Traditional Beliefs and Western Medicine

PERSPECTIVES OF PNG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ON ILLNESS

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Aim

Explore how pre-service teachers explain illness, anticipate family help-seeking and understand a teacher's role in supporting sick children.

Method

A mixed-methods survey of **65 pre-service teachers at two PNG colleges**, using five illness scenarios and closed and open-ended questions.

Illness explanations

Biomedical, customary and church-based explanations coexisted. Naturalistic explanations were more common for fever (**69%**) than behavioural withdrawal (**6%**).

Help-seeking

Health facilities were the most common first response in three scenarios. Behavioural withdrawal more often prompted family-first care, with churches prominent in the wider care pathway.

Educational implication

Teacher education should engage respectfully with students' cultural and religious knowledge while strengthening scientific literacy and children's safety.

Limitations

The small, non-random sample limits generalisation, and findings from open-ended responses remain **provisional pending final human coding**.

Take-home message: Illness explanations and expected care varied with the problem—not a fixed preference for one knowledge system.