

A Socio-Health Reading of Health Education as a Preventive Mechanism in Society

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Abstract

Health education forms an entire operation that aims to improve consciousness and health knowledge. It reinforces positive behaviour on individual and society level, and it covers various fields of nutrition and physical activity to mental and sexual health. It includes positive changes in awareness and behaviour. Health educational efforts contributes in reducing the spread of diseases and improving the quality of life. The outcomes are reflected in the enhancement of individual and collective well-being, and in the formation of healthy and sustainable communities.

Keywords: *Health Education, Health Awareness, Positive Behavior, Healthy Society.*

Received: 23/09/2025 ; Accepted: 25/03/2026 ; Published: 24/05/2026

Introduction

Health education is considered as one of the most important foundations for achieving social entertainment, as it aims to transfer knowledge and encourage health behaviours at both individual and community levels. Understanding the concept of comprehensive health represents a fundamental part in this context, as it goes beyond focusing on physical aspects to include psychological and social dimensions.

Health education is an integral part of the educational system, where research in this field analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of the efforts that the educational system make to improve health awareness and reinforces positive behaviors. These efforts aim to encourage individuals into adopting a healthy lifestyle and limit danger factors related to chronic diseases.

In health education context, the focus relies on guiding individuals into a deep understanding to healthy nutrition and the importance of practicing physical activity in order. Likewise, research deal with prevention cases from diseases and strengthen moral health, while shedding light on the relationship between physical and mental health.

Health education is considered one of the principal fields in the education system, as it aims to reinforce awareness and knowledge about health cases and encourages healthy behaviors for individuals and societies. Throughout what has been mentioned before, the study problem can be defined through two main questions:

- What is health education, and how can it play a vital role in developing health awareness and motivating positive transformations in health behaviors as primary goals to achieve a positive impact on society?

Health Education Concept:

Health education is one of the most essential fields in general health, and by that it is considered as an essential part for any public health program. It is no longer an improvised process but has become an educational process similar to teaching, aiming at changing information, directions and behaviors, with the goal of improving conditions, preparations, information and practices related to health. This gradually

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leads to an understanding of the importance of health and the adoption of appropriate behaviors based on this awareness and understanding.

In order for health education to be effective, there are modern methods that needs to be followed concerning gaining information, attitude change, and individual behavior modification. Healthy individuals are the strategic asset for any nation. Responsibility of preserving health falls upon all society individuals. Therefore, attention should be given to health education to improve their quality of life, as the productivity and advancement of society depend on how much its individuals acquire and practice health standards and principles. The spread of all sort of diseases and the degradation of health level in any country, does not necessarily go back to lack of health, preventive and therapeutic services, but rather from the ignorance of its people about how to maintain their health condition and not knowing how to adopt healthy behaviors that protect them from falling a victim into various diseases, leading to disease prevention and health maintenance. Therefore, an individual must be equipped with the appropriate amount of health knowledge that enables them to recognize the health threats they face.

Therefore, health education is that wide field or unified system between education and health. If:

Education is an organized process to make desirable changes happen in an individual's behavior in terms of his physical, mental, reactive, social character.

(Shalaan Mohamed & Najee Fatima, 2001, p. 19),

Health, according to the World Health Organization, is the state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or disability.

(Mufidi Abu Hula and Al-Balawi Khaled, 2006, p. 199).

Moreover, health education is an effective means of achieving these goals and working on improving individual's health. In its modern concept, health education is an educational operation through which an individual's health awareness is raised by providing them with information and expertise in order to affect his knowledge, attitude, behavior through his health and the health of the community he live in, in order to help him lead a healthy and sound life.

(William, j.h. and Abennathy, r, 1959: p7)

Therefore, the concept of health education is constantly evolving and renewing, in which its means and forms change with the life changes and social systems, concepts and community conditions. It has come to scientists attention because it primarily targets human's mindset, habits and traditions, aiming to free people from old, unhealthy practices based on ignorance, intellectual, scientific, and social backwardness. As a result, it seeks to change and correct these wrong directions and unhealthy behaviors, rectify them, and create individuals with a high level of awareness and knowledge of scientific health facts.

(Hikmat Frehat, Hisham Kanaan, 2002, p. 280)

Klans and his colleagues see that changes in healthcare system gave new opportunities that supports health education. These changes respects the patients's rights and focus more on patient's participation and communication, also it can lead to better health results.

(Glanz, K.Barbara , K. R. Viswanath, K.2008:p08)

Health education is the process of providing individuals with information and expertise by the appropriate positive ways that helps recognize his health problems, and follow a healthy behavior to preserve his health, the health of his family and community.

(*Kindil Ibrahim, :1971 p49*)

Health education does not mean reporting information only, but also reinforce the motive, skills, confidence (self-efficacy) is necessary to improve health. Health education includes delivering information which are related to social, economic, environmental situations that affects health, as well as risk factors, risky behaviors, and the use of the healthcare system.

(*Public Health Agency of Canada 2008:p04*)

The World Health Organization defines it as a set of tools that help individuals and groups adopt behaviors that are appropriate for their health.

(*O.M.S, (S.D) : p 09*)

Regarding the importance of health education to both individual and society, many countries have given it a significant care, especially for the youth in schools. This is because focusing on youth caring is considered as a major goal that is in the government's priorities, as it is the right path to natural growth and to the civilization progress of the nation. The nation's development is built on the foundation of raising healthy citizens who are not hindered by illness or weakness from fulfilling their duties towards the advancement of their nation and the improvement of its affairs in all areas.

Health education has no longer been about only filling students' minds with some information related to health and disease, but also it became a fundamental education process aims to adjust behavior, change concepts and instilling to people healthy habits linked to a sound healthy principle for various life stages.

(*Hajar Soulaïman wa Al Amine Mouhamed, :2002 p 2-1*)

From the above definitions, we conclude that health education (health promotion) is a participated science which it derives its origins from medical sciences, behavioral sciences, social sciences, environmental sciences and administrative sciences. It aims to promote health and prevention from diseases, disability and early deaths. Also, its goal is to achieve a better life quality through education that targets changing both society and individual's behavior. Therefore, health education is achieved through the following:

- Providing the individual with information and functional healthy facts that can benefit him on facing his environmental life problems.
- Forming healthy habits to help the individual on sound healthy behavior that achieves his personal health.
- Acquiring healthy habits that are essential and necessary for the individual's daily life, such as learning first aid and care during illness.
- Forming sound healthy attitudes to free individuals from commonly held myths in society.
- Equipping the individual with the proper thinking methods based on accurate observation and not accepting opinions and judgements before verifying its validity.

(*Carter, L, Marshall, MD, 1977: p 17*)

Health education is generally a set of intentional activities to transform or build knowledge related to the of an individual, group or area.

(Centre of expertise collective, 2001: p 24)

It encourages people to adopt healthy habits in their lives and to follow these habits. Also, to take their decisions about their health by themselves whether individuals or groups, and that is to improve their health and environment. Health education does not mean delivering information but also developing motives, skills and self-confidence is necessary for better health. It includes delivering special information with social, economic, environmental conditions that affects health, also on different danger factors and dangerous behaviors, and on using health system.

(OMS, 1999: 05)

From what previously defined, we notice that all of those definitions agreed that health education is:

- A process of educating individuals on how they protect themselves from diseases and health issues.
- A process of acquiring sound healthy concepts for the individuals.
- A process of supplying community members with the necessary experiences in order to positively influence their information and practices related to health.

Goals of Health Education

Health education does not target spreading health instructions, but it teaches society members what is known about health education such as: how to protect themselves from diseases and health problems. It also involves changing people's thoughts and feelings regarding their health and providing them with the necessary experiences to positively influence their health-related knowledge and practices. This is achieved by translating health principles into behavioral patterns through learning.

(Mustafa Al-Qamash et al., 2000, p. 70)

Among the most important goals of health education are:

- Changing individuals' perception on what is related to health and disease, while trying to put health as a goal for each one of them. That depends on many factors such as existing social systems, also on the education level in this society, economic status, and the level of connection and love individuals have for their country. This is reflected in their support of public health programs and cooperation with those responsible for planning programs aimed at serving the community.
- Changing the attitudes, behaviors and habits to improve health level for individuals, families and society as a whole. This includes appropriate responses in cases of minor injuries, diseases and all the actions that parents take to improve public health.
- Working on growing and ensuring success of health projects in society, through cooperation between individuals and officials.
- Spreading health awareness between society members which in turn helps them understand their responsibilities towards caring for their own health as well as the health of others.

(Salama Baba Eddin, 2001, p. 43)

Health education is an educational and pedagogical process that aimed at increasing health awareness among individuals and communities and promoting public health. Health education seeks to achieve several goals, including:

●**Increasing health awareness:** That is through supplying individuals with information and necessary skills in taking sound and healthy decisions.

Health awareness includes a set of concepts, values, skills related to health, for example:

- * Health and disease concept.
- * Danger health factors.
- * Methods of prevention from diseases.
- * importance of healthy nutrition.
- * importance of physical activity.
- * importance of sound and healthy practices.

●**Changing health attitudes:** That is through reinforcing healthy habits and changing unhealthy one. Healthy behavior includes a set of actions that the individual do and inflects his health, such as:

- * Quitting smoking.
- * Reducing alcohol consumption.
- * Using protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

●**Promoting Public Health:** This is achieved through disease prevention and the promotion of physical, mental, and social health. Health education aims to enhance public health by preventing diseases and improving physical, mental, and social well-being.

●Disease prevention includes various measures aimed at reducing the spread of diseases, such as:

- Vaccinations.
- Regular health check-ups.
- Personal hygiene.
- Monitoring food and water safety.

●Health education also aims to promote physical health through healthy habits that maintain the body's well-being, such as:

- Getting sufficient sleep.
- It also promotes mental health by encouraging habits that maintain mental well-being, such as:
 - Stress management.
 - Building positive social relationships. (**Health Education in Saudi Arabia, 2022, p. 6**)

Health Education Fields:

To achieve the goals and objectives of teaching health (educational health), and contributing in the process of a better healthy conditions, efforts must be made in all surrounding areas and all aspect of a person's life. There are several fields where health education activities can be carried out effectively:

Firstly: The Home; where health education works on:

- * Increasing personal health importance, public hygiene, nutrition, quality of clothes, rest hours, play, sleep, late-night activities.
- * Encouraging family members to practice prevention methods from diseases and provide quick medical care to the sick.
- * Promoting environmental health by addressing issues such as insect control, proper food storage, appropriate lighting, and good ventilation.
- * Encouraging the family to adopt healthy habits and avoid unhealthy practices, such as drinking from the same cup or using a shared towel.
- * Taking care of recreational activities, travel, and utilizing parks and recreational areas.

(Mustafa Al-Qamash et al., 2000, p. 187-188)

Secondly: The School, where the role of the school in health education can be highlighted as follows:

- * Cooperation between the school and parents to transfer health awareness to the home.
- * Collaboration between the school and health institutions to organize exhibitions, seminars, and form committees for awareness campaigns.
- * Involving students in spreading health guidelines at home through models and posters.
- * Engaging teachers in epidemic and contagious disease prevention efforts.
- * Fostering interest in physical education and sports among students.
- * Teaching students how to handle emergencies and accidents, and providing first aid training.

(Mustafa Al-Qamash et al., 2000, p. 187-188)

Third: Society; Includes society fields:

Coffe shops, restaurents and clubs, pakrs, mosques, camps, factorties and others. Which makes way for gaining foundations and correct principles in all sort of social and health matters, espacially if the society was aware to health principles.

(Mustafa Al-Qamash, 2000, p:187 - 188)

The world health organizations has identified the key areas of health education as follows:

Personal health, food safety, consumer's food, mental and psychological health, family health, society health, environment health, security and accident prevention, disease prevention and control, prevention of drug abuse and harmful substances.

(Akef Fouad, 2015 P 281)

• *Education health levels*

The first level: a fundamental adjustment in personality, which is the optimal level that addresses problems radically, and this is achieved through the development of the child's personality by investing his disabled energies and an essential modification in the pressures of the environment.

The second level: a total or relative adjustment in the child's personality, and it is common in cases where the child's personality plays the main role in the problem or in cases where it is completely impossible to modify the surrounding environment, so the goal is to acquire a degree of immunity that bears experiencing the painful reality that surrounds him.

The third level: a total or relative adjustment of environmental conditions, which is a common goal in the cases of children with disabilities or low economic and social conditions, i.e. whose environmental conditions are the main factors in their problems in addition to guidance or service.

- **Estimation:** It is concerned with collecting and analyzing a set of objective and subjective, psychological or social data to help them understand themselves, as well as corresponding behavioral observation procedures, application and interpretation of achievement assessment tools, academic skills, preparations, tendencies, cognitive abilities, attitudes, emotions and motivations.

- **Information:** This component is concerned with planning to give students more knowledge of educational, professional, personal and social opportunities so that they can make choices and decisions.

- **Guiding:** It is concerned with the management of self-understanding and self-development through bilateral relationships or in small groups, and interest in these relationships is based on personal growth and decision-making that are based on self-understanding and knowledge of the environment

- **Counseling:** It aims to provide specialized assistance to teachers, school administrators and parents so that they can be more effective.

- **Planning and follow-up:** The focus is on helping, choosing, using the opportunities available to them, assisting the rehabilitation center in career planning, counseling and evaluation programs aimed at discovering the effectiveness of mentoring programs and conducting research with the aim of improving them.

(Nur al-Huda Muhammad al-Jamous 2004, pp. 154-147)

- *Methods and means of health education*

The difficulty of applying health education programs in an effective and broad manner lies in that they deal with the complex human behavior that determines it, and is affected by a very large number of environmental, social, cultural and personal factors. It is not only to deliver knowledge to people, but also strives to reach the goal it seeks, which is to change the wrong behavior to healthy behavior, and so that our health messages are more convincing. The choice of means through which health information is provided is very important.

(Artag, M, 2001 p05)

This communication is only effective when a message is sent and received properly, so that the recipient understands the intended meaning of the message conveyed by the sender. In health education, the message is extremely important, and as such, various methods of communication have been used and diversified to ensure effective communication. The most important methods include:

- **Direct communication:** Sometimes called methods of confrontation, which prepares the teacher's interview for the learner and confronting them. Direct contact depends on the personality of the health intellectual, his style, skill and training, and it is usually in the form of a confrontation or interview between the intellectual and those who provide them with health awareness, whether it is an individual or collective confrontation.

(Badah Ahmed and Mazahera Ayman and Badran Zein, 2009, p. 21)

- **Indirect communication:** It is the process of communicating the health educator indirectly, such as the use of various media like satellite channels, television, radio, posters, pictures and exhibitions. In order to communicate the health educational message to the members of society so that we cannot recognize their reactions and the extent to which they understand what these means offer.

(Salama Babauddin, 2001: p. 138)

The media is considered one of the most important health educational tools in society. But despite its positives in delivering information quickly and easily and delivering very modern information, it is marred by some defects as it is a one-way process, meaning that the message reaches from the sender to the receiver, so it is not possible to determine the extent of his reaction, or its impact on him, or it is not possible to determine the extent of his understanding of the message communicated correctly. Therefore the effectiveness of the media in health education depends on:

- The educational level of community members.
- Their economic level.
- The style of presenting the health message, whether in a newspaper, radio or television, and the extent to which suspense methods are used.
- The receiver's readiness to receive the content of the message and its relationship to his interest.
- The cultural level of community members.

(Al-Siddiqi Salwa, 1999, pp. 211-212)

Due to the ineffectiveness of the media in the field of health education, especially in culturally backward environments, it is preferable not to rely on them entirely but to accompany the use of other methods.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it can be said that health education is a continuous and multidimensional process, aimed at developing health awareness among individuals and promoting their healthy behaviors. Health education plays an important role in promoting public health, preventing diseases and injuries, improving the quality of life, and promoting well-being.

The results of the research concluded that health education has a positive impact on public and individual health, as it contributes to:

Decrease the incidence of diseases and injuries and increase the life expectancy of the individual while improving the quality of life in all its aspects, which mainly aims to build healthy and prosperous communities.

In order to achieve its goals, health education must rely on multiple and varied methods and means, take into account personal differences between individuals, and focus on building sustainable healthy behaviors.

Accordingly, health education is an important investment in the health of individuals and communities, and must receive significant attention and support from all stakeholders.

Here are some recommendations that can help promote health education:

- The need to include health education in school curricula at all educational levels.
- The need to train teachers and health workers on the methods and means of health education.
- The need for cooperation between health institutions, government agencies and civil society to promote health education.

Finally, health education is a shared responsibility of individuals and communities, and everyone must promote it in order to achieve healthy and prosperous societies.

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