The effect of a physical activity, diet and behaviour modification intervention on the self-perception of 9 to 12 year old overweight and obese children

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Short title: Physical activity intervention and self-perception

Abstract

The aim of the study was to determine whether a physical activity, diet and behaviour modification intervention would significantly improve the self-perception of 9 to 12 year old overweight and obese children. A convenience sample of 38 subjects between the ages of 9 and 12 years (mean age = 11.0) participated in the study. Twenty children (N = 20), 13 girls and 7 boys, participated in the intervention programme for 13 week (3 times/week), while 18 children (N = 18), 11 girls and 7 boys, served as a control group. Kinanthropometric measurements were used to assess body composition and self-perception was determined by using the Harter Scale for Self-Perception. The results showed low self-perception values compared to normal children, although the self-perception of overweight and obese children did not differ from each other. There was a significant increase in all subcomponents of self-perception in the experimental group, with the largest improvement in athletic, physical and global self-perception (p < 0.05). In contrast, the control group exhibited lower values in all the subcomponents with a significant decrease in social self-perception (p < 0.05). Waist and upper arm circumferences, as well as fat percentages of the experimental group decreased significantly, while the measurements of the same components in the control group increased. The multidisciplinary intervention programme not only possesses weight loss advantages for overweight and obese children, but has the advantage of improving self-perception. Participation in the programme also showed positive effects on the self-perception of both sexes, although the effect in the various subcomponents appears to be different.
Key words: Overweight, obesity, children, self-perception, intervention

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