

Association of health literacy with obesity and overweight among arabic secondary school students in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Background: Overweight and obesity among adolescents is considered an epidemic in both developed and developing countries. There is still limited study on the health literacy as a determinant of overweight and obesity in adolescents. The aims of this study was to determine the association of health literacy with overweight and obesity.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional study among Arabic secondary school students in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya. Health literacy was measured using the Newest Vital Sign (NVS) questionnaire. Limited health literacy was defined as the NVS score of 0 to 3. Body weight and height were measured twice by standard methods and the mean of these two measurements was used in the calculation of body mass index. Overweight and obesity classification were based on the World Health Organization criteria. Chi-square test and multivariate binary logistic regression were performed using IBM-SPSS version 21.0.

Results: A total of 202 out of 250 students involved in this study giving the response rate as 81.0%. The percentage of overweight and obesity among the respondents was 21.3% and 6.9% respectively. Respondents with limited health literacy was 51.5%. Those with limited health literacy was almost 2 times higher (AOR = 1.963, 95%CI: 1.010, 3.816) to have overweight and obesity as compared to adequate health literacy.

Conclusion: The prevalence of overweight and obesity was high among the study population. Limited health literacy is a predictor of overweight and obesity. Improving health literacy should be considered in obesity and overweight intervention.

Keyword: Arabic secondary school; Health literacy; Overweight and obesity; Newest Vital Signs, Malaysia