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Assessment of body weight, dietary knowledge and lifestyle practices among children and adolescents in schools of North Jordan

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Background & Objectives: Obesity and overweight in children is considered one of the health issues that demands special attention, its prevalence is alarming and threatening in many countries around the world. Obesity in children and teenagers has been linked with technological development accompanied with the increased purchasing power. Family lifestyle modification, the development, luxurious living and the increased hours might have lead to the fact that the children have consumed high energy foods without any physical activity. There is no descriptive information on prevalence of obesity/overweight in children of Jordan. The objective of our study was to estimate the prevalence of overweight and obesity among school children/adolescent in Jordan, to explore the associated risk factors with such crucial phenomena, and to evaluate dietary knowledge among children's mothers.

Design: Cross sectional study

Methods: A total of 514 participants from both genders were recruited (618 years) for this study. The sample was selected randomly from four public schools and 4 private schools in different areas of Irbid city in the north of Jordan. A trained researcher helped all the students from all different age groups to fill out the questionnaire, all questions were explained clearly to the students to guarantee accurate answers. Anthropometric measurements were taken for each student to assess weight, height, body mass index and waist circumference. A simple quiz was distributed to all children to be given to their mothers/ guardian to assess dietary knowledge. The level of significance was set at $p \leq 0.05$.

Result: 30% of our sample populations were categorized as overweight and obese whereas 59% of the participants had normal weight, and about 11% were underweight. Obesity seems to be a common problem among children and adolescents in Jordanian schools. The quiz questions showed that, most parents know the minimum requirements of water for their children, which is good. But, fortunately two third (79.6%) of those parents didn't know the best oils to be consumed. Among 514 participants, only 39.1% of the parents know nutrients and food items that could contribute to obesity. Nearly 56.8% of them realize that salad is a healthy food choice.

Conclusion: The study revealed that obesity is a growing health problem in children and adolescent in Jordan which requires an urgent and appropriate intervention. This study demonstrated that alarming rates of obesity and of its associated comorbidities among Jordanian schools are confirmed. Our study documented a relatively high prevalence Rate of overweight/obesity in 9–17 years children in Irbid schools. This finding is considered a serious concern of public health in Jordan and calls for the creation of new preventions programs at the individual, family and community level.

Biography

Hadil Subih is currently an Assistant Professor in Clinical Nutrition in Jordan University of Science and Technology. She has completed her PhD in 2014 from Texas Tech University- Texas. She has her research in obesity, weight loss, diabetes, sleeping patterns and weight gain, eating habits and practices among school children and adolescents.

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