

**ASSESSMENT OF LIFE STYLE AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF ADOLESCENTS IN SCHOOLS OF ANURADHAPURA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AREA**

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Few studies have been conducted to measure the nutritional status among Sri Lankan adolescents to establish proper intervention strategies. Therefore, this study aimed at identifying association between nutritional status and factors such as sex, race, socio-economic condition and life style pattern of adolescents in Anuradhapura Municipal Council area. A representative sample of 309 school students aged 12-16 was selected randomly from all the schools in the study area. Socio-economic condition and lifestyle pattern were assessed by self-administered validated questionnaires. Body weight and height of each student were measured using a calibrated scale and measuring tape. Age was calculated using student's birth data. Age and sex specific body mass index criteria recommended by the World Health Organization were used to determine the nutritional status. Results revealed that 36.9% of adolescents were underweight while 5.2% and 6.5% of them were overweight and obese, respectively. A high prevalence of underweight was found among males (24.0%) than females (12.9%). Also, prevalence of underweight was high among Tamils (83.3%) while overweight (5.7%) and obesity (9.4%) were high among Muslims. Among the variables studied, sex, race, family income, sleeping hours, level of physical activity, number of hours spent in front of television and involvement of exercises demonstrated significant impacts on their nutritional status ( $p < 0.1$ ). However, urban residency status did not significantly ( $p > 0.1$ ) influence their nutritional status. The physical activity level was significantly higher ( $p < 0.1$ ) among boys (85.6%) compared to girls (57.1%) and 22.7% of female students were physically inactive. In general, underweight is the major nutrition problem among the study population at present while overweight and obesity are emerging problems.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Anuradhapura, Body mass index, Nutritional status