

Bullying and victimization in overweight and obese outpatient children and adolescents: an Italian Multicentric Study.

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Objective: Being overweight or obese is one of the most common reasons that children and adolescents are teased at school. We carried out a study in order to investigate: i) the relation between weight status and school bullying and ii) the relation between weight status categories and types of victimization and bullying in an outpatient sample of Italian children and adolescents with different degrees of overweight from minimal overweight up to severe obesity.

Participants/Methods: Nine-hundred-forty-seven outpatient children and adolescents (age range 6.0-14.0 years) were recruited in 14 hospitals distributed over the country of Italy. The participants were classified as normal-weight (N = 129), overweight (N = 126), moderately obese (N = 568), and severely obese (N = 124). The nature and extent of verbal, physical and relational bullying and victimization were assessed with an adapted version of the revised Olweus bully-victim questionnaire. Each participant was coded as bully, victim, bully-victim, or not involved.

Results: Normal-weight and overweight participants were less involved in bullying than obese participants; severely obese males were more involved in the double role of bully and victim. Severely obese children and adolescents suffered not only from verbal victimization but also from physical victimization and exclusion from group activities. Weight status categories were not directly related to bullying behaviour; however severely obese males perpetrated more bullying behaviour compared to severely obese females.

Conclusions: Obesity and bullying among children and adolescents are of ongoing concern worldwide and may be closely related. Common strategies of intervention are needed to cope with these two social health challenges.

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