

Abstract

- Objective:** The association of eating behaviours, perception of body image and social characteristics to BMI in 12 – 16 year students.
- Design:** Cross - sectional study.
- Subjects:** (n = 331) of students who attend Ardenne and Papine High School and Ardenne Extension-Private High School.
- Methods:** A prevalence survey in Papine and Ardenne High School and Ardenne Extension Private High School in Kingston and St. Andrew Metropolitan area. A cross-sectional study design was used. Subjects completed the questionnaires..
- Anthropometry- weight and height was measured. (n=331).
Subjects were black Jamaicans, 12 – 16 years. Normal, overweight and obese were defined using Quetlet BMI 25.00 – 29.99 and >30 respectively.
- Results:** On an average, there were no marked differences among the BMI for the different age groups with means 20.4 ± 71 (CI 19.8, 24.3) 22.1 ± 49 (CI 21.5, 22.8) and 22.9 ± 4.4 (20.9, 23.3) for < 12 years, 13 – 14 years and ≥ 15 respectively. In general the prevalence rate for overweight and obesity was 72.5%, indicating a higher prevalence in overweight than obesity.

The majority (81.3%) of the students had normal weight. The highest prevalence (28.6%) of obesity was found among students whose parents worked as skilled and manual workers. The same category demonstrates the highest prevalence in overweight and obesity. It was found that food consumption pattern, lack of knowledge of obesity and to a lesser extent inactivity, have contributed to overweight and obesity.

Conclusion: The pandemic issue of obesity poses one of the greatest threats to human health and well being in the 21st century. The prevalence of obesity tends to increase with age. The identification of BMI as a major risk factor for obesity provides a basis for primary prevention.