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A Study on the influence of body satisfaction on obesity related stress and eating behaviors of adolescents in Korea

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Recent studies have shown that adolescents who are concerned about their body image perceived that extreme thinness is their ideal body shape. This thought was influenced by social and mass media and led to dissatisfaction with their body shape. Particularly, satisfaction with their body shape in adolescence could modulate not only emotional and psychological development but also eating behavior, which has an effect on mental and physical growth and development. This study investigated the body perception and eating behavior of adolescents and suggests a possible direction for nutritional education to establish desirable eating behavior and body shape perception. The survey was performed from a population of 616 junior high school students (286 boys and 330 girls) in the Seoul area and included questions about height, weight, satisfaction or stress with their body shape, weight control, eating behavior, and eating disorder. Satisfaction with body shape was tested by 12 questions. The answers were divided into three groups based on total score satisfaction (top 25%), normal, and dissatisfaction groups (bottom 25%). Answers about eating disorders were also tested using the EAT-26 test, calculated and students were divided into two groups based on their score: students who had over 20 points were placed in the eating disorder group and those who had less than 20 points were normal group. Data were presented by frequency, percentage, or average and standard deviation. The significant difference of answers about satisfaction with body shape was tested by χ^2 -test and Duncan's multiple range test. Average BMI were 19.9 and 19.3 and overweight students were 8.0 % and 2.4 % in boys and girls. The total score of body shape satisfaction was 28.8 and boys (30.3) were more significantly satisfied with their body shape than girls (27.5). In addition, satisfaction with body shape group had more students who perceived that their body shape was fatty but had a lower stress score on obesity compared to the dissatisfaction group in boys and girls. In body weight control, the dissatisfaction group had more interest and experience with weight control. In addition, there was a significant difference among groups regarding reasons for weight control. When we compared eating disorder and body shape satisfaction, the dissatisfaction group (24.3%) had more eating disorder than the satisfaction group (11.6%). In eating behavior score, the satisfaction group had a higher score than the dissatisfaction group in girls but there was no difference between boys. According to these results, dissatisfaction with body shape in adolescents may cause stress with obesity and this stress may make them to start weight control. Therefore, proper nutritional education is necessary to establish the desirable weight control and eating behavior.