

Awareness of overweight and obesity among Grade 10 students in the Nallur Education Division

Rathnayaka SMRAL¹, Dias NK¹, Nachinarkiniyan CS², Sivansuthan S³

¹ *Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

² *Department of Community and Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

³ *Teaching Hospital Jaffna*

Background: Changing lifestyle is increasing the risk for overweight and obesity leading to a high incidence of non-communicable diseases among adults. Neither obesity nor non-communicable diseases are born overnight; they are influenced by various factors, starting from the early decades of life. Attending to issues related to obesity in children will undoubtedly have positive effects on preventing obesity among adults. The objective of this study was to assess knowledge and attitude towards overweight and obesity among Grade 10 students in the Nallur Education Division.

Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out among Tamil-speaking Grade 10 students registered for the year 2017 at schools in the Nallur Educational Division. Stratified cluster sampling was used to select the sample. A pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data relevant to knowledge, attitudes and sociodemographic variables.

Results: 800 students participated in the study. Of the total sample, 85.5% scored over 50% on knowledge while only 30.1% had favourable attitudes towards obesity and overweight. Knowledge about childhood obesity was significantly associated with socio-demographic factors whereas attitude was not. Female students had significantly more knowledge than male students.

Conclusion: Although a substantial proportion of students had satisfactory knowledge on overweight and obesity, the proportion who had favorable attitudes towards obesity and overweight was not satisfactory. The present study suggests that knowledge on overweight and obesity may be associated with sociodemographic factors but does not highlight a similar association with attitude.

Keywords: Overweight, obesity, adolescents, Jaffna.