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Situation Analysis of Obesity Prevention Among School-Age Children Living in a Rural Community in Thailand

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Purpose:

Childhood obesity is a serious public health concern worldwide and evidence strongly suggests that school and home are disconnected in practice contributing to the sustainability of solutions (Phaitrakoon et al., 2014; Kothandan, 2014; Mead et al., 2017; Micha et al., 2018). Therefore, the researcher has developed a participation program between schools and families to prevent obesity among school-age children by applying the participatory action research (PAR) as outlined by Kemmis and Mc Taggart based on Ecological System Theory (EST). The purpose of first phase was to explore the risk factors related to obesity among school-age children as input for the second phase of obesity model development.

Methods:

The data collection employed three methods of qualitative data collection composed of focus group discussions (n=48), in-depth interviews (n=8) and participant observations with 56 key informants at Anuban Aong Karuk School, Nakhon Nayok Province, Thailand. The stakeholders were composed of students (n=24), parent/guardians (n=12), teachers (n=8), the school administrator (n=1), school lunch cooks (n=5), shop vendors (n=5) and the school nurse (n=1) in order to conduct the investigation and permit a triangulation approach. EST was used as a rough guideline for the questions. Content analysis was applied for data analysis by using the NVivo program (Version 10).

Results:

The analysis resulted in the following main category: 1) risk factors based on the following three sub-categories: 1.1) **Personal Factors** including high-calorie intake in which children spend the majority of their time engaged in sedentary lifestyles 1.2) **Family Environmental Factors** including family perceptions, such as “Chubby children are cute”, parenting practices in overly indulgent styles 1.3) **School Environmental Factors** – According to the findings, schools have no space for exercise, while school lunch cooks and shop vendors hold the view that selling healthy foods would lead to a loss in profits and that making food for children is a business matter.

Conclusion:

Although family environmental factors have the most powerful influence over the development and maintenance of children's eating and exercise habits at home (Syrad et al., 2015; Ochoa & Berge, 2017; Sildén, 2018; Adom et al., 2019), parents have

insufficient time due to hard work contributing to sedentary lifestyles. In the past, Thailand was an under-developed country coping with the problem of numerous malnourished children who were too thin and short. These issues have, therefore, fostered the belief that chubby children are cute, healthy and stronger than thin children in addition to the belief that chubby children are an indicator of improved economic status. Nevertheless, the findings reveal that the PAR process leads to a high sense of participation leading to a sense of ownership of the problem and collaborative help in seeking solutions.

The findings revealed that family environmental factors may be a key contributing factor in the development of sustainable programs for the prevention of school-age obesity, while students serve as a bridge between family and school. Based on the PAR and EST can help school nurses to develop an appropriated context-based program to prevent Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) for population.

Title:

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Keywords:

Obesity, School-age children and Thailand

Abstract Summary:

Childhood obesity is a serious public health concern worldwide and this is the first phase of a participation program between schools and families to prevent obesity among school-age children by applying PAR based on EST with 56 key informants living in a rural community in Thailand.

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