

Abstract

Adolescents who are estimated at 1.5 million by the year 2008, in the world play a very crucial role in a country's development. Because they are the future working force who is going to uphold the country. As they go through the second growth spurt in this period, it is crucial that they receive the required nutrients. Adolescence is also challenging for nutrition, because of their lifestyle and eating behaviours along with underlying psychosocial factors. Adolescent girls are more susceptible to nutritional deficiencies than boys due to, improper dietary practices, low physical activity and especially because of menstruation losses. Studies on nutritional status of adolescent school girls are lacking in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study was carried out with the objective of assessing the nutritional status of adolescent school girls in Pannala sub zonal educational division by anthropometric measurements. Five schools in Pannala sub zonal educational division were randomly selected and a cross sectional study was carried out to take the nutritional measurements. Nutritional indices as height for age, weight for age, BMI for age and waist to hip ratio were derived from the measurements. A total number of 164 subjects, aged 13-16 category was selected to the study. Epi-info software was used to categorize the subjects into stunting wasting underweight, overweight and obese groups. In the study population 18.9%, 21.34%, 13.41%, 9.14% and 0.61% were stunting, wasting, underweight, overweight and obese respectively. There was a significant correlation with under nutritional parameters and birth weight, father's and mother's educational levels, dieting behaviour and the amount of money that spent for food. In conclusion, 63% percentage of girls aged 13-16 years in schools of Pannala sub zonal educational division as a group, did not achieve a good nutritional status.

Key words: Adolescent school girls, Anthropometric measurements, Stunting, wasting, underweight.