

Poster 64

## Evaluating Mediterranean diet adherence, physical activity and weight perception in Portuguese adolescents

Maria Teresa Moreira <sup>1,2</sup>, Beatriz Loibl <sup>3,\*</sup>, Augusta Silveira <sup>1,4,5</sup>, Beatriz Lopes <sup>3</sup>, Hugo Ferraz <sup>3</sup>, Maria Inês Guimarães <sup>1,4,5,6</sup>, Sandra Rodrigues <sup>1,2</sup> and Andreia Lima <sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>RISE-Health, Fernando Pessoa School of Health

<sup>2</sup>FP-I3ID, Fernando Pessoa Education and Culture Foundation, Rua Delfim Maia 334, 4200-253 Porto, Portugal

<sup>3</sup>FCS-UFP, Fernando Pessoa University, 4240-004, Porto, Portugal; Research Group DELEQOL: Health-UFP

<sup>4</sup>FP-I3ID, FP-BHS, Fernando Pessoa Teaching and Culture Foundation, Rua Carlos da Maia 296, 4200-150 Porto, Portugal

<sup>5</sup>CEISUC, Centre of Investigation in Technologies and Centre for Health Studies and Research of the University of Coimbra, 3004-512 Coimbra, Portugal

<sup>6</sup>INMLCF, I. P., North Delegation - National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, I. P., Jardim Carrilho Videira 4050-167 Porto, Portugal

\* Correspondence: 42806@ufp.edu.pt

### Abstract

**Background:** A balanced diet and regular exercise are essential components of good health, with the potential to reduce the risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease and other chronic illnesses. Portugal is facing a high prevalence of childhood obesity, and a growing concern regarding sedentary lifestyles, reflecting a wider European trend in which approximately 340 million young people are overweight or obese [1]. Projections indicate a continued increase in these trends, exacerbated by a decline in physical activity, which has an impact on physical and mental health [1]. The Mediterranean diet has been shown to offer significant health benefits, yet there is a decline in adherence to this diet among young people [2]. **Objective:** Amid global concerns regarding unhealthy lifestyles among youths, this study aims to evaluate the dietary habits, physical activity, and weight management strategies of 3rd cycle students in Portugal. Specifically, it assesses adherence to the Mediterranean diet, physical activity habits, and overall weight perceptions among students aged 12 to 18. **Methods:** This quantitative and descriptive study collected self-reported data from a sample of 232 students, utilizing the KIDMED and YRB questionnaires to investigate dietary patterns, physical activity engagement, weight perceptions, and weight management practices. **Results:** The findings indicate that adolescents engaged in varied diets, with 65.5% reporting recent physical activity participation. However, 25% of students experienced exercise-related injuries, suggesting safety concerns. Extreme weight management practices were rare, yet disparities in weight perception and weight loss desire were evident, hinting at the influence of societal and media factors. Minimal gender differences were observed in certain habits. **Conclusions:** Although students generally exhibited healthy habits, concerns remain regarding safety in physical activities and weight perceptions. Future interventions should focus on enhancing students' literacy and awareness of the Mediterranean diet and physical well-being [2,3].

**Keywords:** dietary habits; physical activity; weight management

### Acknowledgments/Funding

This research received no external funding.

### References

1. Van Sluijs, E. M. F. et al. Physical activity behaviours in adolescence: current evidence and opportunities for intervention. *The Lancet* **2021**, 398, 429–442, doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(21)01259-9.
2. Rito, A.; Mendes, S.; Baleia, J.; Gregório, M. J. Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative: COSI Portugal 2019. *Lisbon* **2021**.
3. Martinez-Lacoba, R.; Pardo-Garcia, I.; Amo-Saus, E.; Escribano-Sotos, F. Mediterranean diet and health outcomes: a systematic meta-review. *Eur J Public Health* **2018**, 28, 955–961, doi: 10.1093/eurpub/cky113.



In *Scientific Letters*, works are published under a CC-BY license (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), the most open license available. The users can share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially), as long as they give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made (read the full text of the license terms and conditions of use at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>).