Childhood Obesity and Academic Performance at School

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ABSTRACT

Childhood obesity is one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. Children who are obese are above the normal weight for their age and height. Childhood obesity leads to its related noncommunicable diseases and psychosocial health problems of children. Childhood obesity increases the risk of adulthood obesity and obesity related diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidemia. Successful academic performance is important during the school years and is also a strong predictor of occupational and social success in adult life. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to examine the association between children's overweight status and their academic achievements. This study was based on primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from a cross-sectional survey conducted through a structured questionnaire in Gampaha district. Simple random sampling method were used to select 80 students. Descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics comprising chi square test, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze data using SPSS and Excel. Overweight students both girls and boys achieved lower average marks for math and language than their non-overweight peers. Age, gender, mother's BMI, father's BMI, skipping breakfast, eating fast foods and snacks have identified as key determinant for the development of obesity. The overweight students also demonstrated significantly more detentions, worsened school attendance and less participation on sports. This study has identified that, obesity is negatively associated with academic performance in both gender at school.

Key words: *childhood obesity, academic performance, multiple regression analysis, Sri Lanka*

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