

Knowledge and practice in prevention of childhood obesity and factors associated with practice among mothers attending well-baby clinics in the Jaffna MOH Area

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Background and objective: In Sri Lanka, prevalence of overweight in children under 5 years is 2%. Parents play a critical role in shaping their children's dietary practices, physical activity, and sedentary habits. Assessing knowledge and practices in obesity prevention is important to reduce non-communicable diseases and complications during childhood and later in life. This study was conducted to assess the knowledge, practice, and influence of sociodemographic factors on practices in prevention of childhood obesity among mothers attending well-baby clinics in the Jaffna MOH area.

Methods: A field-based descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 197 mothers who attended well-baby clinics for vaccination during February and March 2020 in Jaffna MOH area. Consecutive sampling was used to recruit 197 mothers to the study. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Data analysis was done using SPSS 25 and chi-square test was performed to analyze the results.

Results: Mean age of the participants was 31.79 (± 4.36) years; 64.4 % of participants were Hindus. Only 6.1% had good knowledge, 49.2% had average and the rest (44.7%) had poor knowledge. With respect to practice, a statistically significant relationship was found between family type and weekly fast-food ($p=0.003$), soft drink ($p=0.036$) and sweet ($p=0.049$) intake, where children belonging to nuclear families were more likely to consume unhealthy snacks. Parental educational level above O/L ($p<0.001$) and high monthly income ($p=0.02$) had a statistically significant relationship with weekly fried food intake.

Conclusion: Only 6.1% of mothers in the Jaffna MOH area had good knowledge regarding childhood obesity. Providing health education, conducting awareness programmes, and increasing the availability of healthy food options, may help to improve the knowledge and practice of parents in Jaffna.

Keywords: Knowledge, Practices, Childhood Obesity, Mothers