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Breakfast skipping as a risk correlate of overweight, obesity and central obesity among adolescents in the state of Qatar

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Background: Prevalence of overweight and obesity among children and adolescence over the past three decades reached an alarming point in both developed and developing countries. As a result of the economic boom overweight and obesity has become a major health problem in the Arabian Gulf countries particularly in Qatar. Breakfast is considered to be the first and most important meal of the day. Breakfast skipping may be one of the complexes and multi-factorial causes of obesity.

Aims: The aims of this study were (1) to examine the prevalence of breakfast skipping among adolescent in the state of Qatar. (2) Evaluate the hypothesis that breakfast skipping would be associated with increased overweight and obesity and central obesity in the study population.

Method: A cross-sectional study was carried out among 1225 adolescents (625 boys and 600 girls) aged 15 to 18 years were selected by means of a multistage stratified random sampling technique from 14 public and 7 private schools between October 2012 and February 2013. Anthropometric measurements: Weight in (kg), height in (cm), Body Mass Index (kg/m²), waist circumference (cm) and waist to height ratio (WHtR) were measured/computed. Demographic data and Food habits were collected by using structured questionnaire.

Breakfast eating pattern was classified as: Breakfast eaters (students who ate breakfast at least 4 days in a week). Breakfast skippers (students who skipped breakfast at least 4 days in a week).

Results: Breakfast skipping is a common unhealthy habit, out of 1225 participants 766 (62.5%) consumed breakfast less than daily. 52.5% of the participants were breakfast skipper (ate breakfast less than 4 times/week). Weight, Body Mass Index (BMI), waist circumference (WC), was significantly different between participants age in both gender $p < 0.05$. The prevalence of overweight (43.0%) and obesity (39.5%) was lower among breakfast eaters than skippers (56.7% & 60.5%) respectively. In addition central obesity (WHtR ≥ 0.5) was more prevalent among breakfast skippers than eaters (59.3% vs 40.7%) respectively. A dose-response relationship was shown to exist between breakfast consumption and being overweight and obese among all students. This study showed that breakfast skippers were heavier than eater in both genders; body mass index was significantly higher among breakfast skippers.

Conclusion: Regular breakfast consumption is negatively associated with overweight and obesity among adolescents in Qatar, we found that breakfast skipping was prevalent in our study sample, and was associated with overweight, obesity and central obesity in both gender. Awareness programs about the importance of breakfast meal are needed for adolescents.

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