

**PARENTAL DIETARY AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
MODELLING AND CHILDHOOD OBESITY**

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## ABSTRACT

Overweight or obese children grow up to become obese adults if serious measures are not undertaken to reduce their overweight or obesity levels during their childhood. This study was conducted to determine if parental dietary and physical activity modelling can influence the child's weight status focusing on childhood obesity. This study was a cross-sectional study using convenient sampling method. Data was collected from three different primary schools in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 103 primary school children (55 boys and 48 girls) of the age between 6 to 10 years old took part in this study. The raw data was analysed using SPSS. 17.0 for OS (Operating system) Windows. The data were all not normally distributed data, thus frequency, descriptive and non parametric methods were used to analyse the raw data. The study variables showed mixed descriptive differences although not significant when compared with the child's weight status illustrating that there was an observational difference seen when the child's gender ( $p=0.422$ ), parent's weight status ( $p=0.133$ ) and mother's working status ( $p=0.238$ ) were compared to the child's weight status. Analysed parental dietary and physical activity practices and policies show that mothers and fathers reported similarly. The parental dietary modelling scale showed that parents are found to be selective on what they wanted to model, as they would only model certain items which they thought was appropriate to model. However, no significance was found between parental dietary modelling practices ( $p=0.886$ ) and policies ( $p=0.607$ ) with child's BMI. There was no association showed between parental physical activity modelling practices ( $p=0.750$ ) or policies ( $p=0.504$ ) with child's BMI. However, parents were reported to provide more supportive physical activity behaviours compared to modelling them and this may have been because they may not be able to spend a lot of time with their children as majority of the parent's who took part are full time working. As a conclusion, even if none of the study variables were significantly associated in this study, past but recent studies reported that parental dietary and physical activity modelling has reported to have been declining over the years because children could also be influenced by external environmental factors. Thus, parents are needed to be better empowered to be good role models as family environment is shown to play only a partial role when it comes to influencing children's dietary and physical activity behaviours.