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A systematic review of school factors associated with long-term obesity outcomes in youth

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Childhood obesity is a growing public health concern because overweight/obese youth are more likely to become severely obese in adulthood, especially racial/ethnic minorities and higher BMI is associated with increased risks for cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and many forms of cancer in adulthood. How school factors play a role in obesity development has not been well-documented. The objective of this study was to conduct a systematic review examining the current evidence on the longitudinal associations between cultural and contextual school factors and children's obesity outcomes in school setting. The search was performed on PubMed, EMBASE, CINHAI and PsycINFO and the following key terms were applied: 1) Overweight or obesity or obese, 2) School factors, 3) Longitudinal. All articles written in English and published from 1991 to present and studies with school-aged children to adulthood were included. Titles, abstracts and reference lists were manually reviewed to identify and verify relevant articles. Several articles were identified and used for the final systematic review process. Parent education, school environment such as school lunch and minutes of recess, type of school, mean socio-economic status, locality (urban, suburban, or rural) and parental involvement and an indicator of school quality were reported as significant school-level factors associated with obesity status/trajectory in youth. In conclusion, school factors examined in previous studies were mostly demographic characteristics or physical environment. Findings of this review indicate that there has been a limited research examining long-term influence of school culture or contextual factors associated with obesity. A summary table will be presented.

Biography

Janelle Barrera Ikan, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the University of South Florida. She has a background in health communication and behavior change methods, such as nutrition, the dangers of tobacco and the importance of sun safety and physical activity. Her research interests include cancer prevention, behavioral interventions for child and adolescent, health education, cancer health disparities, community based research, program implementation and evaluation and child and health development.

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