ICCN Poster Presentations

Obesity

Gender and ethnic differences of Mexican children's attitudes toward a drawing of an obese peer

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Background: In the Mexico-US border, in 1999, 35% of the children aged 6-11 y were over the 85th percentile body mass index from NCHS. Among Mexican-Indian migrant children on the Mexico-US border the overall prevalence of overweight and obesity was 38%. In the USA studies have been conducted to identify how children acted toward the drawing of an obese child. Studies in the USA have shown that children liked the drawing of an obese child the least. However, no studies have been published on the attitude toward an obese child among Mexican children.

Objective: We explored the relationships of stereotypes of obesity to sex and ethnicity in 433 Mexican children attending elementary public schools at a Mexico-US border city.

Methods: School-based sample of children evaluating different qualities of children. Participants included 433, 9 to 14 year old girls and boys attending upper-middle and lower-middle income Mexican public schools. Children ranked six drawings of same-sex children with obesity, various disabilities, or no disability (healthy), in order of how well they liked each child.

Results: Ratings were generally more favourable for the wheelchair child and the average weight than for the obese condition in both girls and boys. However, girls liked the obese child less than boys did, $p<0.0001$. Girls above BMI at 85th percentile were generally more favourable for the obese child, $p=0.07$. Indian children liked the obese child more than non-Indian children; however, this was not statistically significant.

Conclusion: These results should be considered when designing general health education and obesity prevention programs at school levels.