



Children's Eating Habits in Turkey: An Evaluation through Children's Eating Attitudes Test (ChEAT)

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Obesity in children is a global concern that requires immediate attention. The sedentary lifestyle leads to the onset and progress of obesity in children. Herein, a detailed survey was conducted on 637 students aged between 8 and 11.

Methods: The survey was done on children of either Turkish or Syrian ethnicity, who went to public and private schools and belonged to rich, medium, and poor socioeconomic backgrounds. Contour drawing scales were used to categorize the body type of the participants. Statistical analysis was conducted to understand the responses provided by the selected students on the 26 items according to the ChEAT questionnaire.

Results: The results suggested that the students were aware of their health but were not ascertain about the relation between eating attitudes and obesity. A mixed response to the other's perception of their obesity was observed.

Conclusions: The present results supported the validation of the ChEAT questionnaire to evaluate the children's perspective psychometrically. The survey suggested adopting a scientific approach to improve the awareness of obesity among children.

Keywords: Obesity; Children's Eating Attitudes Test; Public Health; ChEAT

Introduction

Obesity has become a major health concern globally with an ever-growing number of cases. In children, the situation is not different compared to adults [1]. The estimation related to overweight or obese children suggested that 40 million children (≤ 5 years) are reported to be obese whereas for adolescents (5-19 years) obesity was reported for 330 million.

Such a serious situation warrants proper scientific exploration of the disease's cause and relevant remedies rapidly. Apart from genetic factors [2,3], several socioeconomic, environmental factors govern the onset and progress of obesity [4,5]. In the case of children, socioeconomic status [6], the influence of the home environment [7], the influence of the school environment [8], parental obesity condition [9] were reported to be associated with the obesity in school-going children.

However, the eating pattern [10], dietary intake, diet quality [11], food types, nutritional factors [12] were reported to be major eating habits associated factors responsible for obesity in children. Apart from eating attitude, the immense role of lack of exercise and a sedentary lifestyle can induce obesity in children [13,14].

Understanding the children's psychology regarding eating attitudes and their body type is important to prevent them from over-eating, have a proper and healthy diet, perform physical activities, and prevent obesity. Various psychometric scales are used to understand children's psychology in different age groups and with relevance to different aspects. Psychometric evaluation of the children has been done for emotional regulation during adolescence [15], emotional awareness [16], child behavior according to the DSM related scales [17], and eating habits [18]. The ChEAT questionnaire with 26 simple questions can evaluate the psychology of children regarding their eating attitudes and perception of their body type and feelings about others' opinions on their body type [18]. Several earlier studies were conducted on evaluating the eating attitudes of children using this psychometric scaling system where apart from the questions provided in this test, additional parameters were also considered for analysis and correlation [19].

In this study, we report an analysis of 637 students (aged 8-11) conducted using the ChEAT 26 questionnaire and contour body drawing scaling analysis. The objective of the study was to understand the psychology of the children regarding their eating atti-