

# NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE IN ADOLESCENTS

## PERCEPTION OF PARENTS AND PEERS BEHAVIOR AND STIMULUS

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### I. Introduction

- Parents and peers have a strong influence in children and adolescent choices and behaviors, including eating habits and physical activity practice (Contento et al, 2006; Boutelle et al, 2007; Vagstrand et al, 2009; Beydoun e Wang, 2009).
- No work has been done yet about parents and peers influence in nutrition knowledge.

### II. Aim

- To study the relation between adolescents' perception of parents and peers food habits, physical activity practice, stimulus to the adolescent follow a healthy diet and be physically active and adolescents Nutritional Knowledge.

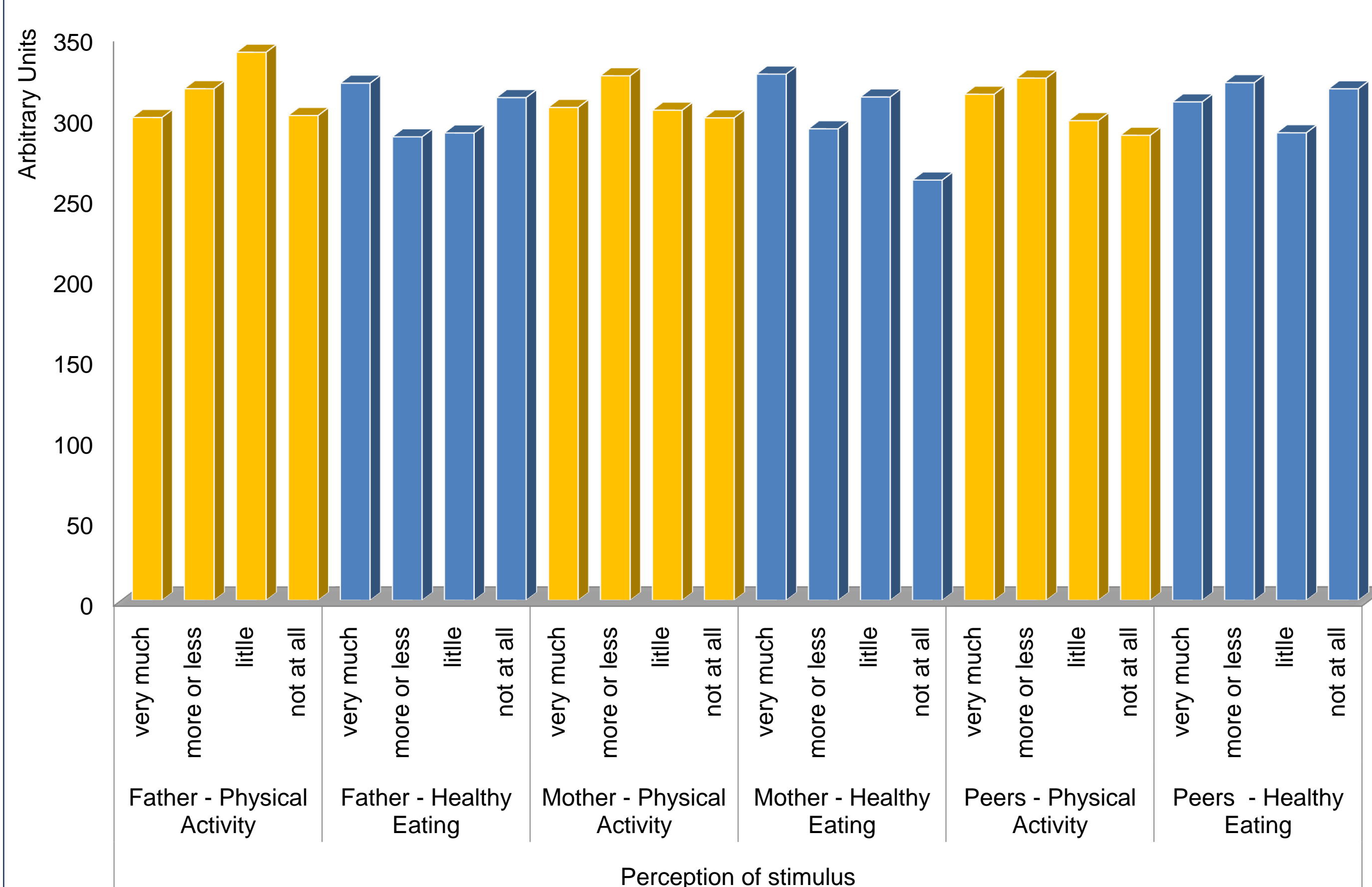
### III. Methods

- 653 volunteer adolescents from North Portugal were recruited in 3 junior high schools
- A translated and validated version of the Nutritional Knowledge Questionnaire; Sections 1, 2 and 3 was used to assess adolescents Nutritional Knowledge (Parmenter and Wardle, 1999)
- Questionnaire specially design for this study about adolescents' perception of parents and peers behavior in relation to a healthy diet and physical activity. Perception about parents and peers stimulus to the adolescents physical activity and healthy eating was also evaluated.
- Data were analyzed using Kruskal-Wallis Test, SPSS vs. 18.0.

### IV. Results

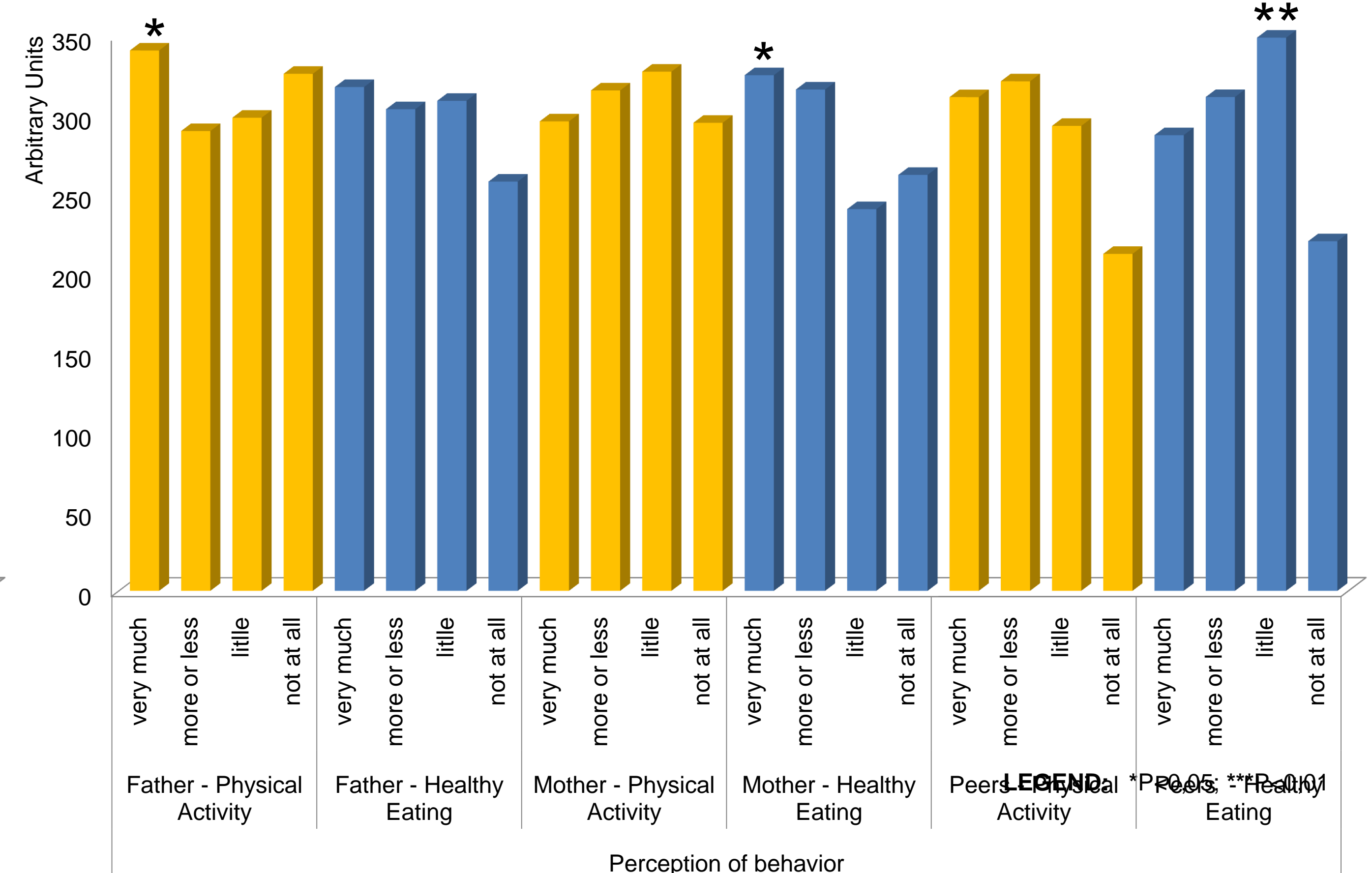
- The mean (SD) age was 15,9 years (SD=2,10) years.

**Figure 1.** Adolescent Nutrition Knowledge Questionnaire Score and Perception of Stimulus



- There was no difference in adolescent nutrition knowledge score between groups or levels of perceived stimulus.
- Adolescents who perceive their fathers as very physically active have significantly higher score for Nutrition Knowledge ( $p < 0,05$ ).
- Perception of a healthier mothers diet is associated with significantly higher score for Nutrition Knowledge ( $p < 0,05$ ).

**Figure 2.** Adolescent Nutrition Knowledge Questionnaire Score and Perception of Behavior



- Adolescents Nutrition Knowledge Score of those who perceive peers have a less healthier diet is significantly higher than other levels of perception ( $p < 0,01$ ).
- No significant difference was found in adolescents nutrition knowledge score between all other groups of perceptions.

### V. Conclusions

- The perception adolescents have about their parents and peers stimulus to a healthy eating or physically active lifestyle are not related with their nutritional knowledge. These results are in accordance to other studies that conclude that adolescents exercised considerable autonomy over much of their food choice (Basset et al, 2008; Fitzgerald et al, 2010) and possibly nutritional knowledge.
- Adolescents that perceive that their mothers, but not fathers, have a healthy eating have greater nutritional knowledge. This may be explained by a greater attention to children eating behavior, since childhood, from the mothers to their children, transmitting their own knowledge. Previous

studies shown that there was a relation between mothers', but not fathers', and children eating behavior and possibly nutritional knowledge. (Vagstrand et al, 2009; Beydoun e Wang, 2009, Boutelle et al, 2007)

- Adolescents with greater nutrition knowledge perceive their peers eating habits as not so healthy, suggesting that there are more aware of their friends diet errors.
- These results show the importance of planning intervention actions with adolescents, since there is no association between their perception of parents and peers behavior and stimulus to their healthy eating or physical activity practice and Nutritional Knowledge.

### VI. References

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