

Integrating of Mental Health Interventions in School Health in Saudi Arabia: Policy Brief

Amr A. Mariee^{1*}, Eman Aly Abd Elhamid², Anwar Salah Farhan Al-Dhmashi³,
Fawzya Fawaz Alshahrani⁴, Heba Dakrory Ali El-Said⁵

^{1*} Researcher and Biostatistics' specialist of nursing administration and Public Health, Minia, Egypt

² Lecturer of Nursing Administration, Faculty of Nursing, Minia University, Minya, Egypt

³ Director of Nursing of Turaif AL-Awast Primary Healthcare Center, Turaif, KSA

⁴ RN, Nursing education Administration, King Saud Medical City in Riyadh, KSA.

⁵ Lecturer of Nursing Administration, Faculty of Nursing, Minia University. Minia, Egypt

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10868098>

Published Date: 25-March-2024

Abstract: In light of the increasing prevalence of mental health issues, there exists a significant need for efficacious interventions aimed at decreasing depression and anxiety in children of school age and enhance their mental health. A considerable number of mental health interventions are available within educational settings; nevertheless, the effectiveness and quality of these interventions exhibit significant variation. This paper targeted children coming from rural areas in different regions in Saudi Arabia, and Parents in rural community. Authors investigated policy options about rural school-based health centers, and collaboration with other sectors. Currently, the Ministry of Health (MOH) is in the process of developing a comprehensive national mental health strategy in line with Vision 2030. This strategy emphasizes the importance of collaboration among various stakeholder groups and encourages active participation. Furthermore, it aims to align with the Saudi Ministry's overarching principles of patient centricity and the coordination of healthcare facilities, beginning at the local level. One of the disadvantages of the partnership is the need to effectively coordinate all action plans. Due to the multifaceted nature of the responsibilities assigned to the respective specialists, it is anticipated that inadequate coordination may occur. Study investigated case of child with attentive deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) came to school healthcare center in rural area in KSA

Keywords: Health, Mental, Nursing, Policy, Saudi Arabia, School.

I. INTRODUCTION

The mental health requirements of children have become a matter of public concern in the World. Approximately, there are about 20% of adolescents are believed to experience a mental disorder⁽¹⁾. The prevalence of mental health conditions among children is on the rise, however, there is a significant gap between the demand for services and the availability of appropriate interventions, despite the existence of community-based programs. As per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, mental disorders among children refer to significant alterations in their emotional regulation or coping mechanisms that result in distressing experiences throughout the day⁽²⁾. School-aged children can be impacted by a variety of factors, including their home environment, intergenerational trauma, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Given that children devote a significant portion of their time to educational pursuits, it is imperative to incorporate mental health initiatives into broader public health services as a means of bolstering the prompt identification and treatment of prevalent mental health conditions. The integration of comprehensive services into the school program and the prioritization of primary care objectives result in a holistic approach to addressing children's issues.

International Journal of Novel Research in Healthcare and NursingVol. 11, Issue 1, pp: (303-306), Month: January - April 2024, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

The level of awareness and attitude of teachers towards students with mental health issues can significantly impact their ability to provide appropriate care for such students. A cross-sectional study was conducted by Mahsoon et al., among teachers in primary, middle, and secondary schools located in Hail Governorate, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia⁽³⁾. The aim of the research was to evaluate the level of knowledge and disposition of educators towards mental health concerns among students. This was achieved by utilizing a pretested, semi-structured, and anonymous self-administered questionnaire consisting of 38 items. The research study revealed that a total of 2398 questionnaires were returned by willing educators, resulting in a response rate of 60.0%. The results of the study indicate that a significant proportion of participants held positive attitudes towards students with mental health concerns, as evidenced by a mean attitude score of 74.7% on a 55-point scale. However, the findings also suggest that participants demonstrated a lower level of awareness regarding mental health issues among students, with a mean awareness score of 55.1%. The present study provides valuable insights for policymakers regarding the awareness and attitudes of teachers towards mental health concerns in educational settings. The provision of training programs in mental health is deemed to be of paramount importance for educators. The provision of adequate resources to schools to enable them to fulfill their roles in promoting mental health is likely to facilitate the healthy development of individuals.

According to CDC⁽²⁾, a prevalence rate of 9.4% of children aged 2 to 17 years have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), whereas 7.4% of children aged 3 to 17 years exhibit behavioral problems. Anxiety and depression are among the mental health conditions that have an impact on school children, with prevalence rates of 7.1% and 3.2%, respectively, as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2019. The issue is exacerbated by the co-occurrence of multiple conditions. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2019, roughly 75% of children receive a diagnosis related to the policy matter that has undergone legislative evaluations in the United States. This issue is associated with the Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2019, also known as H.R. 1109⁽⁴⁾.

Despite being a unique subset of children with special needs, those who experience emotional and behavioral disorders are not currently identified or provided services in Saudi Arabia. Maajeeny conducted a study with the objective of expanding on previous endeavors to determine the occurrence of emotional and behavioral disorders in children residing in Saudi Arabia⁽⁵⁾. The purpose of this was to assess the necessity of intervention services. The present study involved the administration of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire to educators of pupils ranging from 4 to 17 years of age in Saudi Arabia. According to the study's results, it can be inferred that a significant proportion, approximately 25%, of the school student population aged between 4 and 17 in Saudi Arabia may comprise individuals with emotional and behavioral disorders. The results of the study indicate that educators expressed the highest level of dissatisfaction with conduct-related behaviors, followed by challenges pertaining to peer interactions.

The legislative proposal, known as H.R. 100, 116th Congress, 2019, was initiated on February 8, 2019, by the esteemed California Representative, Grace Napolitano. Currently, the proposal is undergoing its preliminary reading phase. Despite the provisions of the Public Health Service Act for healthcare services, individuals with mental health conditions encounter difficulties in accessing and affording care, which can be attributed to the scarcity of providers⁽⁶⁾. According to Lindsey's findings, around 10% of children were facing clinical challenges, with most instances going undiagnosed⁽¹⁾. The issue at hand pertains to the pediatric population, where timely intervention plays a pivotal role in the subsequent management of health concerns. According to the CDC report of 2018, there is a projected disparity between the demand for services from children's psychiatrists and the supply of providers⁽⁶⁾. This gap is estimated to reach 8,312, which is approximately 4,000 less than the required number to address all cases. The socioeconomic factors prevalent in rural areas pose a significant disadvantage to children. This is particularly concerning given that the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has estimated that 61 percent of locations experiencing a shortage of mental health facilities are situated in rural or semi-urban areas⁽⁶⁾. The aforementioned Act places emphasis on the modification, augmentation, and extension of extant mental health programs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) with the aim of enhancing accessibility and pertinence. This will be achieved by providing more all-encompassing mental health services and support in educational institutions. The implementation of school-based interventions is a timely and effective approach to mitigating the adverse effects of mental health concerns on the well-being of children, as well as their academic attendance and achievement.

This policy brief was written with nation Mental health in School program in mind. Also included are community-based groups, Children coming from rural areas, and parents. This policy brief provides a synopsis of many recommendations that affect the populations including; children coming from rural areas in different regions in Saudi Arabia, and parents in rural

International Journal of Novel Research in Healthcare and Nursing

Vol. 11, Issue 1, pp: (303-306), Month: January - April 2024, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

community. Study aimed to Promote mental health for children, and promote quality of life of rural children, and their parents

II. BODY OF ARTICLE**Policy options:****Rural School-Based Health Centers**

As per the provisions outlined in H.R 100 of the 116th Congress in 2019, the legislation aims to create school-based mental health services at the local level in alignment with its underlying principles. The management of mental health issues among children and adolescents in rural areas has been identified as a gap by public health stakeholders and educationists. Chronic accessibility and socio-economic challenges have a notable impact on rural areas. The implementation of the rural school-based health model is a crucial strategy for resolving issues related to healthcare accessibility. The School-Based Health Centers program utilizes educational institutions as a platform for providing comprehensive mental health services. The implementation of School-Based Health Centers has been found to be advantageous due to its ability to enhance accessibility and remove obstacles such as insurance expenses, social stigma, and inadequate transportation (1).

In 2023, Ibrahim et al. conducted a retrospective record-based descriptive study aimed at evaluating the patterns and outcomes of acute pediatric intoxication in Aljouf, KSA ⁽⁷⁾. The study revealed that acute pediatric intoxication is a significant concern in Aljouf, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The age group of 1 to <6 years was found to be the most prevalent among children who exhibited acute intoxication. The majority of reported cases were attributed to pharmaceutical drugs. The majority of children who were acutely intoxicated exhibited stability and were asymptomatic upon admission. However, a majority of the observed children were admitted to the inpatient ward. Thus, the results of our study suggest that caregivers should exercise greater caution regarding the potential risks posed by toxic agents and their adverse effects. In addition, it is imperative to implement preventative measures via primary school services in order to mitigate incidents of acute pediatric intoxication in rural regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The findings of the study emphasize the necessity of adopting preventive measures to alleviate the incidence of acute pediatric intoxication in the future. In addition, identifying the key predictors associated with accidental intoxication and the necessity for hospitalization can facilitate the development of preventive strategies.

Furthermore, students optimize their time in educational institutions due to the enhancement of academic and behavioral performance through the provision of improved services. The social support for this policy option suggests that it is also backed by a majority of politicians. A potential drawback pertains to the issue of acceptability, which may be influenced by the negative connotations surrounding mental health in rural regions.

b. Collaboration with Other Sectors

There exist multiple domains pertinent to mental health that have the potential to enhance the efficacy of interventions aimed at addressing the needs of minors and young adults. The World Health Organization(WHO) posits that various entities including civil society, the private sector, and governmental departments such as education, juvenile justice, social work, and finance, share a vested interest in promoting the mental health of children. Effective collaboration is imperative in mental management due to the intricate interdependence of the various factors involved (8). In addition to primary care, other public health programs can be incorporated into the team to enhance the comprehensive management of health issues among children and adolescents. One potential drawback of collaborative efforts is the necessity for precise coordination of action plans. The presence of distinct professional responsibilities among team members may result in inadequate coordination.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has initiated the development of a novel healthcare system in line with the KSA's Vision 2030, which seeks to enhance the social, mental, and physical well-being of individuals through the implementation of a patient-centric Model of Care (MoC) (9). The MoC (Model of Care) design aims to guarantee that the provision of care aligns with the unique requirements of each patient. The Model of Care (MoC) comprises six distinct systems of care that prioritize the needs of patients. These systems include Keep me well, Chronic Care, Urgent Care, Planned Care, Safe Birth, and Last Phase. The Chronic Care system encompasses mental health services. The proposed national strategy aims to mitigate the deficiencies present in the current care systems and to formulate services that can effectively attain care

International Journal of Novel Research in Healthcare and Nursing

Vol. 11, Issue 1, pp: (303-306), Month: January - April 2024, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

integration, accessibility, and quality. Additionally, the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia has recently instituted a "National Committee for Mental Health Promotion" with the aim of providing assistance to the populace.

Policy Recommendation/Next steps and summarize rationale

Saudi Arabia has been offering improved mental health care as part of a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Health and the charitable organization (10). The MOH is at present creating a national mental health approach to Vision 2030 with cross-sectorial collaboration among stakeholder groups and participation, ensuring that it is aligned with the Ministry of Care and health transformation fundamentals of patient centricity and the coordination of facilities starting from the neighborhood level. The fact that it is necessary to strictly coordinate all of the action plans is one of the drawbacks of the partnership. Given the numerous areas of responsibility that are held by the relevant experts, poor coordination is expected. Child ali came to school healthcare center in rural area in KSA with signs of attentive deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD). The center locates beside his house by 100 miters. This promote feeling with safe and hopeful and trust in management of mental health status of child. Presence of metal health physician and nurse in each physical examination. Social workers, and other different specialists which facilitate the process of health education after management by health education process and follow up by recording on electronic health record. This will help school to differently educate those children with the same disorder by applying methodology which is appropriate for his health condition.

III. CONCLUSION

This study focused on parents in rural communities and children from various Saudi Arabian provinces' rural areas. The authors looked at possible policies regarding cooperation with other sectors and rural school-based health facilities. In keeping with Saudi Vision 2030, the Ministry of Health (MOH) is currently formulating a comprehensive national mental health policy. This approach promotes active involvement and highlights the value of cooperation across diverse stakeholder groups. It also seeks to be in line with the general patient-centricity and facility-coordination concepts of the Saudi Ministry, starting at the local level.

REFERENCES

- [1] Lindsey, B. The common benefits of school based mental health programs: A systematic review (Master's thesis, St. Catherine University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, Unites States). (2017). Retrieved from https://sophia.stkate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1762&context=msw_papers
- [2] Center for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC. "Data and statistics on children's mental health." cdc.gov. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html>
- [3] Mahsoon, A., Sharif, L., Banakhar, M., Alasmee, N., Almowallad, E., Jabali, R., ... & Assur, S. Parental support, beliefs about mental illness, and mental help-seeking among young adults in Saudi Arabia. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, (2020), 17(15), 5615.
- [4] Mental Health Services for students Act of 2019, H.R. 100, 116th Congress (2019).
- [5] Maajeeny, H. Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Saudi Arabia: A Teacher Preliminary Screening. *Globus Journal of Progressive Education*, (2019), 9(2), 4-10.
- [6] Center for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC. "Mental health services for children policy brief." cdc.gov. (2018). Retrieved <https://www.cdc.gov/ruralhealth/childhealth/policybrief.html>
- [7] Ibrahim, M. A., Alfahd, K. N., Alruwaili, A. T., Alruwaili, N. A., Alanazi, B. H., & Mostafa, E. M. Patterns of acute pediatric intoxication in Aljouf Province, KSA. *Journal of Taibah University Medical Sciences*, (2023), 18(3), 548-559.
- [8] World Health Organization, WHO. "World Health Organization and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Policy options on mental health: A WHO-Gulbenkian mental health platform collaboration." (2017). Retrieved from <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259406/9789241513296-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
- [9] Saudi Vision 2030. National Transformation Program 2020. (2019). Retrieved from <http://vision2030.gov.sa/en/ntp>. (6th June 2023).
- [10] Heller T, Damba D, Kumwenda T, Huwa J, Kamamia C, Nhlema A et al. Implementing advanced HIV disease care for inpatients in a referral hospital in Malawi – demand, results and cost implications. *Ann Glob Health*; (2022), 88:16.