Background: Undernutrition among adolescent girls is a major public health problem all over the world particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa including Ethiopia. Adolescence is the most critical period of life where rapid growth and developmental changes occur. Even though adolescence is a unique opportunity to break the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition, information regarding the prevalence of undernutrition among adolescent girls is limited in the study area. Therefore, this study is aimed to assess the prevalence of undernutrition (thinness and stunting) and associated factors.

Methods: A community-based cross-sectional study was employed from March 11 to April 11, 2021. A two-stage sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 672 adolescent girls. Data were checked and entered into Epi data version 3.1. SPSS window version 25.0 was used for data analysis. Variables with a *p*-value < 0.25 in bivariable logistic regression were a candidate for multivariable logistic regression. Multiple logistic regression models were fitted to identify factors associated with thinness and stunting. *P*-value < 0.05 was used to declare statistical significance.

Results: The prevalence of thinness and stunting among adolescent girls in the district was 12.6% [95%CI: (10.3%, 15.2%)] and 21.1% [95%CI: (18.3%, 24.3%)], respectively. Large family size [AOR=3.23, 95%CI: (1.87, 5.58)], ≤ 2 meal frequency [AOR=3.21, 95%CI: (1.59, 6.45)], non-menstruating girls [AOR=4.24, 95%CI: (2.36, 7.61)], poor and medium wealth index [AOR=2.34, 95%CI: (1.15, 4.72)] and [AOR=3.16, 95%CI: (1.61, 6.21)], and inadequate dietary diversity [AOR=2.23, 95%CI: (1.34, 3.68)] were factors significantly associated with thinness. Whereas, early adolescence [AOR=1.54, 95%CI: (1.04, 2.28)], large family [AOR=1.85, 95%CI: (1.24, 2.77)], separate decision making on nutrition service by father or mother, [AOR=3.21, 95%: (1.68, 6.14)] and [AOR=3.01, 95%: (1.76, 5.15)], inadequate dietary diversity [AOR=2.12,

95%CI: (1.41, 3.19)], and household food insecurity [AOR=2.24, 95%CI: (1.48, 3.41)] were significantly associated with stunting.

Conclusions: Stunting and thinness among adolescent girls were found to be a prevalent problem in the study area. Future interventions and programs may consider strategies to improve dietary diversity, food security, wealth status, household decision-making power, meal frequency, and family size through increasing the awareness of the community on the intergenerational effect of adolescent undernutrition and by implementing multi-sectorial collaboration.

Bibliography

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