PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PREVALENCE OF OBESITY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN KURUNEGALA DISTRICT

JASD Bandara[1], AMGCP Adikari[2] and S Weerasinghe[3]
Department of Sports Science, Faculty of Applied Sciences,
University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka
[1]*shalinidbandara@gmail.com*

Many studies have identified the relationship between Body Mass Index (BMI) and physical activity level. The purpose of this study was to identify the prevalence of underweight, overweight and obesity and to examine the relationship between BMI and physical activity level of 16-18 year old adolescents in Kurunegala district. A cross-sectional study was conducted. Four hundred and twenty students (205 males and 215 females) were selected using stratified random sampling technique. Data was gathered using the physical activity questionnaire to measure the physical activity level. BMI categories of overweight, obesity, normal weight, thinness and severe thinness were determined based on WHO growth reference. Descriptive statistics, Mann Whitney U test and Spearman correlation tests were used to analyze data. The results revealed that the percentages of students in normal, underweight, over-weight and obese categories were 62.1%, 31.9%, 4.5% and 1.4%, respectively. Also, a significant difference ($P<0.05$) of physical activity level was observed between children in urban and rural areas. There was no correlation between BMI and physical activity level of students in Kurunegala district ($r=0.015$, $p=0.766$). It can be concluded that there is no relationship between BMI and physical activity level of students in Kurunegala district and there were more underweight students than overweight and obese students. Also, underweight adolescents can be found in both urban and rural areas and prevalence of obesity was higher in urban areas.

Keywords: Physical Activity Level, BMI