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Physical inactivity, sedentary lifestyle and overweight/obesity in secondary school children of Mashhad city

Introduction & Aim: Physical inactivity can be defined as the amount of time spent in sedentary behavior. Sedentary behaviors range from 'stroller time' to time sitting in the classroom at school, doing homework, listening to music, surfing the Internet, talking on the phone or reading. Screen time (time spent watching TV/videos, playing video games, working at the computer) represents a major source of inactivity. Physical inactivity is recognized as an independent risk factor for cardiovascular disease and is related to other risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Spending too much time sitting increases the risk of becoming obese and may also increase the risk of chronic diseases and early death. Researchers found positive associations between television viewing and childhood obesity. The main purpose of this study was to determine sedentary lifestyle in secondary school children of Mashhad and its relationship with overweight/obesity.

Material & Methods: This cross sectional study was conducted in urban low/high socio-economic area of Mashhad city. A total of 1189 secondary-school children aged 12-14 years were selected through a stratified-multistage random sampling. The samples recruited in 10 schools among total 501 schools. The validated Physical Activity Questionnaire for Older Children (PAQ-C) was used and then adolescents were classified based on their mean total physical activity scores. Watching TV and using computer were measured by using the modified questionnaire of Turconi, et al. (2003).

Results: Data analysis showed that more than half of adolescents (55.8%) were physically inactive. Physical inactivity was more prevalent among females (66.6%) than males (46.3%) with significant difference ($P=0.001$). In terms of TV watching, 37.3% of adolescents watched TV for 3-4 hours per day and 13.4% of them watched TV more than 6 hours per day. The difference between males and females was not significant. This study showed that 11.7% of adolescents were obese and 17.3% were overweight.

Conclusion: Childhood obesity is increasing in alarming rate in Mashhad. Some studies have showed screen time and PA are equivalent risk factors for overweight/obesity. In current study, females were found to be less active than males. Iranian national statistics showed that 49.6% and 21.5% of 15-24 year old urban female and males had low physical activities and time spent in sedentary activities per day was 5.1 and 4.5 hours among female and males, respectively.

Biography

Khosro Shafaghi is currently working as a Lecturer in Gonabad University of Medical Sciences, Iran. He has completed his PhD in Community Nutrition in Universiti Putra Malaysia. His current research interest is on overweight/obesity and dietary patterns in adolescents.