

Stressful Life Events and Their Influence on Childhood Obesity and Emotional Well-Being: Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract : There is an association between an early accumulation of Stressful Life Events (SLE) during childhood and various physical and psychological health complications. However, there are only a few studies on this topic in children and adolescents with overweight or obesity. The general aim of the study was to evaluate the accumulation and type of SLE in 200 children from 8 to 12 years old and analyze the relationship with their emotional well-being and weight status (obesity, overweight and normal weight). The children and their families completed an interview. The evaluated variables that are included in this study are sociodemographic measures, medical/psychological history, anthropometric measures (BMI, z-BMI), and psychological variables (children's clinical interview K-SADS-PL (Schedule for Affective Disorders and Schizophrenia for School-Age Children Present and Lifetime Version) and battery of questionnaires). Results: Children with overweight and obesity accumulate more stressful events from an early age and have a significantly higher percentage of psychiatric diagnoses, compared to their peers with normal weight. Presenting a child psychiatric disorder is related to greater z-BMI and the total number of SLE ($p < 0.001$). A higher z-BMI is also related to a greater number of stressful events during childhood. There is also a positive and significant relationship between the total number of SLE and worse emotional well-being (higher levels of anxious and depressive symptoms and low self-esteem of children) ($p < 0.01$). Conclusion: Children with overweight and obesity grow up in a family, school, and social context where more stressors are accumulated. This is also directly associated with worse emotional well-being. It is necessary to implement multidisciplinary prevention and intervention strategies in different changes (school, family, and health). This study is included in a project funded by the Ministry of Innovation and Science (PSI2011-23127).

Keywords : childhood obesity, emotional well-being, psychopathology, stressful life events

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