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Parents' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices on Childhood Obesity: Insights from a Community Engagement in Putrajaya

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Introduction:

Childhood obesity is a growing global public health concern linked to chronic diseases and psychosocial challenges. Parental awareness is vital, as parents and caregivers shape children's dietary and lifestyle choices.

Aim:

To assess knowledge, attitude, and practices towards childhood obesity among parents who participated in a local community engagement.

Methods:

A cross-sectional survey was conducted during World Obesity and Sleep Day 2026 community event in collaboration with the Endocrine Unit and Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Hospital Putrajaya, on 14 February 2026 in Wetland, Putrajaya. Parents completed a validated Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) questionnaire via Google Forms, and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

Results:

A total of 62 parents participated, predominantly mothers (82.3%) aged 27–56 years. Over half (56.5%) reported a positive family history of overweight or obesity. The mean BMI of mothers was 28.8 kg/m² (SD ± 7.7) and fathers 27.0 kg/m² (SD ± 5.0), both in the overweight range. Knowledge was high, with most identifying lifestyle-related risk factors (>87%) and moderately recognizing genetics, parental influence, and screen time (~61–73%). Awareness of complications was strong, particularly type 2 diabetes (98.4%), sleep disorders (88.7%), and high cholesterol (83.9%), though fewer recognized asthma (64.5%) and early puberty (56.5%). Attitudes were supportive of prevention, emphasizing exercise, healthy lifestyles, limiting screen time and junk food, and seeking medical advice, while rejecting the notion that obese children are healthy. Practices showed positive trends—such as breastfeeding, encouraging physical activity, and including fruits and vegetables—but inconsistencies persisted, including frequent consumption of fried foods (44.4% daily), weekly fast-food consumption (17.5%), snacking (46%), and excessive screen time (20.6%).

Conclusion:

Parents demonstrated strong knowledge and supportive attitudes toward childhood obesity prevention, yet practices were inconsistent. Bridging awareness with sustainable behaviours is essential to strengthen prevention efforts.