Abstract

Background: Mexico has the highest rates of childhood obesity of any country in the world. As an environmental risk factor, family perception and behavior concerning child obesity is thought to have an important influence on the prevention and treatment of obesity. Objective: the aim of this study was to evaluate maternal perceptions of children's weight and to determine whether these perceptions are associated with the actual weight of the children. Methods: A descriptive study was conducted that assessed 273 children and included interviews with their mothers. Maternal perceptions of the children's weight status were compared with the measured weights, statures and body mass indices (BMI). Results: The mean BMIs of the children and mothers were 18.1 ± 3.6 and 27.7 ± 4.7 kg/m², respectively. The perceptions of mothers of children's weight are not associated with actual BMI category of children (p < 0.0001). We found 74 children who were overweight and obese (27%); 62.2% of the mothers of these children considered them to be overweight and obese and 37.8% of these mothers felt that their sons were of normal weight when in fact they were overweight (p = 0.038). Conclusions: We found no association between actual BMI category of children and their mother’s perceptions of their weight. In addition, found that third of mothers with obese or overweight children reported that their children had a normal nutritional status.

Keywords
Maternal perception, Children, Overweight, Obesity, Nutritional status.