



Research Article

An Investigation of Body Size Perception Accuracy and Body Satisfaction in Turkish Primary School Children

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Abstract

Introduction: Early detection of body size misestimation and body dissatisfaction in children can provide the basis for planning and implementing more effective prevention and treatment for body image problems and disorders. **Aim:** To assess body satisfaction and the prevalence of overestimation and underestimation of body size in primary school children with different body sizes. **Method:** The study is a cross-sectional and school-based study conducted in Beypazarı district of Ankara. This study was conducted with a total of 561 children (aged 7-10; 49.2% girls, 50.98% boys) from 7 primary schools in 2023. Sociodemographic and anthropometric data and perceptions of body image were analyzed. Children's perceptions of body size and body size satisfaction were assessed using the Body Image in Children Scale (BISC) figure scale. **Results:** In all grade levels, boys' perceived body size was significantly larger than their actual body size, while no significant difference was found in girls ($P < 0.05$). At all grade levels, girls' ideal body size was significantly smaller than their self-perceived body size ($P < 0.05$). It was observed that girls in the overweight and obese categories underestimated their own body size. The highest body dissatisfaction was observed in girls and boys who perceived themselves in the overweight and obese BMI category. **Conclusion:** Gender and weight status are effective variables in body size estimation and body satisfaction in 7-10 year-old school-age children. It was found that boys did not have a realistic body perception based on overestimating their body size. Underestimation of weight in girls in the overweight and obese category may be a risk factor for healthy weight management, diagnosis and treatment of childhood obesity. Further studies using different variables and methodological approaches are needed to more clearly reveal the causes of body dissatisfaction and misperception of body size in children.

Keywords: Body Image; Body Size Perception; Children; Body Satisfaction

Introduction

Today's popular culture emphasizes appearance-oriented happiness and this situation threatens the body image satisfaction of individuals of all ages. Body image is a multidimensional concept that encompasses how an individual perceives, thinks, feels and behaves towards their own body [1]. According to the generally accepted classification, body image consists of two main dimensions: perceptual and attitudinal [2]. The perceptual

dimension includes the accuracy of the estimation of body size and shape. The attitudinal dimension refers to body satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which expresses feelings and thoughts about one's body [2]. In the body image literature, most research has focused on body dissatisfaction in young girls and women [3,4]. However, in recent years, this interest has shifted to research on the development of body image in children.

There is evidence that perceptual and attitudinal dimensions of body image develop in children at an early age. In studies on the perceptual dimension, it has been observed that children as young as three years of age gain awareness of their own body size and