

Prevalence of food addiction in children and adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis

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Summary

Food addiction (FA) has been as a construct that is associated with childhood obesity. However, relatively little is known regarding the prevalence of FA among children and adolescents. An instrument designed to assess FA among youth, the Yale Food Addiction Scale for Children and Adolescents (YFAS-C), has been developed and used to estimate FA prevalence among pediatric populations. The present systematic review and meta-analysis aimed to synthesize the results of FA prevalence among youth. Using keywords related to FA and children to search PubMed, Embase, Scopus, and Web of Science, we identified and analyzed 22 cross-sectional studies. No longitudinal studies were identified in the search. Meta-analysis with Freeman-Tukey Double Arcsine transformation was conducted to estimate FA prevalence. Meta-regression was applied to understand whether weight status (i.e., data from community samples vs. overweight/obese samples) is associated with FA. Eligible studies ($N = 22$) were analyzed using 6,996 participants. The estimated FA prevalence was 15% (95% CI 11–19%) for all samples, 12% (95% CI 8–17%) for community samples, and 19% (95% CI 14–26%) for overweight/obese samples. Meta-regression indicated that weight status was associated with FA severity ($p = 0.002$) and marginally with FA prevalence ($p = 0.056$). Healthcare providers should consider and address the high FA prevalence among pediatric population.

KEYWORDS

addictive behaviors, adolescent, child, food addiction, obesity, prevalence, systematic review

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