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Positive Development in Children and the Precursors of Healthy Life-Styles: The Role of Eating Regularity and Level of Leisure Activity

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Author(s)

Silvia Ciairano, Giulia Bardaglio, Emanuela Rabaglietti, Maria Fernanda Vacirca

ABSTRACT

The two sides of children positive development, that is physical and psychological health, have been most often investigated separately. We explored the relationships between not being overweight, respecting relational rules, regularity of eating behavior (eating breakfast) and involvement in active (e.g. playing in team sport) or sedentary (e.g. playing at videogames) leisure activities shared with friends. The study was conducted among 272 Italian children (52% female; M age = 6.85 yrs) using a multi-informant design (children, parents and teachers of physical activity). Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that regularity of eating breakfast (informed by parents) was associated to lower levels of Body Mass Index (BMI) values (objectively measured) in girls. Involvement in sedentary leisure activity with friends (informed by children) was negatively associated with respecting relational rules (evaluated by teachers of physical activity) in boys. Thus, more or less active leisure activity and more or less healthy eating behaviour have some potential relevance for present and future general adjustment of boys and girls, and not only for their physical condition. Implications for educational interventions are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Children, Life-Style, Overweight, Leisure Activities

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