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Assessment of body mass index-for-age status and child eating behaviour among preschool children (2-4 years)**Ijioma Okorie***Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Nigeria*

Statement of problem: Obesity is one of the main nutritional problems that constitutes a challenge in both developed and developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. Thus, nutritional problem(s) do not go well for any economy that seeks to attain industrial and economic development, and therefore, calls for urgent public health action. Eating habits and inclinations to food are acquired in early childhood, representing behaviour traits that may change overtime. The preschool years are critically important period, however, family influence is key to food intake patterns, eating behaviour and childhood obesity. More so, changes in behaviour with advancing age tend to be difficult to be achieved. The purpose of this study was to assessed BMI-for-age and child eating behaviour among preschool children.

Methodology: A simple random sampling by balloting without replacement was used to select 50% of 13 private schools in the study area. A total of 163 pupils (83 male and 80 female) in 7 private schools were recruited for the study. Data were collected using questionnaire, anthropometric measurement was carried on the pupils and their eating behaviour was assessed using child eating behaviour questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse categorical and continuous variables, Chi-square was used for child eating behaviour, WHO-Anthro software was used to analyse the BMI-for-age of the preschoolers.

Results: revealed that 38% of the pupils had normal BMI-for-age, 16% were at risk of being overweight and, 15.3% and 27.6%, respectively, were overweight and obese. The was significant different ($P < 0.05$) between food responsiveness and BMI-for-age of the preschool children.

Conclusion: The rate of overweight/obesity seen in this study was high, however, this could be due to their response to food and/or obesigenic environment exposed to, thus, child eating behaviour play a role in weight gain and loss, and invariably may lead to overweight/obesity and wasting respectively.

Biography

Ijioma Okorie is a seasoned Applied and Experimental Human Nutritionist, also a lecturer/researcher at the Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. In his nearly 12 years of work experience in nutrition related researches, support and care, and teaching, he has been involved in various researches on; maternal infant and child nutrition, nutrient compositions of some food crops in management of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), dietary diversification with respect to food security and nutrition, childhood obesity and eating behaviours. He is also experienced in formulation & development of therapeutic diet, experimental nutrition using animal to determine the potentials of food crops and formulated diets; with IBM/SPSS statistical tools used in analyzing nutrition study outcomes, and some of the nutrition software such as; WHO-Anthro Software for child growth standard, ENA software, etc., he also has the knowledge of individual dietary diversity score method of calculating dietary diversity.

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