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Eating and lifestyle habits of overweight and obese teenagers in Thulamela municipality, South Africa

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Abstract

A survey made worldwide (including South Africa) revealed that most teenagers are overweight and obese and that they eat little nutritious food. Obesity and overweight are public health problems and need to be addressed from a community perspective. The reason for exploring this problem in this study was that South Africa has one of the highest rates of overweight and obesity in the world among urban and rural black women. The objective was to investigate the eating and lifestyle habits of overweight and obese female teenagers in Thulamela Local Municipality, Limpopo province, South Africa. This was an exploratory, descriptive study conducted amongst 125 female teenagers aged 13 to 18 years from rural schools in Thulamela Local Municipality. Eating and lifestyle habits, physical activity, meaning of healthy and unhealthy dietary habits, weight, height and body mass index were measured. A hundred and twenty-five questionnaires were completed and data were gathered on the demographics, anthropometry, social and lifestyle habits, nutrition-related problems, dietary patterns and dietary history of the participants. The BMI revealed that 34.4% were of normal weight, 39.2% overweight and 26.4 obese. Seventy percent of the respondents actively consumed meals in a day, 83% consumed starchy snacks, whilst 72% of the respondents carried lunchboxes to school. Regarding lifestyle habits, 88% of the respondents slept more hours than recommended (8 hours) while 88% performed sedentary activities and 66% did physical activities such as walking. The results pointed out unhealthy eating and lifestyle habits influencing teenagers' weight and provided information on which of these must be considered in order to develop tailored nutrition interventions, improving teenagers' consciousness about s adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest