

## Predictors of Dietary Behavior and Lifestyle Habits Among Jordanian Schoolchildren During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract:

**Background:** The prevalence of childhood obesity has emerged as a critical global health challenge, with rates nearly tripling in recent decades. In Jordan, the recent pandemic significantly disrupted daily routines, creating an "obesogenic" environment that reduced physical activity and fostered detrimental dietary shifts among the youth.

**Objective:** This study aimed to identify the demographic and socioeconomic predictors of dietary and lifestyle behaviors among Jordanian school children using a validated assessment tool. Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted using the validated Dietary and Lifestyle Behavior Inventory (DLBI). A sample of 900 school children aged 6 to 18 years was selected through purposive sampling across in rural and urban areas in Jordan. The instrument demonstrated exceptional content validity (CVI = 0.997) and strong internal reliability for assessing nutrition and activity levels.

**Results:** The sample profile included 37.8% males and 62.2% females. Analysis of economic backgrounds showed 80.2% of families earned a middle-income (501–1000 JOD), while parental backgrounds were characterized by high education, with over 68% of parents holding bachelor's degrees. Correlation results established strong associations between parental education and employment. Multiple regression analysis identified age, living region, and paternal occupation as significant predictors of dietary behavior ( $p < .001$ ), reflecting the pandemic's impact on lifestyle choices.

**Conclusion:** The findings underscore how the pandemic-induced environment altered nutritional patterns. The validated DLBI provides a vital foundation for targeted interventions to mitigate the obesity crisis in Jordan.