EATING ATTITUDES AND PHYSICAL APPEARANCE IN ADOLESCENTS GIRLS

STAVOVI ADOLESCENTKINJA U VEZI ISHRANE I TJELESNOG IZGLEDA

Živana Gavrić

Department of Social Medicine, Medical Faculty, University Banja Luka

Abstract

Introduction: Eating disorders are more common in women; especially adolescent girls are at risk.

Objective: To assess whether the adolescent girls in Banjaluka (Repulika Srpska- B&H) are satisfied with their present physical appearance and weight. To analyze views about their appearance.

Methods: The survey was conducted among female adolescents, aged 16–17, in all secondary schools in Banjaluka, using the modified Eating Attitudes Test - EAT-26. The response rate was 1956 (87.3%) out of 2240 (total number in first and second grade female students).

Results: Almost ½ of surveyed with BMI <18.5 kg/m² were sometimes dissatisfied with their body image. More than ½ (54.8%) with BMI 18.5-25 kg/m² were sometimes dissatisfied with their appearance, while 1 of 10 respondents had that feeling often. Nearly 1/5 declared that they often wanted to be slimmer. With statistically significant differences, the surveyed students with BMI <18 kg/m² stated that they were unaware of calorie value of foods compared to students with BMI of 18-25 kg/m². (X²=63.7, df=24, p=0.000). Nearly 1/3 of respondents were always, very often, and often familiar with calorie values of food.

Discussion: Unrealistic idea of the size of the body can carry different health risks. They range from inadequate child attempts to inability to recognize and stop the weight gain.

Conclusion: The survey highlights the need for education of young people in order to accept a healthy lifestyle.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is characterized by significant physical, emotional and intellectual changes, and changes in social roles, relationships and expectations. This is a time of growth, which is characterized by the change in body proportion, size, weight and body image, emotional changes, new sleep patterns and needs, development of sexuality and reproductive functions. These changes are a normal transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescents are experiencing these changes in different ways. Adolescent girls are often concerned about their bodily appearance, express dissatisfaction with their appearance, weight and want to lose weight.

Girls in adolescence often perceive themselves as fatter than they really are and that is why they want to be slimmer and start dieting. Although most of these attitudes and behavior related to nutrition are benign, their can bear significant psychological and medical risks. These risks are not infrequently associated with increasing risk of clinically manifested eating disorders. The conduct related to eating disorders is associated with increasing risk of risky behavior such as smoking, consumption of alcohol and psychoactive substances, development of depression and suicidal behavior.

Eating disorders are more common in women. Especially teenage girls and young women are at greater risk of eating disorders, because they are preoccupied with their body shape, weight and diet.

Eating disorders involve serious disturbances in behavior related to nutrition (to eat too much or too little) (1). They are unhealthy eating patterns and include anorexia nervosa, bulimia and non-specific eating disorders. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia are among the most common eating disorders in the developed western world. Images of beauty send a strong message to all women about what our culture expects them to be.
to become or what bodily appearance is desirable. A sad
truth is that trying to look perfect, a young girl divides her
"self" and her esteem becomes dependent on the reflection
she sees in the mirror or on the number of pounds she reads
on the balance.

People with anorexia nervosa refuse to maintain body
weight above or at the minimum normal body weight, they
have intense fear of gaining weight and express significant
disturbance in perception of their own bodily shape and size
(2).

While people with bulimia nervosa are subject to exces-
sive intake of food, with a sense of loss of control over eat-
ing (in a sense that they cannot stop eating or cannot control
what and how much they eat), then use a compensatory
behavior to prevent weight gain, such as induced vomiting,
intensive exercising or abuse of laxatives, diuretics, and star-
vation. They also attach exaggerated importance to their
bodily shape and weight. (3).

The development of eating disorder is considered to be a
result of combination of biological, psychological and social
factors (4, 5, 6).

**OBJECTIVE**

The aim of the research is to assess whether the adoles-
cent girls in Banjaluka are satisfied with their real physical
bodily appearance and weight, and to determine, by analyz-
ing their attitudes toward their own appearance.

**METHOD**

The survey was conducted in seven secondary schools in
Banjaluka in February 2007. Out of total seven middle
schools, all first and second grade female students, aged 16
and 17, from 116 classes, were selected as a sample.

The survey was carried out by student interviewers during
a 45 minute school hour, in teacher’s presence. Instructions
were given on how to complete the survey, which was anonymous and voluntary.

Out a total of 2240 I and II grade student girls of secondary
schools surveyed, 1956 (87.3%), which were the day of
the class, responded to the questionnaire- 91.2% in the first
grade and 83.5% (950 out of total 1137), in the second
grade. (Table 1)

In this survey a modified EAT-26 questionnaire was
used, while the girls recorded their weight and height by
themselves. (Garner, Olmsted, Bohr, & Garfinkel, 1982).
was used as a survey. It addressed items like satisfaction
with one’s body image, body weight and attitudes to diet and
your body. (7)

The Epi Info 2002 statistical program for statistical pro-
cessing of collected questionnaire responses and the 95%
assessment interval for estimation of accuracy degree were
used.

**RESULTS**

Of total number of female students who filled the survey (1956), the highest
percentage (83.4%) had BMI of 18.5-25
kg/m², while 150 (7.7%) had BMI <18.5
kg/m² and 4.7% had BMI> 25 kg/m². (Table 2.

Almost ½ of surveyed students with
BMI <18.5 kg/m² stated that they were
sometimes dissatisfied with their bodily
appearance, 40.7% that they have never
dissatisfied with their appearance.
12.7% declared that they sometimes
wanted to be slimmer, while 82.7%
never had that feeling. 2.0% of subjects
induced vomiting by themselves, while
97.3% never did that. (Table 3)

More than ½ (54.8%) of surveyed
students with BMI of 18.5-25 kg/m²
were sometimes dissatisfied with their appearance, while 1 of 10 surveyed sta-
et that they often have that feeling.
Almost 1/5 said that they often wanted to
be slimmer, and 41.9% had that desire
sometimes, while 38.3% never wanted to
be slimmer. 2.1% of surveyed subjects
induced vomiting by themselves, and
97.1% never did that. (Table 3)

More than ½ (54.8%) of surveyed
students with BMI of 18.5-25 kg/m²
were sometimes dissatisfied with their appearance, while 1 of 10 surveyed sta-
et that they often have that feeling.
Almost 1/5 said that they often wanted to
be slimmer, and 41.9% had that desire
sometimes, while 38.3% never wanted to
be slimmer. 2.1% of surveyed subjects
induced vomiting by themselves, and
97.1% never did that. (Table 3)

With statistically significant differ-
cence, surveyed students with BMI <18
kg / m² declared that they were unfami-
lar with caloric values of foods in rela-
tion to the surveyed students with BMI
of 18-25 kg/m². (Chi-squared = 63.7, df
= 24, p = 0.000)

Table 1. Number of students who made up the sample, and the number and percentage of students who responded to both questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Classis</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th>Surveyed number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>total</td>
<td>first</td>
<td>second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Medical</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Economic</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Technology</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Agriculture</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Catering</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Grammar</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Music</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Classification of students in secondary schools by body mass index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Body mass index-BMI (kg/m²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Medical</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Economic</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Technology</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Agriculture</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Catering</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Grammar</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Music</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Almost 1/3 of surveyed students was always, very often, and often familiar with the calorie values of food, while more than ½ answered to this question as never or rarely. (Table 5)

**DISCUSSION**

According to the South Australian study(8) more than 70% of girls believed they were obese, while the medical record showed that only 10% of them were overweight with respect to their age and height.

The study conducted in the Center for adolescents in Victoria in 1995 on a 600 teenagers sample found that more than 70% of girls wanted to be slim, even those with low body weight. About 60% of Australian women were on some kind of diet, and 13% of girls believed that smoking is a good way to weight loss.

Dr. Dianne Neumark-Sztainer(9) estimated the prevalence of eating disorders and dieting on a sample of 6728 adolescents from 5 to 12th grades, and reported that almost half of girls (45%) were on a diet, compared to 20% of boys. Eating disorders were found in 13% of girls and 7% of boys.

**CONCLUSION**

You need to be a part of the curriculum to introduce teaching about nutrition as it tries to build healthy attitudes of youth toward proper nutrition. It is also necessary in schools as early as possible to discover people who have problems with diet and subjected them to an early treatment.

As part of informing the citizens via the media is necessary to draw attention to the symptoms of eating disorders and give advice to parents, teachers and others who work with young people so as to recognize the symptoms of eating disorders.
Apstrakt

Uvod: Poremećaji ishrane su češći kod žena, a posebno su pod rizikom adolescentkinje.

Cilj rada: procijeniti da li su adolescentkinje u Banja Luci (Republika Srpska-B&H) zadovoljne svojom postojećom tjelesnom masom i izgledom. I da se analiziraju njihovi stavovi o sopstvenom izgledu.

Metod rada: Anketnim istraživanjem su obuhvaćene adolescentkinje u dobi od 16 do 17 godine u svim srednjim školama u Banjoj Luci. U anketiranju smo koristili modifikovani anketni upitnik EAT-26. Od ukupno 2240 učenica I i II razreda srednjih škola 1956 (87.3%) je popunilo anketni upitnik.

Rezultati: Skoro ½ anketiranih učenica sa BMI<18.5 kg/m² je izjavilo da su ponekad nezadovoljne svojim tjelesnim izgledom. Više od ½ (54.8%) anketiranih učenica sa BMI od 18.5-25 kg/m² je ponekad nezadovoljno svojim izgledom, dok 1 od 10 anketiranih je izjavila da često ima taj osjećaj. Skoro 1/5 je izjavila da često želi da je mršavija. Uz statistički znatne razlike anketirane učenice sa BMI<18 kg/m² su rekle da nikad nisu upoznate sa kalorijskim vrijednostima hrane u odnosu na učenice sa BMI od 18-25 kg/m². (÷²=63.7; df=24; p=0.000). Skoro 1/3 anketiranih učenica je uvjek, veoma često i često upoznata sa kalorijskim vrijednostima hrane.

Diskusija: Nezadovoljstvo tjelesnim izgledom može nositi različite zdravstvene rizike. Oni se kreću od pokušaja neadekvatne dijete do nesposobnosti da se prepozna i zaustavi debljanje.

Zaključak: Istraživanje ukazuje na potrebu edukacije mladih u cilju prihvatavanja zdravih stilova života.

REFERENCES