

ADVOCACY PAPER

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CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Introduction:

Early childhood is the golden period, and it is the greatest wish of parents that their children spend the best time, and they want to give the better facilities and opportunities to grow. It is seen that childhood is a blend of advantages of being the sensitive class of society, and at the same time, certain risk factors need to be avoided.

The childhood problems are diverse, and they need extra attention and focus on society because the children cannot take care of themselves and cannot make decisions. So, the caretakers, especially the parents, have an important role in children's lives (Organization, 2019).

The problem that has become an important part of today's discussion is childhood obesity. Obesity is known as the mother of diseases, and it acts as a root to create various problems not only for adults but it is seen that the children are getting more affected from the obesity in the recent years and the trend of obesity in early childhood is giving the tough time to the caretakers.

Childhood is the age where maximum growth and development takes place, and it is recommended that most nutritious foods and healthy nutrients be given to them to meet their adequate needs.

Giving the maximum nutrients does not mean giving the maximum calories and enhancing obesity. Obesity has been increased to too many folds in the 21st century, and it is now recommended that the problem be taken seriously and should not be ignored.

The recent statistics on obesity have shown that 19.3 percent of children suffer from obesity. It was 13.4 percent in the children of 2-5 years, 20.3 percent in the age of 6-11 years and 21.2 percent in the young adults up to 19 years (CDC, 2020).

Problem Statement:

The children are more involved in eating junk and non-nutritious food, and indoor sedentary style games have replaced the outdoor games due to which the obesity has been increased, and the number of issues has been increased. The trends of obesity are heading towards the large figures, and it needs to be addressed.

Specific problem or concern:

Childhood obesity has reached 19.3 percent in the United States of America, and young teens are highly affected. The main problem is to address the causes of obesity in childhood and to find the appropriate solutions for the issue. It has been found that childhood obesity has several adverse effects on children's growth.

Who is affected by the issue?

The children and their families are most affected by the issue because obesity is not a condition to be ignored. Obesity needs to be treated at an early age. Children who are obese have to suffer in later life, and they are at risk of different other diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. These issues need to be addressed at all levels.

How are children and families are affected?

The children are the main subjects to be addressed because the term childhood obesity has explained how they get affected and the adverse effects of obesity on them. Not the children get affected only, but the families suffer equally, and it is seen that they have to suffer more than other community. The children have to face the different risks of suffering from different

risk factors, and the families have to suffer a lot as they have to take care of them and avoid them from having various risks (Pinto, 2018).

Why does the issue need to be addressed now?

The issue needs to be addressed because childhood obesity increases the risks for the children to be suffered. The trends of obesity have been increased, and the figure is expecting to get increased in the next decade. It is expected that the ratio of obese children will be double by 2030. It is an alarming situation. to avoid the future risks of childhood obesity and to save the children from the adverse effects, it is necessary for us to address the problem and find the appropriate solution.

What intervention is needed?

Several interventions can help to address the problem of obesity, and it can reduce the risk. Two major interventions are required, and the children and the families must adopt them. First of all, the food patterns and the meals are required to be changed because the nutritious food is lacking and the children are involved in eating the junk food and unhealthy snacks. The trend needs to be changed with healthy foods, and the second intervention is about the sedentary lifestyle.

It is seen that the sedentary lifestyle for the children is creating several issues for the children. They are engaged in watching movies, cartoons and several other gadgets like laptops, mobiles and Ipads. It is common to observe that children at a very young age are involved in using these gadgets.

They have lost interest in playing outdoor games and spend most of the time with indoor games. It is further seen that the children are the ones to get involved in these habits, but the parents have the main role in triggering these habits.

Who is my audience?

I will address the general population of children and the parents, so the whole community is the target. The specific audience is the community of the United States of America, and it is seen that there are a lot of efforts required to deal with their problems. The affected population is highly engaged in a sedentary lifestyle and eating junk food.

They are not encouraged to play outside and have healthy and nutritious foods. It is recommended that the young parents should concentrate on the issue and should try to solve it. They can help in the problem because they are the decision-makers and highly influence children's lives.

Research Summaries:

(Dipti A. Dev, 2013) and the colleagues have published the research findings on the risk factors of childhood obesity. Identifying risk factors is important because if the parents know about the risk factors, they can easily deal with the problem and can address it better. The problem can be better solved by the efforts of both the teachers and the parents because the children do not have a sense of decision making.

A sample of 329 children was taken, and parents' information was also involved in the data. The weight, height and z-score of children were measured, and the measurements were recorded to know the actual problem. The data was taken from the research team of Strong Kids. The results have shown that three risk factors contributed a lot to childhood obesity.

These included the restrictive feeding patterns by the parents, the parents BMI and the other important factor that contributed to childhood obesity was night time sleep. The intervention included less restrictive feeding and the proper night sleep time.

The above data and the research findings have shown that the children should not be engaged in restrictive feedings, but they should be made learned to choose their food choices wisely. It is seen that food choices and night sleep play an important role to reduce childhood obesity.

(JL, 2018) and the colleagues have found that children and adults suffer from obesity, and the trends have been increased. The statistics of WHO and UNICEF have shown that the 85th percentile of children has been continuously increased despite many interventions.

The interventions are important to make, but the implementation is the most important matter of concern. It is seen that childhood obesity and its trends increase diabetes and the high-grade BMI in children, so it should be addressed.

The authors have summarized the findings of the systematic reviews, and it is found that the other authors have pointed out similar factors for obesity. The important aspects that contribute to obesity are diverse.

Nutrition is an important factor that affects childhood obesity, and it is seen that the parents are required to give healthy and nutritious foods to the children instead of the high calories and junk.

Physical activity is one of the contributing factors towards childhood obesity. Physical activity should be introduced among the children and the pre-school toddlers. It is found that the children should be engaged in outdoor games and healthy activities.

The parents should also be involved in the games and the activities for the children. There are other factors like awareness and wise decision making choices of foods that contribute to childhood obesity.

(Jelena Bjelanovic, 2017) has also published the findings of the risk factors of childhood obesity, and at the end of the article, the authors have also suggested the interventions related to childhood obesity. The authors have mainly focused on the primary school children, and it is found that the school going children are a great matter of concern.

The school management and the parents have to introduce the interventions among the children to remain safe and protected from obesity. Obesity in the five years of life usually affects the next ten years of highly nourishing and important development.

The children from the Republic of Serbia have been selected for the research, and there was a total of 1664 children selected for the study. After the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 120 families were selected, and the study was conducted on them. The anthropometric measurements and the questionnaires were the tools for the research, and the results obtained were used to analyze the situation.

The results have found that the risk factors that contribute to childhood obesity are similar, and almost all the research articles in the literature have indicated similar results. The research results have shown that the calorie surplus diet is one of the contributing factors towards childhood obesity.

The family diet is one of the other highly important factors because if the family is involved in irregular meal patterns and junk foods, it contributes to childhood obesity. Moreover, obesity is highly associated with children's indoor and outdoor games and physical activity. Almost 11 percent of boys and 10 percent of girls suffer from obesity.

Obesity can be treated by introducing several interventions. First of all, the children of Serbia should be created awareness from a young age. The family is repeatedly focused because

the children learn from their families, especially the parents. If the parents do not focus on the meal patterns of children, it will create the problem later on.

Physical activity is given extra importance, and it is seen that the sedentary lifestyle is usually not given importance. The parents promote the sedentary lifestyle and do not allow the children to play outside. All these factors need to be considered and addressed.

The literature is full of such studies, and it is determined that the risk factors and the interventions to treat obesity are similar. The above research studies have given the idea that children are an important part of our society and their health should not be ignored.

Healthy diets should be introduced instead of junk and unhealthy diets. The teachers and schools should introduce physical activity and outdoor games for the children. Wise meal planning should be introduced, and children should be guided for their games and the meals patterns (Weihrauch-Blüher, 2018).

Small Advocacy Plan:

The advocacy plan is to target the families, including the parents and children, to address childhood obesity. I have different suggestions, and action plans to guide the families affected by obesity. The suggestions are not only for the write-up, but it is expected that they will help the families, and the guidelines will be implemented.

The small advocacy plan requires little effort and contributions, but they matter greatly. Childhood obesity is the leading risk factor for children's health, and it is recommended that efforts should be made at all levels to eliminate it.

The first step that I will do is create awareness among the families and the teachers. I plan to look at my close families and the friends who are suffering from the problem and

guiding them. Young parents have guided throughout the parenting era that their children are most important and need to care about them. They should guide the children on what to eat and what to avoid during the early developmental years to avoid the issues in the future.

I plan to start a campaign on social media for awareness among the parents and the children. Social media is one of the most influential platforms that help parents get awareness. I will publish a Facebook page through which the parents will be targeted, and they will be given awareness about the development of children.

I will try to publish different blogs and articles that will focus on parenting and children development. The peer group will be asked to share the page and the posts with others to also get awareness.

I will focus on two things in my social media campaign: healthy food choices and a sedentary lifestyle. The children are the loved creatures, and the parents want to give their best to them. There are situations in love and care when they make wrong choices.

It is more common for young parents when they allow the children to have unhealthy snacks or give them money to choose the meals themselves. I will try to include different healthy snacks in the blogs to make easy decisions.

The second point of focus is the sedentary lifestyle that is quite common among children. It is seen that the parents do not focus on the outdoor games, and the children are engaged in playing video games and other television gadgets. They do not get a chance to go outside and enjoy nature.

The trend has increased the obesity trends, and the children are getting overweight. I have a plan that I will publish the videos, blogs and the different posts through which the

parents will be guided, and they will be informed of different ways to eliminate the sedentary lifestyle.

Large Advocacy Plan:

The long term or large advocacy plan will include the parents and other target audience to accomplish the desired goals and objectives. At the small level, I will try to reach out to the maximum audience, but it is a fact that I cannot help the whole community alone. Still, there is a need for other people and a targeted audience that can help me out in achieving the desired targets. Moreover, these objectives have been set for their help and betterment, so it is good for them to assist in the advocacy plan at the large level.

Role of parents:

The parents are focused throughout the plan because their decisions greatly influence the development of children. The parents must keep a check on the children what they eat and the eating patterns in the home and the schools.

The parents must engage them in healthy snacks instead of giving them junk food in the name of love. Unhealthy foodstuff should not be introduced in the home; instead, proper meal planning should be done. Educated parents can easily contribute to the plan.

The parents should consult the dieticians and nutritionists for the proper meal planning of children. There are six food groups, and all of them are important for the development of children. The parents should introduce the appropriate serving from each food group, and the focus should be given to fruits and vegetables.

The fruits and vegetables can be introduced in the healthy version. For example, the fruits salad and vegetable chips can be easily introduced to the children. The different utensils

of attractive shapes should be introduced, and children should be guided to choose wisely about the meal patterns and should play the outdoor games.

Role of teachers:

The teachers and schools have an important role in the dietary management of children. It is seen that the children are always burdened with academic books. In the earlier age, academia was easy, and the students were involved in several healthy activities.

The trends have been changed, and they are now given a lot of stuff to study instead of giving them the chance to play. It is recommended that the targeted audience engage the children in physical activities, and they should be encouraged to play outside to reduce the effects of obesity.

Conclusion:

The literature is full of such studies, and it is determined that the risk factors and the interventions to treat obesity are similar. The above research studies have given the idea that children are an important part of our society, They are the future, and their health should not be ignored. Healthy diets should be introduced instead of junk and unhealthy diets. The teachers and schools should introduce physical activity and outdoor games for the children. Wise meal planning should be introduced, and children should be guided for their games and the meals patterns. The parents should consult the dieticians and nutritionists for the proper meal planning of children.

There are six food groups, and all of them are important for the development of children. The parents should introduce the appropriate serving from each food group, and the focus should be given to fruits and vegetables. The results have found that the risk factors that contribute to childhood obesity are similar, and almost all the research articles in the literature

have indicated similar results. The research results have shown that the calorie surplus diet is one of the contributing factors towards childhood obesity. The family diet is one of the other highly important factors because if the family is involved in irregular meal patterns and junk foods, it contributes to childhood obesity.

Moreover, obesity is highly associated with children's indoor and outdoor games and physical activity. The family is repeatedly focused because the children learn from their families, especially the parents. If the parents do not focus on the meal patterns of children, it will create a problem later on.

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