

Dog Attachment and Perceived Social Support in Overweight/Obese and Healthy Weight

Children

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Introduction

The main aim of the research was to establish the relationship between childhood obesity and dog attachment. Further, the primary objective was to verify how weight gain is related to social support from family and friends. Notably, a similar investigation had been conducted with adult participants, but there was a study gap in regards to children (Linder et al., 2017). Due to an increasing rate of obesity in kids in the current world, it was essential that control mechanisms get established. However, the only way to provide a solution was to find the cause. On that note, the study that took four months was conducted in the living laboratory in a Boston museum from April to August 2015. The researchers had an informed hypothesis based on a similar exploration that was done with adults, where overweight grownups had more attachment to their pets (Linder et al., 2017). On that effect, participating children were selected based on age, and those between 8-13 years old were the ones allowed to be a part of the research. In addition, only kids who visited the museum under the care of either parents or guardians were accepted for the study. Statistically, the investigation managed to sample only 43 children who filled surveys that were later analyzed. Therefore, the finding of the research will inform future studies on this topic regarding the improvements that are to be made.

Overview of the Article

The basis of the research was to develop sustainable and effective interventions for treating children with obesity. Markedly, the study was based on the fact that overweight is a global challenge and a priority. According to Linder et al. (2017), obesity is a worldwide health

issue that inflicts people who take high-energy food, and it results in fat accumulation. Consequently, it occurs due to weight gain that predisposes individuals to health problems such as diabetes, stroke, heart diseases, and cancers among others. The principal aim of the research was to examine the child-pet relationship to unravel proper obesity treatments among kids. Overall, the findings of the study showed that overweight minors with either 85 or more body mass index (BMI) had higher attachment scores to their pets, and they were registered to be less mean in the perceived social support (PSS). The PSS was determined from the parents and friends of both obese and healthy children. Resultantly, the overweight children had greater affection for their dogs and lowered social support. The outcome provides the insight of how pets can get used for unhealthy kids.

Evaluating the Methodology

The methodology section outlines how data was collected and analyzed. Markedly, Kuiper et al. (2017) noted that studies often choose the methods based on the nature of the research and the ideas borrowed from previous works. The authors added that three main investigation approaches are informed by different exploration philosophies known as the quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method. Moreover, Yoon (2017) stated that researcher should always provide a theoretical justification of the method used. Notably, the study was non-experimental and followed a quantitative model of research that involved the collection of numerical data and application of statistical analysis. As mentioned, a cross-sectional design got employed, thus allowing collection of data at a particular time (Olive, 2014). In addition, the research performed by Linder et al. (2017) was practical and related to a serious health problem in the current society. Despite the fact that the paper has no specified section called “Literature Review,” the researchers developed the problem having assessed the other works in the field. In

fact, the ideas, concepts, theories, variables, and the methodology were borrowed from the previous studies. Notably, the research is consistent with the contemporary studies on health issues. On that note, the paper needs improvements on the literature review.

A sample size of 43 participants was adopted although it was not selected randomly. Clear exclusion criteria were developed to omit children without either pets or parents/legal guardians. Besides, only kids between the ages of 8 and 13 years old were included. Notably, a survey was employed as the instrument of data collection after adhering to the ethical and professional rules of information gathering. Precisely, participation was voluntary, and consents were gathered from the children and parents. Other principles applied included privacy, confidentiality, and authorization from a given research body. The data was analyzed using statistical tools such as t-test and chi-square to present quantitative results. Moreover, there were instances of bias in the selection of the respondents, primarily by excluding children without dogs and those below eight years old or over 13 years old. The sample size (43) was also small given the growing number of obese teens in the area of the study. Moreover, most participants were female because the sample was not correctly selected. As a result, the composition was not even a scenario that could cause bias in the results. Overall, the methodology was well-organized and integrated all the required components.

Objectives and Results

As aforementioned, the primary objective of the study was to examine the dog-children relationship to understand how pets can be used for treatment of kids with obesity. The three main variables include dog-children connection, perceived social support, and attachment level. Despite the fact that the researchers did not delineate either the specific objectives or the research questions, it is clear that the affection influences children's motivation, focus, emotional stability,

mental health, enjoyment, and physical activities among others. In addition, the social support concerned the relationship of the included kids with either their parents or friends. They were voluntarily sampled to take their children to the museum and answer certain questions about the kids. Empirically, the study aimed to prove the hypothesis that either dogs or other pets may offer social support to the obese children and, thus, should be included in the intervention mechanisms.

My Evaluation and Opinion

From the results, it was perceived that the overweight teens often have a close relationship with their pets, and it gives them emotional, mental, and physical support. The explanation is that the obese children often lack strong attachment to their parents, legal guardians, or friends. Markedly, the results of the study showed that being overweight establishes a stronger connection between children and their pets, while it lowers the perceived social support. However, I am of the opinion that the outcome should not be applied directly due to some undefined parameters such as the number of dogs attached to the child and their ages. It can be concluded that dogs can get used as an essential part of health intervention for the overweight kids.

Markedly, I found the article to be straightforward and clear, and the characteristics make it applicable and practical in real life context. However, it needs improvements on developing detailed theoretical underpinnings to the concepts and hypotheses identified. While performing future researches, I recommend that more variables should be considered, and they include the number of pets in a household and their ages. Besides, the years of the participants should be expanded from the current 8-13 to 5-17 because obesity is becoming a problem in kids with a

young age and extends to the older teens. Consequently, further researches should get conducted on how either dogs or other pets can be included to support other health problems.

Conclusion

Obesity and overweight are trending global problem, especially among children. The increase in high-energy food, unhealthy behaviors, and inactivity cause more harm to the body of kids. The co-morbidities, where obesity is related to several chronic and non-communicable diseases, are also compounding the challenge and priority of human health. The victims are at higher risks of contracting chronic and non-communicable diseases such as heart problems, stroke, diabetes, and cancers. Evidently, the article is consistent with other studies. Markedly, the main findings of the research showed that obese teens have a stronger attachment to their pets and lower perceived social support. On that note, dogs can be used as an intervention to child obesity. The research used quantitative data collection and analysis, but little was done on reviewing previous studies. Besides, the results experienced some bias due to poor sampling and sample size. On this note, future researches need to improve the technique of selecting the participants to facilitate the applicability of the results in solving childhood obesity problem.

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