

Introduction

Obesity is defined as a condition in which excess body fat that has accumulated to the extent that it may have an adverse effect on health, leading to reduced life expectancy or increased health problems. Overweight on the other hand is defined as a child with a BMI at or above the 85th percentile and lower than the 95th percentile for children of the same sex and age, the child's standard deviation is >2 (WHO, 2010). In Uganda, the prevalence rate of overweight children is 10.4% for girls and 3.2% boys with 0.9% girls and 0.5% boys obese (Peltzer et al 2011).

Broad objective: In this study the researcher assessed factors influencing the occurrence of overweight and obesity among primary school going children in Kampala with focus on Greenhill Academy.

Methods: This study adopted and used descriptive study cross-sectional design that employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Self administered questionnaires were used to interview a total of 226 parents of primary school going children to collect the quantitative data. The researcher also conducted ten key informant interviews to collect quantitative data from the teachers, head teacher and sports teacher. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS and presented in form of tables.

The results

Out of the 226 pupils that were included in the study, 15.9% (36/226) of the pupils were underweight, 68.1% (154/226) were normal, 11.5% (26/226) were found to be overweight while 4.4% (10/226) were obese. At Bi-variate analysis parental history of disease significantly influenced the occurrence of overweight and obesity among the pupils (P-value=0.026). The following behavioral factors had a significant influence on the occurrence of overweight and obesity among the pupils: amount of physical activity (P-value < 0.000), amount of food eaten (P-value = 0.003), types of food eaten (P-value = 0.001), sedentary behavior (P-value = 0.046) and among the socio-economic factors, the number of siblings a pupil had (P-value = 0.001) significantly influenced overweight and obesity of a child. These were further supported by responses from the key informer

interviews held with the class teachers, head teacher, head of kitchen staff and sports teacher.

Conclusions and recommendations

The parental history of a non-communicable disease, amount of physical activity, amount of food eaten by the pupil, types of food eaten by the pupil, sedentary behavior and the number of siblings of a pupil had significant influence on the overweight and obese of the primary school children of Greenhill Academy.

I therefore recommend that pupils with parents with history of a non-communicable disease should be closely monitored and encouraged to engage in more supervised physical activity and eat healthy both at home and at school. Every pupil should be encouraged to take up a sport of their interest, parents and teachers should also restrict the kinds of foods their children eat and prevent them from over consuming fried and processed food and increase the intake of fruits and vegetables. The school canteen should replace unhealthy beverages like soda to more healthy beverages like fruit juice, pupils with few (1-3) or less siblings should also be closely monitored so that they do not become overweight or obese, their lifestyles should be monitored, the kinds of food they eat and in what quantity.