

## ABSTRACT

### **Food retail environment and nutrition standards in selected basic schools within La Nkwantanang-Madina municipality of Ghana**

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**Background:** Unhealthy dietary behaviour is known to be a cause of overweight and obesity in children. Obesity, itself a non-communicable disease (NCD), predisposes children to a higher risk of other NCDs. The school food retail environment is recognized as having a great influence on children's/students' eating behaviours. To promote and protect children's health, there is the need for comprehensive and robust approaches including regulating environmental food exposures. In certain jurisdictions especially in the developed countries, nutrition standards and guidelines are used to help regulate the food retail environment in and around schools as a means of contributing to the creation of a healthier food environment. Such interventions are absent in most developing countries, including Ghana

**Objective:** The study assessed the school food retail environment and existence of nutrition standards in selected basic schools within the La Nkwantanang-Madina Municipality of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

**Methods:** The study design adopted was descriptive cross-sectional. It involved 15 basic schools and all food retailers within the selected schools. Multistage sampling method was used to select the schools. In-depth interview was used to collect data from key informants in selected schools. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ghana Health Service, Ethical Review Committee. Permission was obtained from the Municipal Education Office and authorities of selected schools whereas consent was obtained from respondents prior to the study. Factors such as the number and type of food retail outlets within 250m along road network around schools as well as nutrition standards were examined. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 20 and Microsoft Excel 2013. The results were presented in the form of tables and charts.

**Results:** This study mapped 468 food outlets around selected schools (n =15) in the studied district. 40% of outlets were convenience/provision shops, and 53.6% of the outlets sold Sugar Sweetened Beverages, none of the schools had nutrition standards although all the School Heads thought that nutrition standards were necessary.

**Conclusion:** Majority of the foods and beverages sold were sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs) and other sugary foods. Nutrition standards for the regulation of food retailing within the proximity of schools was non-existent in all the schools. Nonetheless, all the schools had a way of regulating food retailing within the school premises. Guidelines for regulating food retailing were not written and application of these guidelines was discretionary. There is a strong expressed need for the formulation of nutrition standards to regulate food retailing within and around schools.