

School-based nutrition programmes in the uk

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Introduction

This work presents a proposal for suggested research looking at the evaluation and comparison of school-based nutrition programmes in the UK, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Malaysia. The proposal presents the research question, the aims and objectives, a short background literature review, a suggested methodology and a discussion of the expected outcomes and timetable for the proposed research.

Research question

What are the health problems facing schoolchildren in the UK, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Malaysia and what impact can school-based nutrition programmes have on these health problems?

Research aims and objectives

The main aims and objectives of the suggested research are to:

- determine what the health problems are that face schoolchildren in the UK, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Singapore
- understand what school-based nutrition programmes have been implemented to overcome these health problems
- explore the effectiveness of school-based nutrition programmes in addressing the identified health problems

Literature review

As suggested by Abou-Zeid et al. (2006), many children living in certain areas of Saudi Arabia are malnourished and suffer from conditions such as anaemia, which affects their academic performance at school. Research conducted by Al-Mekhlafi et al. (2008) notes that, in certain areas of Malaysia, there are high levels of protein-energy malnutrition in schoolchildren, with this being a public health concern as this type of malnutrition is related to impaired cognitive functioning and lowered educational performance. In other, more affluent, areas of Saudi Arabia, there are high levels of incidence of overweight and obesity in school-aged children, with this negatively impacting their overall health (Al-Almale, 2005). Research shows that there are, similarly, high levels of overweight and obesity in the UK, with certain ethnic groups, such as Black African children, having higher levels of obesity, and these higher levels of obesity being linked to lower socioeconomic status (Karlsen et al., 2013). As Toh et al. (2002) suggest, there are also high levels of obesity in Singapore, amongst certain socioeconomic groups, with this obesity negatively affecting children's health.

As Bundy et al. (2006) note, school-based nutrition programmes are useful in terms of improving the health of schoolchildren affected by poor nutritional intake, with these programmes being ubiquitous in many different countries, both low and high income countries. The main aims of such programmes are to improve the nutritional intake of schoolchildren in order to improve their overall health and cognitive functioning to be able to improve their overall academic performance (Bundy et al., 2006). Such programs have been successful in encouraging a greater intake of fruit and vegetables in fast

food-addicted children and, as a result, in decreasing the incidence of overweight and obesity (Howerton et al., 2007). As Oldroyd et al. (2008) suggest, the effectiveness of nutritional interventions differs according to socioeconomic status with children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds being more likely to drop out of such programmes and being less likely, therefore, to see the benefits of such programmes.

Suggested methodology

It is suggested that a quantitative survey is developed that would be administered to various public health officials in the UK, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Singapore. This survey would be administered with a view to collecting data, which would allow the main aims and objectives of the suggested research to be explored.

Expected outcomes

The main expected outcomes would be the development of the thesis, via the exploration of the research question and the aims and objectives of the research. It is expected that several research articles would also be developed and that conference talks would be given.

Suggested timetable

The research would take place over a period of three years; the first six months would be used to prepare the literature review, with the next year being used to collect the survey data. The following six months would be

used for data analysis and the remaining six month period would be used to write up the findings and to complete the written thesis.

References

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