ABSTRACT

Introduction: It is a well-known fact that prevalence of physical inactivity is rising in global level in all stages of life with significant association for increased non-communicable disease burden.

Objectives: To describe the physical activity (PA) patterns, its environmental associations and perceived barriers for physical activity among school teachers in Kattankudy educational division.

Methods: A cross sectional descriptive study was conducted among 392 government school teachers in Kattankudy Educational Division, who was selected using a multistage cluster sampling method. A validated self-administrated questionnaire including "International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ)" - Long Version and "Physical and Social Environment Scale (PASES)" was used to measure the socio-demographic factors, physical activity level, social and physical environmental factors, perceived barriers to PA and other relevant data. The metabolic equivalent task (MET) in minutes per week was calculated to determine total PA and it was categorized in to sufficient an insufficient group. Data was analysed using Statistical Software for Social Sciences (SPSS version 21.0). Obtained data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean, median, standard deviation, range, frequencies and percentages and inferential statistics of chi-square and a non-parametric test (Mann-whitney U) test. Significant level (p)was set at 0.05.

Results: The mean age of the sample population was 36.9 years (± SD 8.9). Majority of the study participants were female (81%), age more than 40 years (62%), Muslim (80%), married (85%), having at least two children (51%), monthly income. 20,000 to 40,000 Sri Lankan rupees, having a permanent job (92%), trained teachers (50%), residing in urban area (76%), and sitting more than 2 hours per day (68%). Nineteen percent of the participants had at least one chronic disease. It was found that each participant on average spends 3005.7 (SD±2706.7) MET-minutes total energy per week. The main contributor to the energy expenditure was engaging in home cleaning and gardening [1516.9 (SD±1618.9) MET-minutes per week]. People engaging in job, transport, leisure related activity was less. More energy was spent in

moderate activity [2069.0 (SD±2173.7) MET-minutes per week] percentage of low, moderate and high PA level was 15%, 48% and 37% respectively. Majority (85%) of the participants had sufficient level of PA. Majority of the houses belonged to low density (88%) area. Land use diversity showed that most of the facilities were away from the participants residence. Overall physical and social environment was less favorable to engaging PA. "I haven't got time (no time)", "I need to rest and relax in my spare time (need rest)" "I've got young children to look after (children)" expressed as more perceived barriers for engaging in PA. Insufficient PA level was significantly associated among young and not having chronic disease teachers. Physical environment and perceived barriers were not significant with sufficient level of PA.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Despite the non- conducive environment, majority of Kattankudy government school teachers had sufficient level of PA. Young teachers and those who not having chronic disease did not meet the sufficient level of PA. None of the factors was perceived barriers to engaging PA. A separate intervention program has to be initiated to increase awareness on participating PA to young teachers. Policy makers has to be instructed to consider the favourable environment to engaging PA when doing town planning in future.

Key words

Physical activity, teachers, physical and social environment, perceived barriers.