

Primary School Children's Nutrition Knowledge, Self-Efficacy, and Behaviour, after a Three-Year Healthy Lifestyle Intervention (HealthKick)

While many studies have used schools as a setting for obesity interventions, relatively few of these have taken place in lower- and middle- income countries. However, obesity rates are growing across the globe. In the Western Cape Province of South Africa, over a fourth of girls have a BMI greater than 25. Additionally, children here score poorly on nutrition knowledge exams. This article intended to “evaluate the effects of HealthKick (HK), a healthy lifestyle intervention, on nutrition knowledge, behaviour, and dietary self-efficacy of school children in the Western Cape Province of South Africa.”

Between 2009 and 2011, researchers provided educators with the Action Planning Process (APP) to implement their own interventions and the resources to carry them out. “Nutrition-related support took the form of: 1) additional training and assistance with the APP; 2) curriculum and South African Food Based Dietary Guidelines (SAFBDG) workshops; and 3) assistance in the form of training and basic resources from the Provincial Department of Agriculture in starting up vegetable gardens.” A questionnaire was used to measure “nutritional knowledge, self-efficacy and behaviour.” Ultimately, students in intervention groups gained a greater understanding of nutrition and were more self-efficacious than before the intervention. However, students did not significantly alter their behaviour. Study design emphasised the sustainability of the programme, contrary to previous South African interventions. Limitations of the study include the inability to include parents in interventions or create a “healthier nutrition environment.” Additionally, future studies should examine the effectiveness of the developed curriculum in each school.

Reference: de Villiers A, Steyn NP, Draper CE, et al. Primary School Children's Nutrition Knowledge, Self-Efficacy, and Behavior, after a Three-Year Healthy Lifestyle Intervention (HealthKick). *Ethn Dis.* 2016;26(2):171 - 180. Published 2016 Apr 21. doi:10.18865/ed.26.2.171