

Obesity and Factors that Contribute to Obesity among Pre- Adolescents Attending Day Private Primary Schools in Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

Obesity is a diet-related condition and it refers to an abnormally high proportion of body fat. Various studies carried out in the United States reveal that obesity stems right from childhood. Childhood obesity is the most prevalent and common nutritional condition among the urban population and it is becoming an area of public concern. Cited literature suggests that feeding habits, especially during infancy and childhood predisposes the child to obesity in adulthood. This was a descriptive study aimed at investigating obesity and factors that contribute to obesity among Pre-adolescents. The respondents were randomly selected from two day private primary schools in Nairobi. Systematic random sampling was used to select pupils from each school making a sample of 120 pupils. School head-teachers were also included in the sample. Data were collected by use of questionnaires, an interview schedule and an observation checklist. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Qualitative data were analyzed by coding raw data into common themes to form patterns. Quantitative data were analyzed by computer through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Linear regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis. Results were reported using frequencies and percentages. The study showed that there was a significant relationship between eating habits of the pre-adolescents and obesity. Eating food three times a day and eating any time were positively correlated with obesity. In the schools studied, 40% of the respondents ate food three times in a day while (50%) consumed food at any time of the day. The reasons given for these trends of food consumption were: availability of money, peer pressure, boredom and influence by media. Skipping meals had a very significant relationship with obesity. The t-statistic of -2.88 was significant at 5% significant level. This implied that an obese person could reduce their BMI by 2.0 points by skipping meals. On the other hand, eating between meals was positively correlated with obesity and the result was significant at 10% significant level. Data collected indicated that 55.8% of the respondents ate between meals. A third of the respondents were found to have a BMI of over 26, which indicates evidence of overweight.

Keywords: Obesity, Eating habits, Overweight, Body Mass Index (BMI), Activity Patterns

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