

39. WEIGHT SELF-PERCEPTION IN ADOLESCENTS: EVIDENCE FROM A POPULATION-BASED STUDY



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Introduction. Exploring the nuanced relationship between weight and self-perception in adolescents is a crucial aspect of understanding their mental and physical well-being. Through a population-based study, we delve into the evidence surrounding how adolescents perceive their weight and its impact on their overall self-image.

Aim of study. To assess misperceptions regarding weight among adolescents and identify links between self-perceived weight and socio-demographic factors, screen time, self-assessed food quantity and quality, weekly breakfast frequency, and the consumption of both healthy and unhealthy foods.

Methods and materials. This study is based on a study in which a questionnaire was used that was answered by 101 students aged 15-18.

Results. Nearly half (53,1%) of the adolescents with overweight/obesity did not evaluate their weight properly. Associating perceptions of being thin or carrying excess weight was notably influenced by multiple factors. These inclinations were linked to gender, particularly females, individuals grappling with overweight/obesity, self-assessed diet quality as poor/very poor, and a habit of consuming snacks ≥ 3 times per week. Moreover, a pattern emerged where daily breakfast consumption appeared to reduce the likelihood of perceiving oneself as thin. On the other hand, excessive eating habits seemed to heighten the likelihood of this perception. Interestingly, those consuming cookies/crackers ≥ 3 times per week seemed less inclined to perceive themselves as having excess weight. 46.9% of teenagers believe that weight loss diets can have a negative impact on health. (56.3%) say that among the negative effects of weight-loss diets, the most important is the impact on mental health, (46%) of teenagers consider that the previous weight returns after the interruption of the diet and (33.3%) that there are important nutritional deficiencies. However, the biggest finding is that (89.1%) of teenagers say that they have never been guided by a specialist in choosing a weight loss diet.

Conclusion. Greater weight misperception was found in overweight/obese adolescents. Self-rated food quantity/diet quality, weekly frequency of breakfast and some unhealthy foods were associated with self-perceived weight. Conclusively, the prevalence of weight misperception among overweight/obese adolescents underscores the need for targeted interventions to address this issue. The significant associations discovered between self-perceived weight and various socio-demographic attributes, coupled with the misconception regarding weight loss diets among teenagers, signal a crucial need for comprehensive education and guidance on healthy lifestyle practices. Moreover, the concerning revelation that a vast majority of adolescents have never sought guidance from specialists when opting for weight loss diets demands urgent attention. The present findings could contribute to health promotion strategies targeting adolescents.