<u>Short Communication</u>

Obesity in female students in the United Arab Emirates University

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A study on 200 female university students was carried out to determine their weight status. Using body mass index (BMI), 24% and 7.5% of students were overweight and obese, respectively. There was no significant association between BMI and age of students.

The prevalence of obesity is increasing rapidly in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) especially among females. Musaiger and Radwan [1] found that there are many social and dietary factors associated with obesity in female university students in the UAE. Studies [2,3] showed that overweight and obesity are related to morbidity and mortality due to some diseases. The present paper aims to investigate the prevalence of overweight and obesity among female students of the United Arab Emirates University (UAE University).

METHODS

The female students were obtained from female hostels related to the UAE University in Al-Ain, UAE. There are four hostels for females in Al-Ain, and two of them were selected. Only 200 females participated in this study. Weight was taken using a portable weighing scale with an accuracy of 0.1 Kg. Height was taken using a portable stadiometer with an accuracy of 0.1 cm. Body mass index (BMI) was used to calculate the weight status of the females as follows: underweight (BMI<20), acceptable (BMI 20-24.9), overweight (BMI 25-29.9) and obese (BMI≥30) as reported by Garrow [4].

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ages of the students ranged from 18 to 24 years, with a mean age of 19.8 ± 1.5 years. Of the students 77 (38.5%) were under the age of 20 years and the rest (61.5%) were aged 20 years and above. The weight status of the female students based on BMI according to their age is given in Table 1. Of the students, 20% were underweight and 31.5% were overweight or obese. This finding is very close to that reported by Musaiger and Radwan[1], as they found that 20% and 28.8% of female students in UAE University were underweight and obese, respectively. The proportion of overweight was higher among students aged less than 20 years (27.3%) compared to students aged 20 years and above (21.9%), but there was no statistically significant association between the age of the female students and nutritional status.

As reported in other studies in the region, [1,5,] there are two problems related to weight status existing among female university students; underweight and overweight. Consequently, programmes to promote healthy weight in the community should take into consideration both underweight and overweight. Further studies are recommended to assess the main causes of unacceptable weight among children and adults in the UAE.

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Table 1. Nutritional status of female students in the UAE University, Al-Ain by their ages

Nutritional Status	<20 years		20+ years		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Underweight (BMI<20)	15	19.5	25	20.3	40	20.0
Acceptable weight (BMI 20-24.9)	36	46.7	61	49.6	97	48.5
Overweight (BMI 25-29.9)	21	27.3	27	21.9	48	24.0
Obese (BMI≥30)	5	6.5	10	8.2	15	7.5
Total	77	100.0	123	100.0	200	100.0