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Motivation and pupil behavior: Pandemic infection control in a Zimbabwe Primary School context

Chiparange Getrude Vongai[1]*, Mapolisa Alfred[2], Chiwanza Easter[3]
[1,2,3]Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe
[1]chiparangeg@zou.ac.zw*, [2]mapolisaa@zou.ac.zw, [3]easterchiwanza@zou.ac.zw

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study addresses the critical issue of pupils' adherence to COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Measures (IPCM) within the educational setting, specifically at Chancellor Junior Primary School in Mutare, Zimbabwe. Understanding the role of motivation in fostering positive behavioral change is crucial for mitigating disease transmission in schools. This research sought to understand how motivation affects pupils' behavior regarding COVID-19 prevention, and to develop strategies for improving their adherence to safety measures. Data was collected through purposive sampling of 30 participants, including 20 pupils, 6 teachers, and 4 parents. Focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and direct observations were utilized to gather rich, contextual data. Findings indicated that pupils generally exhibited positive behavior towards handwashing, staying home when sick, and cough etiquette. However, challenges were observed concerning consistent social distancing and mask-wearing. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies were found to significantly influence pupils' adherence to IPCM, highlighting the importance of targeted motivational interventions. The study concludes that motivation is crucial for IPCM adherence, recommending interactive education, positive reinforcement, parental involvement, peer initiatives, and resource availability. These strategies, aimed at school, government, parents, and NGOs, are essential for creating a safer learning environment during and post-pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

The effective implementation of COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Measures (IPCM) within school settings is paramount to safeguarding pupils' health. This study investigated the effects of motivation on pupils' behavior towards IPCM at Chancellor Junior Primary School in Mutare, Zimbabwe. While the transmission dynamics of the causative agent, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), are well-documented, primarily via close contact and respiratory droplets (Sar et al., 2023), the challenge lies in translating this knowledge into consistent behavioral adherence, particularly among young learners. Following the World Health Organization's declaration of a global health emergency in January 2020 (Sohrabi et al., 2020), schools worldwide faced the unprecedented task of implementing IPCM. The rapid global spread, with millions of cases and fatalities (La Maestra et al., 2020), underscored the urgency of effective prevention strategies. However, the success of IPCM hinges not only on understanding transmission but also on fostering sustained behavioral change. This study specifically addresses the critical gap in our understanding of how motivational factors influence pupils' adoption and consistent practice of IPCM by focusing on the interplay between motivation and behavior, so as to provide actionable insights for enhancing IPCM adherence in primary school environments, thereby contributing to safer learning spaces during and beyond the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, emerged from Wuhan, China, and rapidly escalated into a global health crisis. Characterized by its high transmissibility via respiratory droplets and contaminated surfaces, COVID-19 prompted the World Health Organization to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. By early 2021, the

pandemic had resulted in over 90.2 million infections and 1.9 million deaths globally, with its impact felt across continents, including Africa. While no definitive cure exists, vaccination and adherence to preventative behaviors are crucial for mitigating its spread and severity.

In Zimbabwe, the first case was detected in Victoria Falls on March 20, 2020, leading to nationwide transmission. Although children generally experienced milder symptoms, outbreaks in schools, particularly boarding institutions, raised concerns about asymptomatic transmission and the vulnerability of at-risk populations (Chitiyo et al., 2022). The Zimbabwean government, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Child Care, implemented Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), emphasizing symptom screening, testing, contact tracing, and preventive behaviors such as hand hygiene, social distancing, and mask-wearing.

However, consistent adherence to these measures proved challenging, with community transmission linked to lapses in preventive guidelines. Studies have indicated that adolescents and adults struggle with maintaining consistent mask-wearing and other preventive practices (Hatami et al., 2021; Matovu et al., 2021). Furthermore, the pandemic's psychological and environmental impact on children, including caregiver loss and lifestyle disruptions, may have influenced their attitudes towards COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Measures (IPCM). Given the importance of motivation in influencing behavior, this study aims to explore the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on pupils' adherence to COVID-19 IPCM at Chancellor Junior Primary School in Mutare, Zimbabwe. COVID-19 IPCM, as defined by the WHO and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, encompass a range of preventive behaviors, including Hand Hygiene, Surface Disinfection, Face Masking, Social Distancing, and Cough Etiquette.

At Chancellor Junior Primary School, the implementation of these measures included strategic placement of handwashing facilities, mandatory temperature screening, and the establishment of a Health Coordination Team (HCT). Despite these efforts, challenges such as inconsistent mask-wearing and difficulty in maintaining social distancing were observed, and the school experienced outbreaks. This context motivated the researcher to investigate the role of motivation in influencing pupils' adherence to COVID-19 IPCM.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the education sector in Zimbabwe, necessitating the implementation of IPCM to ensure a safe learning environment (UNICEF, 2020). Intermittent school closures and reopenings were implemented as part of national control and mitigation efforts (Dzobo et al., 2020). School closures raised concerns about increased teenage pregnancies, child marriages, and child labor (Dzinamarira & Musuka, 2021). Consequently, the decision to reopen schools was contingent on the development and implementation of robust IPCM. The Government of Zimbabwe, through the Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) and Health and Child Care (MOHCC), established a coordinated response mechanism to strengthen resource mobilization and monitor COVID-19 in educational institutions, aligning with) recommendations. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of effective strategies for enhancing pupils' adherence to these crucial preventive measures.

This study adopts the Planned Behavior Theory (PBT) to elucidate the factors influencing pupils' adherence to COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Measures (IPCM) at Chancellor Junior Primary School. PBT, an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action, provides a robust framework for predicting behavioral intentions and subsequent behaviors in specific contexts. Its relevance has been demonstrated in various health-related studies during the COVID-19 pandemic, including investigations of factory workers' preventive behaviors (Zhang et al., 2021) and parental intentions regarding child vaccination (Zhang et al., 2020). The core principle of PBT posits that behavioral intention, the immediate precursor to behavior, is determined by three key constructs: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

The application of PBT in this study offers a structured approach to understanding the motivational determinants of pupils' adherence to COVID-19 IPCM. This understanding is critical for informing public health interventions aimed at promoting preventive behaviors during pandemics and other infectious disease outbreaks (Aschwanden et al., 2021). Furthermore, the study acknowledges the broader role of behavior in infectious disease transmission and control. Behavior, encompassing both

internal cognitive processes and external actions, is influenced by a complex interplay of psychological and environmental factors. These factors, including individual perceptions, social support, and the availability of school facilities, are pivotal in shaping adherence to preventive measures.

The significance of preventive behavior is well-documented in the control of various infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS, where behavior change interventions have demonstrated substantial efficacy. It also extends to other health domains, such as substance abuse prevention, immunization, and cancer screening. However, the persistence of risky behaviors among young people, leading to adverse outcomes such as unwanted pregnancies and substance abuse, underscores the need for targeted interventions. Consequently, fostering responsible behavior, supported by conducive environments, is paramount for safeguarding children's well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. This study seeks to contribute to the development of evidence-based strategies for promoting adherence to COVID-19 IPCM, thereby enhancing the health and safety of pupils within the school setting.

The primary objectives of this study were twofold: first, to assess the impact of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors on pupils' compliance with COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Measures (IPCM) at Chancellor Junior Primary School, and second, to develop and recommend evidence-based motivational strategies to improve this compliance. To achieve these objectives, the research sought to answer three key questions: identifying the specific intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors currently influencing pupils' behaviour regarding IPCM; determining the extent to which these factors predict pupils' adherence; and formulating actionable motivational strategies to optimize pupils' compliance with IPCM within the school setting.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative research paradigm, grounded in an interpretive epistemological stance, to explore students' attitudes towards COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Measures (IPCM) at Chancellor Junior Primary School. Data collected using interviews, focus groups, and observations were thematically analyzed in NVivo 12 through open, axial, and selective coding. The data were then triangulated and member-checked to ensure rigor, with an audit trail maintained for transparency. A single instrumental case study design was used to examine the impact of motivation on students' attitudes towards COVID-19 IPCM in the specific context of Chancellor Junior Primary School in Mutare, Zimbabwe. The target population consisted of all students, teachers, and support staff (N=2,910) at Chancellor Junior Primary School. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select a sample of 30 participants, including students, teachers, and parents. This sampling method ensured the involvement of participants who had rich information and lived experiences relevant to the study's focus on the impact of motivation on students' adherence to COVID-19 IPCM. Students were selected based on age and educational level, teachers based on their experience and role in monitoring IPCM compliance, and parents from the School Development Committee (SDC) to represent the broader parent community.

The study used a multi-method approach to data collection, which increased the depth and comprehensiveness of the findings; Semi-Structured Face-to-Face Interviews, Interviews were conducted with teachers, parents, and students to explore their perspectives on IPCM motivation and compliance. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings, the study used methodological triangulation, integrating data from semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and focus group discussions. Triangulation of data collection periods was also conducted to verify consistency of behaviors, statements, and beliefs across different times of the school day.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from interviews, observations, and focus group discussions were analyzed and are presented descriptively. Verbatim quotes from interviewees are included to provide in-depth insights and capture the emotional nuances observed by the researcher. The following themes emerged from the data, focusing on the socio-demographic characteristics of participants, pupils' behavior, and the role of motivation in COVID-19 IPCM:

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants

The initial section of the interview guide focused on gathering socio-demographic information from participants, including their gender, age, educational level, and teaching experience at Chancellor Junior Primary School. This data was collected to explore its potential influence and relationship with behavior and motivation towards adherence to COVID-19 IPCM.

Age and Gender

All participants were asked about their age and gender. The study included 20 pupils across age groups 6-7, 8-9, 10-11, and 12-13, ensuring gender balance (10 female and 10 male). Six teachers (3 female and 3 male) and four School Development Committee (SDC) members (2 female and 2 male) also participated. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of participant demographics. Naughton (2021) suggests that age is a significant determinant of behavior towards adherence to COVID-19 IPCM. Therefore, age data was collected to compare similarities and differences with previous research findings. Participants were asked about their gender to identify potential differences in responses and minimize bias.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

	Pupils		**Teachers**		**SDC**		**TOTAL**	
Age & Gender	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**	**F**	**M**
6-7 years	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
8-9 years	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
10-11 years	3	3	0	0	0	0	3	3
12-13 years	3	3	0	0	0	0	3	3
18 + years	0	0	3	3	2	2	5	5
Total	**20**		**6**		**4**		**30**	

The data in table 1 indicates that there was a gender balance between all the selected participants.

Level of Education

The pupil participants in this study were drawn from grades ECD B-1, 2-3, 4-5, and 6-7 at Chancellor Junior Primary School. A total of 20 pupils participated. Eight pupils were from grades ECD B-1 and 2-3, while 12 pupils were from grades 4-7 (6 from grades 4-5 and 6 from grades 6-7). The educational level of the respondents was considered relevant to the study as it relates to their level of knowledge and ability to access COVID-19 related information (Ezati Rad et al., 2021).

Teaching Experience

Teacher's years of service at Chancellor Junior Primary School (Table 2) and their overall experience in the Zimbabwean education system were collected. This aimed to elicit insights into their past experiences related to motivational issues and their observations of pupils' behavior since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2. Teachers' Years of Service at Chancellor Junior Primary School

Participant number	Number of years of at Chancellor
Teacher 1	8
Teacher 2	13
Teacher 3	18
Teacher 4	12
Teacher 5	15
Teacher 6	10

As evidenced by Table 2, most teacher participants possessed extensive experience within the teaching profession. Furthermore, their involvement with the school's Health Coordination Team (HCT) provided them with firsthand knowledge of the COVID-19 interventions implemented at the school.

Pupils' Behavior Towards COVID-19 IPCM (Theory of Planned Behavior Framework)

The interview and focus group discussion questions were designed using a semi-structured format, allowing participants to elaborate on their views and providing essential insights into their behaviors. The themes of these questions were derived from the Theory of Planned Behavior (PBT), aiming to assess pupils' attitudes, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding handwashing, mask-wearing, social distancing, staying home when sick, and cough and face protection at Chancellor Junior Primary School. Similarly, the focus group discussions were structured around the three components of the PBT.

Themes that emerged consistently across participants during interviews and focus group discussions were identified as significant to the study findings.

Pupils' Attitudes on the Importance of COVID-19 IPCM

All pupil participants were asked about their opinions on the importance of COVID-19 IPCM, including mask-wearing in public, regular handwashing with soap or alcohol-based sanitizer, maintaining a 1-meter social distance in and out of classrooms, cough protection, staying home when sick, and face protection. This aimed to assess their attitudes towards these measures.

All 20 pupil participants, from both interviews and focus group discussions, expressed positive attitudes towards mask-wearing, hand hygiene, cough protection, staying home when sick, and face protection. They agreed that these IPCM were crucial for preventing and controlling COVID-19 infection. The following excerpts from group discussions and interviews illustrate these views:

Focus Group 1, Participant 4: It is very important to always wear a mask to protect yourself from getting COVID-19 and to wash your hands before eating food.

Focus Group 1, Participant 6: I think it is important to stay at home when you have flu to avoid spreading it to others, and you might not know whether it's flu or COVID, so it's better to stay at home. And then come back to school when you feel better.

Interviews, Participant 13: If you do not wear a mask, you can get coronavirus."

Focus Group 2, Participant 15: "Washing your hands protects you from getting diseases so that you protect yourself and others.

These responses demonstrate that the pupils generally recognized the importance of these IPCM in safeguarding their health and the health of others.

Pupils' Attitudes on the Effectiveness of COVID-19 IPCM

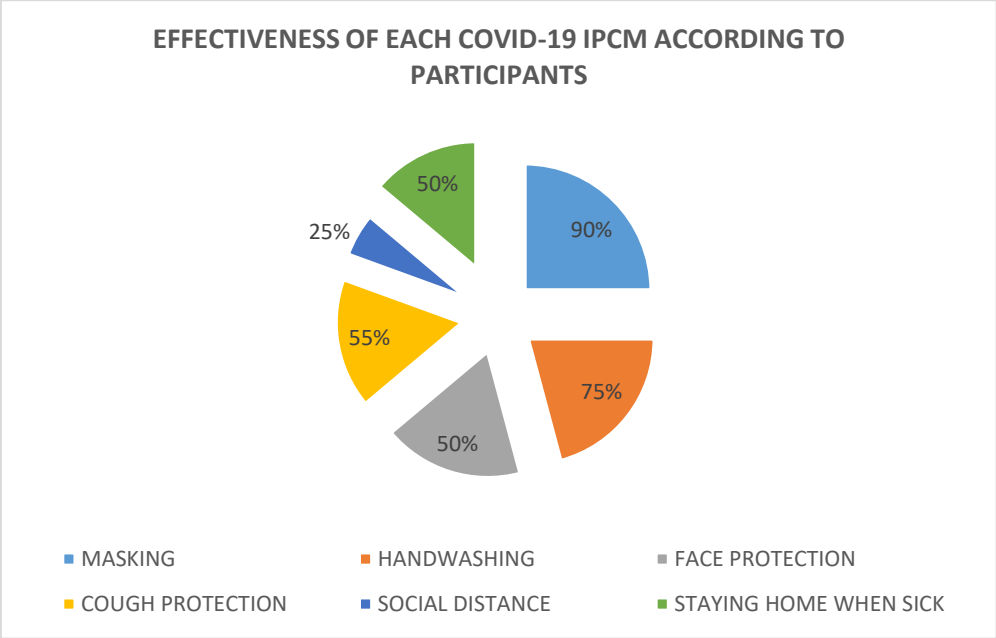
The study revealed varying perceptions among pupils regarding the effectiveness of COVID-19 IPCM. Specifically, 90% of respondents perceived mask-wearing as the most effective measure for preventing droplet inhalation, followed by 75% who emphasized handwashing as crucial for disinfecting germs and preventing infection. While other preventive measures were acknowledged by over 50% of respondents (as summarized in Chart 1), social distancing was perceived as effective by only 25% of the pupils. This positive attitude, as predicted by TPB, contributed to their intentions to adhere to these measures.

Furthermore, the study highlighted a correlation between educational level and COVID-19 knowledge. Pupils in higher grades (4-5 and 6-7) demonstrated a better understanding of COVID-19 transmission and the effectiveness of preventive measures. Conversely, pupils in lower grades (ECD B-1 and 2-3) exhibited limited knowledge, particularly regarding the effectiveness of social distancing. For example:

Interviews, Participant 3: I always wear a mask, but I do not think it's important to practice social distance when you wear a mask.

These findings suggest a significant positive correlation between educational level and COVID-19 knowledge regarding IPCM effectiveness, which aligns with the study by Ezati Rad et al. (2021) conducted in Hormozgan. Their research also found that higher education was associated with increased protective behaviors due to enhanced knowledge of IPCM importance.

Therefore, pupils in grades 4-5 and 6-7 demonstrate a stronger intention to engage in COVID-19 preventive behaviors compared to those in ECD B-1, likely due to their higher level of COVID-19 knowledge. This aligns with Han et al. (2020), who asserted that accurate knowledge of COVID-19 transmission and prevention measures increases the likelihood of practicing preventive behaviors. However, it's important to note that Liu et al. (2021) argued that higher educational levels do not necessarily influence personal hygiene and healthy practice behaviors during the COVID-19 outbreak. The participants' perceptions of the most effective COVID-19 IPCM are illustrated in Chart 1. This chart shows the percentage of respondents who identified each measure as highly effective.



Picture 1. Perceived Effectiveness of COVID-19 IPCM Measures

Note: This chart represents the percentage of pupils who rated each IPCM measure as highly effective.

Pupils' Perceived Behavioral Control on COVID-19 IPCM

The research findings revealed varying levels of perceived behavioral control among pupils regarding different COVID-19 IPCM.

Mask-Wearing:

Mask-wearing was associated with low perceived behavioral control due to barriers such as discomfort during breathing and talking. Many respondents found it challenging to wear masks throughout the school day. Additionally, some felt "abnormal" wearing masks, as it was not a habitual practice. Weather conditions, particularly hot days, also contributed to discomfort and reduced mask-wearing compliance. These findings align with previous research indicating that perceived barriers to mask-wearing include beliefs that masks are harmful, inconvenient, cause breathing difficulties, are uncomfortable, lead to overheating, and are aesthetically unappealing (Taylor & Asmundson, 2021).

However, perceived behavioral control regarding mask-wearing was higher among older pupils, particularly those in grades 6-7 and prefects, who were identified by their distinct uniforms. The study results suggest a correlation between age and mask-wearing, with older pupils demonstrating higher adherence. This aligns with studies indicating a significant association between age and face mask-wearing, with older age predicting higher adherence to COVID-19 preventive behaviors (Haischer et al., 2020; Naughton et al., 2021; Ning et al., 2020). The observation that younger learners often wore masks improperly (beneath the mouth) further supports this age-related difference. Overall, the findings suggest that behavioral intention towards mask-wearing among younger learners is likely low due to reduced perceived behavioral control.

Handwashing:

In contrast, 95% of respondents reported handwashing as the easiest COVID-19 IPCM to practice, and they confirmed doing so regularly. Perceived behavioral control towards handwashing was consistently high across all ages and educational levels. This suggests that handwashing had become habitual, likely due to prior experience with other infectious diseases such as cholera, dysentery, typhoid, and diarrhea. For example:

Grade 3 Pupil, Participant 9: I always wash my hands after visiting the toilet or when I shake hands with someone to remove germs and prevent coronavirus.

Focus Group 1, Participant 15: I have a personal sanitizer that I brought from the school office and I often use it regularly.

These findings are consistent with studies conducted in the USA, which reported increased handwashing frequency during the COVID-19 pandemic (Wise et al., 2020). Similar trends were observed during the 2015-16 influenza season, where handwashing was the most commonly reported preventive behavior (Sar et al., 2023). Direct observations confirmed the school's efforts to facilitate handwashing by installing multiple taps and placing buckets in classroom corridors, thereby enhancing behavioral control.

Face Protection:

Regarding face protection (avoiding touching the face, nose, or mouth), participants reported low perceived behavioral control. For example:

Focus Group 2, Participant 5: It's difficult to spend the day without touching your face, and sometimes I forget and accidentally touch my eyes or mouth.

Face protection was perceived as difficult due to habit and forgetfulness, increasing the risk of COVID-19 transmission. These findings are supported by studies indicating that individuals touch their faces frequently, increasing the risk of infection (Howard et al., 2021). Therefore, face protection, like mask-wearing, was associated with low perceived behavioral control, reducing the intention to adhere.

Cough Protection and Social Distancing:

Most pupils reported high perceived behavioral control towards cough protection, with consistent adherence across ages and genders. Younger pupils expressed that covering their mouths

when coughing was habitual. However, maintaining social distancing was challenging due to the school's high population density. Additionally, pupils in grades 6-7 reported difficulty staying home when sick due to academic pressure related to their final exams.

Subjective Norms on COVID-19 IPCM

The study findings indicated that social distancing was the least practiced IPCM among pupils and staff, both in classrooms and outdoors. Lambe et al. (2021) suggest that observing peers or others not complying with social distancing can discourage young people from adhering to the behavior. This aligns with research indicating lower adherence to social distancing guidelines in schools, highlighting the need for interventions that address environmental and social enablers and barriers, rather than solely focusing on information dissemination (Berry et al., 2020). Barriers to social distancing, as identified by Berry et al. (2020), include peer actions, forgetfulness, environmental constraints, and emotional factors. In this context, the school's high population density likely hindered effective social distancing.

Conversely, hand hygiene was associated with high social pressure. Participants reported that teachers consistently instructed them to wash their hands before breaks. This perceived social pressure, as per TPB, reinforced handwashing behaviour. For example:

ECDB, Participant 9: Before we go to break, we make a line and wash our hands.

Early research suggests that social support significantly influences COVID-19 preventive behaviors (Fontes et al., 2022). Among older female pupils, handwashing was associated with high subjective norms, as they reported their friends consistently practiced it. However, older male pupils reported lower subjective norms regarding handwashing. Gender was also identified as a predictor of hand hygiene, with females demonstrating greater adherence (Dwipayanti et al., 2021).

Mask-wearing was subject to varying perceptions. Some pupils reported that their teachers and parents wore masks, while others did not. The majority of older pupils indicated that their teachers were strict about mask-wearing in classrooms, which likely contributed to their adherence. This aligns with findings from Thailand, where social norms and legal penalties influenced compliance with preventive measures (Assavanopakun et al., 2022). Parental support was also noted, with participants stating that their parents provided them with masks, indicating high subjective norms. However, some pupils still did not wear masks, possibly due to low perceived behavioral control.

Young pupils reported that their parents restricted them from attending school when sick, indicating high social pressure to stay home. School requirements, as announced by the Teacher-in-Charge (TIC), also reinforced this behavior. Handwashing and cough protection were accompanied by regular reminders from parents and teachers. However, face protection was associated with lower subjective norms, as it was perceived as an individual behavior.

The Motivation on Behavior of Pupils Towards COVID-19 IPCM

Section B of the interview guide, administered to teachers who were members of the school's Health Coordination Team (HCT), focused on exploring the forms of motivation and their effects on pupils' behavior regarding adherence to COVID-19 IPCM at Chancellor Junior Primary School.

Forms of Motivation on Behavior of Pupils Towards COVID-19 IPCM at Chancellor Junior Primary School

This section aimed to identify the motivational strategies implemented by the school to influence pupils' behavior towards adherence to COVID-19 IPCM. The findings revealed that an HCT was established at the onset of the pandemic to strengthen internal supervision and monitoring of COVID-19 related issues. The HCT was responsible for overseeing the availability of COVID-19 facilities and monitoring adherence to recommended guidelines. The following motivational strategies were identified:

Enhancing COVID-19 Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP):

The school promoted extracurricular activities such as dramas, songs, and poems to increase pupils' COVID-19 knowledge. In 2021, the school organized COVID-19 themed competitions with other primary schools, including Baring Primary School and Mutare Junior, focusing on poetry, music,

dance, and paintings. These competitions, held among ECD to grade 3 pupils, included rewards and recognitions for winners.

Teacher 2: This was a platform for teachers, parents, and pupils to interact such that pupils were given tasks to practice on poetry, music, and the role of the parents was to assist learners at home.

Improving Handwashing and Hygiene Facilities:

The school invested in installing sufficient handwashing facilities at entry and exit points to promote hand disinfection, face protection, and cough protection. Tap-designed buckets with clean soap water were placed across classroom corridors. Efforts were made to repair and maintain all taps around the school to enhance the provision of WASH facilities.

Utilizing a WhatsApp Communication Platform:

A WhatsApp platform was created to facilitate regular communication between parents, teachers, and learners on COVID-19 issues. This platform was used to disseminate core messages, such as reminders for handwashing, mask-wearing, cough and face protection, staying home when sick, and social distancing. Teachers used the platform to communicate COVID-19 related tasks and provide feedback on pupils' performance.

Developing New School Blocks:

The school raised funds to expand classrooms to address overcrowding and facilitate social distancing. Previously, the school implemented staggered school days to reduce classroom density, but this was discontinued due to teacher objections.

Implementing Strict Regulations:

Strict regulations were enforced to ensure pupils' adherence to COVID-19 IPCM.

Teacher 5: Here at Chancellor Junior School, we are very strict about adherence to COVID-19 guidelines; failure to do so is followed by an ultimate punishment like picking up rubbish around the school.

The Effects of Motivation on Behavior of Pupils Towards COVID-19 IPCM

Teachers and parents were asked to provide their perspectives on the effectiveness of the school's current motivational strategies. Both groups indicated that motivation was effective in influencing preventive behaviors towards COVID-19 IPCM. However, participants also highlighted environmental barriers that hindered the full effectiveness of these strategies. The following challenges were noted:

High Population Density in Classrooms: Overcrowding in classrooms posed a significant challenge for teachers and pupils in maintaining social distancing.

Challenges in Motivating Young Pupils: Motivating younger pupils proved difficult, as they often resisted mask-wearing and social distancing due to their desire to play. Frequent loss of masks was also a common issue among younger pupils.

Reluctance Among Some Teachers: Some teachers exhibited reluctance towards mask-wearing, adhering only in the presence of the school headmaster. This behavior diminished the perceived importance of mask-wearing among pupils.

Financial Constraints and Limited Government Support: Financial limitations hindered the school's ability to initiate comprehensive COVID-19 awareness campaigns. Participants also noted limited government support in assisting schools with COVID-19 programs.

Lack of Parental Collaboration: Insufficient collaboration from some parents in reinforcing motivational efforts alongside teachers was observed.

Implications For Policy Pakers

To improve pupil adherence to COVID-19 IPCM, policymakers and educators should focus on strengthening Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) by providing resources and addressing environmental barriers like overcrowding. Reinforcing positive Subjective Norms through role modelling and peer influence, and addressing negative attitudes with targeted education, are also crucial. Tailored interventions for different age groups and strong parental engagement are essential for effective implementation.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effects of motivation on pupils' behaviour towards COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Measures (IPCM) at Chancellor Junior Primary School in Mutare, Zimbabwe. The research was prompted by concerns regarding poor adherence to COVID-19 IPCM at the school, which posed a risk to the health and well-being of teachers, pupils, and the wider community. Employing a qualitative case study design, a purposive sample of 20 pupils, 6 teachers, and 4 parents was selected to examine pupils' behaviour towards COVID-19 IPCM. Additionally, the study explored the motivational strategies implemented by the school and their impact on pupils' behaviour. Narrative descriptions, tables, and a pie chart were used to present and interpret the research data. The study findings demonstrated that motivation positively influenced overall behavioural intention towards mask-wearing, social distancing, handwashing, staying home when sick, and face and cough protection during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the study also revealed that a lack of knowledge regarding COVID-19 IPCM, overcrowding, and low subjective pressure demotivated pupils' adherence to mask-wearing and social distancing.

Therefore, to enhance COVID-19 IPCM adherence, the study recommends that the school, in partnership with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) and other relevant stakeholders, should intensify educational awareness campaigns on preventive behaviours towards COVID-19 IPCM, utilizing both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational strategies such as targeted educational campaigns using age-appropriate materials like visual aids, stories, and videos, delivered through assemblies, peer education, parent workshops, and community outreach. Simultaneously, environmental barriers must be addressed by ensuring accessible handwashing stations, providing masks, clear signage, and structured classroom layouts. Social pressure should be increased through school-wide pledges, positive reinforcement, public displays of good behavior, and role modeling by staff. Effective implementation requires collaboration with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, NGOs, and local businesses, ensuring adequate resources and support to create a conducive environment for safeguarding pupils' health. it is crucial to address environmental barriers associated with social distancing and mask-wearing by enhancing perceived behavioural control and increasing social pressure.

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