Abstract

Background: The current literature suggests that children of all ages are influenced by their parents. This is evident in many aspects of their lives, including food choices and eating behaviors. However, little is known about exactly how different types of parenting affect these choices in adolescents.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of three parenting variables (parental monitoring, parental style, and parent-adolescent communication) on adolescent disordered eating. This study also aimed to determine which parenting variable had the greatest effect on the development of disordered eating.

Method: A cross-sectional secondary analysis was done with data collected in a cohort-sequential, longitudinal study of adolescents from three rural areas in central Texas. The sample included 908 adolescents (54% female; 50% Mexican American, 37.9% Anglo American, 10.7% African American, 1% Asian and Pacific Islander, 0.3% American Indian) at an average age of 14.7 years in Grade 9 and 17.18 in Grade 12. Four validated instruments were used: Parental Monitoring, Parenting Style Inventory, Parent-Adolescent Communication, and Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Scales (YRBS).

Results: As parent responsiveness increased, the likelihood of the adolescent answering “yes” to the question of whether or not they had fasted, decreased (r=-.387, p<.001). Compared to males, females were significantly more likely to respond “yes” to one or more of the body questions asked (r=-4.365) (p<.001). As parental monitoring increased, the likelihood of the adolescent answering “yes” to all three body questions mentioned above, decreased (Body 1: r=.168, p<.001; Body 2: r=.093, p=.005; Body 3: r=.168, p<.001). No significant relationship was found between parent-adolescent communication and the body questions.