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Parents' occupation status on food habits and physical activity patterns of adolescent girls and boys in Kuwait

Obesity at an early age may constitute a risk factor for unhealthy conditions later on in life. Kuwait is ranked as the eighth fattest country in the world (WHO) with the prevalence of overweight and obesity among adolescent girls at 46.4% and boys at 50.5%. The nutrition status of adolescents has not been given enough attention. The objectives of this study were a) to compare food habits and physical activity of Kuwaiti adolescent boys and girls and b) to investigate socioeconomic factors especially parents' occupation status affecting the lifestyle patterns of teenage adolescents. Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted using a modified International Health Behavior in School Children (HBSC) questionnaire reaching ~800 children in grades 9 and 10 from 12 public schools, both boys and girls, in all six governorates of Kuwait. The questionnaire assessed family and socioeconomic factors, dietary patterns and physical activity status. The questionnaire of the survey had the approval from the Ministry of Education, Kuwait. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 was used for data analysis. Results: The results reflect low consumption of vegetables, fruits, whole wheat bread and dairy in both genders as relative to RDA; between genders, girls had lower intake than the boys ($p < 0.001$). Chocolate and other sweet consumption were high for both genders; girls exceeded boys ($p < 0.001$). Both genders watched TV 4 to 6 hours daily; girls physically more inactive than boys ($p < 0.01$). Both parents' occupational status had positive association with hours of TV and computer use ($p < 0.05$) and not with physical activity ($p > 0.05$). Conclusion and recommendations: In conclusion, teenage adolescents in Kuwait had poor lifestyle habits and parents' occupation did not have any improvement on eating and physical activity patterns of these children. It is recommended for both genders to consume more vegetables, fruits, whole grains and dairy and fewer chocolates and sweets and to add physical activity to lifestyle for optimal body weight and good health. The study was funded by Kuwait University Research Fund, Project # WF01/14.

Biography

Tasleem A. Zafar, Associate Professor, earned her Ph.D. degree in Foods and Nutrition at Purdue University, USA. She obtained a substantial research experience as Research Associate at Purdue, and University of Toronto, Canada. She has a vast experience of more than 30 years of teaching graduate and undergraduate students and guiding research. Her focal research interests concentrate on to explore a breakthrough for the epidemics of obesity and diabetes through functional food ingredients. She has published more than 20 original research articles in peer-reviewed journals and contributed chapters to four scholarly books published by Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Co., New York, USA and by IGI Global, USA. She has given invited talks, oral presentations and chaired several sessions at international conferences. She is an honorary editor of the Pakistan Journal of HomeEconomics (PJHE) and has served as an honorary reviewer for many prestigious journals.

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