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Maria Carmen Goodwin
Walden University, hart3800@yahoo.com

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Parental Self-Efficacy, Feeding Practices and Styles, and Obesity in Mexican American Children

Maria del Carmen Goodwin, PhD

Problem

This study addressed the relationship among risk factors, such as lack of parental self-efficacy and unhealthy feeding practices and feeding styles, and obesity among Mexican American children.

Purpose

This quantitative, correlational study used self-reported data on Mexican American children in Texas to investigate the relationships among parental self-efficacy, parental feeding practices and styles, and obesity, as measured by the parental perception of child weight.

Significance

This study is original because it focused on an issue of childhood obesity that has lacked investigation regarding the relationship of parental self-efficacy and parental feeding practices and styles on obesity in Mexican American children in Texas.

The findings from this investigation could help clarify the impact of parental feeding practices and styles on the effectiveness of obesity interventions among Mexican American children in Texas.

Social Change Implications

The implication for positive social change could involve the further understanding of the impact of feeding practices and styles on the effectiveness of obesity interventions and perhaps on morbidity and mortality in Mexican American children, especially boys, in Texas.

Theory or Framework

The theoretical framework for this research was Bandura's **social cognitive theory** (SCT).

Relevant Scholarship

SCT constructs have addressed outcome expectancies, outcome expectations, self-efficacy, and impediments (Sosa, 2012), and have been used in childhood obesity prevention efforts focusing on parental influences (Sosa, 2012; Vaughn et al., 2013).

Since 1980, rates of obesity for children ages 6 to 11 have increased more than threefold (Elder et al., 2010). Hispanic children between the ages of 6 to 11 years are among the most obese children, males (25.8%), females (24.1%), in the United States (Fryar, Carroll, & Ogden, 2014).

For Hispanic children, the effects of obesity are often coupled with diabetes mellitus, asthma, and psychosocial disorders (Branscum & Sharma, 2011; Flores, Maldonado & Duran, 2012; Kornides, Kitsanas, Yang & Villarruel, 2011; Perreira & Ornelas, 2011).

Branscum and Sharma (2011) affirmed that Hispanic children suffer from lack of insurance 50% more than White children and receive referrals to medical specialists 50% less than White children.

In 2007 and 2008, obesity for Mexican American females, ages 6 to 11, was 22% and for males 27%; but White females were at 17% and males were at 21% (Tschann et al. (2013).

Research on parental feeding practices and styles has been conducted predominantly among White, middle-class populations (Hennessey, Hughes, Goldberg, Hyatt, & Economos, 2011; Hoerr et al., 2009; Thompson, 2010).

A similar gap exists regarding parental self-efficacy (Taveras, Mitchell, & Gortmaker, 2009).

Research Question

What is the relationship between parental self-efficacy and parental feeding practices and styles on obesity, as measured by the parental perception of child weight, in Mexican American children in Texas, after controlling for parental weight, socioeconomic status (SES), gender, and years in the country?

Participants

The target population was Mexican American mothers and fathers, born in the United States or Mexico, residing in Corpus Christi, Texas, with at least one child between the ages of 8-10.

A convenience sample was the chosen sampling strategy for the study. There were 83 participants.

Procedures

Participants were recruited from a children's hospital, pediatric clinics, Facebook, a childhood obesity program, and a Catholic church.

Each participant completed the Tool to Measure Parenting Self-Efficacy questionnaire, the Parental Feeding Practices Questionnaire, the Parenting Dimension Inventory–Short Form, and a figure rating scale. Demographic questions were also included.

Demographic information that was collected included parental weight, SES, gender and years in the country.

Analysis

The data analysis included descriptive statistics, a simple linear regression, and a multiple linear regression.

Findings

There were no significant results for female children or parental self-efficacy.

As parents became more controlling in their feeding styles, their perception of their male child's body became thinner.

As parents became more indulgent/permissive in their feeding styles, their perception of their male child's body became heavier.

As parents increased their use of food to control behavior and became more restrictive of food in their feeding practices, their perception of their male child's body became heavier.

Interpretation

Authoritative feeding style supports the child's development of self-regulation of hunger cues, fullness and promotes a healthy weight (Maliszewski et al. 2017; Tschann et al., 2013).

Indulgent/Permissive feeding style had the opposite effect; parent caters to the child's food preferences (Patrick, 2013).

Restriction of amount of food and use of food to control behavior feeding practices makes the food more appealing; child neglects hunger cues (Musher-Eizenman & Kiefner, 2013).

Limitations

Reporting bias could have influenced study outcomes because the parental data was based on self-report.

Views of body size could have become biased simply by figural drawing placement.

Recommendations

Professionals working with the Hispanic community should refer parents to local childhood obesity programs.

Education on indulgent/permissive feeding styles, restriction of amount of food, use of food to control behavior feeding practices and effects on hunger cues and satiety need to be included in obesity prevention interventions.

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