



# EMPOWERING HEALTH CONCEPT AND IDENTIFYING STUDENT'S HEALTH STATUS AT ISLAMIC SCHOOL IN SOUTH THAILAND

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## ABSTRACT

Education and health are two inseparable elements that are encompassed within two key points of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Comprehensive health is essential to ensure the effective implementation of education. Thailand, as a developing country in Southeast Asia, faces health challenges similar to those in Indonesia. The concept of health needs to be instilled from an early age, as it directly impacts overall quality of life. This community service aims to empower students' understanding of the health concept at Sangkhom Islamic Wittaya School. The method involved educating students on holistic health concepts using audio-visual media with Thai subtitles, targeting students at Sangkhom Islamic Wittaya School. The audience of this program was 16 students from 4th grade of Sangkhom Islamic Wittaya School. Their health status was defined by their body mass index (BMI). Half of the students were underweight, one student was overweight, and only 43% of them had a normal BMI. By implementing this activity, the understanding and insight into health concepts can be substantially enhanced. The students only know about physical health before. However, after the event, students became more aware of holistic health based on their activeness and interaction with the speakers.

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## Introduction

The overall health status of Thailand highlights significant challenges related to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), which have become the leading cause of death in the country (Tangcharoensathien, 2024). Songkhla, as one of the largest provinces in southern Thailand, has a dense population and diverse geographical features, ranging from lowlands to mountainous areas, which can affect the distribution and accessibility of healthcare services (United Nation, 2019).

In this context, the urgency of educating the population on health concepts, particularly starting from a young age, becomes evident. With a population of over 1.4 million and various health challenges, including the risks posed by NCDs and <sup>1</sup>diverse geographical conditions, proactive efforts in health education are crucial. Such education can help prevent the rise in NCD prevalence in the future, improve the quality of life for the people of

Songkhla, and ultimately contribute positively to the overall health status of Thailand.

Health level status can be improved in various ways, including education at the school level (Rizvi, 2022). Education about the concept of health is essential because to start a healthy lifestyle, a person must know the meaning of health itself (Rincón Uribe et al., 2021). In practice, education about health is one of the public health endeavors that focuses on disease prevention (Gitirana et al., 2021). Education in improving health levels is at the base of the health impact pyramid, which indicates that the scope of education is quite fundamental, yet comprehensive, and has a higher impact on a large population. Improvements at the base of the pyramid generally improve health for more people, at a lower cost per unit, compared to improvements at the top level (Alberti & Pierce, 2023). Moreover, education about the concept of health to an early age can support SDGs in point three, namely a healthy and

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prosperous life, and point 4, quality education. Quality education can be achieved more optimally if the health status of students is good (Raghupathi & Raghupathi, 2020).

Based on this background, education about the concept of health is needed. The target of education about the concept of health in this service is one of the schools in Songkhla, namely Sangkhim Islamic Wittaya School. By holding the International Community Service in one of our Islamic schools, we can hold work programs that are easy to understand for students there, one of which is education about health concept.

### Method

The implementation of community service was held on 28th September 2024. It begins with the introduction of the speaker by the homeroom teacher. It involved 16 4th-grade elementary school students at Sangkhom Islamic Wittaya School. Students' health status is known by their BMI,

which is collected retrospectively from teachers' data. Students are given education in the form of audio-visuals in English-Thailand regarding the concept of overall health. Students are then given an intermezzo at the beginning of the implementation so that students are interested in paying attention. Education about the concept of health as a whole, including physical, mental, social, and spiritual health was given. The event ends with interaction between the speaker and students. Data was analyzed descriptively using Microsoft Excel. The effectiveness of the program was assessed by observing student activity in class during the implementation.

### Results and Discussion

#### Result

The results of the International Community Service activities align with the objectives and methods set out in the program. Students' health status is known by their BMI depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' BMI Status

Students	Weight	Height	IMT	BMI Status
1	34	145	16,17	Underweight
2	25	130	14,79	Underweight
3	43	145	20,45	Normal
4	47	141	23,64	Normal
5	40	140	20,41	Normal
6	37	140	18,88	Normal
7	30	134	16,71	Underweight
8	34	144	16,40	Underweight
9	26	140	13,27	Underweight
10	23	130	13,61	Underweight
11	50	145	23,78	Normal
12	48	146	22,52	Normal
13	47	147	21,75	Normal
14	54	143	26,41	Overweight
15	26	130	15,38	Underweight
16	22	122	14,78	Underweight

Through interactive health education sessions at Sangkhom Islamic Wittaya School, the following

key outcomes were observed as students demonstrated a notable improvement in their

knowledge of holistic health, encompassing physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects. It depicted an increased understanding of health concepts. All 16 students were active participants when speakers used group discussions and creative activities led to heightened enthusiasm and involvement among students. All students also showed greater initiative in adopting healthier habits and contributing to a healthier school environment.



**Fig 2.** The Implementation of Community Services

### Discussion

The findings from this program align with previous research emphasizing the importance of health education in shaping lifelong well-being (Devwaikhom et al., 2022; Pulimeno et al., 2020). Similar community-based interventions have demonstrated that early exposure to health concepts significantly contributes to students' learning outcomes (Khamwichai et al., 2021). This supports the fundamental role of educational programs in enhancing public health awareness and behavior modification (Suarjana, 2024).

Calculation of students' Body Mass Index (BMI) could be the first step for acknowledging their health status. BMI is a widely used measure to assess the health status of children and adolescents. It provides an estimate of body fat based on weight and height, making it a simple yet effective tool for identifying potential health risks. Given that childhood obesity and undernutrition are global

concerns, BMI serves as an essential screening parameter to monitor growth and development. However, while BMI is useful in identifying weight-related health risks, it does not directly measure body composition, leading to potential limitations in its interpretation (Khanna et al., 2022).

The importance of BMI in childhood health assessment is underscored by its strong correlation with various health conditions. Children with a BMI above the normal range are at higher risk for metabolic disorders such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and hypertension (Park et al., 2024). Conversely, children with a low BMI may face challenges related to malnutrition, weakened immunity, and stunted growth (Li et al., 2023). These health implications highlight the need for regular BMI monitoring as part of pediatric health check-ups to enable early intervention and appropriate nutritional and lifestyle guidance.

A crucial aspect of this program was the integration of interactive learning strategies, such as group discussions and creative activities, which encouraged student participation. Research suggests that interactive and participatory learning methods are more effective in knowledge retention and behavioral change compared to passive learning approaches (Kooloos et al., 2020). Moreover, the use of audio-visual materials with Thai subtitles helped bridge language barriers and ensured that students could grasp the concepts more effectively. The integration of audio-visual media enhanced student engagement and comprehension. Additionally, the collaboration with local teachers ensured effective communication and cultural adaptation. The incorporation of interactive and creative learning approaches led to sustained student interest and participation. The program successfully raised awareness about the holistic concept of health, including physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects.

Furthermore, this initiative aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). Providing early health education not only improves immediate health knowledge but also contributes to better long-term health outcomes and academic performance, as healthier students tend to perform better academically (WHO, 2023).

Despite the program's success, several challenges were encountered, including language barriers that, despite translation support, sometimes hindered precise communication. Employing bilingual facilitators in future programs could improve comprehension. Additionally, the limited duration of the intervention constrained the ability to measure long-term behavioral changes, emphasizing the need for follow-up assessments. Resource constraints, such as the availability of printed materials and trained personnel, also impacted the overall reach of the program. Collaborating with local health professionals and securing additional resources would further enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of similar initiatives.

### Conclusion

The International Community Service program at Sangkhom Islamic Wittaya School successfully achieved its objectives by enhancing students' understanding of holistic health through interactive learning strategies. BMI assessment provided valuable insights into students' health status, highlighting the prevalence of underweight cases alongside normal and overweight conditions. The participatory approach, including group discussions and creative activities, fostered student engagement and encouraged healthier habits. Despite challenges such as language barriers and resource limitations, the program effectively contributed to health awareness and aligned with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). Future improvements, including bilingual facilitators and follow-up assessments, could enhance the program's long-term impact.

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the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

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