

THE DETERMINANTS OF OBESITY AMONG STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
VENDA, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, OF SOUTH AFRICA

By

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to describe the determinants of obesity among students of the University of Venda.

Methodology: The design of the study was a quantitative correlational survey. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire that was hand delivered to all participants. A total of 338 students (155 male and 183 female) was selected to constitute the sample size. These were registered students residing at the university hostels. The halls of residence were divided into clusters; simple random sampling and systematic sampling methods was used to select the rooms from which participants were chosen. The data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 22. Descriptive analyses were performed to show frequency distributions of socio-demographic and other variables that determined obesity among the sampled population. These were summarised in the form of tables and figures. Chi-square test was used to compare the relationship between obesity and socio-demographic; dietary and environmental variables among students.

Results: Overweight and obesity is prevalent among student population with 20% of the participants being overweight and 9.5% obese. Students' eating practices included low intakes of fruits and vegetables, high consumption of refined carbohydrates, fast-foods/snacks food/processed foods and fried foods; thus the eating practice can be seen as unhealthy. Participants engaged in physical activities, however, they are inconsistent in engaging in physical activities. Moreover, there was statistical significant difference in BMI between male and female gender with female (66%) being more obese than male (34%). Overweight and obesity was more prevalent within age 20-25 years while obesity class I and II indicating higher risks were found in the higher age bracket (31-35), therefore in terms of socio-demographic variable this study found gender and age of participants as important factor of overweight and obesity. Students eat two meals a day instead of three. More students eat breakfast in their rooms as compared to the student cafeteria. The frequency of eating breakfast is 2-3 times a week and not daily as expected.

Conclusion and Recommendations: This study recommendation is that regular nutrition education campaign be carried out in the university in order to motivate more healthy food choices such as daily consumption of balanced diets, fruits and vegetables as well eating of breakfast. This study also recommends a daily Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activities (MVPA) as a lifestyle among student population.

Key words: Obesity, Overweight, Body Mass Index, Students, South Africa