



A review of applied control groups in studies on children and adolescents regarding overweight and obesity

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Overweight and obesity are a growing problem in today's world. Every year approximately 3.4 million adults die because of it and the number of people diagnosed with overweight or obesity rises. But obesity is not only a problem of adults - it can already start in the early childhood. In 2003, 42 million children under the age of five were overweight or obese (WHO, 2014). Seeing these numbers it is clear that the problem of overweight and obesity demands to be addressed by today's research. Many studies have been and still are conducted to find risk factors, evaluate weight loss or prevention programs. But looking at the quality of the studies something strikes: Although the use of a control group is a major quality criterion, assuring a good validity, there are still studies without control groups that challenge the empirical evidence found. (Howing at al., 1989; Katz, Peace & Spurr, 2012; Zeanah, 2009; Lindsey, 2004). In addition to the infrequent use of a control group, it is common that, if applied, the specific kind of control group is not described in detail or the labels used for the different types are not used consistently.

This Bachelor thesis aims to provide an overview of possible control group designs in psychological research and their advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, the objective is to show how control groups are actually used in studies on children and adolescents regarding overweight and

obesity. To find suitable studies, which actually applied control groups, the scientific data bases "Science direct", "Psycarticles", "Psycinfo", "Psyndex" and "Medline" are used, the first 200 to 300 results will be downloaded from each data base and the studies will be sorted by the criterions "trial or other article", "overweight/obesity or other", "children/adolescents or adults", "control group or no control group" and finally the kind of the control group. The goal is to find at least ten studies for each of the control groups and identify the way they were used, reasons for the use of that special kind of control group and other practical clues for future appliances of control groups. This can be of advantage for future research by providing an overview of how control groups have been used and what can be modified to make it easier to apply control groups, leading to more valid and methodologically improved studies.

Literature

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