Original Research Article

Prevalence of overweight and obesity in medical and allied science students of Karnataka, India

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Received: 19 June 2019
Accepted: 01 August 2019

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ABSTRACT

Background: Overweight and obesity is the underlying cause of death for about 3 million people each year. More than 100 million individuals are obese in India. Few studies have been carried out among Indian undergraduate students where irregular dietary pattern, stress and anxiety are more prevalent due to academic pressure. The objective of this study was to estimate the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Medical and Allied Science students.

Methods: The cross-sectional study was conducted in 2017 among 922 medical and allied science undergraduate students of Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Karnataka, after obtaining the institutional ethical approval and written informed consent. Information was obtained with the help of pre-designed, pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire by self-administered method and anthropometric measurement.

Results: Overall prevalence of overweight and obesity among students was 23.6% and 5.2% respectively. Prevalence of overweight among male students was 28.7% and 18.6% in female. Obese male students were 5.5% and 5% were obese in female.

Conclusions: About one fourth of the students were overweight and more than one in twenty students were obese. Overweight and obesity was more in male than female.

Keywords: Overweight, Obesity, Undergraduate students

INTRODUCTION

Overweight and obesity are well-defined as abnormal or unnecessary fat accumulation in the body, body mass index (BMI) equal to or more than 25 is taken as overweight, and BMI equal to or more than 30 is taken as obesity by WHO.¹ World Health Organization has recommended lowering the BMI cut off levels for Asian people to 23.0 for overweight and 25 kg/m² for obesity.² Data suggest that, if secular trend persist, in the world there will be 38% overweight and 20% obesity among adults by 2030.³ In India, the prevalence of obesity varies from 10-50%.⁴ We perceived obesity mostly affects among the adults of middle age but recently, in a regular, there is increase of obesity among young adults, mainly the college students and of university becoming evidence.⁵ The objective of the study was to determine the prevalence of obesity and overweight among Medical and Allied Science students.

METHODS

A cross sectional study was carried out to determine the prevalence of overweight and obesity among medical and allied sciences students in Jawaharlal Nehru Medical
College, Belagavi, Karnataka. Study was conducted from March 2017 to February 2018. Complete enumeration, total nine hundred twenty two medical and allied science students were enrolled for the study. Ethical principle the respect to the participants was maintained in the study and in the report. Data was collected from the participants by using pre-designed, pretested semi-structured questionnaire by self-administered method and anthropometric measurements. Height was measured in meters by using measuring tape. Weight in kilograms was recorded by using adult standard spring balance. Data were entered in EpiData 3.1 and analysed in SPSS version 20. Univariate and bivariate analysis was done. In univariate analysis, frequency and percentage was calculated and in bivariate analysis, Chi-square test was used to show the association between BMI and socio-demographic variables.

RESULTS

In our study, majority (48.7%) of the students were in the age groups of 20-22 years, 38% were in the age group of 17-19 years, 13.3 % were in the age group of ≥23 years. More than half (52.45%) of the students were female. Most of the participants (79.2%) were from Hindu religion followed by Muslim (9.5%) and Christian (2.3%). Majority (74%) of the students were from nuclear family. More than one third (41.5% participants father were studied in graduate level followed by post graduate level (30.2%), PUC level (16.7%), secondary level (8.5%) and primary level (2.5%). About one third (32.5%) participants’ mothers had graduate level of education, followed by post graduate level (24.5%), PUC level (18.5%), secondary (15.3%) and primary level (6.0%) (Table 1).

| Characteristics | Categories | Frequency | % |
|-----------------|------------|-----------|---|
| Age (in years)  | 17-19      | 350       | 38.0 |
|                 | 20-22      | 449       | 48.7 |
|                 | ≥23        | 123       | 13.3 |
| Gender          | Male       | 439       | 47.6 |
|                 | Female     | 483       | 52.4 |
| Religion        | Hindu      | 730       | 79.2 |
|                 | Muslim     | 88        | 9.5 |
|                 | Christian  | 83        | 9.0 |
|                 | Others     | 21        | 2.3 |
| Type of family  | Nuclear    | 682       | 74.0 |
|                 | Joint      | 224       | 24.3 |
|                 | Extended   | 16        | 1.7 |
| Education of father | Illiterate | 10 | 1.1 |
|                 | Primary level (1-5)th standard | 19 | 2.1 |
|                 | Secondary level (6-10)th standard | 78 | 8.5 |
|                 | PUC level (11-12)th standard | 154 | 16.7 |
|                 | Graduate level | 383 | 41.5 |
|                 | Post-graduate level | 10 | 1.1 |
| Education of mother | Illiterate | 29 | 3.1 |
|                 | Primary (1-5)th standard | 55 | 6.0 |
|                 | Secondary (6-10)th standard | 141 | 15.3 |
|                 | PUC (11-12)th standard | 171 | 18.5 |
|                 | Graduate level | 300 | 32.5 |
|                 | Post-graduate level | 226 | 24.5 |

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants (n=922).

| Characteristics | Categories | Frequency | % |
|-----------------|------------|-----------|---|
| Socio-economic status according to modified BG Prasad classification | Class I (upper class) | 561 | 60.8 |
|                 | Class II (upper middle class) | 183 | 19.8 |
|                 | Class III (middle class) | 93 | 10.1 |
|                 | Class IV (lower middle class) | 45 | 4.9 |
|                 | Class V (lower class) | 40 | 4.3 |

Table 2: Socio-economic status according to modified BG Prasad classification (n=922).
According to B.G Prasad’s classification of socio-economic status, 60.8% of study participants belonged to upper class followed by upper middle class (19.8%), middle class (10.1%), lower middle class (4.9%) and lower class (4.3%) (Table 2).

Our study revealed that 22% of the participant’s mothers and 23.9% of the participants’ fathers were obese (Table 3).

Table 3: Distribution of participants according to the family history of obesity (n=922).

| History of obesity in the family | Father | Mother |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Yes                             | 220 (23.9) | 203 (22.0) |
| No                              | 702 (76.1) | 719 (78.0) |
| Total                           | 922 (100) | 922 (100) |

Table No. 4: Association between BMI and gender of the participants.

| BMI               | Gender | Total | P value |
|-------------------|--------|-------|---------|
|                   | Male   | Female|         |
| Below 18.5 underweight | 43 (9.8) | 89 (18.4) | 132 (14.3) | <0.001 | $\chi^2$=22.179, df = 3 |
| 18.5-24.9 normal weight | 246 (56.0) | 280 (58.0) | 526 (57.0) |
| 25-29.9 overweight | 126 (28.7) | 90 (18.6) | 216 (23.6) |
| 30-34.9 obesity   | 24 (5.5) | 24 (5.0) | 48 (5.2) |
| Total             | 439 (100) | 483 (100) | 922 (100) |

Out of 483 female participants, 58% were normal weight, 18.6% were overweight, 18.4% were underweight and 5% were obese. Out of 439 males, 56% were normal weight, 28.7% were overweight, 9.8% were underweight and 5.5% were obese. There was significant association between BMI and gender ($\chi^2$=22.179, df=3 p=0.00) but not for obesity (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

Our study revealed that, prevalence of overweight and obesity among students was 23.4% and 5.2% respectively. In this study, there was 28.7% overweight among male students and 18.6% in female which was similar to study conducted among adolescent students of Gujrat, India and also consistent with the findings of the study conducted among medical students of under graduation in Madhya Pradesh, India where the prevalence of overweight and obesity among students was 25% and 9.64% respectively.6,7 In our study, 60.8% participants belonged to upper class and 19.8% were from upper middle class according to BG Prasad classification of socio-economic status which was consistent with the findings of the study conducted in Medical College of Haryana where 58.4% and 26.9% of the participants were from upper class and upper middle class respectively.8 Majority 74% of the participants in our study were from nuclear family which was similar to the study of obesity and overweight among students of Karnataka.9

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that overweight and obesity in the undergraduate students was high. About one fourth of the students were overweight and more than one in twenty students were obese. Overweight and obesity was more in male than female.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge for all the participants of the study.

Funding: No funding sources

Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, KLE Academy Higher Education and Research, Karnataka, India

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Cite this article as: Parajuli K, Lamichhane R, Lama N, Marasine NR, Narasannavar A, Shivaswamy MS. Prevalence of overweight and obesity in medical and allied science students of Karnataka, India. Int J Community Med Public Health 2019;6:3739-42.