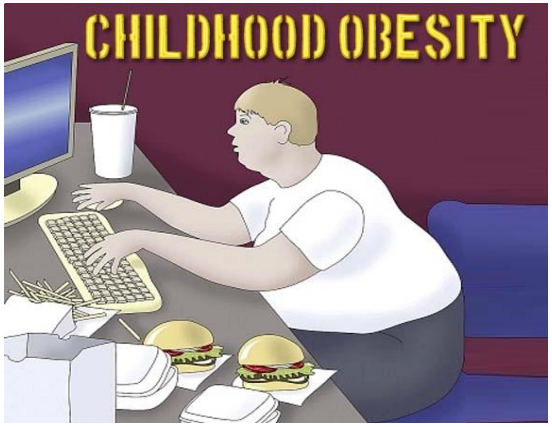




Risk factors of overweight and obesity in childhood and adolescence in South Asian countries: a systematic review of the evidence

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Background

- Obesity invaded heavily among south Asian children and adolescents, particularly of India
- Obesity prevalence increased among children from 9.8% to 11.7% between 2006 to 2009 in India
- This is 'beyond expectation', as under-nutrition has always been the concern, posing a dual burden of malnutrition
- Reflects a 'nutritional transition', also happening in other developing countries
- Obesity in childhood often runs into adulthood and act as a potent risk factor of several chronic diseases

Objective and Rationale

- Individual studies do not provide sufficient evidence on their own to warrant appropriate action
- This review systematically synthesizes the factors of overweight and obesity among children and adolescents in South Asian countries to inform policy, practice and future research

Methods

- Study Design: Systematic Literature Review
- Searched databases included: PubMed, PubMed central, EMBASE, MEDLINE, BioMed central, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and the electronic libraries of the authors' institutions
- Text words and MeSH terms were used such as 'obesity', 'childhood', 'overweight', 'determinants', 'factors', 'risk factors', 'South Asian countries', 'India', 'Pakistan', 'Nepal', 'Bangladesh', 'Sri Lanka', 'Bhutan', 'Maldives' etc.
- Boolean search was done using 'AND', 'OR' and 'NOT' to unite and filter the search terms

Methods (Cont.)

- Study Selection: Firstly based on title and abstract; then against some preset inclusion criteria
- Quality appraisal of the selected studies done by Effective Public Health Practice Project (EPHPP) guidelines

Inclusion criteria
• Qualitative and quantitative primary studies • Conducted in South Asian countries i.e., India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka • Participants were children aged 0–18 years • Published in English language • Reported in peer-reviewed sources • Published 1990–2013 • Overweight and or obesity measured using Body Mass Index (BMI) as the measurement tool

Findings

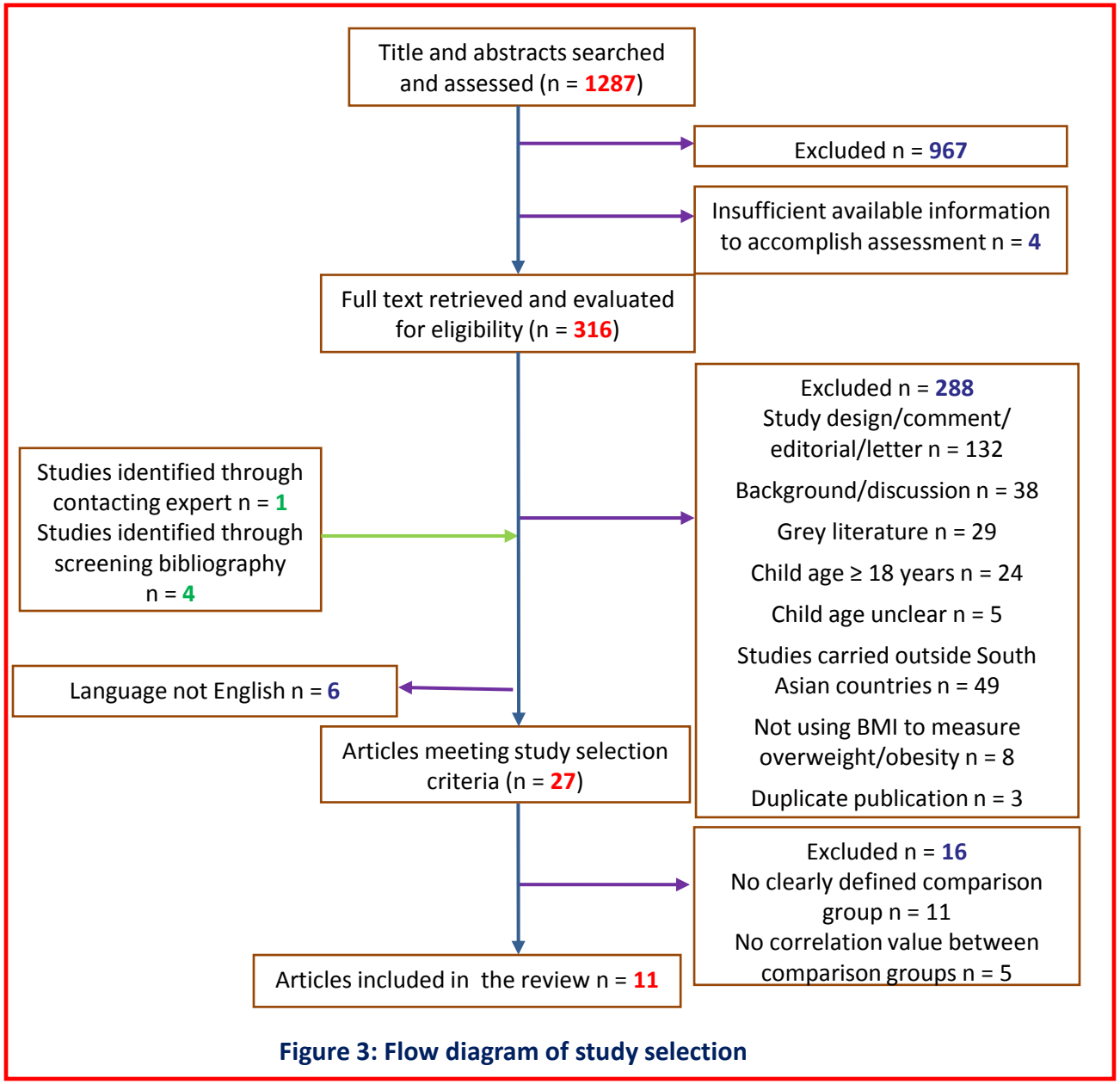


Figure 3: Flow diagram of study selection

Findings..

- Studies were done in India (7), followed by Pakistan (3) and Bangladesh (1); between 2000 and 2013
- Nine uses cross-sectional design, others case-control
- Prevalence of overweight ranged from 3.1% to 19.7% and obesity ranged between 1.2% to 14.5%
- Though not statistically significant obesity prevalence is higher among boys than girls

Findings..

- Lack of physical activities positively associated with overweight and obesity in childhood and adolescence
- Regular exercise for 30 minutes/day as a protective factor against overweight/obesity
- Long hours (2-4h/d) of TV watching/video games is a potent risk factor (OR: 5.4-7.3)
- Frequent consumption of fast food/junk food has a significant positive correlation with risk of overweight and obesity in childhood and adolescence

Findings..

- Participants with at least one overweight parent were nearly three times more likely to become overweight or obese
- Obese children were nearly 50 times more likely to have a family history of obesity
- Four of six studies reported a significant positive association between higher SES and higher overweight/obesity prevalence among chilgren

Conclusion

- There is increasing burden of obesity and overweight among children and adolescents in South Asia
- Unhealthy energy-rich foods and sedentary lifestyle contribute to increasing prevalence of childhood and adolescent overweight and obesity
- Important for planners, policymakers, academics and researchers in public health and health policy at national, regional, and international levels

Recommendations

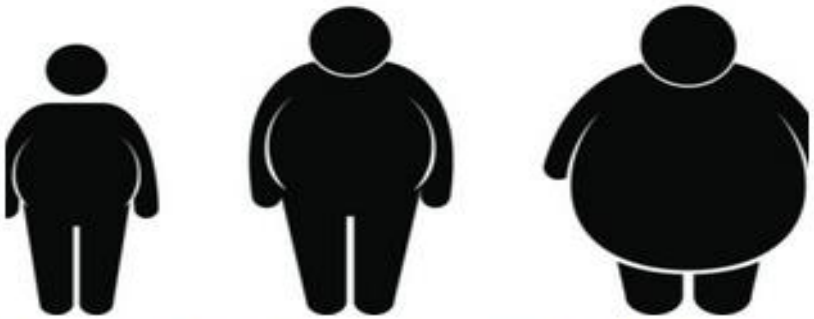
- Need for a cross-sectoral approach involving interventions at various levels such as home, school and the community
- Require nationally representative data to inform concerted action to tackle the issue
- In-depth understanding of the associated cultural, social and environmental factors, including drivers for causative dietary and behavioural factors through qualitative studies
- Focused intervention to tackle the problem

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Obesity in South Asia 'Beyond Expectation'

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Children and young people in South Asia, particularly in India, are increasingly battling with obesity, according to findings by researchers including one of Indian-origin. Shuby Puthussery partnered with Bangladeshi Sabuj Kanti Mistry to pull together existing research and uncover correlations between weight problems and factors such as socioeconomic status, junk food tendencies and even video game usage.

The pair researched more than 300 published papers, and reviewed 11 studies conducted across school settings in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, with striking results. 'Risk factors of overweight and obesity in childhood and adolescence in South Asian countries: a systematic review of the evidence' was jointly published by the University of Bedfordshire and BRAC, an international development organisation based in Bangladesh.

"Increasing trends of obesity and overweight among children in South Asia are beyond expectation as most countries in the region continue to have high numbers of malnourished children," said Mistry. The findings reflect the nutrition transition that is happening in other developing countries as well.

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