



14. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY

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Introduction. Childhood obesity, once thought of as a sign of health, now raises concerns among parents, healthcare professionals, and society. Beyond its association with somatic consequences, it imposes significant negative psychosocial challenges, including depression, anxiety, and oppositional defiant disorder

Aim of study. This study explores the evolving dynamics of childhood obesity, revealing the intricate interplay with emerging mental health consequences beyond conventional health concerns.

Methods and materials. The literature synthesis covered 2018-2023, using Google Scholar, UpToDate, and ScienceDirect. Inclusion criteria focused on studies of children with obesity, excluding comorbidities, with key terms like "childhood obesity and psychological consequences."

Results. Numerous studies show a link between BMI and psychopathology, with common symptoms like depression, anxiety, binge eating, and attention deprivation disorders. Correlations between childhood obesity and depression, anxiety, and increased bullying, especially in girls, are established. Among the bibliographic sources found, depression frequency in adolescents ranged from 13% to 63%. No single cause has been identified, but chronic stress due to weight-related bullying may contribute. Some researchers suggest depression severity correlates with the child's waist circumference. About 45% of obese children and adolescents surveyed are dissatisfied with their figure, contributing to low self-esteem. Research says that parents' negative comments about their child's weight exacerbate self-esteem issues. Reviews highlight links with anxiety and behavioural disorders, projecting future increases tied to family and environmental, physical and relational bullying. As a result, obese children avoid physical activities, negatively impacting school performance. Research shows at least a third of girls and a quarter of boys refuse to participate in group activities due to weight related shame. The lasting impact of obesity significantly reduces the quality of life for obese children affecting physical, emotional, and social aspects. Duration of obesity is identified as a risk factor, emphasizing the need for active intervention.

Conclusion. Obesity, beyond its physical consequences, significantly affects the child's psychological state, leading to depression, anxiety, body shaming, and a diminished quality of life. Optimizing obesity treatment and preserving mental health require a multidisciplinary approach, including early screening for psychosocial factors and providing timely psychological support.