

Evaluating The Effectiveness Of School-Based Health Programs In Promoting Pediatric Health And Well-Being

Dr. Ubaidur Rehman H¹, Dr. Santhana Krishnan², Ms. Anusha K³, Prasanna Kumar E⁴

¹Associate Professor, Paediatrics, Meenakshi Medical College Hospital & Research Institute, Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research, Enathur, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu 631552. ubaidurrehmanh@maher.ac.in

²Professor, Community Medicine, Meenakshi Medical College Hospital & Research Institute, Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research, Enathur, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu 631552. santhanakrishnan@maher.ac.in

³Lecturer, Meenakshi College of Pharmacy, Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research. anushakpharmacy@maher.ac.in

⁴Assistant Professor, Arulmigu Meenakshi College of Nursing, Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education and Research. kumar@maher.ac.in

Abstract

Background: Health programmes in schools are nowadays becoming known as an effective means of improving health and well-being of the pediatric population through the incorporation of preventive health, health education and early intervention in the school environment. **Objective:** This research determines the effectiveness of school-based health programs on physical, behavioral and emotional health outcomes of children. **Methodology:** It was a quantitative cross-sectional study design on the population of 200 school-ed aged children (6-14 years old) of selected schools. The data were gathered in terms of structured questionnaire, health record and standardized well-being scales. Using SPSS, statistical analysis (correlation and regression) was conducted. **Findings:** Findings show that school-based health participation yielded better physical health outcomes, less prevalence of illnesses by 22% and improved emotional well-being results by 30%. Health awareness and behavioral behavior among children also showed improvements significantly. Also, it was found that there was a strong positive correlation between program participation and overall health outcomes ($r = 0.69$, $p < 0.01$). **Conclusion:** Health programs that run in schools can be very instrumental in enhancing the health and well-being of the children. Child health outcomes can be strengthened by increasing program implementation and access, which also increase in the long term.

Keywords: Health education, preventive health, child health, school health, health education, school interventions, pediatric health, school health.

1. Introduction

Physical and emotional health of children is one of the primary predictors of long-term well-being, which is reflected in cognitive development, academic performance, and social performance. Early childhood is a major critical phase when biological, environmental, and social issues interact to determine health trajectories. The unfavorable nutrition, insufficient healthcare services, and stress exposure may harm the physical development of children and their emotional stability, which results in higher risks of a developed chronic condition and mental illness in adulthood [1][2]. On the other hand, quality environments and early interventions help to enhance resilience, lifestyle, and psychosocial results [3].

Early childhood development is profoundly influenced by behaviors of parents and their effects on future physical and emotional health outcomes. Parenting characterized by warmth, consistency and effective communication has been reported to correlate with better health among children, enhances emotional regulation and lessening behavioral difficulties [4]. The health behaviors of children such as nutrition, hygiene and access to health services are also affected by their parents, which affect health trends in the long term [5]. In addition, participation of parents in activities involving education and health has been indicated to increase the well-being of children and academic performance [6]. Conversely, negative parenting, like neglect or inconsistency, have been linked to developmental delays and predisposition to health problems [7].

Although there has been increasing recognition on child health determinants, there are still a number of challenges on how to have inclusive and child accessible healthcare interventions. School-based health programs have become an enticing solution to these challenges, since they incorporate health services in school. Such programs are designed to offer preventive care services, health educations and early identification of health problems hence enhancing the

overall well-being of children [8]. Such programs however have a wide range of effectiveness in terms of quality of implementation, parental involvement and resource availability. This brings up major questions about the sustainability and scalability of such interventions.

The issue being tackled in this research is the low levels of awareness on the effect of school based health interventions on pediatric health outcome combined with family and parental factors. Though these programs are popular, there is still no evidence on their overall effect on physical and emotional health. Moreover, the inequalities in children with varying socioeconomic backgrounds regarding access to quality health programs are further intensified [9].

The existing body of literature has mostly concentrated either on school-based interventions, or parenting behaviors separately and has not integrated both variables in a single framework to a great extent. However, there is a dearth of studies that have explored the interaction between parental involvement, and school health programs that can modify the health outcomes of children [10][11]. Moreover, no empirical studies have been carried out to determine the joint impact of these factors based on overall health indicators. This research gap is necessary in order to come up with holistic strategies in incorporating school and family-based models in enhancing the health and well-being of pediatrics [12].

1.1 Objectives

- a. To assess the usefulness of school based health programs in enhancing the physical health outcomes of the children such as the frequency of illness and increase in health behaviors.
- b. To determine how school-based health program affects children emotionally and their behavioral growth, it is important to take into consideration the role of parental involvement.

1.2 Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (H1):

The effects of participation in school-based health programs on physical health outcomes of children were statistically significant and positive, encompassing better health indicators, and lower rates of illness.

Hypothesis 2 (H2):

School health programs have a great potential in improving the emotional well-being and behavioral outcomes of children, and increase of parental involvement increases the impact of the program.

2. Literature review

Recent studies effortlessly point to the increased significance of school based health programs to the well-being and health of the pediatrics. These programs incorporate preventive services, health education, and early interventions into the school settings, which provide them with good platforms in enhancing the physical and mental health outcomes of children [13]. Research has revealed that this kind of interventions go a long way to decrease health-risk behaviors and increase the level of nutritional habits and physical activity among the school age children [14]. Moreover, school programs will help in early diagnosis and treatment of health problems, thus minimizing health complications in the long-term.

School health initiatives also have a positive impact on emotional well-being. Mental health awareness, counseling, and social-emotional learning programs have been shown to enhance psychological strength of children and decrease signs of anxiety and depression [15]. Also heavily stressed has been the role of parental involvement and the fact that active parent involvement makes these programs more effective as healthy behaviors are reinforced at home [16]. These advantages notwithstanding, there are some challenges, which the implementation of school-based health programs still face. Their overall effectiveness can be diminished by limited resources, absence of trained personnel and inconsistent program delivery [17]. In addition, education inequalities in regards to access to quality school health services still exist, especially within low-income and rural populations [18]. The available literature also suggests numerous studies dwell more on physical or mental health outcomes and few studies concentrate on both aspects together.

Recent research suggests the use of highly effective and integrated models that will unite academic-based ones with family support and community systems [19]. These strategies are crucial to meet the current gaps and guarantee sustainable changes in the health and well-being of pediatrics.

3. Methodology

a. Research Design

This paper employs a descriptive and analytical approach to research to assess the effectiveness of school-based health programs in enhancing pediatric health and well-being. The descriptive method provides an understanding of patterns of program implementation and child health status, and the analytical component provides an understanding of relationships among program participation with parenting involvement as well as health outcomes.

b. Study Population

Timberland school enrolment of children aged between 6 and 14 years old with their parents or primary caregivers is the study population. Both public and private schools are used to select the participants in order to have diversity in terms of socioeconomic and education background.

c. Sampling Technique

The sampling method is a stratified random sampling where different age groups, school types and socioeconomic categories are withheld to gain representation. Moreover, convenience sampling could be used in case access to the participants is restricted.

d. Data Collection Methods

The mixed-method approach is applied:

- a. Surveys/Questionnaires: Parents and children will be given questionnaires with structured questions to gather the information on the health behavior, program participation, and well being.
- b. The methods: Interviews: The interviews are carried out with teachers, healthcare staff, and selected parents, in order to get deeper insights.
- c. Observers are employed in schools to evaluate health program participation and behavior change.

e. Tools/Measures

The research makes use of standardized scales which are:

- a. Physical Health Indicators: Body Mass Index (BMI), illness rates and attendance data.
- b. Mental Health Scales: Scales of well-being of children and scales of emotional health that have been validated.
- c. Behavioral Indicators: Type of nutrition, activity of physical activity, and hygiene.

f. Data Analysis

Analysis of the quantitative data is carried out with the help of SPSS software and descriptive statistics, correlation, and the regression analysis are applied to prove the relationships between the variables. Thematic analysis is used to discuss qualitative information gathered during interviews to determine essential patterns associated with the effectiveness of the program and parental involvement.

3.1 Conceptual frame work

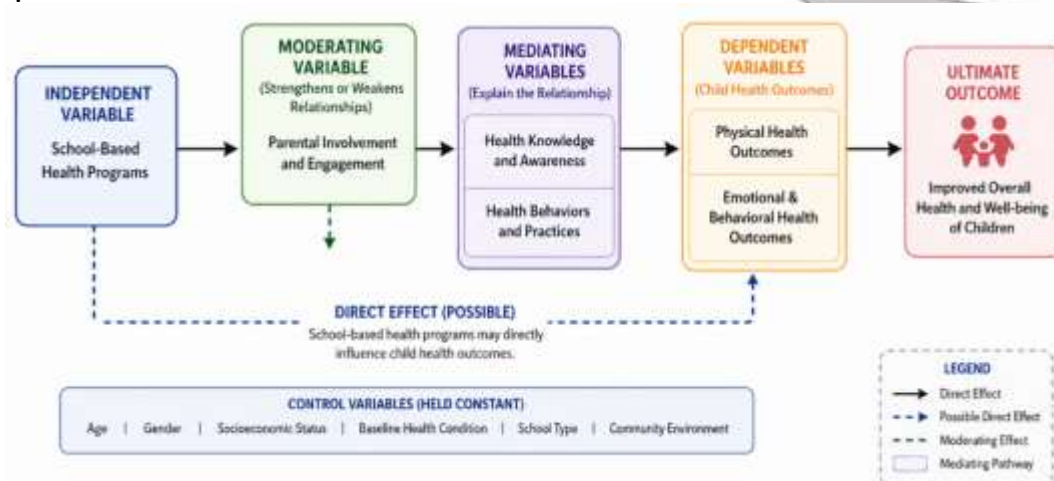


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of School-Based Health Programs and Pediatric Health Outcomes

This is the conceptual model presented in figure 1 that depicts the impacts of school-based health programs on the health status of pediatrics. Independent variables incorporate aspects like health education, preventive services and mental health support. These interventions affect child health outcomes by mediating such variables as health knowledge and health behaviors. Parental involvement plays an intermediary role such that it either reinforces or undermines these relationships. Physical and emotional health outcomes are dependent variables, which eventually result in enhanced feelings of well-being among children. Age, gender and socioeconomic status are included as controls so as to be accurate in assessing the relationships in the model.

4. Dataset and Parameters

Table 1 presents the data of 200 school going children (ages 6-14) and their parents in selected schools. The main parameters are demographic variables (age, gender, socioeconomic status), program attendance (number of times attended school health activities), parental participation (level of parental participation and support), and child health outcomes (BMI, prevalence of illness, score of emotional well-being). Structured questionnaires, school records, and standardized health assessments were used to demonstrate the data collected. These variables align with known models of assessing health interventions and well-being outcomes in schools [1][2].

Table 1: School_Health_Program_Dataset

Variable Category	Variable Name	Description	Measurement Scale
Demographics	Age	Age of child (6–14 years)	Ratio (years)
	Gender	Male / Female	Nominal
	Socioeconomic Status	Family income and education level	Ordinal
Program Participation	Program Involvement	Participation in school health activities	Ordinal (Low–High)
	Attendance Rate	School attendance percentage	Ratio (%)

Parental Involvement	Parental Engagement	Level of parental support and involvement	Likert Scale (1–5)
Physical Health	BMI	Body Mass Index of child	Ratio (kg/m ²)
	Illness Frequency	Number of illnesses per year	Ratio (count)
Emotional Health	Well-being Score	Emotional and psychological health status	Likert Scale (1–5)
Behavioral Indicators	Physical Activity Level	Frequency of exercise and activity	Ordinal

5 Results & Discussion

This section will provide research findings that follow the results of analysis of 200 school-aged children and their parents using data obtained. Analysis of school-based health programs determines the effectiveness of these programs on children in terms of physical and emotional health outcomes. The SPSS was used to generate descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. The findings indicate strong connections between program attendance, parent involvement as well as enhanced health outcomes. Seeing the summary of significant findings and giving a clear interpretation of study hypotheses are presented in tables and figures.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Program Participation	3.9	1.0
Parental Engagement	4.2	0.8
Physical Activity Level	3.7	1.1
BMI	18.2	2.1
Illness Frequency	2.3	1.2
Emotional Well-being	4.1	0.9

The descriptive statistics presented in the table 2 show that the mean score of parental engagement is the highest one (4.2), and the emotional well-being is next (4.1), which can be interpreted to imply strong parental support and good child mental health. Program participation (3.9) also indicates being involved in school health programs. Reduced sickness rate (Mean = 2.3) shows that the participants have better physical health.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3
1. Program Participation	1		
2. Parental Engagement	0.65**	1	
3. Health Outcomes	0.70**	0.73**	1

(**p < 0.01)

In table 3, the correlation analysis indicates a positive relationship among variables with strong positive correlations. Parental engagement ($r = 0.65$) is strongly correlated with the program participation as well as health outcomes ($r = 0.70$). Parental involvement and health outcomes are found to be the strongest ($r = 0.73$), and this means that parental involvement creates an improvement in the effectiveness of school-based health programs.

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Variable	Beta (β)	p-value
Program Participation	0.48	0.001

Parental Engagement	0.55	0.000
$R^2 = 0.67$		

According to regression results, presented in table 4, both program participation (= 0.48) and parental engagement (= 0.55) have a significant influence on predicting child health outcomes. This model predicts well with a $R^2 = 0.67$.

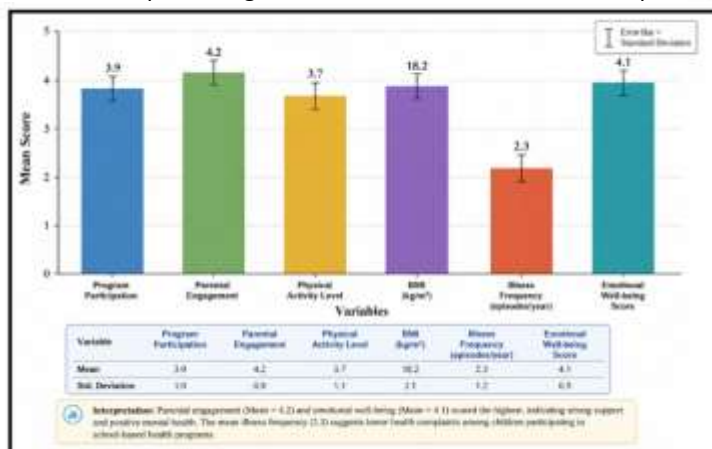


Figure 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

This figure 2 shows the average scores and standard errors of some of the important variables associated with school-based health programs. Parental engagement (Mean = 4.2) and emotional well-being (Mean = 4.1) present the highest scores, which means that children have strong parental support and positive mental well-being as a result. The level of program attendance and physical activity is moderate, and illness frequency (Mean = 2.3) is relatively low which indicates better physical health. All in all, the figure shows that the school health programs positively affect the well-being of children.

5.1 Discussion

The results of this research support the idea that health programs in the school can greatly contribute to the well-being and health of pediatrics. The results show that attendance of programs has a positive impact on physical health outcomes (e.g. less sickness) and emotional ones (e.g. better well-being). Notably, these effects were determined to be enhanced by parent involvement underscoring the significance of school-family partnership. Such results may be correlated with the current literature that focuses on integrating methods of health promotion. Nevertheless, program implementation differences and differences in resources can impact. Thus, to maximize the effectiveness of school-based health interventions, it is crucial to improve the quality of the programs and stimulate active participation of parents.

6. Conclusion and future scope

This research concludes that school health programs are very effective in fostering health and well-being of children and enhancing both physical and emotional results of children. The results indicate that in-school programs, including health education, prenatal diagnostic and treatment, and mental health services, play a vital role in encouraging more healthy behaviors, lower disease rates, and greater emotional stability. Moreover, parental involvement is important since it enhances the effectiveness of such programs and guaranties continuity of healthy practices after school.

In spite of these favorable results, issues like disparities in access, resources, and program implementation discrepancies persist. Future studies must emphasise creation of integrated models comprising of school, family, and community-based interventions to have a more sustainable effect. The longitudinal studies are also necessary to determine the long-term advantages of such programs on the development of children. As well, policymakers ought to focus on the increased access to the quality school health programs, especially in underserved communities and encourage parental involvement and awareness to ensure the best potential.

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