

AWARENESS OF THE PREVENTIVE MEASURES OF HEALTH PROBLEMS AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN BY PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

For any nation to protect its future there must be an increased focus on issues that affect children's physical, mental and emotion health. It is against this idea that this study was designed to determine awareness of the preventive measures of health problems among primary school children by parents and teachers in Anambra State. Four purposes, four research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The area of the study was Nnewi North in Anambra State. The population of the study consists of 1112 parents and 86 teachers; also, the sample of the study consist 198 teachers and parents. The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed instrument titled Awareness of the Preventive Measures of Health Problem Questionnaire (APMHPQ). It was validated by three experts; Kuder-Richardson (K-R 20) method was used to check for the reliability of the instrument and it got reliability coefficient of 0.59. Mean was used to answer the research question while t-test analysis was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study among others showed that parents and teachers in both public and private primary schools in Nnewi North are aware of preventive measures of both physical and mental health problems among primary school children in Anambra State. Conclusions and recommendation were made based on the findings of the study that continuous health education and promotion should be provided for teachers, parents and children for the prevention and complete eradication of physical and mental health problems among primary school children generally.

Introduction

Children are important to every nation. For any nation to protect its future, there must be an increased focus on issues that affect children's health and how best to improve their health. Parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles are committed to providing every advantage possible to improve the health of children. Some of the growth and developmental health problems of primary school children include asthma, learning disabilities, back to school, cultural competence, depression, diabetes, emergency care, food allergies, head lice, infectious diseases, medication management, vision, and oral health (Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, 2020). Children could also experience some mental health problems which affect their growth and development these include, Anxiety disorder, Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), eating disorders, and mood disorders. CBHS Health Fund (2020) identified eight common children's health problems which include; Respiratory Syncytial Virus which can affect the lungs and breathing passages; Ear infections; Gastroenteritis (that is a bowel infection that causes inflammation of the stomach and intestines); Roseola (a viral infection that usually occurs in babies and children between 6 months and 2 years old); conjunctivitis (pink eye); asthma, hand, food and mouth disease and threadworm or pinworm. The truth is that some of these health problems seen among children can be prevented because all children have the right to survive and thrive. Also school could be a strategic place for children to pick up diseases and some serious health problems which may be bacteria or virus; their immune system are still maturing which makes them prone to certain health problems (Verywell family, 2020).

These health problems result because children tend to play closer together and share toys and other classroom items, therefore, some of these health problems in school could easily be transmitted from one child to another. Very Well Family (2020) listed some of these diseases in the school which are mostly bacteria and virus infection to include flu, cold, pink eye, strep throat, and gastroenteritis. They also suggested that parents who are the biological owners of these children and teacher should teach the children basic hand washing techniques especially before and after eating and after using the bathroom, children should also get enough sleep and eat healthy. They should also avoid sharing of personal belongings among themselves. Yenny (2018) stated that classroom in which the children study everyday could be a possible breeding ground for childhood illnesses, even when the classroom seems neat and well-arranged. However, placing twenty children in a classroom might increase the opportunity for sickness and various diseases to spread. It takes one child being a carrier of a particular disease coming to school with the symptoms of the illness and

other children who are healthy would leave school with that particular disease. Yenny (2018) also mentioned some of these common illnesses as chicken pox, hand food and mouth diseases, impetigo, mononucleosis, meningococcal meningitis, measles, pinkeye (conjunctivitis) mumps, pertussis (a whooping cough), and strep throat.

Yenny (2018) also advised that some of these diseases or health problems could be prevented by either vaccine or simple hygienic practices. Due to the various health problem experienced among primary school children who are basically children between the ages of 5 to 12 years, World Health Organization stipulated that school health programmes should include HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, violence and injury, unintended pregnancy and poor reproductive health, helminth infection, poor nutrition and food safety, poor sanitation and water control, lack of immunization, poor oral health, malaria, respiratory infections, psychological problems, alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug abuse (WHO, 2020). There are numerous health problems facing primary school children because of their developmental stage and the state of their immune system; the school as well as parents has a duty in the prevention of some of these health problems. The school could teach a child about their health and other promotion behaviours and also provide them with physical activities to make them healthy. Also school which is a place where children acquire academic learning and activities should try as much as possible to prevent behaviours such as alcohol and tobacco use or bullying and cyber lying, encourage healthy habits like exercise and healthy eating and also deal with specific health problems in children such as asthma, obesity and infectious diseases while providing safe school building and environment (Medline plus, 2020).

School health programme is one of the most efficient strategies that could be used to prevent majority of the health problems experienced among primary school children. School is expected to play more role than families in school health prevention. School can and invariably do-play a powerful role in influencing children's health related behaviours. Appropriate school interventions by teacher can foster effective education, prevent destructive behaviour and promote enduring health practices. This is to ensure healthy development for children and avoid health problems among the school children; Parents need to help their children build neural connections in the brain. These connections are created through good parenting practices such as hugging, comforting, playing, reading, singing and talking. Parents should prevent their children from maltreatment, abuse and neglect (UNICEF, 2020). It is the right guidance of parents that develops the character of the child. When children are growing up; positive parenting improves their cognitive, social and problem-solving skills. Positive parenting also affects their responses

and helps them grow up to be better humans; Children learn about being healthy, exercising regularly, being a team player, having the right diet and growing in a conducive environment through play-and-learn. The right guidance from parents can inculcate in children a good regimen of exercise and diet to achieve ideal physical development; the role of a father in child development is very important. Children always look up to their father for motivation. Similarly, the role of a mother in child development has moved on and is not restricted to nurturing and caretaking alone. From that first touch and look, to later years, a parent is responsible for making the tiny infant into a well-grown, responsible and caring adult (Anisha, 2023).

In addition, the role of parents in a child's development does not just end at infancy; it continues through toddlerhood, early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence and the rest. It has to be noted that the cost associated with not breastfeeding a child by the mother far outweighs that of breastfeeding. Breast milk is the primary source for all the nutritional needs in the initial few months of an infant's life. It prevents the child from severe diseases (WHO, 2020). It is also critical to achieving many of the newly announced Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (Obiotika, 2023). Poor health in childhood can have long-term consequences on their health and well-being as adults. Good health in children provided by their parents is essential for them to reach their full potential and thrive in all areas of life. It can improve their academic performance, increase their social skills, and reduce their risk of developing chronic health conditions later in life. Furthermore, promoting children's health not only benefits the individual child but also the larger community. Healthy children are more likely to grow into healthy adults, which can contribute to a healthier society as a whole. It can also reduce healthcare costs and increase productivity in the workforce. Parents should follow the recommended vaccination schedules and preventive care guidelines; this includes ensuring that children receive all recommended vaccines and preventive care visits, such as regular check-ups and dental exams. Parents should also serve as role models for healthy behaviors by practicing what they preach and leading by example. They can also seek out resources and support, such as healthcare providers, community programs, and online resources, to help them promote their children's health as well as in the primary school (Somya, 2023).

Primary school is the first stage of formal education that children typically experience, and it plays a pivotal role in shaping their academic and social development (British School Jakarta, 2025). These sets of children are minors who may be careless about their health there is need to create awareness of these health problems.

Awareness is knowing something; knowing that something exists and is important. It is being aware of the preventive measures of the health problem that could be seen in children and how to prevent it from occurring if this awareness is not created, it may seriously affect the children and the parent and teacher will not be left out.

There are factors that could affect parents and teachers awareness of health problems and their preventive measures these include the school type that is whether the school is a public school and or a private school. According to the study conducted by Ram, Renuka and Ramana (2019), government primary school children had more health problems, probably because they consist of middle class families. Also school type is one of the factors that could determine awareness and it is simply whether public or private schools.

No study has been conducted in this area in Anambra State and in Nnewi North in particular to the best of the researchers knowledge. And also due to the importance of preventing these health problems in children in order not to interfere with their academic and personal life endeavours. This study has been designed to determine the awareness of the preventive measures of health problems among primary school children in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the awareness of the preventive measures of physical health problems among primary school children by teachers and parents in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State?
2. What is the awareness of the preventive measures of physical health problems among primary school children in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State based on school type?
3. What is the awareness of the preventive measures of mental health problem among primary school children by teacher and parents in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State?
4. What is the awareness of the preventive measures of mental health problem among primary school children in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State based on school type?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance;

1. There is no significant difference in the awareness of the preventive measure of physical health problems among primary school children as perceived by both teachers and parents in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

2. There is no significant difference in the awareness of the preventive measure of physical health problems among primary school children in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State based on school type.
3. There is no significant difference in the awareness of the preventive measure of mental health problems among primary school children as perceived by teachers and parents in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State.
4. There is no significant difference in the awareness of the preventive measure of mental health problems among primary school children in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State based on their School type.

Methods

The design of the study was a descriptive survey research design. The area of the study is Nnewi North L.G.A. Nnewi North is a Local Government Area in Anambra State, south-central Nigeria. The population of the study was 1198 which consisted of 1112 teachers and 86 parents consist of primary school teachers and parents who attend P.T.A. meetings in both government owned schools and private owned schools in Nnewi North. The sample of the study was 198 which include 112 teachers and 86 parents; Ten percent of the total population of teachers was used while all the parents were used for the study. Simple random sampling was used to select six schools from a total of fifty- nine government owned primary schools and four from the nine private owned schools in Nnewi North L.G.A of Anambra State; making it a total of ten primary schools used for the study. Proportionate sampling technique was used to realize the number of teachers used in each school because of unequal number of teachers in all the schools. Accidental sampling technique was also used in the sense that only the parents seen were used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed instrument titled Awareness of the Preventive Measures of Health Problem Questionnaire (APMHPQ). Validity of the instruments was established with the help of three experts. The data collected from the teachers and parents from primary schools in Nnewi south was used to determine the reliability of the instruments. The reliability of the items was analyzed using Kuder Richardson (K – R 20) method and the value were 00.59 and 0.61 respectively which was very high therefore it was acceptable for use. The data collected was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences version 20 (SPSS). Mean was used to answer research questions; t-test was used test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question one: What is the awareness of the preventive measures of physical health problems among primary school children by teachers and parents in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Scores of Teachers and Parents on the Awareness of Preventive Measures of Physical Health Problems among Primary school Children in Nnewi North LGA

Variable		Status	N	Mean	SD	Remark
Percentage	Awareness	of Teachers	112	93.06	12.93	Very High
Preventive Measures of Physical Health Problems in Children		Parents	86	93.28	13.88	Very High

The mean scores displayed in Table 1 show that both teachers and parents in primary schools in Nnewi North LGA had high awareness of preventive measures of physical health problems as indicated by the mean scores of 93.06 and 93.28 respectively.

Research Question two: What is the awareness of the preventive measures of physical health problems among primary school children in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State based on school type?

Table 8: Mean Awareness Scores on Preventive Measures of Physical Health Problems in Children in Nnewi North LGA Based on School-type

Variable		School-type	N	Mean	SD	Remark
Percentage	Awareness	of Public	108	94.44	12.11	Very High
Preventive Measures of Physical Health Problems in Children		Private	90	91.60	14.55	Very High

Table 2 displays the mean scores on preventive measures of physical health problems of children in Nnewi North LGA based on school-type (public and private). While the mean score for public schools was 94.44, that of private schools was 91.60. Although public schools were 2.84 points better than participants in private schools on awareness, both groups had high awareness of the preventive measures of physical health problems of children in Nnewi North LGA.

Research Question three: What is the awareness of the preventive measures of mental health problem among primary school children by teacher and parents in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State?

Table 3: Mean Scores of Teachers and Parents on the Awareness of Preventive Measures of Mental Health Problems among Primary school Children in Nnewi North LGA

Variable	Status	N	Mean	SD	Remark
Percentage Awareness of Teachers	Teachers	112	89.61	16.14	Very High
Preventive Measures of Mental Health Problems in Children	Parents	86	84.57	16.45	Very High

Table 3 displays the mean scores of teachers and parents on awareness of preventive measures of mental health problems among primary school in Nnewi North LGA. The mean score for teachers was 89.61 while that of parents was 84.57. Teachers were 5.04 points ahead of parents in terms of awareness of preventive measures of mental health problems of primary school children. However, both had high awareness of the measure to be taken to prevent mental health problems among children in primary schools in Nnewi North LGA.

Research Question four: What is the awareness of the preventive measures of mental health problem among primary school children in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State based on school type?

Table 4: Mean Awareness Scores on Preventive Measures of Mental Health Problems in Children in Nnewi North LGA Based on School-type

Variable	School-type	N	Mean	SD	Remark
Percentage Awareness of Public	Public	108	89.23	16.59	Very High
Preventive Measures of Mental Health Problems in Children	Private	90	85.25	16.04	Very High

Table 4 displays the mean scores of public and private schools on awareness of preventive measures of mental health problems among primary school in Nnewi North LGA. The mean score for public schools was 89.23 while that of private schools was 85.25. This gave a mean difference of 3.98 in favour of public primary schools. Although public schools were better in awareness of measures for preventing mental health problems among primary school children, both groups had high awareness.

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in the awareness of the preventive measure of physical health problems among primary school children as perceived by both teachers and parents in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Table 5: *t*-test on Teachers' and Parents' Mean Scores on Awareness on Preventive Measures of Physical Health Problems in Children

Variable	Teachers (n=112)		Parents(n=86)		Df	T	p	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Awareness of Preventive Measures of Physical Health Problems in children	93.06	12.93	93.28	13.88	196	0.12	.906	NS

The *t*-test result presented in Table 5 indicates that there was no significant difference in teachers' and parents' mean scores on awareness on preventive measures of physical health problems in children, $t(196) = 0.12, p > 0.05$. The null hypothesis was therefore, not rejected. This implies that teachers and parents do not differ significantly in their awareness of preventive measures of physical health problems in children in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference in the awareness of the preventive measure of physical health problems among primary school children in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State based on school type.

Table 6: *t*-test on Mean Score on Awareness of Preventive Measures on Physical Health Problems in Children in Public and Private Schools in Nnewi North Local Government Area

Variable	Public (n=108)		Private (n=90)		Df	T	p	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Scores on Awareness of Preventive Measures of Physical Health Problems in children	94.44	12.11	91.60	14.55	196	1.50	.135	NS

The *t*-test result presented in Table 6 shows that there was no significant difference in mean scores on awareness of preventive measures of physical health problems in children between public and private schools in Nnewi North LGA, $t(196) = 1.50, p > 0.05$. The null hypothesis was therefore, not rejected. This indicates that the awareness of preventive measures of physical health problems in children in public and private schools was not significantly different.

Hypothesis three: There is no significant difference in the awareness of the preventive measure of mental health problems among primary school children as perceived by teachers and parents in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Table 7: *t-test on Teachers' and Parents' Mean Scores on Awareness on Preventive Measures of Mental Health Problems in Children*

Variable	Teachers (n=112)		Parents(n=86)		df	T	p	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Awareness of Preventive Measures of Mental Health Problems in children	89.61	16.14	84.57	16.45	196	2.16	.032	S

The t-test result presented in Table 7 shows that there was a significant difference in teachers' and parents' mean scores on awareness on preventive measures of mental health problems in children, $t(196) = 2.16$, $p < 0.05$. The null hypothesis was, therefore, rejected. This implies that teachers' mean score on awareness (Mean = 89.61) was significantly higher than the mean score of parents (Mean = 84.57) on the awareness of preventive measures of mental health problems in children in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Hypothesis four: There is no significant difference in the awareness of the preventive measure of mental health problems among primary school children in Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State based on their School type.

Table 8: *t-test on Mean Score on Awareness on Preventive Measures of Mental Health Problems in Children in Public and Private Schools in Nnewi North Local Government Area*

Variable	Public (n=108)		Private (n=90)		df	T	P	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Awareness of Preventive Measures of Mental Health Problems in children	89.23	16.59	85.25	16.04	196	1.70	.090	NS

Awareness of Preventive Measures of Mental Health Problems in children 89.2316.5985.2516.041961.70.090NS The result presented in Table 8 shows that there was no significant difference in mean scores on awareness of preventive measures of physical health problems in children between public and private schools in Nnewi North LGA, $t(196) = 1.70, p > 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that the awareness of preventive measures of mental health problems in children in public schools and in private schools was not significantly different.

Discussion of Findings

Awareness of the Preventive Measure of Physical Health Problem among Primary School Children

The results of the study showed that parents and teachers based on school type had very high awareness of the preventive measures of physical health problems as can be seen in the mean awareness scores. The study was not in line with the study conducted by Imran et al. (2021), that there was lack of awareness of physical health problems by both teachers and parents which lead to high rate of physical health problems among school children. Also the null hypothesis of non-significant difference based on the awareness of teachers and parent was not rejected while based on school type was also not rejected.

The results of the study revealed that the teachers and parents in both public and private schools had very high awareness on preventive measures of mental health problems among school children as shown in the mean awareness scores. The result might be expected because parents whose children has developed some of these mental health problems might have found a way of treating them and also preventing them from developing in other of their children also parents who has family friends with such children would also learn from them. For teachers over time as a teacher, they must have come in contact with children with some type of mental health problem and over time, they might for learnt how to prevent them among children in school. The study was not in line with the study of Kagaa, Amura, Magda and Salma (2021) that was not aware of the physical, mental and emotional health problems of their children. For the null hypothesis of no significant difference between public and private school parents and teachers was not rejected but for teachers and parents only, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, of the study, the following conclusions were made;

Regardless of the school type, parents and teachers in primary school had very high awareness of preventive measures of both physical and mental health problem but the findings showed that teachers and parents of public primary school children were more aware than those in private school. It is therefore important for this high knowledge to be maintained among teachers and parents in order to completely eradicate these health problems among primary school children both at home and schools.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Continuous health education should be provided for teachers, parents and children for the prevention and complete eradication of physical and mental health problems.
2. School management should enlighten Parents and teachers on some of these health problems seen among school children and encourage them to seek for solutions.
3. Awareness should be created for everyone through various medium both printed and visual.

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