

**Community Support, School Health Programs, And Effective Management On Childhood Obesity**

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ABSTRACT

**Background:** Literature on childhood obesity prevention suggests that school health programs are essential in managing children's health behaviors that are associated with childhood obesity. **Purpose:** This research examines what conditions are necessary for communities for the effective implementation of school health programs, specifically for managing youth behaviors related to childhood obesity. **Methods:** We pool health outcomes on risk behaviors related to childhood obesity in fifty U.S. states from 1991 to 2007, multiple school policy programs designed to induce behavioral changes among American youth, and measures for community support. We use panel data analysis to compare the association between community support and effectiveness of school health programs in managing youth health behaviors across fifty states. **Results:** Our empirical analysis finds that community support plays a conditional role in affecting the effectiveness of various school health programs in preventing childhood obesity. We find school health programs, such as health education programs, nutrition programs, and physical education programs, are more effective in reducing obesity related risk behaviors (e.g. unhealthy dietary behaviors, physical inactivity etc.) in states where community support is high. In states, where community support is low, these school-based interventions do not have significant effects on changing obesity-related risk behaviors. **Conclusions:** Our research suggests that the effectiveness of school-based childhood obesity programs is conditioned by community support for policy implementation. While policy makers and health professionals are advocating various school-based interventions for managing the issue of childhood obesity, it is also important to enhance community conditions for effective policy implementation.

KEY WORDS: School Health Programs, Community Support, Childhood Obesity, Youth Risk Behaviors, Policy Effectiveness