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Influence of satisfaction with school meals on food waste in fourth-grade children

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Introduction: School meals play an important role in children’s food habits development [1, 2]. In spite of schools meals usually being nutritional balanced, these are frequently rejected [3], so that benefits are no longer assured [4]. Food sensory characteristics influence children's acceptance concerning school meals [5], being an important determinant of food waste [6].

Objectives: To evaluate children’s satisfaction with school lunch sensory characteristics and its impact on plate waste.

Population and methods: There were included all fourth-grade children attending 6 schools from Oporto. Data collection was performed in two sequential days: on the first day, plate waste was evaluated by the physical measurement; on the second day, it was collected socio-demographic and anthropometric data and satisfaction of children with school lunch in relation to sensory characteristics was evaluated.

Results: Plate waste was 20.5% for soup and 32.4% for the main dish. The waste obtained by protein and carbohydrates-rich foods was 13.5% and 31.3%, respectively. The most dissatisfaction was observed for appearance and smell of meals served. It was found that as satisfaction with sensory characteristics increased, food waste reduced, with significant results for soup taste and smell and the main dish taste.

Conclusion: Children’s satisfaction with school lunch had influence on plate waste. In order to reduce food waste, besides improvement of taste and appearance of meals, interventions for school community should be planned, to increase satisfaction and acceptability of school lunch.

References:

Adherence to mediterranean dietary pattern and nutritional status association in primary school children from Póvoa de Lanhoso

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Introduction: Portugal is moving away from the traditional mediterranean dietary pattern (MDP). Since the 70's, coincidentally or not, the prevalence of obesity in school-age children has hugely increased.

Objective: To assess adherence to MDP, its determinants and association with nutritional status.

Methodology: Children from the 3rd and 4th years, of two primary schools from Póvoa de Lanhoso, participated in this cross-sectional study. During the months of May and June 2012, personal data were collected (sex, age, household, etc.) as well as anthropometric data (height and weight) and the application of the KidMed questionnaire.

Results: Of the 166 children studied, aged between 8 and 10 years old, 56% were female and 44% male. It was observed that 66.9% presented appropriate weight and 33.1% were at risk for being overweight or obese. 61.4% had good adherence to MDP and 38.6% had a moderate to weak adherence. Female children showed a greater adherence to MDP (p=0.041). No statistically significant differences were found between adherence to MDP and the type of household with whom the child lived (p=0.402). Children with overweight or obesity showed less adherence to MDP (p=0.013).

Conclusion: In this study it was found that more than half of the population had good adherence to MDP, more specifically, the female children. There was no association between the adherence to this dietary pattern to the type of household with whom the child lived. Children with better adherence to the MDP had a lower prevalence of overweight and obesity.