

**PREVALENCE AND RISK FACTORS
FOR OBESITY AMONG STUDENTS
ATTENDING SIJARJAH SCHOOLS
THESIS**

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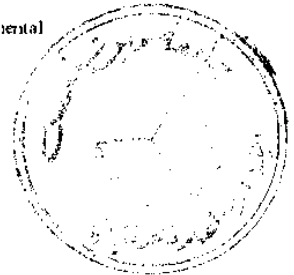
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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to describe overweight and obesity among student attending preparatory and secondary, government and private schools of Sharjah City in the UAE. The study was conducted in two parts. The first part was a cross-sectional study to estimate the prevalence of overweight and obesity. The study revealed that the prevalence of obesity and overweight is low in adolescents in Sharjah (8.7%) in comparison to other Gulf and international countries. Prevalence of obesity among male students was found higher than that for females, but overweight prevalence was found higher in female students than that among male students. Association between obesity and nationality type was found significant, although the relation between obesity and school type was found insignificant. The prevalence of obesity was found high when re-estimated by using the relative weight method. The second part of the study was a case-control study, were cases and controls were classified according to gender and school type. Significant associations were found between obesity and the following factors: family history of obesity, small family size, eating fatty food, eating with mood changes and inactive life styles. Highly significant association was found between BMI and other body fat measurement indices including relative weight, skin fold thickness, arm anthropometry and waist to hip ratio.

Limitation of this study and the generated recommendations are included.

Key words: United Arab Emirates (UAE), Body Mass Index (BMI).

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Throughout most of human history, weight gain and fat storage have been viewed as signs of health and prosperity. Today, however, as standard of living continue to rise, weight gain and obesity are posing a growing threat to the health of inhabitants from countries all over the world. Obesity is a chronic disease, prevalent in both developed and developing countries, and affecting children as well as adults. Indeed, it is now so common that it is replacing the more traditional public health concerns, including undernutrition and infectious disease, as one of the most significant contributors to ill health. Furthermore, as obesity is a key risk factor in the natural history of other chronic and non-communicable diseases, it is only a matter of time before developing countries are likely to experience the same high mortality rates for such diseases that industrialized countries with well-established market economies exhibited 30 years ago (WHO, 1997).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is considered one of the countries that have achieved satisfactory development in a short period of time. Since the union of the seven emirates in 1971, the standard of living has improved. The luxurious lifestyle has led to changes in eating habits of Emirates people,

where they are consuming more junk food that is high in fat. Beside that people became less active due to dependence on housemaids and servants. In addition, many people watch television, use computers, plays video games for many hours (Abdul Gaffor, 1997)*.

Radwan (1997)* mentioned that the infectious diseases and undernourishment were the most common health problems. Nowadays, non-communicable diseases as obesity, hypertension, heart diseases and diabetes, become a major cause of morbidity and mortality in the UAE. These health problems contribute to the inflation of health care expenditure in UAE. The rapid social development that took place in the wake of the sharp increase of national income since the discovery of oil, has been the major determinant of most subsequent changes. The newly acquired luxurious lifestyle and behavioral pattern have emerged especially with respect to eating habits and leisure-time practices. So this new category of diseases may be attributable to the lifestyle changes that occurred in the past two decades.

From the above mentioned new category of diseases, and in the light of literature review, it seems that obesity is an emerging health problem worldwide, and in the Arabian Gulf

* Arabic references.