Author's response to reviews

Title: Body Weight Dissatisfaction and Communication with Parents among Adolescents in 24 Countries: International Cross-Sectional Survey

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Dear Reviewer,

We would like to thank you for your constructive comments on the manuscript “Body Weight Dissatisfaction and Communication with Parents among Adolescents in 24 Countries: International Cross-Sectional Survey”

The following are the point-to-point replies to your comments and indications of the changes made in the manuscript accordingly.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The authors seek to examine the extent to which parent adolescent communication is related to body weight dissatisfaction among boys and girls aged 11 to 15 years in 24 western countries.

a) The manuscript would benefit from research questions that guided the data selected from the HBSC.

Answer: The aims of the study have been reformulated as follows:
“The study aimed at assessing the prevalence in boys and girls of self reported body weight dissatisfaction and the prevalence of difficulties in talking to father and mother, in 24 countries/regions in Europe, Canada and USA participating in the HBSC 2001/2002 survey. Because parents have been found to have a significant influence on behaviors [14,17] and perceptions surrounding eating [18-20], body image [11], and weight [16,21] in adolescents, the aim of this study was to investigate cross culturally the relationship between adolescents self-reported body weight dissatisfaction and mother/ father-adolescent communication. We hypothesized that both girls and boys who indicated difficulty in talking to their father or mother would be more likely to report body weight dissatisfaction”.

b) In fact, their background and literature review could lead logically to hypotheses. The literature review and background is current and cites the major authorities in the field. The logic leading to the selection of variables is well described and articulated. The manuscript could benefit from theory to guide the selection of these variables – a family theory or communication theory would be logical.

Answer: The Background section has been re-organized and the following has been added.

“The prime context where the child lives and develops is the family. It is in this context that the cognitive, social and emotional development starts [13].”
“An indicator for the quality of the parent-child relations and of parental involvement is the communication between the adolescent and the family members. Communication with family members has been shown to work well as a general measure of family relations and a good measure of the quality of the parent-child-relationships, showing high correlations with several measures of attachment to parents [18].”

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Taking advantage of this large database indeed is appropriate. The web site to the database is provided so that curious readers could access it and find out more and what other data are available. The manuscript could benefit from more description of the population based sample, for example, racial/ethnic background, economic status.

Answer:
The following paragraph has been added under the method section:

“The 2001/2002 survey included rich countries (such as Canada, Norway, Sweden and the United States), poor countries (such as Lithuania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine) and middle-income countries (such as Austria, Belgium – both the Flemish- and French-speaking populations, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Greenland, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Macedonia, and Wales). Children were selected using a clustered sampling design, where the sampling unit was either the school class or the school. More than 160,000 young people took part and approximately 1500 respondents in each of the three age groups were targeted in every country.”

3. Are the data sound?
Given that the data come from a large data base with an international protocol, the data should be considered sound. Further, the authors excluded countries or regions with 20% or more missing values on youth height and weight. The authors should clarify that the data are from 2000/01 survey.

Answer:
Under the method section of the manuscript it is mentioned clearly that the data are obtained from 2001/2002.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data description?

a. Body weight dissatisfaction. The description could benefit from a report of missingness and whether this was at random or if a pattern could be discerned.

Answer:
The following sentence has been added under the Body weight dissatisfaction measure:
“The percentage of missing for this measure was 0.7% randomly distributed over countries and ranged from 0.1-1.7%.”

b. Communication with parents. The description of these data could benefit from a report of missingness as described in a. Further, the idea of don’t have or don’t see a parent being classified as difficult is questionable. Though, as the authors suggest, it would be difficult to talk with a parent one does not see or have, the conceptualization of difficult may be different. Difficult most likely is perceived as the parent not being open, difficult to approach with topics, or distant in their style. Whereas absent may be due to death, divorce, or abandonment. The explanation of difficult including doesn’t see/doesn’t have a parent is poorly written and should be expanded. The authors’ explanation on page 8 “We assumed (reasoned) …” is not clear. It is recommended that instead of saying the percentages were very close to one another that the percentages be reported or that the don’t see/don’t have response be dropped from analyses.

Answer:
The following paragraph has been added to the manuscript under communication with parents:

“We assumed that if adolescents do not have or see their father/ mother then they are not supported. In addition the percentages of dissatisfied with their body image, were quite similar for those who responded not to have/see a father/mother and those who responded to have difficulty in talking to father/mother (respectively for father: 42.4% and 45.3% and for mother: 40.3% and 45.5%), while much lower percentages were found in those who responded that it was easy to talk to their parents (32.1% for talking to father and 35.5% for talking to mother). The percentages of missing data for both talking with father and talking with mother were 2.8%, ranging from 0.1-5.5% over the countries.”

c. BMI. Since this is a survey, only self report of BMI is available.

d. As indicated earlier, the results discussion would benefit from organizing the data around questions or hypotheses.

Answer:
The discussion section has been re-organized as suggested.

e. The tables were concise, accurate, and easy to read.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

a. The discussion primarily puts the findings from the current study into the context of findings from other studies. Though accurate, the section could benefit from
the authors posing additional questions they may have thought of as a result of their analyses, for example, How do these findings move the field ahead? What is the next step in this body of research?

**Answer:**

The discussion section has been re-organized, theoretical arguments have been included and the sections on social support were deleted as the interpretation that good communication implies social support can not be supported by our data or by theory. However parent-child communication is an indicator of involvement and this aspect has been further explored in the discussion.

b. On page 13, the wording “did not feel they could talk with their father” may go beyond the data or potentially may be a mis-interpretation of the data. The question asked was How easy is it to talk with your mother/father about things that bother you? Thus, it would be more correct to state that ½ the girls and 1/3 the boys did not feel it was easy to talk with their father.

**Answer:**

*The sentence on page 13 has been corrected according to the suggestion and read as:*

“over half of girls and one-third of boys did not feel it was easy to talk to their father”

c. Similarly, on page 14, the authors speculate that it is possible that girls’ self-perceptions may be affected by their relationship with both parents while boys’ self-perceptions around weight appear to be influenced by their relationship with their father only. Though the data indicate this may be true, a theoretical rationale or mechanism would raise this statement beyond speculation to a testable proposition.

**Answer:**

*The following has been added:*

“As fathers are particularly likely to be involved with sons [41], the positive effects of father-child relationships in middle childhood might be of greater importance for boys. Positive associations between parent-child communication and body dissatisfaction were found in many but not all countries included in the analysis. This reveals that there might be cultural differences in the parent-child relationships and their effects. As in infancy [42], in middle and late childhood there might be cultural differences in the kind of relationships with parents. Children tend to be more or less distressed by particular events depending on experiences and expectations within their culture. “Variations across cultures in the expression of negative emotions and expectations of autonomy and independence may influence both the activation and deactivation of the attachment behavioral system” [43].”
d. On page 15, the authors seem to be equating ease of talking with parent as social support and stating that lack of social support may be strongly linked to body dissatisfaction for boys. Again, ease of talking with parents may be a form of social support, but this idea should be made transparent in the background discussion on pages 6 and 7.

Answer:
The paragraph on social support has been deleted.

e. Authors may want to consider that their study leads to the recommendation or reiteration that fathers have a very important influence on their family and children.

Answer:
The following text has been added:

“The study on the relationship between as well communication with father and mother and the association with body dissatisfaction adds to the recent literature on the positive effect father-child relations can have also in an area often considered as a female topic.”

6. Limitations

a. Overall the limitations are well stated.

b. Data on weight and height were self-reported. According to the authors’ background information on page 5, being thin is desired in Western societies. Thus, dissatisfaction with body weight may be higher than BMI would indicate.

Answer:
We agree with the reviewers comment that the self-reported BMI may be an underestimation of actual overweight and obesity. In the limitation section the following is stated:

“data on weight and height were self-reported which can produce lower prevalence estimates of overweight and obesity”

7. Authors' acknowledgements of published and unpublished work
Adequate.

8. Title and abstract convey what has been found?

a. Overall abstract is adequate.

b. In the conclusions, the idea of communication “plays a role” should be conveyed more succinctly. This is a vague phrase.
Answer: The conclusion has been revised

9. Is the writing acceptable?

a. Overall, well written.

b. Wales is misspelled on page 11.

Answer: On page 11, Walls has been corrected into Wales

c. The explanation of difficult including doesn’t see/doesn’t have a parent is poorly written and should be expanded.

Answer: The following paragraph has been added under communication with parents:

“We assumed that if adolescents do not have or see their father/mother then they are not supported. In addition the percentages of dissatisfied with their body image, were quite similar for those who responded not to have/see a father/mother and those who responded to have difficulty in talking to father/mother (respectively for father: 42.4% and 45.3% and for mother: 40.3% and 45.5%), while much lower percentages were found in those who responded that it was easy to talk to their parents (32.1% for talking to father and 35.5% for talking to mother). The percentages of missing data for both talking with father and talking with mother were 2.8%, ranging from 0.1-5.5% over the countries.”

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests: I declare that I have no competing interests

Best Regards,

Authors