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Short sleep duration and obesity among children: A meta-analysis

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Statement of the Problem: Childhood obesity is a global concern. The objectives of this meta-analytical study were to examine whether there is an association between lesser sleep duration and risk of childhood obesity and to determine which gender is more common in childhood obesity.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: The methods included were searching databases (PubMed, Google Scholar, and the university's EBSCOhost web service) as well as hand searching reference lists of articles published in English. Selection criteria for studies to be included in the meta-analysis were limited to studies that reported body mass index (BMI) as a means of measurement and reported sleep measurement from parental report through questionnaire, cross-sectional and cohort studies.

Findings: Shorter childhood sleep times were significantly associated with obesity. Possible mechanisms include direct metabolic effects as well as indirect behavioral pathways, sleep quality impairment and duration, biological probability and hormonal responses activation.

Conclusion & Significance: Sleep deprivation plays a significant role in the etiology of obesity among children. These findings support the hypothesis that sleep duration is associated with obesity in a large sample and the findings have a significant implication in the creation of a school-based intervention program to reduce childhood obesity.

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