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Improvement of Schoolchildren's Physical and Mental Health

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Abstract

Today, physical and mental health of schoolchildren is rapidly declining around the world. Up to a quarter of European students experience psychological problems where this development is dangerous because these children's unstable condition endangers not only their future but also that of their classmates. The latter underachieve at school because of the emotional problems of their peers. Solving the children's health problem individually is no longer an option because the numbers of the sufferers demand its processing on an institutional level. For a successful completion of educational processes, schools should participate in an interdisciplinary study that unites public health and education. This research will provide solutions for the present problem on an institutional level. Modern young students also experience problems with their physical wellbeing. A study of schoolchildren in California exemplifies this trend in their health decline in the United States. As a result, this nation-wide tendency hinders the students' ability to complete their education and to integrate into society. New research on the causes of the decline in schoolchildren's health is necessary to investigate this trend in distinct geographical areas. This study should integrate educational and public health aspects to be effective. Only interdisciplinary research can provide solutions for this impending problem on an institutional level. Besides, an investment in funds and workforce for this new study is imperative. The research outcomes will help improve mental and physical health of schoolchildren. These results are essential to solving the global and national mental and physical health decline in young students. This interdisciplinary study must combine efforts of specialists in public health, namely, pediatric medical experts, and those of educators to be efficient. As a result, such research will benefit not only children and their families but also schools through an improvement in the learning process.

Improvement of Schoolchildren's Physical and Mental Health

Research Justification

Improvement of children's physical as well as mental health is necessary. An investment of funds and workforce into new research in this field is imperative to enhance young students' wellbeing (Patalay et al., 2017). This problem demands an interdisciplinary study that combines public health and education to provide a solution to the enhancement of schoolchildren's wellbeing on an institutional level.

The psychological and physical health of school students requires an improvement. A multinational study demonstrates that bodily and emotional state of children is declining (Patalay et al., 2017). Modern children withstand a pressure of global events, such as socio-economic crises and climate change where 10% to 25% of European students experience mental health problems (Patalay et al., 2017). This proportion indicates that up to a quarter of school children in the Western world are psychologically unsafe. For that reason, this state of the children's minds indicates a serious problem that cannot be solved through an individual approach but demands an organized institutional action.

The psychological problems of these students produce a negative impact not only on their lives and those of their families but also on their school peers and the entire educational process. Department for Education demonstrates that mental problems in children damage their progress in society as well as their physical wellbeing. School students who suffer from psychological issues will experience even greater problems in their youth and adulthood. For that reason, a study is necessary to learn causes and find solutions to their suffering while at school. Furthermore, Department of Education argues that mentally imbalanced students negatively

affect their schoolmates. Disruptive behavior and emotional outbursts of some children negatively influence the wellbeing of other class members. These disruptions also prevent students from performing at their top abilities and their teachers from completing their course programs. Hence, schools will benefit from solving the students' psychological issues because their betterment will permit them to improve academic achievement. An interdisciplinary study aimed at an enhancement of the young students' mental health will amend this problem.

Physical health problems in school children are also an issue that requires separate research. Reback (2018) indicates that the physical wellbeing of Californian students declined in the new millennium. This sample of the US population of schoolchildren is illustrative of the general tendency in this country. At this point, the problem of children's health becomes an issue of national concern that must be solved by restructuring the approach to their wellbeing at school. The increasing decline in health hinders students' ability to participate in the learning process (Reback, 2018). This disquieting tendency affects their learning outcomes and, consequentially, their futures and their effectivity as society members.

A study that investigates reasons for a decline in school students' health in different states would provide the data for this situation's analysis. Reback (2018) report offers information about this issue in California and about the local attempts to solve the problem. This study is indicative of a national crisis in young citizens' health. However, the results from one state are insufficient to make nation-wide conclusions. Therefore, a new study of schoolchildren's wellbeing from different geographical areas is necessary to evaluate the extent and the reasons for this dangerous tendency. Such research should combine both public health and educational perspectives on the issue to provide conclusions about the best approaches to the institutional amendment of this problem.

Literature Review

Schoolchildren are facing difficult times while in school making unprecedented pressures in their lives, which are contributing to both physical along with mental health challenges such as depression, eating disorders, anxiety and self-harm. Several individuals and organizations have research on causes and solutions to prevent or reduce the physical and mental health challenges to school children. Several pieces of literature are reviewed to realize where research on improvement of schoolchildren's physical and mental health has reached.

Adelman et al. (2019) argue that the biggest kind of problem that affects schoolchildren is mental health. While majority of the children suffer from hopelessness, the commotion of attention and substance abuse, the occurrence of mental health challenges among the adolescent stage kids varies from ten to thirty percent. Furthermore, Puolakka (2014), emphasized that emotional problems affect girls a lot while disruptive behaviors are prevalent to boys. Therefore, both physical and mental health plays a critical role in making people recognize their potential by participating in their community well-being, work prolifically and productively as well as can handle normal stresses.

Patalay et al. (2017) contended that despite the problem of physical and mental health for schoolchildren being a responsibility to healthcare and education sectors, very few children who are acute and chronically mentally ill are accessing medical treatment. However, they have found out that the low uptake of healthcare treatment to the children is because of the following reasons. First, there is limited specialist thus making the service not to be accessed efficiently. Secondly, the vagueness between both parents and children to realize if the variations in moods and behavior require treatment or not and, not being aware if there are such healthcare services in existence and the fear of having a mental disorder as well as being stigmatized.

According to the research accomplished by Hills et al. (2015), to improve both physical and mental health well-being of schoolchildren is important to encourage physical activity intervention in schools. Furthermore, a well conservative physical activity in school will ensure children develop with better psychological, physical, mental and social health. Therefore, the research has claimed that poor physical and mental health is linked with insufficient exercise for both young individuals and children. Moreover, another research conducted by Rappaport et al. (2015), argues that mental health plays a crucial role in good health and quality of life for children. Therefore, parents should join hands with schools and healthcare facilities to promote mental and physical health to schoolchildren to prevent mental health problems. Nonetheless, enhancing mental and physical health will help promote an individual's survival skills, and capacity to feel empathy, thus, developing to be responsible members of the society with the ability to sustain other community members with their mental together with physical health problems.

Roth et al. (2017) also added that community and society at large have a role in improving physical and mental health in schoolchildren through implementing certain actions. For instance, they may decide to use actions such as developing laws and policies, provide opportunities for leisure activities and also create physical as well as mental health programs. The environment of these children such as home, neighbors or friends and schools can also lead to physical and mental health problems.

Having reviewed the above pieces of literature, it is evident that physical and mental health plays an crucial role in development of school children. Therefore, when enhanced children can develop and improve both on their level as well as community level. The main reason for mental and physical health problems is lack of physical activity, unavailability of

healthcare specialists and parents not being aware of their children's changes in behavior and moods.

State of Research

Physical and mental health for school children has deteriorated for the past few years, hence need for research on the causes in the school setting as well as find solutions. Although several researchers have worked towards establishing the causes especially in students and their families, it is also important to consider the knowledge as it will lead to an easy understanding of the topic in question. Puolakka et al. (2014) also focused on school children's and family's viewpoints about mental health promotions in school. Therefore, the author needed to get the concept used by both families and friends regarding improving mental health in school and thus used the interview to school children that ranged from 12-16 years and their mothers. Furthermore, the research method applied in the collection of data is grounded theory and aims at developing a substantive theory as well as the relationship among concepts and assumptions. Also, grounded theory was selected in the research as it included the experiences of people and thus the researcher will be able to get individuals' perspectives and viewpoints.

However, the research did not focus on how the school setting leads to physical and mental health challenges to school children. Nonetheless, the concept presented is important in the development of this research. The limitation of this research was that the interview was conducted in one school and thus different schools have varying human resources and practices thus the results cannot be generalized to represent all the schools. Besides, the positive psychology interventions have not been in a position to include the enhancement sections towards promoting physical and mental health to schoolchildren (Roth et al., 2017).

Physical activity initiates ⁷ a significant role in development of physical and mental health in school children. For that reason, schools need to establish ways in which they will fix physical activity in their schedule to enable children to have time for exercise, as it has benefits to the well-being of kids. Notably, Smedegaard et al. (2016) researched that more physical activity performed in school is related to good psychological, social health and physical. However, a good number of school children exercise inadequately hence having physical and mental health well-being. Although the research focused on children within the age of 10-13, they used a four-phased intervention method that included design, RCT, pilot and assessment. Unfortunately, the research did not answer the roles of teachers in helping school children realize the causes of physical together with mental health problems early like detecting stress.

Andrieieva et al. (2017) researched the use of ecological tourism in broad physical education to enhance physical as well as mental health to school children. Hence, the researcher aimed at proving the training program can easily work out when used with ecological tourism in schools. Furthermore, there was a need for ecological culture establishment as well as the enhancement of physical condition indicators. The study found out that majority of the school children were affected mentally and physically by tensed learning activities. As a result, children developed their cognitive functioning when involved in ecological activities such as hiking and walking which enhanced their interaction with the environment.

However, despite all the research conducted and content matching the research in question, they did not explore what school teachers are required to do. Notably, teachers are closer to children more and therefore they can easily know the challenges school children are passing through. Nonetheless, parents and teachers working together could lead to the enhanced

physical and mental health of children. The question gap being realized is; what is the role of teachers as a way to improve physical along with mental health of school kids.

Bibliography

Adelman, H. S., Taylor, L., Dwyer, K. P., & Mayer, M. J. (2019). Intersection of School Safety, Mental Health and Wellness, and Family and Community Issues. *Keeping Students Safe and Helping Them Thrive: A Collaborative Handbook on School Safety, Mental Health, and Wellness [2 volumes]*, 3.

The book focuses on ensuring safety to school children while in school. Also, it has presented several ways that children can maintain their mental and physical health as well as proposing that teachers have a great responsibility to play in ensuring children are healthy. Moreover, Adelman et al. (2017) argue that both school safety and success have ecological foundations related to academic achievements and success. Thus, addressing issues such as mental health, school safety and wellness will help in enhancing emotional and social functions through decreasing depression and increasing positive identity development. On the other hand, academic obstructions and poor protection in school lead to poor physical and mental health.

Andrieieva, O., Galan, Y., Hakman, A., & Holovach, I. (2017). Application of ecological tourism in physical education of primary schoolage children.

The purpose of this article is to work out and scientifically prove training programs with the use of ecological tourism methods in primary school children to enhance their physical state indicators as well as ecological culture development. 191 pupils participated in the study and they were assessed by physical culture teachers as professionals. Nonetheless, they found out that most of the pupils were not at a safe health level and the problems were caused by a tensed learning activity. Furthermore, according to Andrieieva et al. (2017), some of the ecological monitoring programs to enhance physical health included ecological activity, overpowering

difficult courses, introducing games in the air, level of adaptation-reserve possibilities and indicative of the environmental culture.

Department for Education. (2018). *Mental health and behavior in schools*. The report, November 2018.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755135/Mental_health_and_behaviour_in_schools_.pdf.

The report focuses on how mental health in addition to behavior is developed in schools.

⁸ Department for Education (2018) posit that schools have a significant duty in enhancing mental health and wellness of their schoolchildren through developing strategies that will ensure they are safe through avoiding actions and activities that will impair their health development thus improving outcome. Furthermore, several ways are used by schools to promote mental health together with wellbeing of children including preventing strategies through developing a safe and calm environment and making them resilient in managing the normal stress of life efficiently. Schools are also responsible for recognizing emerging issues as early as possible and act accordingly as well as provide early evidence-based support to children.

Hills, A. P., Dengel, D. R., & Lubans, D. R. (2015). Supporting public health priorities: ¹ recommendations for physical education and physical activity promotion in schools. *Progress in cardiovascular diseases*, 57(4), 368-374.

The purpose ⁹ of the article is to promote use of physical education along with physical activity in schools in enhancing the health condition of children. Currently, the changes in lifestyle have resulted in individuals being busy and not considering the issues related to their health, it is, therefore, important to ensure that children are taking physical activity in school to

boost their mental in addition to physical health. Issues of obesity together with overweight have increased due to of reduced physical activity. Hills et al. (2015) also argue that school settings should adopt programs that will focus on maintaining children health despite the present crowded curriculum that focuses on academic success, inappropriate leadership backing and poor-quality teaching preventing the physical activity from progressing in school.

Patalay, P., Gondek, D., Moltrecht, B., Giese, L., Curtin, C., Stanković, M., & Savka, N. (2017). Mental health provision in schools: approaches and interventions in 10 European countries. *Global Mental Health*, 4.

The aim of the article is designing and assesses particular interventions available and concentrate on professionals and schools that provide the support of these interventions. Furthermore, the function of learning institutions in offering community-based care to children with mental health challenges is widely inspired and accepted. Particularly, the study by Patalay et al. (2017) utilized an online survey method in collecting data from 10 European countries including Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Ireland. The countries were selected according to their multiplicity in political and economic systems, environmental spread and ease of getting the research participants. Therefore, the paper provides projections of priorities available for mental health support in schools.

Puolakka, K., Konu, A., Kiikkala, I., & Paavilainen, E. (2014). Mental health promotion in school: schoolchildren's and families' viewpoint. *Nursing research and practice*, 2014.

The purpose of this works was to identify the concepts used by schoolchildren concerning their mental health as well as the parent viewpoint about their children's knowledge

of mental health in school. Although Puolakka et al. (2014) have focused on children between the ages of 12-16, their parent's perception also plays a critical role in realizing the mental health of their kids. The interview was used to collect information from children and parents where mothers were to speak on behalf of the whole family. At the same time, the methodology used was ground theory since they were to analyze individuals' experiences. The perceptions enable the school administration to identify the areas they should focus on and employ human resources and practices.

Rappaport, N., Pollack, W. S., Flaherty, L. T., Schwartz, S. E., & McMickens, C. (2015).

Safety assessment in schools: beyond risk: the role of child psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics*, 24(2), 277-289.

The main aim of the resource is to evaluate the risks in schools that bring physical and mental health problems to children. Therefore, despite the realization that educators are responsible for decision making towards ensuring children are safe in school, the paper proposed that it is important to empower children and their families when they feel threatened and at the same time maintaining the school standards and protection of all children. Rappaport et al. (2015) argue that safety evaluation was done by school consultation and interviewed children and parents as well as staff to identify the challenges that could lead to physical and mental health problems. As a result, the evaluation realized there was a need to enhance communication that would stimulate mental health resources.

Reback, R. (2018). Investments in Student Health and Mental Health in California's Public

Schools. Technical Report. Getting Down to Facts II. *Policy Analysis for California Education, PACE*. https://gettingdowntofacts.com/sites/default/files/2018-09/GDTFII_Report_Reback_1.pdf

The report focused on exploring access to health services in school such as physical and mental health in k-12 public institutions students in California. The provision of overall health service is critical in ensuring health standards of students are met, however, they also get challenges when it comes to health and education policy negotiations. Primarily, according to Reback (2018) several schools in California provides universal access to health together with mental health services by various ways including mental health clinics, partnering with government agencies or non-profit organizations and employed staff by the school. The report found out that school-based healthcare and mental health access are vital in student success, however, less than twenty percent of elementary schools provide physical health service and less than forty percent provide mental health services.

Roth, R. A., Suldo, S. M., & Ferron, J. M. (2017). Improving middle school students' subjective well-being: Efficacy of a multicomponent positive psychology intervention targeting small groups of youth. *School Psychology Review*, 46(1), 21-41.

The agenda of the research was mainly to examine impact of children's and parents' small group positive psychology interventions before intervention and two months after intervention. Although many interventions that were required to enhance children's well-being were considered not to include appropriate participants it was important to include both parents and children. According to Roth et al. (2017), 42 schoolchildren participated in the study and they were assigned positive psychology interventions randomly while others waited for the controlled group. However, children who received positive psychology intervention immediately before the study showed substantial gains in subjective well-being including life satisfaction. Besides, these

students also showed a decrease in assuming and conveying problems compared to controlled groups.

Smedegaard, S., Christiansen, L. B., Lund-Cramer, P., Bredahl, T., & Skovgaard, T.

(2016). Improving the well-being of children and youths: a randomized

4 multicomponent, school-based, physical activity intervention. *BMC Public*

***Health*, 16(1), 1127.**

The goal of the research is developing along with implement together with gauge ³ a multi-component, effective school-based physical activity involvement in enhancing psychosocial well-being between school-aged kids within 10-13 years. The method mainly utilized by Smedegaard et al. (2016) is a four-phase intervention including design, pilot, RCT and assessment. However, the intervention is controlled by medical research council outline for creation of multifaceted intercessions. Furthermore, the interposition emphasizes on mental advantages of physical activities at school abandoned for several years in the past. Similarly, psychosocial well-being is promoted among children along with youths and thus the inclusive efficacy appraisal and a parallel considerable procedure assessment that is designed to handle challenges at the school level.

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