

The relation between selected health behaviour and body mass index amongst adolescents living in urban and rural areas in south-western Poland.

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The relation between selected health behaviour and body mass index amongst adolescents living in urban and rural areas in south-western Poland.

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Source

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Changes to the body and its proportions, especially body mass, are frequently and critically assessed by the young according to peer pressure and opinions prevalent in their living and home surroundings, as well as through role models created by the media; particularly those promoting fashions for having a slim figures. The desire to achieve this ideal, is thus responsible for adolescents undertaking a variety of actions/behaviour to regulate their body weight.

OBJECTIVE:

To compare healthy lifestyle behaviour in secondary school pupils living in towns and the countryside who have variable weights and heights associated with a self-assessment of body mass.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Subjects were $n = 1,279$ pupils aged 13-15 years, attending secondary school. Those from the countryside environments were $n = 273$ (136 boys and 137 girls), whilst those from urban areas, (towns) were $n = 1,006$ (512 boys and 494 girls). Both weights and heights were measured and the Body Mass Index (BMI) determined. Threshold values for overweight, obesity and underweight, were used to assign BMI groups according to the procedure of Cole et al. Perceptions on how subjects assessed their body weight and remedial actions so arising, were surveyed using the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) questionnaire. The relationships between the factors studied were subjected to log-linear analysis and their significance evaluated by Chi² test using a significance level of $p < \text{or} = 0.05$.

RESULTS:

No significant differences were found in the observed frequencies of overweight, obesity and underweight groups between students from the different environments studied. Pupils having a normal body mass constituted 68.9% of total subjects. There were also no differences seen in body weight perception between the various environments. Approximately 70% of subjects properly assessed their own body mass, however the methods of its assessment differed between boys and girls. The main ways adopted for regulating body mass was found to be exercise and diet in both student groups. Significantly more girl pupils living in towns, (54.9%) did physical exercises, aimed at weight reduction, compared to those living in the countryside (43.8%).

CONCLUSIONS:

Only small differences in observed frequencies of height-weight were seen between urban and rural dwelling pupils; the same being true for lifestyle behaviour in controlling weight. Irrespective of residence, two thirds of pupils, aged 13-16 years, correctly assessed their own body mass. In children and adolescents, improving self-awareness of body proportions can be achieved through educating on what the significance of having a healthy BMI is, effective ways of its estimation and safe methods for regulation.

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