# Parent and Child Perceptions of School-based Obesity Prevention in England: A Qualitative Study

The article “Parent and Child Perceptions of School-based Obesity Prevention in England: A Qualitative Study” by Clarke et al. (2015) has managed to look into ways in which one of the pressing social issues in society, obesity, can be prevented. The study focused on finding out the perceptions parents and children had on the program “WAVE” offered in schools to prevent obesity. The authors chose a catchy topic, and this attracts the reader to explore the research. Furthermore, obesity is a social issue that is affecting most people especially the youth, and this fact alone makes the article attractive to its target audience. The abstract provided in this article is very precise and written with prowess. It is also able to explain the topic of the study clearly and has provided a summary of the main features in the study. The abstract has been segmented into sub topics namely, the background of the study, methods, results, conclusions as well as laying down the keywords that the authors have used in the study, which gives the reader an insight of the whole article.

Schools hold the highest population of persons, the youth, who are affected by obesity because of poor eating habits (Pallan, Parry, Cheng and Adab, 2013). For this reason, schools have been targeted by many researchers as their primary locations for their intervention studies. This qualitative research study has managed to explore the experiences the parents and students had on the WAVES program as a prevention intervention in schools. The article has made it possible for the key stakeholders to acquire more information on WAVE, by providing the context that helps in supporting the interpretation of the trial results of this program. The study is made simpler by the authors by identifying the overarching themes which included responsibilities, sustainability, and impact. To make the article and the topic of study less ambiguous, the authors subdivided the themes further into sub-themes like the “role of schools” which emerged from the topic guide.

To explain the topic of study for the target audience, the authors incorporated some literature from other studies that would help lay a solid basis for the study. The author used some literature from World Health Organization among other reviews which provide in-depth information on the study topic. From the article, it is clear that a systematic review of the study can indicate how the prevention programs, eating behaviors and physical activity can be effective in preventing obesity. However, the literature is limited and inadequate in providing information on the WAVE program, and the reader has to look further into the article to be able to get a full analysis of this program. The heterogeneity and complexity of the program require more literature to be able to disentangle the potential interactions and the effectiveness of the components that underlie the WAVE program. This is the reason why this qualitative research study scores its points by generating data that provides more information on the concerns, opinions, attitudes, motivations, and perceptions people have on the WAVE program. Due to the inadequacy of the literature review, the readers rely mostly on the article to contextualize and understand the active ingredients of the program, and interventions, and the mechanisms actions it uses.

The article focuses on the concerns, opinions, attitudes, motivations, and perceptions of the parents and children in 10 schools out of the 15 schools invited to the study. The sample included 30 parents and 62 children who were between the ages brackets of 6-7 years. The schools invited to the study were from the West Midlands, United Kingdom. The authors were right to choose this sample because schools play a big role in obesity prevention. According to one of the parents interviewed they said,

“I think schools have to do it [health promotion], it is important because as a society we are not doing particularly well at eating healthily, sadly, so yeah it is good if it can be taught, and they can take something on board while they’re at school (Clarke et al., 2015)”

However, there was a limitation on the selection of the sample group for the study. The outcome of the study might have been compromised because the researchers had previously met the participating schools and this brought about the bias of social desirability which also affected the data interpretation. The sample also was biased because out of the sample size, only five were male. The views of the fathers were under-represented in this study. Despite the limitations, the researchers were still able to come up with tentative conclusions from the diverse number of schools selected from the study on the opinions of the children and parents on the school based programs on obesity prevention.

The results of the study identified three themes: responsibilities, sustainability, and impact. In addition to the themes, sub-themes were determined which it made easy for the researchers to explore the topic under study. This being a descriptive- interpretive analysis, data was collected by moderators who had the experience of working with the children (Moravcsik, 2014). The group discussions were recorded and later transcribed by two researchers. Themes from the transcribed recordings were identified, and codes were applied to the data. The codes were later discussed and compared, and a thematic framework was agreed upon and applied to the transcripts separately. This shows that data for the study was well managed and the analytical strategy used was compatible with the nature of the data collected for the study (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). The analysis of the data by the researchers was effective in that it was able to produce appropriate themes. This study was well planned, and the procedure used in the analysis of the data was unbiased because it was done independently by two researchers.

The conclusions made by the researchers after the study interpreted the topic of study, as the researchers were able to remain within the context of the study. The article can address the issue under study. The study was a success because it helped the reader to better understand the aspects of the WAVE program and its potential to initiate a change in eating behavior in families. The study also can outline the possible pathways that when included in the lifestyles of families will be able to bring upon change. Some of the pathways identified included: empowering the parents and children with skills and knowledge to increase their capability, provision of healthier eating lifestyles, and coming up with strategies that will sustain the behavior changes. The role of the schools in supporting opportunities for healthier lifestyles was given important consideration in this study.

In summary, the report findings appear trustworthy, and the findings can be useful in the nursing discipline. The report was well written, well organized, and critically analyzed using the descriptive methods along with the interpretation of the findings which is vivid and rich.

References

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