

PSYCHO-NEUROTIC DISORDERS ASSOCIATED WITH
ADOLESCENT OBESITY : A STUDY



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ABSTRACT:

The objective of the present study is to compare psycho-neurotic disorders between obese and normal weight adolescent girls. 100 obese adolescent girls (Ave. age 16.92 yrs) and 100 normal weight adolescent girls (Ave. age 17.01 yrs) from various govt. and private schools/junior colleges operational in and around Nagpur city were selected to serve as sample for the present study. WHO (1995) classification was used to selected normal and obese adolescent girls. Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality Inventory prepared by Joshi and Malik

(1981) was used to assess psycho-neurotic disorders among selected subjects. Results reveal that, social introversion, a dimension of personality was strikingly high in obese adolescent girls as compared to normal weight adolescent girls. The other personality disorders i.e. anxiety, obsessive compulsive reaction, conversion reaction, hysteria dissociate, phobia, depression, neurasthenia, L-scale, K-scale, F-scale and An-scale were equally present in obese and normal weight adolescent girls. It was concluded that, obesity alone is not the causative factor as far as development of personality disorder in adolescent girls are concerned.

KEYWORDS

Psycho-neurotic disorder, adolescence, girls.

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INTRODUCTION :

Obesity is a medical condition in which excess body fat has accumulated to the extent that, it may have a negative effect on health, leading to reduced life expectancy and/or increased health problems (WHO, 2000).

One of the global health problems which are fast rising in India is obesity. More than 200 million school aged children all over the world are being categorised as overweight/obese in which around 40 to 50 million are obese. In India, the rising trend of prevalence of overweight and obesity is a cause of great concern. It also shows that, in not only urban but rural population in India is also affected by changing lifestyle.

There is a growing body of research that addresses the psychological impact of obesity, especially among adolescents. Obese children are often teased and are targets of bullying. Stigmatization could have a marked impact on childhood psychological development (Puhl & Brownell, 2003), and could explain some of the psychological disorders obese children experience.

Researches in the past have shown that, overweight and obese have difficulty in communicating with their peers, parents and teachers which leads to psychological distress in them. The grave consequences of obesity may be emotional distress, poor self image, aggressive behavior, lower academic achievement etc. (Mellin et al, 2002 Horton, 2008), Petry et al., Ternouth et al. (2009)).

Despite the role of obesity in development of psycho-neurotic disorders, no study has yet been conducted in India in which psycho-neurotic disorders have been compared between obese and normal weight adolescent girls, hence the present study was planned.

HYPOTHESIS

It was hypothesized that, magnitude of psycho-neurotic disorder will be significantly higher in obese adolescent girls as compared to normal weight adolescent girls.

METHODOLOGY :-

The following methodological steps were taken while conducting the present research work.

Sample :-

For present study, 100 obese adolescent girls (Ave. age 16.92 yrs) and 100 normal weight adolescent girls (Ave. age 17.01 yrs) from various govt. and private schools/junior colleges operational in and around Nagpur city were selected to serve as sample for the present study.

Tools:

Following tools were used to fulfil the objectives of the study -

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(a) Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality Inventory :

Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality Inventory prepared by Joshi and Malik (1981) was preferred to assess personality disorders. This inventory consist of 283 items and its psychoneurotic scale consist of 12 items i.e. anxiety, phobia, obsessive-compulsive reaction, conversion reaction, hysteria dissociate, neurotic depression, neurosthenia, social introversion and awareness scale. This inventory is highly reliable and valid.

(b) Body Mass Index:

WHO (1995) classification for Body Mass Index was used to identify obese and normal weight adolescent girls. According to the WHO, a BMI <18.5 kg/m² is defined as underweight, 18.5-24.9 kg/m² as normal weight, 25.0-29.9 kg/m² as overweight, and >30.0 kg/m² as obesity.

Procedure:

Adequate number of adolescent girls were selected as sample through convenience sampling method. Height and weight of these selected subjects were measured. Body mass index was calculated by using the formula given by WHO (1995). Afterwards subjects were classified into two categories i.e. normal weight and obese. This process was continued till desired number of samples in each group were not met.

The selected subjects were then subjected to Jodhpur Multiphasic Personality Inventory prepared by Joshi and Malik (1981) in a laboratory like condition. Scoring of the responses was done with the help of author’s manual. The obtained data was tabulated according to their respective groups. ‘t’ test was used to compare the data between two study groups. The results are presented in table 1.

RESULTS

Table No. 8
Comparison of Personality Disorders between Normal Weight And Obese Adolescent Girls

Personality Disorders	Normal Weight Adolescent Girls (N=100)		Obese Adolescent Girls (N=100)		t	Level of Significance
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.		
Anxiety	37.80	13.31	40.12	11.78	1.30	NS
Obsessive-compulsive reaction	38.78	14.62	39.05	10.51	0.15	NS
Conversion-Reaction	22.13	8.72	22.53	8.46	0.32	NS
Hysteria-Dissociate	7.03	4.08	7.44	4.83	0.64	NS
Phobia	13.07	6.64	13.17	5.25	0.11	NS
Depression	34.99	12.11	36.62	8.69	1.09	NS
Neurasthenia	11.27	5.13	11.39	7.17	0.13	NS
Social Introversion	43.95	7.78	47.25	6.81	3.18	.01
L-scale	36.92	6.76	37.63	6.25	0.77	NS
K-scale	51.33	9.07	52.37	7.68	0.87	NS
F-scale	28.90	9.93	30.39	8.41	1.14	NS
Awareness Scale	5.70	3.05	6.33	2.98	1.47	NS

Not Significant ($p > .05$)

A perusal of statistical entries presented in table 1 clearly indicate that, apart from social introversion, no significant difference was observed between normal weight and obese adolescent girls on dimensions of personality disorder i.e. Anxiety, Obsessive-compulsive reaction, Conversion-Reaction, Hysteria-Dissociate, Phobia, Depression, Neurasthenia, L-scale, K-scale, F-scale and Awareness Scale respectively. Only social introversion was found to be significantly higher in obese adolescent girls ($M=47.25$) as compared to normal weight adolescent girls ($M=43.95$).

DISCUSSION

According to biophysical theory, biology + psychology + social factors are responsible for development of personality disorders [Paris, J., 1996 : Social Factors in Personality disorders]. Hence, on the basis of above facts it can be said that, although personality disorders are found to be on higher side in obese adolescent girls as compared to normal weight adolescent girls, it may not be the only factor which triggers personality disorders. Some other factors such as family environment, social factors, genes etc. are also combined with obesity to pin pointedly assess personality disorders.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that, obesity is not the single most causative factor as far as development of psycho neurotic disorders in adolescent girls are concerned.

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