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PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT, OBESITY, AND ASSOCIATED PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN QATARI'S FEMALE POPULATION

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Background: Dissatisfaction with body weight and the use of unhealthy weight reduction practices have been reported among adolescents.

Objective: The aim of the present study was to examine the severity of dieting and its association with obesity, body satisfaction and psychological problems in female adolescents.

Subjects: A representative sample of 800 girls aged 14-19 years were approached during the period October to December 2004 and 566 girls gave consent and participated in the study, thus giving a response rate of 70.8%.

Methods: Self-reports were obtained from 566 teenage girls using the Adolescent Dieting Scale (ADS) and the Self-Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ-20) for psychopathology.

Results: The prevalence of overweight and obesity for female adolescents were 13.4% vs 1.8%; 39.9% were intermediate dieters, and 8.3% were extreme dieters. Dieting was not associated with age but was significantly associated with body mass index (BMI) ($p=0.045$). Extreme dieting was strongly associated with peer perception of respondent's figure ($p< 0.001$) and self perception of figure ($p=0.016$). Additionally, in adult Qatari population overweight and obesity for males were (34.4% vs 34.6%) and for females were (33.0% vs 45.3%). This is significantly higher than adolescent girls. ($p< 0.01$). The SRQ score was significantly highest in the extreme dieters group ($p=0.005$). The extreme dieters get most of their education (or information?) about dieting from school(14.0%) and TV(43.6%).

Conclusion: The present study revealed strong evidence for the association between frequent dieting and overweight, body image dissatisfaction and psychological problems among adolescent females.