

Differences in body image of young normal weight and overweight/obese people.

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: Obesity is a chronic and growing problem. Its study requires the understanding of multiple associated variables. Body image has an important role in the health condition. The purpose of this study was to compare the perception of body image of young normal weight and overweight/obese people.

MATERIAL AND METHODS: A sample of 376 young men and women aged 18 to 25 was compared. Body mass index classified them in two groups: normal weight and overweight/obese. To evaluate body image participants answered the Multidimensional Body Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ). To evaluate eating behavior they answered the Eating Disorders Inventory (EDI-3).

RESULTS: Overweight/obese young people are less satisfied with their appearance and their body when it is evaluated separately. They evaluate their physical condition and their physical abilities badly. They show fewer behaviors intended to maintain or improve their physical appearance, perceive a worse diagnosis of their health and show less body satisfaction. They are more concerned about their weight and they are obsessed about thinness. In addition, women, compared to men, have a worse negative assessment of their body image.

CONCLUSION: Despite the low assessment that overweight/obese students made in relation to their body, they are not willing to perform activities that allow them to change their condition. Further research is needed in order to develop preventive programs and more treatments that are effective.