

The Co-Development of a School-Based Nutrition Intervention to Prevent Childhood Obesity in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

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Background: Childhood obesity is a topical issue in Gulf Countries (GC), but there are no known community intervention evaluations. This study aims to develop a culturally-appropriate, nutrition-focused, school-based intervention for obesity prevention in adolescent females.

Method: A mixed-method approach included a systematic review of childhood overweight/obesity prevalence, dietary assessment of pupils (n=190), school readiness for interventions (n=6), and concept mapping (CM) with stakeholders (n=30) to obtain the perspectives of pupils, teachers, policy makers and parents on priorities and feasible school-based interventions.

Among adults, CM prompts: 'Factors influencing childhood obesity are...' and 'A school based programme should consider...' to generate responses that were then sorted by conceptual similarity; and rated for importance and feasibility to change. Photovoice-enhanced CM was used among children.

Result: Childhood/adolescent obesity increased, while overweight decreased in the 2000s in GC. Survey responses indicated 28% skipped breakfast and 62% did not meet fruit and vegetable intake recommendations. CM clusters revealed concordant perspectives across stakeholders, which signalled the importance of family and school environments, and the Ministry of Education (MoE) in driving change. Several changes were perceived as important and feasible, including improving access to healthy foods in the canteen, promoting regular meals and less eating away from home.

Conclusion: Childhood obesity is increasing in GC. The correspondent perspectives across stakeholders signal the feasibility of a partnership between schools and the MoE to deliver a school-based intervention to improve adolescent nutrition. Collaborative development of the intervention content and mode of delivery is in progress.

Biography:

Manal Almughamisi graduated from King Abdul-Aziz University in BSc in Nutrition and Food science. He successfully completed the MSc degree in clinical and public health nutrition at UCL in London. He worked at King Fahd hospital, Saudi Arabia. There; he had obtained a certificate for Diet Technician for 2 years. He had been working as an Assistant Lecturer in Taibah University, Saudi Arabia. Currently he is in scholarship to do his master and PhD degrees in the UK. He is interested to read more in his field Nutrition and public health.