Breakfast Skipping As a Risk Correlate of Overweight, Obesity and Central Obesity among Adolescents in the State of Qatar

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Abstract

Background: Prevalence of overweight and obesity among children and adolescence over the past three decades reached an alarming point in both developed and developing countries. As a result of the economic boom overweight and obesity has become a major health problem in the Arabian Gulf countries particularly in Qatar. Breakfast is considered to be the first and most important meal of the day. Breakfast skipping may be one of the complex and multi-factorial causes of obesity.

Aims: The aims of this study were (1) to examine the prevalence of breakfast skipping among adolescent in the state of Qatar. (2) Evaluate the hypothesis that breakfast skipping would be associated with increased overweight and obesity and central obesity in the study population.

Method: A cross-sectional study was carried out among 1225 adolescents (625 boys and 600 girls) aged 15 to 18 years were selected by means of a multistage stratified random sampling technique from 14 public and 7 private schools between October 2012 and February 2013. Anthropometric measurements: Weight in (kg), height in (cm), Body Mass Index (kg/m²), waist circumference (cm) and waist to height ratio (WHtR) were measured/computed. Demographic data and Food habits were collected by using structured questionnaire.

Breakfast eating pattern was classified as: Breakfast eaters (students who are ate breakfast at least 4 days in a week). Breakfast skippers (students who skipped breakfast at least 4 days in a week).

Results: Breakfast skipping is a common unhealthy habit, out of 1225 participants 766 (62.5%) consumed breakfast less than daily. 52.5% of the participants were breakfast skipper (ate breakfast less than 4 times/week). Weight, Body Mass Index (BMI), waist circumference (WC), was significantly different between participants age in both gender p< 0.05. The prevalence of overweight (43.0%) and obesity (39.5%) was lower among breakfast eaters than skippers (56.7% & 60.5%) respectively. In addition central obesity (WHtR ≥0.5) was more prevalent among breakfast skippers than eaters (59.3% vs 40.7%) respectively. A dose-response relationship was shown to exist between breakfast consumption and being overweight and obese among all students. This study showed that breakfast skippers were heavier than eater in both genders; body mass index was significantly higher among breakfast skippers.

Conclusion: Regular breakfast consumption is negatively associated with overweight and obesity among adolescents in Qatar; we found that breakfast skipping was prevalent in our study sample, and was associated with overweight, obesity and central obesity in both gender. Awareness programs about the importance of breakfast meal are needed for adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents; Breakfast skippers; Body mass index; Waist circumference and central obesity

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Introduction

Prevalence of overweight and obesity among children and adolescence over the past three decades reached an alarming point in both developed and developing countries. [1,2]. Worldwide 10% of school-aged children is overweight or obese; the prevalence of overweight/obesity in American school-children was 32%, followed by 20% and 16% in Europe and Middle East respectively [3]. As a result of the economic boom overweight and obesity has become a major health problem in the Arabian Gulf countries particularly in Qatar and United Arab of Emirate [4]. Recent research suggests that the prevalence of childhood obesity is increasing dramatically, already surpassing the high levels of obesity found amongst children and adolescents in the USA and Europe [5]. Breakfast is considered to be the first and most important meal of the day. At least breakfast meal has been skipped by more than half of school children on at least some days of the week [6]. Inadequate intakes of macronutrients like energy and protein as well as micronutrients like vitamin A, C, and iron have been common among breakfast skippers [6,7]. To date, no published studies have explored whether breakfast consumption is related to overweight status among adolescents in Qatar. Through this study, we aimed to (a) describe the frequency of breakfast consumption among adolescents in Qatar; (b) evaluate the association of breakfast skipping with overweight, obesity and central obesity. The consumption of breakfast may be one of the complex and multi-factorial causes of obesity in both developed and developing countries [8-10]. The frequency of breakfast consumption is inversely associated with Body Mass Index (BMI) among school children and adolescents as suggested by many studies in developed countries [11-15], and in some developing countries, like Iran [16]. Infrequent or never breakfast consumers are at higher risk of being overweight and obese as reported by a systematic cross-sectional and longitudinal studies in Europe [17]. Abdominal adiposity, have been related to cardiac metabolic risk in children and adolescents [18], waist circumference (WC) and waist-to-height ratio (WHtR), have been used to identify at-risk children [19]. Overweight and normal children with abdominal obesity showed a higher cardiac metabolic risk compared to overweight children without excessive abdominal fat accumulation [20]. 20% of abdominally obese adolescents were classified as overweight [21], as showed by are representative study from the Balearic Islands. Significant relationships between missing breakfast and weight status of female adolescents are reported among adolescents in Brazil and in the Gulf region [22,23]. 32% of US female college students aged 18 to 24 years skip breakfast as means of weight control [24], missing breakfast among adolescents females tend to consume greater amounts of food at lunch thereby gaining weight.

Methods

Subjects: The study population included boys and girls adolescence, aged 15 to 18 years. A representative sample of these adolescents (1225 students, 625 males and 600 females) were selected from public and private schools using a multistage stratified random sampling technique and stratified by sex and school type (public and private). Both national and non-national adolescents were included in the study. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Medical Research Center - Hamad Medical Corporation and Supreme Counsel of Education, state of Qatar. All adolescents, parents and school principals were clearly informed about the purpose and content of the study and written consent was obtained from the parents one week prior the study implementation and from the students as well on the day of data collection.

Anthropometric measurements

Weight and height were measured using the standard procedure. 15 Weight was measured to the nearest 0.1 kg using an electronic portable scale (Seca). The scale was checked before each weighing and calibrated with a known weight every morning. To avoid interpersonal error weight and height measurements were carried out by one person. The height was measured, in the standing position, without shoes and socks, back against the scale, heels together and head in the upright position to the nearest 0.1 cm using a portable stadiometer which was attached to the weighing scale. The movable head board was gently lowered until it firmly touched the upper part of the subject’s head and a direct reading of height was obtained. Body Mass Index (BMI) (the ratio between weight in (kg) and height in (m²)) was computed to determine overweight and obesity among adolescents using the cut-off values as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1995) as follows: Underweight < 5th percentile of BMI for age, Normal weight 5th to < 85th percentile of BMI for age, Overweight: 85 85th to < 95th percentile of BMI for age and obese: ≥ 95th percentile of BMI for age. Waist circumference (WC) was measured using plastic, non-stretchable measuring tape, at the level of the umbilicus to the nearest 0.1cm while student standing and

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following normal expiration. Waist to height ratio (WHR) was calculated as the ratio between WC (cm) and height (cm). Central obesity was defined as WHtR ≥ 0.5 cm [25].

**Dietary habits assessment**

Data was collected by using a structured questionnaire which consisted of two parts: demographic data such as: age, sex, school type, class, and nationality. Food habits which include question about how many times did you eat breakfast per week. The answers were ranges between (0 = never, and 7 times = every day). The questionnaire was pre-tested twice, during the development stage and prior to data collection and it was translated into Arabic language. Breakfast eating pattern was classified as: breakfast eaters (students who ate breakfast at least 4 days in a week) and breakfast skipper (students who skipped breakfast at least 4 days in a week).

A statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS (Version 15) software package. Chi-square statistics were used to determine the presence of an association between the variables.

**Results**

Skipping breakfast is a common unhealthy habit, the present study showed that 625 (51.1%) were boys and 600 (48.9%) were girls, 91.8% of them were belonged to a public schools while only 8.2% were from private schools. The highest proportion (35.3%) of participants was at age of 16 while the lower proportion was at age of 18 years. Overall prevalence of breakfast skipper (ate breakfast less than 4 times/week) was 52.5%, and who consumed breakfast less than daily were 766 (62.5%), Daily skipping breakfast was more common among boys 51.0% than among girls 49% table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable (n)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>625</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>287</td>
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<td>330</td>
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<td>Private</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skippers</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 1: Demographic characteristic of participants n = (1225).

Higher prevalence of overweight (56.7%), obesity (60.5%) and central obesity (59.3%) were observed among breakfast skipper adolescents in Qatar. Table 2 shows that Weight, Body Mass Index (BMI), Waist Circumference (WC), were significantly different between participants age in both gender, while Waist - Height Ratio (WHR) was significantly different between ages of girls only.
Table 2: Descriptive statistics by age and sex of the participants n = (1225).

This study showed significantly different between breakfast skipper and eaters p < 0.05 for weight, BMI and WC Table 3. An inverse relationship was exist between breakfast consumption and being overweight and obese among all students, the prevalence of overweight (43.0%) and obesity (39.5%) was lower among breakfast eaters than skippers (56.7% & 60.5%) respectively. In addition central obesity (WHtR ≥ 0.5) was more prevalent among breakfast skippers than eaters (59.3% vs 40.7%) respectively figure 1A, B, C.

There was no significant difference between age, gender and school type with frequency of breakfast consumption; daily breakfast consumption was lower among older ages as compared to younger ages. A dose–response relationship was shown to exist between breakfast consumption and being overweight and obese among all students, prevalence of overweight was 32.7% and 39% when breakfast consumption was ≥ 5/ week and ≤ 3 times / week respectively, as well prevalence of obesity was 30.4% and 41.8% when the breakfast consumption was ≥5/week and < 3 times/week respectively (P=0.03). In addition central obesity was negatively correlated with the frequency of breakfast consumption; the present study showed that the prevalence of central obesity was increased as breakfast consumption decreased, 40% vs 31% when the frequency was < 3 time’s vs ≥ 5 times/ week. Table 4

Table 3: Descriptive statistics by anthropometric measurements of breakfast eaters and skippers n = (1225).
Breakfast Skipping As a Risk Correlate of Overweight, Obesity and Central Obesity among Adolescents in the State of Qatar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Breakfast Consumption Frequency times/week</th>
<th>&lt;3</th>
<th>3 – 4</th>
<th>≥5</th>
<th>P - value</th>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>95 (33.0)</td>
<td>78 (27.1)</td>
<td>115 (39.9)</td>
<td>0.636</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>157 (36.3)</td>
<td>108 (24.9)</td>
<td>168 (38.8)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>115 (34.8)</td>
<td>95 (28.8)</td>
<td>120 (36.4)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>68 (38.9)</td>
<td>50 (28.6)</td>
<td>57 (32.6)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Boys</td>
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<td>172 (27.4)</td>
<td>233 (37.1)</td>
<td>0.936</td>
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<td>Girls</td>
<td>212 (36.5)</td>
<td>159 (26.6)</td>
<td>227 (38)</td>
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<td>304 (27)</td>
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<td>&lt;18.5</td>
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<td>35 (24.6)</td>
<td>58 (40.8)</td>
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<td>199 (31.9)</td>
<td>167 (26.8)</td>
<td>257 (41.3)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.0-29.9</td>
<td>87 (39)</td>
<td>63 (28.3)</td>
<td>73 (32.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>≥ 30</td>
<td>99 (41.8)</td>
<td>66 (27.8)</td>
<td>72 (30.4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waist height ratio</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥0.5</td>
<td>142 (40)</td>
<td>103 (29)</td>
<td>110 (31)</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;0.5</td>
<td>292 (33.6)</td>
<td>228 (26.2)</td>
<td>350 (40.2)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Demographic and Anthropometric Characteristics with Breakfast Consumption Frequency n = (1225).

This study found that breakfast skippers were heavier than eater in both genders (p=0.047 for boys and 0.038 for girls) respectively, body mass index was significantly higher among skippers (p=0.06 and 0.01) for boys and girls respectively table 5.

Discussion

The prevalence of obesity and overweight among adolescents is sharply increasing in Middle East countries, particularly in Gulf Countries because of rapid improvement of socio-economic status which makes their life more sedentary and physically inactive [4,28]. This study explored the patterns of breakfast consumption among adolescents 15-18 years in Qatar and its association with overweight, obesity and central obesity. An important finding was that high prevalence 62.5% of adolescents in Qatar did not consume their breakfast daily. The overall prevalence of breakfast skipper (ate breakfast less than 4 times/week) was 52.5%, this prevalence are high compared to the prevalence of breakfast skipper in US children which ranges 10-30% depending on age group, gender, race and definition of breakfast skipping [26].

Our study showed that boys are more skipper of their breakfast than girls but the difference was not significant; which is consistent with prior literature which suggest that regular breakfast consumption is more common among girls Chitra et al. 2007 [6], Croezen et al. 2009 [14], and Rampersaud GC et al. 2005 [26]. Our study found that skipping breakfast was positively correlated with age, the highest rate was at age of 17 followed by age of 16 and 15 years respectively, and this result was consistent with other studies [14,26].

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<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Breakfast Eater</th>
<th>Breakfast Skipper</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Breakfast Eater</th>
<th>Breakfast Skipper</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>Breakfast Eater</th>
<th>Breakfast Skipper</th>
<th>P-value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE (year)</td>
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<td>16.34</td>
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<td>335</td>
<td>16.56</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>0.006</td>
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<td>16.15</td>
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<td>Weight (kg)</td>
<td>293</td>
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<td>20.327</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>74.85</td>
<td>23.389</td>
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<td>289</td>
<td>58.44</td>
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<td>Height (cm)</td>
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<td>335</td>
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<td>289</td>
<td>158.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMI (kg/m²)</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>24.98</td>
<td>6.545</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>26.06</td>
<td>7.923</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>23.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC (cm)</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>76.89</td>
<td>14.213</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>79.23</td>
<td>16.187</td>
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<td>72.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHtR</td>
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<td>0.082</td>
<td>335</td>
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<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.092</td>
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<td>54 (44.3%)</td>
<td>68 (55.7%)</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity (%)</td>
<td>65 (40.9%)</td>
<td>94 (59.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>29 (37.2%)</td>
<td>49 (62.8%)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5:** Comparison between breakfast eaters and skippers with, overweight, obesity and central obesity by sex.
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High prevalence of overweight (58.4%) and obesity (59.1%) among boy’s skippers was observed while it was (55.7% & 62.8%) of overweight and obesity among girls respectively, similarly as reported by Jonas J et al. 2010 among Fijian adolescent [27]. In this study we found that frequency of breakfast consumption is associated with a lower likelihood of overweight and obesity among adolescents in Qatar. Regular breakfast consumers were significantly less overweight or obese compared to breakfast skipper. This finding is consistent with the finding of Berkey CS et al. 2003 [11], Vanelli M et al. 2005 [12], Timlin MT et al. 2008 [13], Croezen S et al. 2009 [14] and Sander-cock GR et al. 2010 [15]. This might be explained as those who are overweight or obese try to skip their breakfast meal as an intentional weight loss strategy. Excess weight and breakfast consumption are inversely related in some longitudinal studies as reported by Berkey CS et al. 2003 [11] and Timlin MT et al. 2008 [13]. Such these studies are still lacking in Qatar.

Limitation of the study

The data were self-reported and were dependent on the students’ recall which has the likelihood to recall bias. The assessment of dietary habits was qualitative and based on frequency of intakes; nevertheless, this study described the life style behaviors and provides valuable and significant information for the public health.

Conclusion

A higher prevalence of overweight, obesity and central obesity was reported among adolescents in both genders. Adolescence in Qatar: Skipping breakfast was prevalent in our study sample and positively correlated with obesity and overweight which emphasizes that breakfast skipping is associated with adverse health outcomes. Promoting of healthy eating habits and encourage of daily breakfast consumption among Qatari adolescents by conducting of educational programs is highly recommended. Environmental and socioeconomic factors associated with obesity and lifestyle among adolescents should be studied in future research.

Acknowledgments

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Bibliography


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