

Socioeconomic status and overweight in European adolescents

by

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Objective: to describe the relationship between obesity/overweight and socio-economic status in European adolescents.

Methods: Body mass index (BMI) and socio-economic status (SES) data from 3908 adolescents between 12.5 and 17.5 years old (1892 male and 2016 female) were analysed within the HELENA cross-sectional study. BMI was divided into two categories: normal weight and overweight (overweight + obesity) (\geq to the equivalent to 25 kg/m² in adults) according to the IOTF cut-offs. SES variables were: own bedroom, internet at home, number of brothers and sisters, well off (self-reported perception of being well-heeled), mother education level, father education level, mother occupation and father occupation. Bivariate analyses and logistic regression model were applied to study the SES and obesity relationship.

Results: In the logistic regression model, for boys, only mother education level was associated with the risk of obesity, being the risk of overweight 2.3 fold times higher for lowest level compared with reference. In girls the highest association was found for the mother education level being the risk of overweight 3.25 fold times higher for lowest level compared with reference; to have internet at home increase the risk of overweight by 1.4 times. However, the risk of overweight decrease by 13% with each year of age, between 10 and 44% with the father occupation and up to 91% for the best well off category compared with the worst (all $p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: European adolescents of both sexes showed a higher prevalence of overweight and obesity in those with a mother with low education level, while for girls other SES variables were associated also with overweight and obesity prevalence. More research is needed in order to achieve better understanding in the relationship between SES and overweight and obesity in adolescents.

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