

Influence of lifestyle factors on the prevalence of overweight and obesity among A/L students in the Nallur Educational Division

Rajapaksha SL,¹Kanchana HDR,¹ Surenthirakumaran R,²Sivansuthan 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: The incidence of obesity is rising across the world. In Sri Lanka, about 1.2 million adults and 0.4 million school children are overweight. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of overweight/obesity and associated lifestyle factors among Advanced Level (A/L) students in Nallur Educational Division.

Methodology: A school-based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among A/L students in the Nallur Educational Division. Details relevant to age, sex, food habits, and physical activity were obtained through a self-administered questionnaire. Height and weight were measured using standard anthropometric methods. SPSS was used to analyze the data.

Results: 713 students participated in the study. Of them, 373 (52.2%) were male and 341 (47.8%) were female. The majority of students (89.8%, n=640) were 18 years of age, while 50 (7%) were 17 years of age and 23 (3.2%) were 19 years of age. Twenty nine (4.1%) students were underweight, 612 (85.8%) were normal in weight and 72 (10.1%) students were overweight or obese. Thirty eight (5.3%) students had an insufficient level of physical activity, while 671 students (94.1%) and 4 students (0.6%) had a moderate and vigorous level of physical activity, respectively. A significant proportion of students who were overweight and obese consumed restaurant foods (27%) and/or 321g or >321g of carbohydrate (12%) daily. A large proportion of them consumed short eats on at least 3 days of the week (44.1%) and never consumed green leaves (33.4%).

Conclusion: Prevalence of overweight and obesity among A/L students in Nallur Educational Division is 10.1%. Overweight and obesity is associated with insufficient physical activity, consuming foods from restaurants, high intake of carbohydrate, consuming short eats and avoiding green leaves. The relevant authorities should focus primary and primordial preventive efforts on promoting healthy eating among adolescents.

Key words: Overweight and obesity, lifestyle, physical activity, healthy eating, adolescents