Original Research Article

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Evaluation of health promoting schools in Makkah city, Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Background: The study was conducted to evaluate schools that implemented the health promotion program in Makkah city, which were 68 schools, (60%) of them randomly selected for the study.

Methods: The seven components of the health promoting schools evaluated through descriptive cross sectional study, concentrating on the implementation activities of each component, and whether this implementation conforming to requested standards.

Results: The study clarified that the health education activities scored 80% from the targeted activities in this component, encouragement of healthy behavior achieve the highest requested level, while healthy environment activities were being well implemented as it attained 87%.

Conclusions: The study concluded that there were weaknesses in the following components, food and nutritional service, school health and mental service provision, and school connectedness with the surrounding community. The study recommends establishment of health service system for psychological and mental health for students, medical checks for school staff in addition to strengthening the links between health promoting schools and surrounding communities, through organized programs. The study recommends for more researches in order to support implementation of the program.

Keywords: Schools, Health promotion, Makkah city

INTRODUCTION

The promotion of health and longevity may be more successful at preventing disease and improving both the quality and quantity of our lives than attacking individual diseases, his can be called "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" theory.¹

For many years schools had been recognized as important settings for health and education, traditionally, health education focused on providing information or developing skills and attitudes to help individuals make healthy choices about lifestyle or behavior.²

Health promotion in school can be defined as "any activity undertaken to improve and/or protect the health of all school users".³

The health-promoting schools concept is a global school health initiative which offers a holistic approach to address all of the factors that influence the health of young people. It involves students, teachers and other members of the school community, parents and the wider community. It provides for coordinated action with respect to the curriculum, the school's physical, social environments, school health services and of course those policies and practices of the school which impact on health.⁴

School strives to build health into its environment and in the community, schools has distinct strengths and needs. By building on those strengths and drawing on the imagination of students, parents, teachers and administrators, every school can find new ways to improve health and address health problems; this is the heart of the process of becoming a health-promoting school.⁵

The health-promoting schools approach, by contrast, focuses on living conditions and lifestyles, considers well-being and the absence of disease and views health as an open concept in which young people should be involved in defining health.⁶

Justification

Schools are one of the best settings-based approaches to promote health. Schools remains for many years been recognized as an important settings for health promotion and the concept of 'health promoting schools 'has been embraced internationally as an effective way of promoting the health of children, adolescents, and the wider community.

The study includes the nine components of health promoting school in the evaluation of health promoting schools in Makkah city to point out strengths and weaknesses so as help in future improvement and development of the program.

The general objective of this study was to assess the health promoting schools in Makkah city.

The specific objectives of this study was to determine the health promoting school environmental situation, to assess the health education activities in health promoting school, to monitor health and mental health services in health promoting schools, to determine the level of school connectedness with community and to assess the nutrition and catering services in health promoting schools.

METHODS

Study area

The study will be in health promoting schools for boys located in Makkah city, the total area of Mecca today is over 1,200 km², and the total numbers of schools for boys are 594.

Study population

The total number of health promoting schools for boys in Makkah is (68) where (41) schools, has been selected for the study.

Study design

Descriptive cross sectional study for the evaluation of health promoting school in Makkah city, participants were interviewed using a structured, interviewer administered questionnaire and a checklist. Data collected was analyzed using the SPSS version 15.0.

Sample size

Sample size determined by selecting 60% of the total health promoting schools for boys in Makkah city, which are (41) schools.

Selection criteria

Inclusion criteria were all health promoting schools for boys in Makkah city. Exclusion criteria were health promoting schools for girls in the city.

Ethical issues

Ethical clearance certificate from research and ethics committee in faculty of public health and informatics was obtained, official letter for permission of conducting the study was issued from the committee.

RESULTS

The Figure 1 was showing that only the aspect of encouraging healthy behavior attained 90% of the requested activities of this component. The execution of health education programs was not as required in health promoting school.

Most of the healthy environment activities were being implemented in health promoting schools. The classrooms health characteristics were the best component while the safety component needs more efforts as shown in Figure 2.

There are some shortages in the availability of school health services, while first aids kits were better as depicted in Figure 3. Some services need more activation to raise the implementation percentages. Periodic medical check, registers for chronic diseases are weak as given in Figure 4.

Food safety and catering service activities was better implemented in comparing to healthy nutrition activities as seen in Figure 5.

The mental health service provision is generally low, specially programs for early detection of mental problems as shown in Figure 6.

The community involvement in supporting school is better than participating of schools in community service (Figure 7).

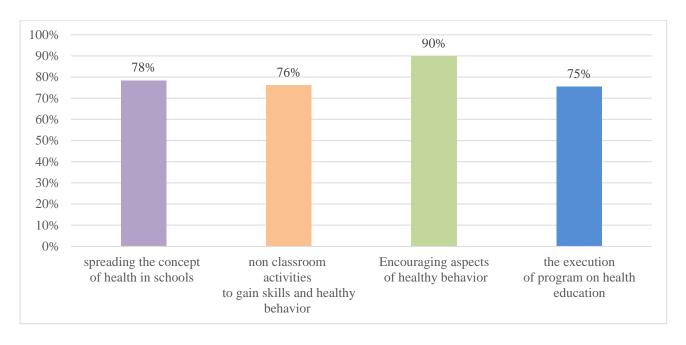


Figure 1: Health education activities in health promoting schools (n=41).

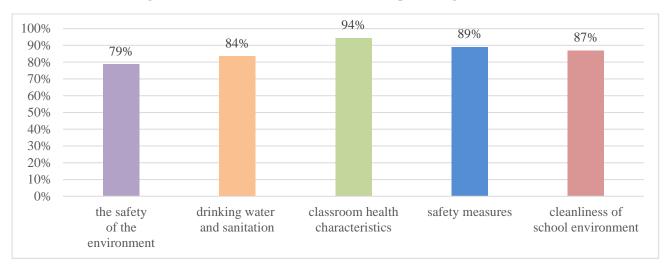


Figure 2: School environment of the health promoting schools (n=41).

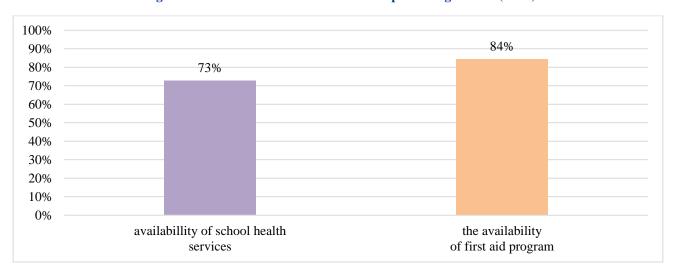


Figure 3: School health services of the health promoting schools (n=41).

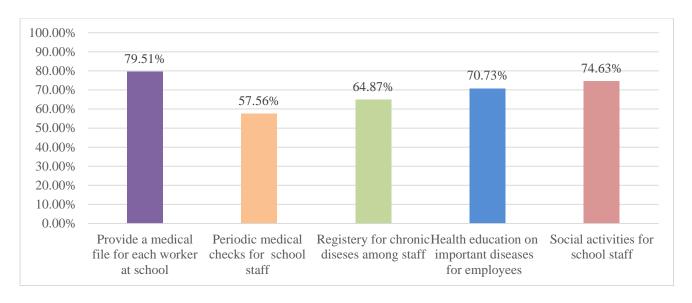


Figure 4: Staff health service provision within the health promoting schools (n=41).

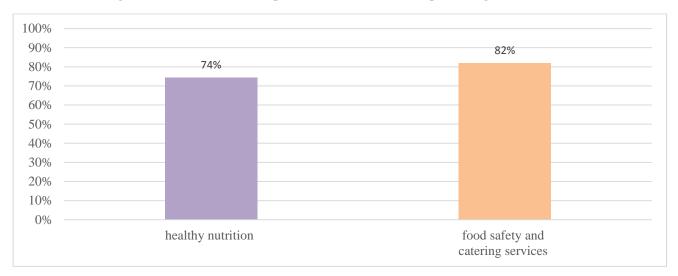


Figure 5: Food safety and nutrition service within the health promoting schools (n=41).

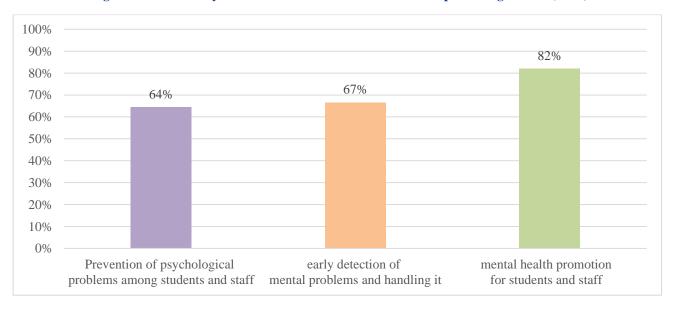


Figure 6: Mental health and counseling service within the health promoting schools (n=41).

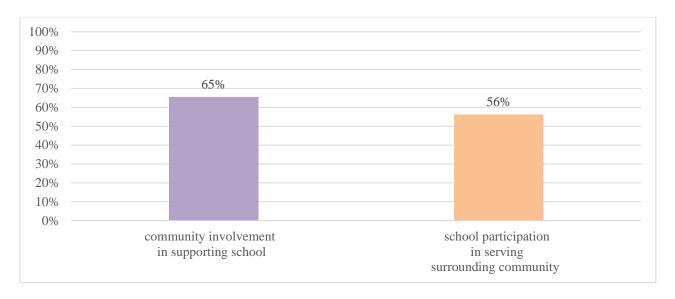


Figure 7: Community-school connectedness of the health promoting schools (n=41).

DISCUSSION

The descriptive cross sectional study was designed to evaluate the health-promoting schools in Makkah city, the evaluation was based on the seven components of health promoting schools.

Health education activities plays a crucial role in promoting school health, it scored 80% this score was formed of four aspects, the encouragement of healthy behavior achieve the highest requested level of 90%, while the other aspects in the component attained between 75% to 78%.

These findings agreed with the study of Bartlett, which concluded that school-based health education programs have three important roles in community health promotion: 1. the provision of a fundamental understanding of health and disease concepts to large segments of the population; 2. the reinforcement of positive health attitudes; and 3. the alteration of concurrent health behaviors for significant health problems.⁷

Referring to school environment component, the study shows that most of the healthy environment activities were being well implemented as it attained 87%, the classrooms health characteristics, safety measures, cleanliness of school environment attains the highest requested level of achievements, this leads to better students behaviors, attitudes and achievements in health promoting schools in comparing to other schools.

This finding agrees with the study of Arul Laurence, which concluded that school environment significantly influence students' academic performance.⁸

The study shows that there is a shortage in the availability of school health service, school health services scored of 76%, schools needs more activities and services in order to improve this component, the staff health service achieved 69% which will be improved with periodic medical checks and registries for chronic diseases among them.

This finding agrees with the study of Kuponiyi et al, the study concludes that the practice of the various components of school health services was poor. 9

It has been clarified that food safety and catering service activities was better implemented in comparing to healthy nutrition activities, extensive efforts are needed from schools to supply healthy food items for students so that the component of food safety and nutrition service within the health promoting schools will be improved.

According to mental health & counselling service within the health promoting schools the study clarified that services of early detection of mental problems and prevention of psychological problems among students and staff were not available as requested, more efforts needed in this component.

The study clarified that community-school connectedness of the health promoting schools is weak, especially in the activity of serving the surrounding community by schools, while community involvement in supporting school is better

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there was a weakness in the nutritional status as unhealthy foods were available in schools, study recommended to enforce rules and regulation that support healthy food in health promoting schools. In the study there was a decline in school connectedness with community, many schools didn't serve the surrounding community or communicate with the local institutions, even some schools didn't contribute

to raise the health awareness of the community surrounding the school.

According to the study, there was a lack of periodic medical check for school staff, study recommended to encourage health promoting schools to maintain medical files and periodic check-up for schools staff.

Study concluded that mental health and counselling services were not active, either preventive of psychological problems among students and staff, or for early detection of mental problems and handling it, study recommended the implementation of the mental health service among school community and encourage staff participation. The health promoting schools has a strong role in student's behavior, attitudes promotion and academic achievements, the health promoting schools in Makkah city needs extensive efforts in the gabs that had been clarified in the study which leads to the delay of attainment of health promoting schools objectives.

Recommendations

- Extensive health education activities are requested in health promoting schools which designed and implemented by school health, school staff and surrounding community according to local needs.
- More efforts needed to improve schools environments.
- Establishment of health service system for school staff by ministry of health containing periodic medical checks and medical records for staff health status.
- 4. Establishment of mental and psychological health service for the prevention and early detection of these problems
- 5. Strengthening the links between health promoting schools and surrounding communities through organized programs.
- 6. More researches are required for the evaluation of health promoting schools to support the implementation of the program.

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Ethical approval: The study was approved by the

Institutional Ethics Committee

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