Original Article

Schoolbag weight and its relationship to the occurrence of pain among schoolchildren in the western region of Libya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between the schoolbag weight, and factors related to schoolbag carriage and occurrence of pain among primary school children in western part of Libya. 2371 students (1212 male and 1159 female) in grades 1 - 4 (6-9 years) were selected. Weight, tall and schoolbag weight were measured and questionnaire was used to collection the data. During the interviewing period children were classified as having pain or non. ANOVA, T-test and Logistic regression were used for analysis the data. Among participants, (96.25%) of students were used two-strap backpack with general mean weight was 3.85 kg. (91.40%) of students carried more than 10% of their body weight. Of 2371 children, neck 1137 (47.90%), Shoulder 1481 (62.60%), back 1179 (49.70%) were classified as having pain while, neck 1234 (52.10%), Shoulder 890 (37.40%), back 1192 (50.30%) were classified as having no pain respectively. The bag weight was significantly associated with occurrence of pain in primary school children.

Key words: Musculoskeletal pain, Schoolbag weight, Libya.

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Introduction

changes, balance impairment and body pain [1-4]. In recent years the studies has increased its focus on body pain in these children [5-9]. The type of school bag, method of transport to arrive to school, weight of school bag, and the

The weight of bags carried by school children in Libya has increased due to the change in the school curriculum. The loads of school bag are reported to cause many problems in children such as postural changes, cardio-respiratory
level considered in the analyses was set at 0.05; 95% confidence intervals were presented. The analyses were carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 software.

**Results**

A total of 2371 students was participating in this study, out of which 1242 (52.38%) were male and 1129 (47.62%) female. The age of the schoolchildren ranged from 6-9 years. The number of students according to educational stage was 730 (30.8. %), 586 (24.70 %), 655 (27.60 %) and 400 (16.90%) in first, second, third and fourth grade respectively. The averages of weight (27.50±10.32), height (137.20±6.82), bag weight (4.27±1.13) and bag weight to student weight ratio (15.53±8.88) have seen in Table-1.

Table (1). Averages of student grade, weight, height, bag weight (full), and bag weight to student weight ratio.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th># of Students (%)</th>
<th>Student weight (Mean ± SD) (Kg)</th>
<th>Height of student (Mean ± SD) (CM)</th>
<th>Bag weight full (Mean ± SD) (Kg)</th>
<th>School bag weight/ Student weight (Ratio)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>730 (30.80 %)</td>
<td>24.06 ± 13.89</td>
<td>119.71 ± 6.04</td>
<td>3.57 ± 0.91</td>
<td>14.83 ± 4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>586 (24.70 %)</td>
<td>25.29 ± 4.90</td>
<td>126.37 ± 8.30</td>
<td>3.65 ± 0.80</td>
<td>14.43 ± 9.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>655 (27.60 %)</td>
<td>28.65 ± 5.67</td>
<td>131.83 ± 7.90</td>
<td>4.50 ± 1.67</td>
<td>15.70 ± 6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>400 (16.90 %)</td>
<td>31.19 ± 6.51</td>
<td>135.58 ± 11.49</td>
<td>4.62 ± 1.09</td>
<td>14.81 ± 3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2371 (100.0%)</td>
<td>27.29 ± 7.59</td>
<td>128.37 ± 8.43</td>
<td>4.08 ± 1.11</td>
<td>14.95 ± 6.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident that carrying a heavy backpack has health effects. This has been clearly demonstrated by many studies conducted in Africa[14], Europe[15-17] and Asia [18]. In Libya, there is a lack of studies related to our subject that have examined the weight of school bags and body pain in children. The aim of this study was to examine the correlation between school bag weight and the occurrence of pain among first to fourth grade students in Libyan’s schools.

**Methodology**

The study conducted on healthy male and female students started from 2014 up to 2022. 2371 students attending first (6Y) to fourth (9Y) grade at a government school in western part of Libya took part in the study. Students were selected randomly from each class. After that, the students were interviewed by the researcher during the school days.

During the interviewing period, the child’s age, gender, weight, height, school bag weight, was recorded. Percentage of school bag weight relative to body weight was calculated. Health effects (back pain, shoulder pain, neck pain and no pain) were recorded. Questionnaire was used included school bag type, perception of students toward school bag weight (lighter weight, heavier weight). At the beginning of the school day, the researcher collected data on a randomly chosen day to measure the weight of all the books and food items.

Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean, standard deviation, frequency variables and Chi–Square test, ANOVA, T-test and logistic regression were also used. The α
As shown in results, the majority 91.40% of school children carry school bags that weigh 10% or more of their body weight, while 8.60% of students usually carry school bags that weigh less than 10%. The loads carried with regard to (%) body weight guideline are shown in Table 2.

Table (2). Distribution of students according to the ratio of school bag weight to body weight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratio of school bag to student weight</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 10%</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>8.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 10% and &lt; 15%</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>41.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 15%</td>
<td>1175</td>
<td>49.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2371</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows a high percentage of school children who complained of pain (neck, shoulder and lower back). Of 2371 children, neck 1137 (47.90%), Shoulder 1481 (62.60%), back 1179 (49.70%) were classified as having pain while, neck 1234 (52.10%), Shoulder 890 (37.40%), back 1192 (50.30%) were classified as having no pain respectively. The bag weight was significantly associated with the occurrence of pain in primary school children.

Table (3) : Distribution of students based on frequency of occurrence of musculoskeletal pain in general due to carrying school bag.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occurrence of pain</th>
<th>Body Region</th>
<th>Always (pain)</th>
<th>None (no pain)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>P. value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neck</td>
<td>1137 (47.90 %)</td>
<td>1234 (52.10 %)</td>
<td>2371</td>
<td>0.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shoulder</td>
<td>1481 (62.60 %)</td>
<td>890 (37.40 %)</td>
<td>2371</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower back</td>
<td>1179 (49.70 %)</td>
<td>1192 (50.30 %)</td>
<td>2371</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School bag weight / Student weight = Result× %

2282 (96.25%) of students in the study were used a two-strap backpack without wheel while 89 (03.75%) carried their schoolbags on their backs using two strap backpacks with wheel (Fig. 1). The weight of schoolbag ranged from (3.57±0.91 kg) to (4.62.09 kg), and the weekly mean of schoolbag weight was (4.08±1.11 kg) (Table-1). In addition to that, 71.0% of participants felt their school bag was heavy during carrying it, while 29.0% of the sampled students felt that their school bag was light (Fig. 2).

Figure 1. Distribution of students according to the type of schoolbag.

Figure 2. Perception of students toward schoolbag weight.
weight ranges from 14.43% to 15.70%. This indicates that the students exceed the suggested weight by 4.43–5.70%.

The results of the study showed a significant relationship between the weight of the school bag and the occurrence of pain in the study sample's student population (Table 3). Similar to our results, a high level of complaints of shoulder pain (47.8% and 38.1%) were reported by Al-Qato (2012) and Shamsoddini et al. (2010), respectively. Most of the students complained of shoulder pain because most of them used bags with two straps, which put pressure on the shoulders. Carrying heavy schoolbags will have many effects, including distorting the back's natural curves.

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Conference Presentation

Part of this paper was presented at the 7th Libyan Conference for Medical Sciences, 2022 October 11-13, National Medical Research Centre, Zawia, Libya.

Clinical Trials

The study did not involve any clinical trials.

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