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PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY AMONG THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN (9-14 YEARS) IN DHAKA CITY IN RELATION TO THEIR DIETARY HABITS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

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Statement of the Problem: The rising trend of overweight and obesity has become one of the most prevalent nutritional problems in Bangladesh. The context of overweight and obesity has been underexplored, more so amongst younger age groups. The objective of this study was to find out the prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity in primary school children in Dhaka and determine its association with their dietary habits and physical activities.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A cross-sectional exploratory study was conducted, involving 150 children aged 9-14 years by following simple random sampling technique drawn from purposively selected four primary schools (2 public, 2 private). Data were collected from children through face-to-face interviews using a pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire, ensuring approval from guardian and school authority. Overweight and obesity were defined based on the International Obesity Task Force BMI cut off-points. Data were analysed using SPSS, BMI (CDC) calculator, and Chi square (χ^2) test was done to determine the association.

Findings: It is found that the magnitude of overweight 32.0% (95% CI: 23.5-39.3) and obesity 20.7% (95% CI: 15.2-39.3) is very alarming. The rate was higher for children attending private schools; it is more prevalent among boys (38.8% and 32.7%) in private schools and among girls (35.7% and 17.9%) in public schools. Food preference to junk foods was significantly correlated with ($p=0.01$) overweight/obesity. Sex, age, watching television, playing video games was not associated but duration of playing in school is positively associated ($P=0.02$) with overweight and obesity. Parents' education was influential in development of overweight/obesity with the highest rate found among children who belong to parents with low level of education.

Conclusion & Significance: It was found that less active lifestyle with dietary habit was related to overweight/obesity among school children. Nutritional education in promoting healthy dietary practices and a variety of physically active recreational activities should be encouraged through family and school authorities.

Biography

Md. Tarek Hossain is a Social Researcher, having graduated from Jahangirnagar University with a BSS and MSS in Anthropology. Later he did Master in Public Health in Epidemiology from American International University-Bangladesh. Hossain is working as a Senior Research Associate for the Centre of Excellence for Universal Health Coverage (CoE-UHC) at the James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University. With over five years of experience, he has his expertise in research, evaluation, project management and passion in improving the health and wellbeing of the people. He is particularly interested in the field of health system, HRH, nutrition, NCDs, HIV/AIDS, climate change and adaptation.

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