

Loss of Control Eating as a Key Factor of the Psychological Symptomatology Related to Childhood Obesity

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Abstract : Introduction and Objective: Given the difficulties of assessing Binge Eating Disorder during childhood, episodes of Loss of Control (LOC) eating can be a key symptom. The objective is to know the prevalence of food psychopathology depending on the type of evaluation and find out which psychological characteristics differentiate overweight or obese children who present LOC from those who do not. Material and Methods: 170 children from 8 to 12 years of age with overweight or obesity ($P > 85$) were evaluated through the Primary Care Centers of Madrid. Sociodemographic data and psychological measures were collected through the Kiddie-Schedule for Affective Disorders & Schizophrenia, Present & Lifetime Version (K-SADS-PL) diagnostic interview and self-applied questionnaires: Children's eating attitudes (ChEAT), depressive symptomatology (CDI), anxiety (STAIC), general self-esteem (LAWSEQ), body self-esteem (BES), perceived teasing (POTS) and perfectionism (CAPS). Results: 15.2% of the sample exceeded the ChEAT cut-off point, presenting a risk of pathological eating; 5.88% presented an Eating Disorder through the diagnostic interview (2.35% Binge Eating disorder), and 33.53% had LOC episodes. No relationship was found between the presence of LOC and clinical diagnosis of eating disorders according to DSM-V; however, the group with LOC presented a higher risk of eating psychopathology using the ChEAT ($p < .02$). Significant differences were found in the group with LOC ($p < .02$): higher z-BMI, lower body self-esteem, greater anxious symptomatology, greater frequency of teasing towards weight, and greater effect of teasing both towards weight and competitions; compared to their peers without LOC. Conclusion: According to previous studies in samples with overweight children, in this Spanish sample of children with obesity, we found a prevalence of moderate eating disorder and a high presence of LOC episodes, which is related to both eating and general psychopathology. These findings confirm that the exclusion of LOC episodes as a diagnostic criterion can underestimate the presence of eating psychopathology during this developmental stage. According to these results, it is highly recommended to promote school context programs that approach LOC episodes in order to reduce associated symptoms. This study is included in a Project funded by the Ministry of Innovation and Science (PSI2011-23127).

Keywords : childhood obesity, eating psychopathology, loss-of-control eating, psychological symptomatology

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