

BODY MASS INDEX DISTRIBUTION AMONG ADOLESCENTS FROM JAFFNA DISTRICT

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Abstract

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage marked by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes. During this period, maintaining a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI) is essential for proper growth and overall health. The study aimed to assess the nutritional status of 362 adolescents aged between 17 and 19 years from Jaffna district. Data were collected through a cross-sectional household survey, with an interviewer-administered questionnaire to gather socio-demographic information. Weight and height of the participants were measured to calculate their BMI. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna. Among the adolescents 46.1% (n= 167) males and 53.9% (n=195) females were have the mean age of 17.95 (± 0.8) and 18.15 (± 0.8) years respectively. The mean BMI of the females was 20.16 kgm⁻², ranging from 13.3 to 35 kgm⁻², while the mean BMI of the males was 20.35 kgm⁻², ranging from 12.5 to 39 kgm⁻². Both averages are within the normal weight range (18.5-24.9) indicating that most adolescents in both genders maintain a healthy body weight. Both genders show a relatively low prevalence of overweight status (males 9.6% and females 8.7%). Of the males 37.7% and females 40.5% were in the underweight category having the BMI below 18.5 kgm⁻², suggesting that a significant number of adolescents are at a risk for malnutrition. In contrast 1.8% and 3.1% of males and females respectively were obese (BMI above 30 kgm⁻²). The study highlights the importance of the interventions addressing the adolescents underweight in Jaffna district. Further studies are important to explore the underlying factors contributing to underweight status of adolescents in Jaffna district.

Keywords: Adolescents, Body Mass Index, Jaffna, Nutritional status, Underweight

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