

Rural primary school children body fat and their parents' physical image perceptions

ABSTRACT

Parent's perception of their children's physical images such as body shape or type, weight and eating habit plays an important role in determine their attitude toward their children's development. This study was conducted to determine perceptions of rural schools' parents or guardians regarding their children's body shape, weight and eating habit and to investigate whether there was a correlation with the children's body fat mass measured with bio impedance analyzer. This descriptive study was conducted in selected rural areas located in the East of Peninsular Malaysia. A total number of 145 year one school children and their parents or guardians (total 145) participated in this study. A questionnaire was developed to measure the parents' or guardians' perceptions, while the children's actual body fat mass was measured separately using Tanita body composition analyzer. Body fat mass results showed that majority of the rural primary school children had less body fat mass for both gender. Correlation analysis using Chi-square indicated that there were significant association presences between the body fat mass with body shape, body weight and eating habit. The reported Chi-square values were $X^2(3)=27.15$, $p<.01$ for body shape, $X^2(3)=22.68$, $p<.01$ for body weight and $X^2(3)=19.67$, $p<.01$ for eating habit, respectively. In conclusion, early awareness pertaining their children's physical images changes will contribute to a more successful prevention and treatment of obesity among children, and this will have an impact in term of reducing the adult incidences of cardiovascular diseases in the near future.

Keyword: Perception; Body weight; Fat percentage; Eating habit; Rural school