

## The Role of School Health in Developing Health Awareness Among Students

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### Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the role of school health in enhancing health awareness and to understand the function of screening and monitoring units within the school environment. It also examines the strategies and programs these units rely on for monitoring, considering them a crucial part of school health programs. These programs serve as an important link within schools, through which health services are provided to help develop health awareness among students and equip them with a culture that enriches their cognitive, intellectual, and sensory aspects. This, in turn, contributes to creating a safe psychological and educational environment. However, the impact of these services often remains slow compared to the health changes occurring in the present time.

**Keywords:** health awareness, school health, screening and monitoring units Here's the academic translation of the provided text:

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### 1. Study Problem:

In the educational process, schools play a crucial role in enhancing and improving the experiences of generations, developing and empowering students through a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the body, health, environment, and community. Schools are educational institutions that strive to maintain and improve health. They attempt to keep pace with health developments and complement them. Any program aimed at developing schools through educational reform must include the health aspect of the student, from prevention to treatment. It helps students achieve healthy physical growth and develop their abilities, emphasizing the importance of schools in the work

done by doctors, administrators, teachers, and leaders to achieve health goals and transform into health-promoting institutions. Working together to improve student health, merely informing students about health is insufficient to induce the desired changes in behavior or practices. Therefore, health education must provide learning experiences that influence choices regarding health alternatives and decision-making based on time and circumstances affected by other factors. Through what we have discussed, this study aims to explore the role of school health in developing health awareness among students by posing the main question: What is the role of school health in enhancing health awareness among students?

## **2. Importance of the Study:**

School health represents an important and essential part of the student's physical, psychological, and social life, contributing to the improvement of their scientific and practical abilities through programs and plans established to enhance the health status of students and develop their level of health awareness. This, in turn, actively contributes to raising the level of health awareness in the community.

## **3. Objectives of the Study:**

Through this study, we aim to achieve a set of objectives summarized as follows:

- To clearly define the nature of school health and health awareness among specialists.
- To understand the importance and objectives of school health in schools.
- To investigate the plans and programs of screening and monitoring units as an important part of school health programs.
- To examine the role and function of screening and monitoring units within the school environment.

## **4. definition of terms**

### **4.1 Concept of Health Awareness:**

Health awareness is an educational program that involves a series of activities and initiatives aimed at enhancing health knowledge, building attitudes, and instilling healthy behaviors within the school community ([www.moh.gov.sa](http://www.moh.gov.sa)).

Morman et al. (1993) defined it as the organized level of differences among individuals regarding their diverse interests in health behavior. Meanwhile, William (1998) described it as an individual's awareness of the perceptual environmental factors surrounding them concerning health issues and self-protection needs, representing the organized differences among individuals regarding health-related matters.

It refers to citizens' familiarity with health information and facts, as well as their sense of responsibility towards their health and that of others. It also encompasses intentional health practices resulting from understanding and conviction, transforming these health practices into habits performed subconsciously.

Health awareness is the recognition of health knowledge, facts, and goals related to health behavior, meaning it is the process through which individuals perceive themselves and understand the health circumstances surrounding them, forming a mental attitude towards the public health of the community (Al-Ajili, Aisha, 2019, pp. 09-10).

It expresses knowledge and understanding, forming inclinations and attitudes towards certain health issues appropriate for the age group, positively reflecting on daily health behavior (Yousfi, Huda and Saad, Ben Abid, 2018, p. 176).

#### **4.2 Definition of School Health:**

“School health” encompasses a set of concepts, principles, systems, and services aimed at promoting the health of students of school age, thereby enhancing community health through them.

The health of students, in its holistic sense—mental, physical, psychological, and social—is one of the key foundations that the Ministry of National Education works to translate through programs and plans aimed at creating a supportive school environment for the targeted group, which represents more than eight million students and thousands of teaching and administrative staff. Since students spend a significant portion of their time in school, the health and educational programs implemented there have a considerable impact on changing student behaviors early in their lives to adopt a healthy lifestyle and behaviors ([webcache.googleusercontent.com](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com)).

School health is a specialized program that belongs to public health and focuses on children and youth at the school level, comprising several components. It involves all activities related to health, executed through the school system, and is considered an effective means for promoting the health of the community as a whole (Samah, Ihsan Taha Al-Halabi, 2017, p. 27).

#### **4.3 Screening and Monitoring Units:**

These are school health institutions established by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health in Algeria in 1994. The ministerial decree No. 06 dated 2008/11/23 defined the unit’s goal as providing preventive, therapeutic, and educational services to children and adolescents to ensure harmonious physical, mental, intellectual, and social development. These units are located in secondary schools, middle schools, primary schools, or even in health sectors ([santescolaire-alg.blogspot.com](http://santescolaire-alg.blogspot.com)).

#### **5. Importance of School Health for Children:**

Health care is fundamental to building the future generation for the growth and well-being of society. Therefore, those interested in education strive to provide school health services to students through various programs, which include preventive measures such as screening new students, providing vaccinations against infectious diseases, monitoring the safety of the school environment, and offering some first aid by treatment units (Samah, Ihsan Taha Al-Halabi, 2017, p. 217). The importance of school health can be summarized as follows:

- Students of school age today are the men of tomorrow. Caring for them and their health means creating strong and healthy generations that can fully contribute to production and the prosperity and welfare of society.
- The school age period is one of the most crucial stages of life, characterized by rapid growth and development in students, whether physically, psychologically, or socially. This necessitates providing suitable conditions for complete growth and development.

- The gathering of students in schools exposes them to the risks of infectious diseases. If any student carries a germ or contagious illness, the infection can spread to other students. Additionally, students may carry infections from their peers back to their homes, leading to the spread of diseases in the community.
- The school serves as a center for combating infectious diseases in the surrounding community, either directly or indirectly.
- The better a student's health, the more capable they are of learning and acquiring the educational information and experiences provided by the school, adhering to the principle of "a sound mind in a sound body" (Samah, Ihsan Taha Al-Halabi, 2017, p. 29).
- Children in this age group (school age) represent a significant portion of the community, amounting to about a quarter of the population, thereby providing them with substantial opportunities for health and psychological and social protection.
- All members of the community, across all demographics, pass through schools; thus, schools present an opportunity to influence them and equip them with preventive medical information and train them in healthy behaviors.
- This stage of life is a period of growth, development, and maturation for the child, during which many physical, mental, social, and emotional changes occur. It is essential to provide students at this age with adequate influences to facilitate these changes within healthy and natural limits.
- In schools, children are more susceptible to contagious and infectious diseases, as well as various injuries and accidents.
- During school age, children acquire behaviors related to life in general and health in particular, and they require an educational environment that helps them adopt these habits. The school provides a suitable atmosphere for modifying incorrect behaviors ([webcache.googleusercontent.com](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com)).
- Serving the community, especially students, and raising their health awareness.
- Students in the school environment are more exposed to health risks (infectious diseases, injuries, and accidents).
- Instilling healthy behaviors related to life in students.
- Early detection and immediate treatment of many diseases.
- Students constitute a high percentage of the community ([edu.moe.gov.sa](http://edu.moe.gov.sa)).

#### **6. Objectives of School Health:**

- Raise Health Awareness: Increase health awareness among students and, consequently, the community.
- Identify Health Issues: Determine health problem priorities in the school community and inform educators about them.
- Train Educators: Train teachers on school health activities such as early disease detection, health education, and monitoring the school environment.
- Provide Health Services: Offer health services to a large segment of the community, including students and educational staff.

- Develop Skills: Acquire skills in planning, implementing, and evaluating school health programs.
- Improve Health Environment: Provide and enhance a healthy school environment in coordination and collaboration with the educational family (edu.moe.gov.ps).
- Enhance Health and Environmental Awareness\*\*: Raise the level of health and environmental awareness among students and teachers.
- Promote Hygiene: Improve personal and public hygiene in schools.
- Monitor Health and Nutrition: Enhance and monitor the health and nutrition status of students and teachers through health indicators.
- Develop School Facilities: Work on improving and developing school environments and health facilities, ensuring their maintenance.
- Participate in Health Needs Assessment: Identify health needs priorities with the participation of the school community.
- Empower Health Workers: Elevate the capabilities of those working in the field of school health (www.mohe.ps).

### **7. Characteristics of Health Awareness in the School Environment:**

- Health as Behavior: Health is a proper behavior exhibited by students, not merely scattered information that is memorized and forgotten.
- Acquisition of Healthy Habits: The acquisition of healthy habits is a primary goal within a sound school environment.
- Relevant Health Knowledge: It is essential to provide students with relevant health knowledge closely related to their lives to solve their environmental problems.
- Tailored Educational Programs: Educational programs must be adapted to meet students' physical, psychological, and social needs.
- Focus on Positive Aspects: Focus on positive aspects and address negative behaviors in health, which contributes to reinforcing the positive effects of health education.
- Peer Influence: The group, particularly peer groups, significantly influences student behavior; thus, it should be utilized in developing health education programs within the school (activities, broadcasts, trips).
- Diverse Activities: School health can be achieved through various activities and programs, not just during lesson time.
- Nurturing Healthy Interests: It is necessary to cultivate students' healthy interests in appropriate ways and support positive behaviors while addressing harmful ones.
- Educational Process: Health awareness is an educational process that considers educational conditions and laws, such as maturity, practice, and motivation (Abd Al-Aali, Dabla and Fazila Sadrati, 2013, p. 112).

### **8. Role of School Health in the School Environment:**

The formation of a child's personality involves proper upbringing that includes all health, psychological, mental, and sensory conditions, such as balance, intelligence, precise observation, understanding, reasoning, analytical thinking, and constructive criticism. This responsibility is shared by the family, school, and social environment. The school is

considered one of the most accountable institutions for providing education to community members, particularly in terms of health education.

This implies focusing on health information, attitudes, habits, preventive services, and enhancing the necessary capabilities to create a school environment conducive to proper growth and development. All experiences across the institution should prioritize healthy, social, and moral behaviors.

The role of health in schools can be summarized through several aspects:

- Establish Healthy Habits: Forming habits and behaviors with a health dimension.
- Instill Health Values: Instilling health and social values that can encompass the concept of health, which is derived from an educational project.
- Link Between Students and Academic Results: Establishing a relationship between the student and their academic performance.
- Create Suitable Conditions: Preparing appropriate conditions for comprehensive growth and development (physically, socially, mentally, and sexually).
- Avoid Health Barriers: Preventing students in their academic stages from facing health barriers that lead to introversion, self-isolation, impulsivity, and aggression.
- Combat Infectious Diseases: Fighting infectious diseases and social issues that pose risks to the individual and society.
- Connect School, Community, and Family: Establishing a relationship between the school, the surrounding environment, and the family, with the school serving as a channel for conveying health messages.
- Importance of Good Health: Good health, free from diseases and psychological issues, is a critical factor in the educational process and in acquiring the knowledge and skills provided by the school.
- Influence on Family and Community: School health helps foster healthy behaviors and influences the family and community through the student.
- Promote Health Through Activities: Promoting health through various activities such as sports and intellectual pursuits.

Interest in school health programs began worldwide in the early 19th century. James Ware observed, in 1812, that some school students in England suffered from vision impairments. By 1840, several physicians conducted examinations for students in schools and universities in Sweden. In 1888, the Swedish government performed medical examinations for students in schools and universities. In 1895, about six doctors examined elementary school students in Moscow. In 1902, the English physician Barstly Smith published a report indicating a relationship between vision impairments in students and their academic performance. Since then, interest in school health entities has grown (Ghada, Kamal Khalil Younes Makhamara, 2020, p. 14).

### **9. Health Screening, Monitoring, and Awareness Units in Schools:**

These units aim to achieve several objectives, including ensuring that students enjoy good health and utilize school health services whenever needed. They provide health education that students can share with their families and peers outside of school, enabling them to

engage in school activities, including learning and sports, in a safe environment. Students should also receive healthy and proper nutrition, appropriate psychological, social, and educational guidance, while the staff around them maintain physical, mental, and social health. Furthermore, they should live in a healthy and safe school environment.

Human Resources of the Screening and Monitoring Unit: This unit is composed of a medical team that includes a general practitioner, a psychologist, a dental surgeon, and nurses. The school health unit, referred to in Algeria as “Unité de Dépistage et de Suivi,” covers various aspects of psychological, physical, social, and educational health care and protection.

#### **10. Activities of School Health Units in Protecting Students’ Health:**

Activating and enhancing the role of the School Health Screening and Monitoring Unit (U.D.S) within the early social protection project for children is justified by several considerations and advantages:

- It is an institution that welcomes children from their first day of school and accompanies them throughout their educational journey. Thus, its activities are community-oriented and supportive over the years of their schooling
- The school age is when children are most exposed to violations of their rights.
- It provides the opportunity for early detection of children who have been harmed or whose rights have been violated through the activities of the psychologist, doctor, or any member of the school health team. This allows for initial inquiries into violations and necessary actions to be taken.
- It also offers comprehensive and early multidimensional care (psychological, social, educational, medical) for children who have experienced violations and maltreatment by maintaining a comprehensive monitoring file for every child entering the school, aiding in documented and genuine protection and investigation.
- Incorporating child protection into the responsibilities of the school health unit allows the state to save valuable time and substantial funds that would otherwise be spent on establishing various institutions dedicated to this group, which is often national or regional. In contrast, the school health unit is available locally and adjacent to all students nationwide, equipped and staffed, and is in a constant state of activity.

Here’s the academic translation of the provided text:

#### **11. Role of Screening and Monitoring Units in Health Awareness for Students:**

The school health screening and monitoring unit plays a crucial role in health education and awareness for students and their parents. Schools are considered the best places to promote awareness about drug abuse and psychoactive substances. Numerous studies have indicated that students aged 14 to 16 are the most vulnerable to drug consumption. Furthermore, some field research on drug abuse indicates that certain criminal gangs rely on drop-out students to sell drugs outside school premises, targeting their peers, especially those facing social or economic problems. Therefore, the programs implemented by the health screening and monitoring units include awareness and prevention days to educate students about this issue and other social vices such as violence, smoking, and HIV/AIDS.

#### **This is achieved through:**

- Regular and Comprehensive Medical and Psychological Check-ups: Conducting periodic medical and psychological examinations for students.
- Therapeutic and Psychological Guidance Services: Providing treatment and psychological counseling services.
- Emergency Medical Care: Offering medical attention in cases of accidents or emergencies.
- Health Education for Special Needs: Providing health care and education tailored for students with special needs.

Preventive Health Education: Implementing health education and awareness programs.

- School Food Safety and Balance: Ensuring the safety and nutritional balance of school meals.
- Physical Education Monitoring: Activating and monitoring physical education activities.
- Early Detection of Child Abuse: According to the national school health program in Algeria, which mandates comprehensive medical and psychological screening for all enrolled students, the program enables early detection of child abuse cases and reporting them.

Evidence of this is reflected in the reporting data; for instance, in Syria, 16.1% of abuse reports came from educational staff, 15.2% from judicial and police personnel, 14.4% from social services and mental health workers, 8.3% from medical staff, and other sources.

Detecting instances of abuse is the result of collaborative efforts among teachers, administration, guidance counselors, parents, and the school health team. It is important to note that children who are victims of abuse often cannot report their mistreatment directly; many cases involve denial despite the presence of evidence and signs of abuse, often to avoid embarrassment and responsibility.

The school health team is responsible for identifying any signs of psychological, physical, or sexual abuse during routine medical and psychological examinations. They conduct psychosocial assessments for any child identified as a victim, examining their family environment to gain a comprehensive understanding of the abuse, its causes, severity, and surrounding circumstances. This information is utilized for treatment, psychological assessment, and preventing future abuse incidents.

## **12. Screening and Monitoring Units and Health Awareness Development in Schools:**

The Screening and Monitoring Unit oversees all preventive, therapeutic, and health education activities across all educational institutions under its jurisdiction, enabling it to:

- Care for All Students: Provide care for all students in the geographical school district.
- Offer Therapeutic Services: Provide some therapeutic services.
- Conduct Regular and Accurate Medical Examinations: Carry out thorough check-ups to detect diseases.
- Raise Awareness Among Educators and Parents: Inform educators and parents about the necessity of reporting any disorders that may occur in some students throughout the year.

- Establish Effective Monitoring Systems: Implement an effective system to monitor each student whose condition requires it.
- Diagnose and Explain Illnesses: Diagnose illnesses and explain them to the student's guardian.
- Ensure Effective Care for Sick Students: Confirm that sick students receive proper care from specialized health facilities and their guardians.
- Vaccinate Students: Coordinate vaccinations for students in collaboration with epidemic prevention services and school administrators.
- Maintain Cleanliness and Health Standards: Ensure cleanliness and appropriate health conditions in educational institutions, dormitories, and school cafeterias.
- Direct Cases of Infectious Diseases: Manage and guide cases of infectious diseases.
- Maintain Health Records: Keep and update health records and files for students.
- Address Psychosocial Cases: Provide care for students with psychosocial issues.
- Enhance Communication in the School Environment\*\*: Strengthen communication within the school community.
- Document Sensory Deficiencies: Record all cases of sensory deficiencies (hearing, vision, speech) (santescolaire-alg.blogspot.com).

### **13. Programs Supporting Health Awareness in Schools:**

Health awareness is linked to various activities within the school, which include:

- Educational Goals: The aim of school health is to educate students and enhance their knowledge in health and wellness, making it a fundamental activity for spreading health awareness.
- Seminars and Lectures: These sessions help students acquire information about their bodily health. Although attendance is not mandatory, most students show interest, and those who are reluctant should attend to avoid feeling isolated.
- Engaging Health Education: This method combines humor, entertainment, and health education, with the theater team providing health education information in an enjoyable and accessible manner.
- School Trips: Field trips to medical centers can educate students on the importance of self-care and the consequences of neglecting personal hygiene (www.annuaire.ma).

### **14. Suggestions for Enhancing the Role of School Health Units in Health Protection:**

To strengthen the protection provided by health screening and monitoring units for children and safeguard their fundamental rights, we propose the following suggestions based on our field observations and feedback from personnel working in these units:

1. Training Practitioners: Provide training for practitioners in screening and monitoring units on how to protect children's rights and identify and care for child abuse victims, along with organizing training sessions for educational staff.
2. Expand Activities to Remote Areas: Generalize the activities of school health units to include remote regions.
3. Organize Educational Days: Conduct educational days involving stakeholders to promote child protection initiatives.

4. Activate Student Clubs: Effectively activate “student clubs” due to their strategic benefits, allowing students to become positive participants in discussions about children’s rights, combating abuse, school violence, and more.
5. Mandatory Implementation of Ministerial Instructions: Enforce the application of Ministerial Instruction No. 027 dated 2007 regarding the target group for the health program to also include students in religious schools and private institutions.
6. Establish a National Electronic Network: Create a national electronic network for statistics on childhood abuse and utilize the results to develop future programs and anticipate the needs of children.
7. Increase Budget and Autonomy: Enhance the budget for screening and monitoring units and grant them financial and administrative independence.
8. Support with Social Workers and Speech Therapists: Augment school health units with the roles of “social worker” and “speech therapist.”
9. Expand Legal Powers: Broaden the legal authority of school administrators and school health officials in child protection, mandating them to report confirmed abuse cases immediately and allowing them to conduct home visits for suspected cases.
10. Emphasize Preventive Strategies: Reinforce the implementation of preventive strategies in school health programs.
11. Introduce Health Education Curriculum: Incorporate a health education curriculum for students that includes educational materials on first aid, children’s rights in cultural and social contexts, emergency survival steps for fires and disasters, traffic education, and the risks of internet misuse for children.
12. Provide Educational Resources for Special Needs: Ensure educational resources are available for children with special needs and those with chronic illnesses or who are in long-term hospital care.
13. Involve the Educational Community: Engage the entire educational community and parents in school health programs.
14. Develop Complaint Mechanisms: Study and develop the “confidential student complaint fund” and the “personal safety program for children” in schools.
15. Enhance School Health Records: Upgrade the “school health record” to align with the project for monitoring the rights of schoolchildren and identifying cases of abuse and neglect.
16. Educate Against Abuse: Raise awareness among children to prevent the mistreatment of peers with special needs.
17. Utilize Technology and Media: Integrate engaging technology and modern media, including cartoons and posters, into rights and health education.
18. Learn from Global Practices: Closely observe and benefit from global experiences and models of child protection programs and their applications in school health.
19. Conduct Awareness Campaigns: Organize educational days and publish awareness materials on children’s rights and protection from abuse.

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