

## Body Weight of University Students in Bahrain

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**To estimate the percentage of overweight and obesity of university students in Bahrain, a sample of 238 males and 406 females were obtained. The findings showed that 17.6% and 18.5% of males and females respectively were overweight. The proportion of obesity was 11.8% in males and 7.6% in females. Physical activity should be encouraged in this group to prevent obesity.**

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Researches on body weight in Bahrain are limited to children, adolescents and adults<sup>1,2,3</sup>, and none of these researches study the body weight of university students. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), MUSAIGER and RADWAN<sup>4</sup> found that university females have the problem, of both underweight and overweight. In Kuwait, AL-ISA<sup>5</sup> showed that the prevalence of overweight and obesity in university females was 27.2% and 7.2%, respectively. The aim of this paper was to determine the body weight of the university students in Bahrain.

### METHODS

This study depended on self-participation of students of Bahrain University at Al-Sakhir campus. The total numbers of students who volunteered to participate were 238 males and 406 females. Their ages ranged from 17 to 38 years, with a mean age of 20.5 years. The students were asked to fill in a questionnaire containing questions on attitudes to and practices of obesity. Weight was measured using a portable scale, and height was measured using a special tape with an accuracy of 0.1 cm. The Body Mass Index (BMI) was calculated to determine the body weight of the students. The body weight was classified into four groups, underweight, normal, overweight and obese, corresponding to BMI <20, 20-24.9, 25-29.9 and  $\geq 30$ , respectively.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of students according to their body weight and sex is illustrated in Figure 1. Females had a higher percentage of underweight (28.7%) than males (19.3%). However, the percentage of obesity was higher among males (11.1%) than females (7.6%). The prevalence of underweight and overweight in university females in this study was close to that reported by MUSAIGER and RADWAN in the UAE. The proportion of obesity among female Bahraini university students was similar to that of their counterparts in Kuwait (7.6% and 7.2%, respectively). Nevertheless, the Kuwaiti females had a higher proportion of overweight (27.2%) than the Bahraini females (18.5%).

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The data of this study confirmed that of other studies in the region, as both underweight and overweight exist in adolescents and young adults. Promotion of physical activity and reduced intake of food rich in fat are important elements to reduce overweight and obesity in university students. For underweight students, sound nutrition and proper food intake should be encouraged. It is recommended that more studies should be carried out on the causes of underweight and overweight in young people in the country.

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