

I am Learning to Protect Myself with Mika



Type of intervention

Pre-school based educational prevention program designed to be delivered by psychologists and teachers and primarily seeking to develop self-protection skills.

Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:

Primary and secondary prevention working with pre-school children.

Target population

Pre-school aged children (4-6 years).

Delivery organisation

The program was developed by Türkan Yılmaz Irmak, Rukiye Kızıltepe, Duygu Eslek, and Şeyda Aksel at Ege University, Turkey. The approach was designed with consideration of children's cognitive, physical and emotional development.

Mode and context of delivery

Pre-school based sessions delivered by both psychologists and teachers. These include the use of Mika, a gender-neutral toy, role play, dancing, singing, and craft activities.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

Pre-school teachers are trained to deliver the program over three days. This training included the types and signs of CSA, responding to disclosures, reporting CSA, CSA prevention and the program content. Parents were also provided with a one-hour information session.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

Each module includes three sessions which are delivered over the course of a week. All five modules are covered over five weeks.

Description of intervention

The program is formed of five modules. Module one explores emotional awareness, focusing on sadness, fear, happiness, anger and surprise, in addition to associations of shame and guilt with CSA. Children are presented with situations where they may feel same or not and role-play and painting are used within the activities. During second module children learn about the body and which areas are private through activities including

singing and dancing. Module three discusses good, bad and unsafe touches, making the distinction that touches can make one feel unsafe even when they don't hurt. This is delivered using role play. In module four children learn about secrets, how keeping secrets can make them feel, and the importance of telling secrets to a trusted adult. Finally, module five integrates the key messages from the program and reinforces the learning. Facilitation is enhanced by the gender-neutral Mika doll to support with learning and demonstration of concepts.

Evaluation

In the first study, the efficacy of the program was investigated with a total of 175 children. The program was delivered by psychologists for girls and boys in separate groups. Children in the intervention group demonstrated enhanced skills and awareness than those in the wait-list control group. Parents reported that children in the intervention condition talked about their emotions more and appreciating their body after participation (Yılmaz Irmak, Kızıltepe, Aksel, Güngör, & Eslek, 2018).

In the second study, preschool teachers delivered the program in mixed-sex classroom settings. In a comparison of children who participated in the program and a wait-list control group, children in the intervention group demonstrated increased knowledge and self-protection skills. These gains remained stable at a two month follow up. However, there were variations in efficacy with some children showing little change in relation to safety rules on keeping secrets. Knowledge and self-protection skills did not differ according to gender, age group, and school SES. Parents and teachers reported some side effects of participation including increased sleep difficulties and less inclination to participate in other classroom activities (Kızıltepe, Eslek, Yılmaz Irmak, & Güngör, 2021).

References

Yılmaz Irmak, T. Y., Kızıltepe, R., Aksel, S., Güngör, D., & Eslek, D. (2018). I'm learning to protect myself with Mika: Efficacy of sexual abuse prevention program. *Turkish Journal of Psychology*, 33(81), 58-61. Retrieved from <https://www.psikolog.org.tr/en/publications/yayinlar/10.31828/tpd1300443320180000m000003.pdf>

Kızıltepe, R., Eslek, D., Yılmaz Irmak, T, & Güngör, D. (2021). "I am learning to protect myself with Mika:" A teacher-based child sexual abuse prevention program in Turkey. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0886260520986272>

Yılmaz Irmak, T., Kızıltepe, R., Eslek, D., & Aksel, Ş. (2020). *I am learning to protect myself with Mika: Sexual abuse prevention program for preschool children a manual for practitioners*. İzmir: Ege University.

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