned during the activities can be utilized in other contexts such as at home, schools, etc. In Gouda et al.'s study, results of their sports intervention showed that not only did physical activity improve physical fitness, knowledge of life skills, and life skill acquisition in participants compared to the control group, but that these gains were maintained beyond the duration of the intervention (Goudas, Dermitzaki, Leondari, & Danish, 2006 and Pesce et al., 2016)

RTP's Sports and Humanitarian Assistance 2 (SAHA2) project in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon provided youth with a safe and healthy outlet through sports. The training and resources provided to coaches in the program improved their ability to integrate values and life skills into their training to enhance social cohesion among youth from different nationalities, religion, political affiliation, locations, age group, and gender. Coaches who have known the youth they trained from prior to the project reported youth feeling less anxious, calmer, more patient, and better able to manage their emotions and tackle their problems. Coaches, parents, and youth alike have reported improvements in the youth's communication skills both on the field for better coordination and off the field in expressing their ideas and interacting with others. Engaging in the program also fostered teamwork and cooperation as well as social cohesion in the larger community. This was facilitated by the design of the program to include youth from different backgrounds, nationalities, and genders (Jadaoun, 2019).

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Program Objectives

The objective of the pilot project is to develop children and youth life skills to address issues of bullying in schools and communities. The project will focus on developing skills and attitudes in children that have a direct link with the causes of bullying, such as teamwork, compassion, self-expression, leadership and overcoming difficulties/problem-solving. In addition, the intervention will transversally address gender issues by raising awareness on gender equality and ensuring equal participation of boys and girls in the activities. Through capacity building and mentoring, the project will create a movement of coaches that can use the power of sport and games to address social issues. The tools and resources provided to the coaches will equip and empower them to be agents of positive change in their communities.

The project will be based on the development of life skills for adaptive and positive behavior that supports children and youth to deal effectively with the stressors and challenges of their everyday life, including bullying and can help prevent violence. RTP's life skills approach entails engaging children and youth in social and emotional life skills activities for peaceful resolution of conflicts while upholding the values of tolerance, appreciation of diversity, teamwork, empathy, respect, solidarity, and promotion of no-violence in the wider community.

Needs Assessment Objectives

The purpose of the Needs Assessment is to draw out specific information on the operating context, beneficiary needs and gaps to be filled through the project's intervention. It will provide the information on which key decisions affecting the planning and fine tuning of the implementation of the "Play to Grow Together" project will be made. The findings will be discussed with implementing partners and will enable the evaluation of expected change at the end of the project.

The RTP needs assessment aims to:

1. Review existing documentation through a desk review of over relevant reports, assessment, evaluations, and lessons learned documents
2. Describe the current situation in targeted project locations/ learning environments with regards to
 - a) coaches' sports for development & life skills teaching practices
 - b) protection from violence and bullying
 - c) gender equality
3. To identify the project specific needs and gaps based on beneficiaries and key stakeholder's feedback
4. Assess current and future needs of coaches and students in the selected project locations.
5. Provide technical and operational recommendations to respond to those needs

This will inform the revision/project implementation planning of the intervention based on those needs for effective response.

Methodology

Sampling Methodology and Data Collection

1. All 40 coaches completed the pre and post tests
2. Three KIIs were held with administrators
 - a. One in Luxor and 2 in Haram City
3. Three FGDs were conducted with a total of 19 coaches (4 males and 15 females)
 - a. One in Luxor and 2 in Haram City
4. Four FGDs were conducted with a total of 39 children (18 males and 21 females), ages 9-15
 - a. 2 in Luxor and 2 in Haram City

Tools used

The methodology for the needs assessment included a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The latter was based on the facilitation of 3 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 19 coaches, 4 FGDs with 39 children and young people, and 3 key informant interviews (KIIs) with center administrators in both cities where the project is taking place. Quantitative data was collected using pre and posttest surveys. The pretest was an 11-point survey for coaches to self-assess their knowledge and skills such as communication, planning sessions, safety procedures, and inclusion of children with disabilities. In addition to the self-assessment questions, the posttest included an assessment of coaches' knowledge, skills, and attitudes as well as a trainers' evaluation.

Findings

Training self-evaluation

Coaches were asked to evaluate their knowledge and abilities in 11 different areas pre and post the training they received. For each skill, they were asked to rate themselves as Excellent, Good, Average, or Poor. On average, coaches' scores improved across all categories with an average pretest score of 76% compared to a higher average score on the posttest which was 84% indicating an increase of 9%. The figure below demonstrates in more detail the improvement in self-perceived abilities, knowledge, and skills.

To investigate if the change in average scores of the pre and posttests is statistically significant, a dependent t-test was performed. Results showed a mean difference of 3.8 points (out of a total of 44 points) between the pre and post test results. This difference is statistically significant (p-value<0.001).

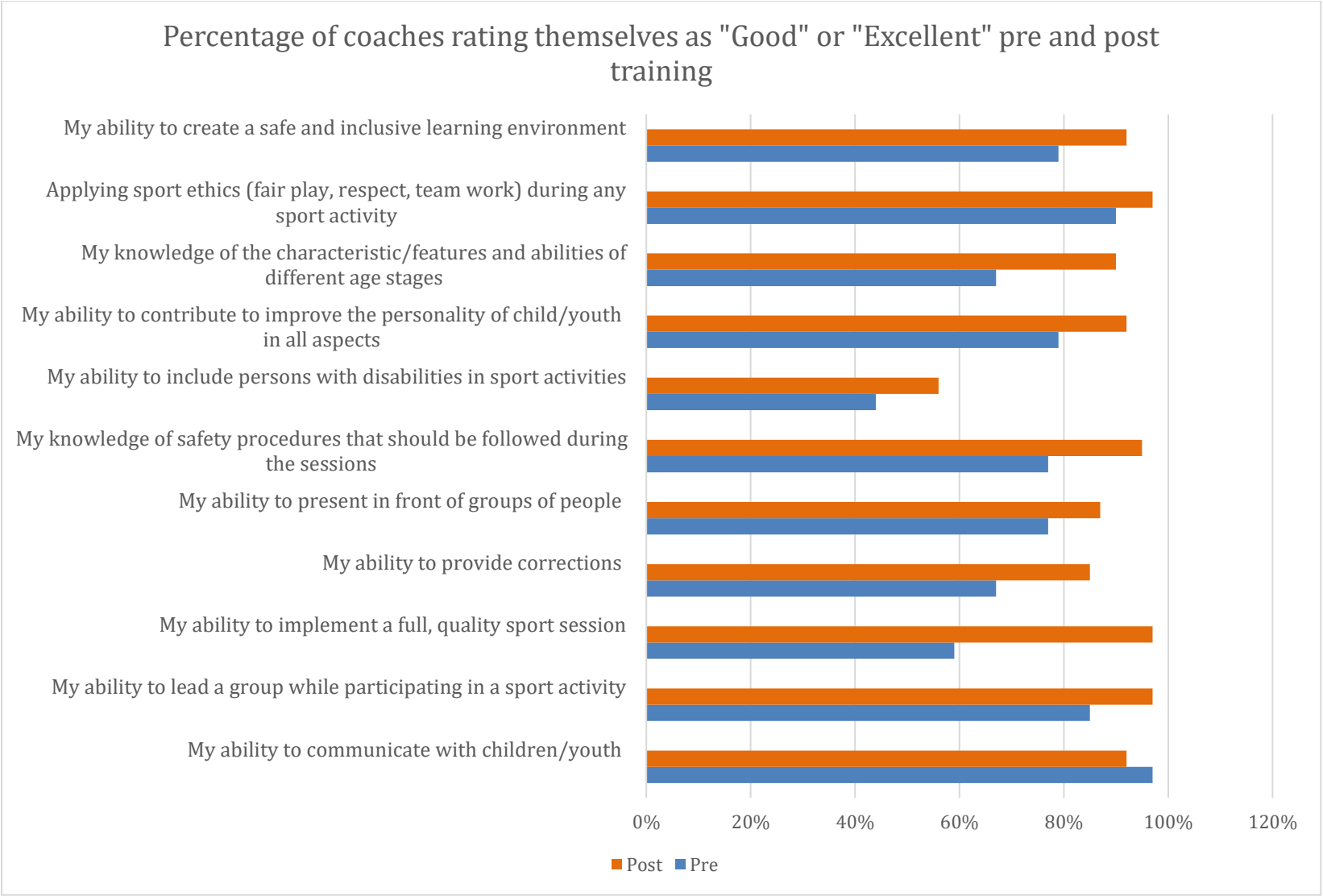


Figure 1. Pre and post test results of the coaches' self-evaluations

Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

The average score on the Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes post training was 55% with a range of 11-89%. Sixty-one-point five percent of coaches achieved a passing score of 50% and above, and 49% of coaches answered more than half of the questions completely correctly.

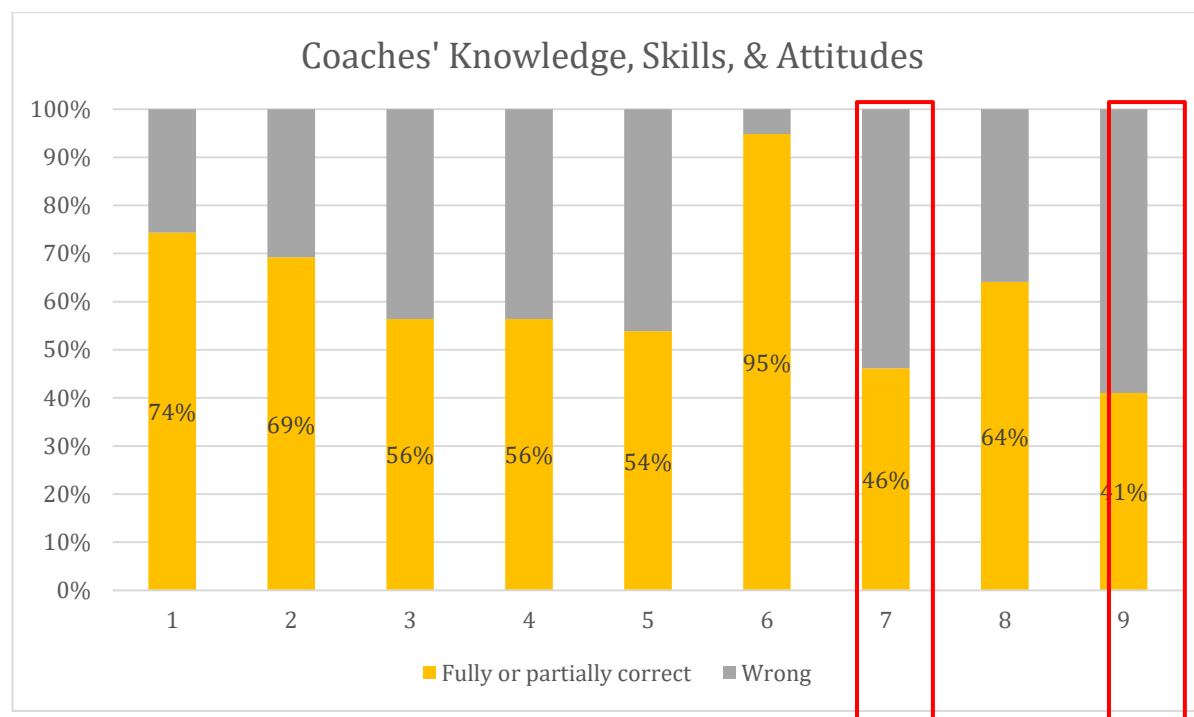


Figure 2. Coaches' performance on the Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes section of the post test

Upon closer examination of the responses, we see at least half of all coaches were able to answer the questions on the Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes components completely or partially correct, except for two questions pertaining to the structure of a S4D session (Fig. 2, question 7) and tackling community and cultural resistance to the participation of girls in S4D sessions (Fig. 2, question 9) where 54% and 59% of coaches gave incorrect answers respectively.

Coaches' FGDs

Coaches believe that sports teach children important values such as patience and cooperation, as well as important life skills such as problem solving, communication, acceptance of failure, self-confidence, and positivity. It also helps keep children away from negative and harmful behavior such as using drugs, sedentary behavior, or engaging in violence. Coaches see their role as someone who provides the children with information and encouragement, someone who assigns them roles and responsibilities equally as well as plan activities to challenge the children and build community.

Coaches anticipated various challenges when they started the program, such as children's possible lack of interest in the discussion part of the sessions which could lead to loss of interest. In addition, they foresee issues of violence and inappropriate behavior amongst the children as well as challenges from parents who need their children to work or who would not allow girls and boys to play together. However, coaches were also able to identify different resources they could utilize to tackle these challenges. The main resources mentioned were previous experience working on similar projects, personal skills such creativity and leadership, as well as being part of the communities they are serving. The latter, in addition to the high presence of female coaches is expected to facilitate convincing the parents to have mixed sessions with both boys and girls.

Children's FGDs

Thirty-nine children and young people participated in the FGDs, 21 of whom were girls and 18 were boys with an age range of 9 to 15 years old. All children and young people in the FGDs love sports, particularly running and football. While some children had opportunities to engage in sports activities such as competitions and championships, others had never taken part in anything similar.

When asked why they liked being at school/the center most children mentioned that it was due to the many fun activities they get to participate in with their friends as well as the life skills they gain. One facilitator noted how the children in the FGD loved competition. Some children mentioned how the many rules and punishments at school, as well as the teasing and bullying make them not like being at school.

Almost all FGDs with children listed fighting, hitting, and teasing/verbal bullying as definitions of bullying. Some focused on those with more power such as teachers or the older, stronger, or more popular children using their power to hurt others who are weaker than them. While most children mentioned witnessing physical, verbal, and social bullying many times on a daily basis in the past four months; they were less familiar with the concept of electronic bullying.

When asked about what usually happens in school when there is an incidence of bullying or violence, the children mentioned that a teacher, supervisor, or the principal would interfere to issue punishments such as warnings, suspensions, or requesting a meeting with the children's parents. Others mentioned that some teachers make promises they do not keep, and nothing happens, and that the principal is not always fair in his decisions. Interestingly, only one FGD mentioned teachers intervening to talk to the bully and making them apologize to those they hurt. This particular group of students were part of the Banati Foundation center where they had learned about and tackled the issue of school bullying in the form of a play that was performed in front of their peers. The group seemed more knowledgeable on issues of bullying and violence than their counterparts in other centers and FGDs, and they echoed what girls in other FGDs mentioned about the type of bullying girls experience the most: verbal and social bullying in the form of making fun of someone, social isolation, and spreading rumors about others behind their back.

When asked what they would do if they witnessed a case of violence or bullying at school, many children said they would intervene to stop the fight by either physically pulling the parties apart or by calling a teacher or someone older to do so, while others mentioned that they would be too afraid to intervene because they are afraid of getting pulled into the fight or from being hurt.

Administrator Interviews

Key informant interviews were held with three administrators who all saw great value in sports projects and benefit in sports for children. In addition to their physical, mental, and emotional benefits, they believe sports activities can teach children values such as respect and sportsmanship, life skills such as collaboration and problem solving, as well as promoting non-violence. They believe that a coach's role is to provide information, guide, and plan the sessions in ways that would create a safe environment for children. Coaches can also have a positive impact on children and their parents by helping them address issues they might be facing, especially when they are from the same area or have a similar background to the families they work with.

All administrators ranked the problem of peer violence and bullying at school and the community to be a moderate to severe problem that affects boys and girls equally. However, one administrator pointed out that violence between boys tends to be physical and is done to show who is stronger and has more power, while girls' bullying is often social and verbal. He also recognized that issue of older boys bullying or hurting younger girls.

Facilitator Evaluation

The diagram below shows the percentage of participants who rated the facilitator’s performance as Excellent or Good on eight different criteria. The evaluations showed that overall, facilitators performed a satisfactory job, with possible room for improvement related to organizing discussions and dialogue as well as explaining the available resources and manuals to the participating coaches.

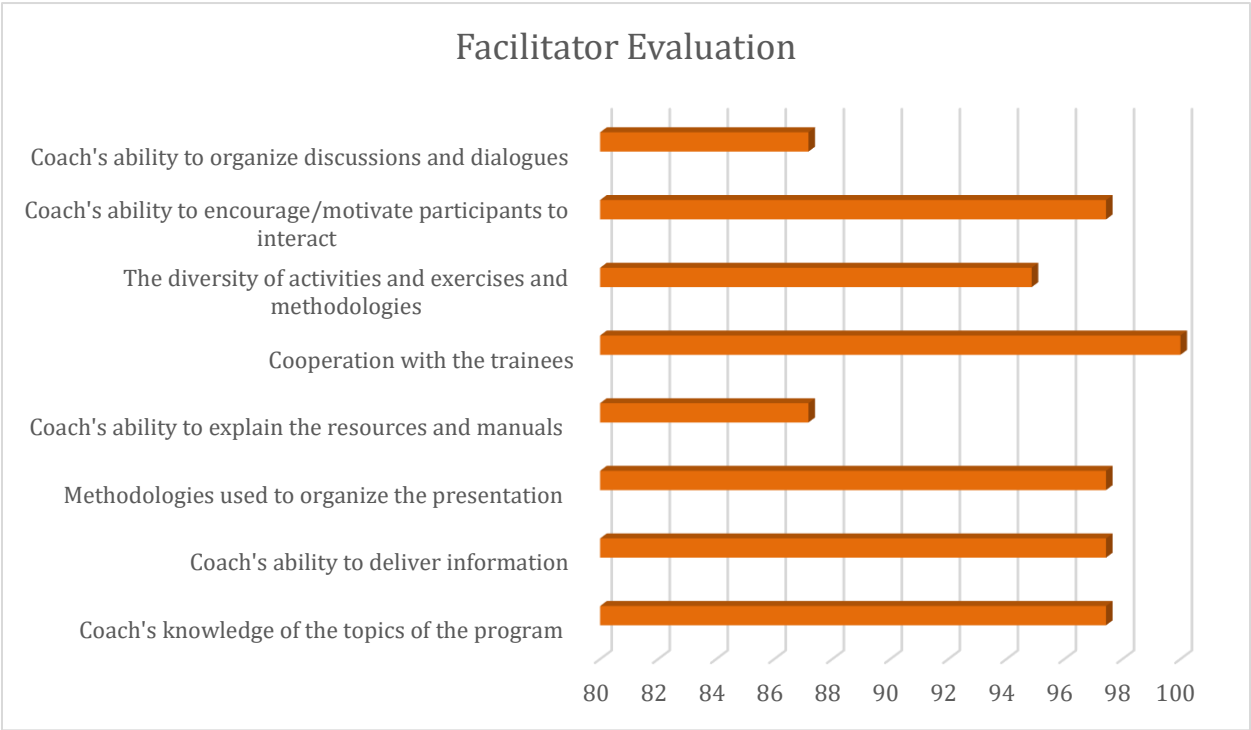


Figure 3. Percentage of participants who rated the facilitator’s performance as Excellent or Good.

Lessons learned & Recommendations

Based on the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data analysis as well as discussions during the Validation Workshop, the following points are recommended:

1. Conduct midterm data collection with coaches and children after coaches’ refresher training to document improvements so far.
In the validation meeting, it was expressed that many of the coaches who felt anxious to start working with the children and who had concerns regarding children’s interest in such programs have come a long way since. Children’s attendance and engagement has been high, and coaches’ excitement and confidence has increased. Midterm data collection would allow us to track the impact of the project better in addition to serving as a resource for future coaches on what to expect when they first get started.
2. It is not enough for coaches to have theoretical knowledge on bullying but to also be able to focus on actions and behaviors that are considered bullying so that children become aware of them as well. We must also include teaching and promoting empathy as a critical social skill.
Many children who engage in or are victims of bullying do not perceive these actions as such. It was also brought to our attention that even in centers where the issue of bullying is talked about, the children do not seem to understand it beyond

a theoretical idea. Therefore, it is important that coaches focus on the actions and behaviors that are harmful and make children more aware of that. That is also why it would be of great benefit to include empathy in the social skills we promote in our programs for children to not only identify violent behavior but also understand its impact on others.

3. Even though this is beyond the project's current scope, it could be very impactful to create training for school staff and put mechanisms of reporting in place. This would serve to increase the capacity of more staff and teachers at schools to tackle and limit bullying as well as have safe and confidential mechanisms of reporting in place that children would trust and utilize. In the short-term, school or center-wide information sessions can be held under the Play to Grow Together project.
4. In future phases, children can be equipped and supported to organize their own initiatives in order to raise awareness on bullying and advocate for safer schools and communities.
5. While coaches' ability to make their sessions more accessible to children with disabilities improved, overall, only 56% of coaches rated their ability as Good or Excellent. In the validation meeting, it was clarified that due to time constraints, the training cannot delve into more details about accessibility. As a result, tackling gender equality and girls' participation was given more priority during training. Therefore, it was suggested that more information and skills on inclusion and accessibility can be covered in the refresher training.
6. With regards to the questions in the Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes assessment that coaches struggled with the most, the discussion during the validation workshop showed that it could be traced back to the language used in the questions. For example, on question #7, the Arabic word "بنية" was used to ask about the structure of a Sports for Development session, but many coaches' answers were about the values integrated in the session or the skills appropriate for different age groups. Furthermore, in question #9, where all the options in the multiple-choice question were correct, there was no option to select "All of the Above" which might have caused confusion. It was also clear that when a question is made up of two parts, whether in the FGDs or on the pre and posttests, participants were most likely to only answer the second half of the question. A revision of these points as well as any wording that is not clear in the Egyptian context is advised.