

## A STUDY ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF LIFESTYLE ON EXCESS WEIGHT IN ADOLESCENTS FROM URBAN AREAS

Corneliu SCURT

*„Transilvania” University of Braşov, Romania*

### **Abstract**

*This research assumes that the processes of growth and development of adolescents from urban areas can be influenced by their lifestyle, diet, as well as the adequate practice of physical activities. This study was aimed at determining the degree to which a specific diet alongside with the practice of physical activities, both during, as well as after school, can influence the processes of growth and development of adolescents. In order to verify this hypothesis, a questionnaire-based survey was applied to a number of 471 girls and 349 boys from highschools in Brasov municipality. By analyzing the research results it was found that a significant number of young adolescents from urban areas have adopted an inadequate lifestyle, characterized by consumption of high-fat hypercaloric food, refined sweets, alcohol, coffee, and tobacco which, correlated with an inadequate practice of physical exercises during and after school, influences the growth and development of adolescents from urban areas.*

**Key words:** *lifestyle, questionnaire, adolescents, growth and development, urban areas, excess weight.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Excess weight in adolescents constitutes a major problem in the EU. The percentage of adolescents affected by excess weight is increasing throughout the whole EU, while in Romania the respective percentages are still relatively moderate.[11].

The studies conducted by Romanian researchers showed that 32% of the study subjects are overweight and obese (Carmen Barbu, 3). The endocrine and metabolic storm influences the energy requirements in adolescents amounting up to 2500 kcal in girls and 3000 kcal in boys. The requirements expressed as units per kilogram of body weight are 55-60 kcal/kg/body/day, when consuming plastic (tissue-building) nutrients and energy-rich nutrients [2].

In terms of diet principles, proteins represent 13%, of which 56-60% with high biological value. Lipid components represent 31-32%, of which 60% of animal origin whereas glucides represent 55-66% in form of cereals, vegetables, fruits, while avoiding refined sweets[2].

The diet should be rich and varied, differing from adult diet, while consumption of coffee and alcoholic beverages should be avoided. Caloric intake should be distributed over 4-5 meals, at fixed times, since inadequate diet habits acquired at this age can be the cause of diseases such as: obesity, atherosclerosis, sugar diabetes, gastroduodenal ulcer[1].

At this age, the confusion between a rational diet and overeating or discretionary eating should be avoided by providing a balance between food requirements and food intake, depending on the

physiological and environmental conditions. The practice of physical exercises by the youths is very beneficial for the adolescents' mental condition. The practice of team sports have a significant contribution to a harmonious physical development, reduce insomnia and lack of self-confidence. According to a study conducted by the Women Sport Foundation (USA), adolescent girls that practice regularly team sports are more involved in school activities, showing improved school performance[11].

Parental guidance and encouragement of children to involve in preferred physical activities contributes to healthy lifestyle and well-being condition of these. It is equally important that the parents continue their encouragement efforts in this direction even in the absence of immediate results. [4].

Sports are a healthy alternative to sedentary activities such as: television watching, excessive computer time, coffee, alcohol, tobacco consumption, delinquent behaviours.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued recommendations regarding physical exercises practice for improving the health condition [5] since these contribute to the development of the bone and muscle systems, the endocrine system, the cardiorespiratory and neuromuscular systems and help to preserve body weight within normal limits. The association between physical activities and psychological benefits helps to improve control over anxiety and depression symptoms, increases self-confidence, fosters social interaction and integration. It is essential that adolescents be

encouraged to participate in sports activities in accordance with their age that are varied and pleasant.

**MATERIAL AND METHOD**

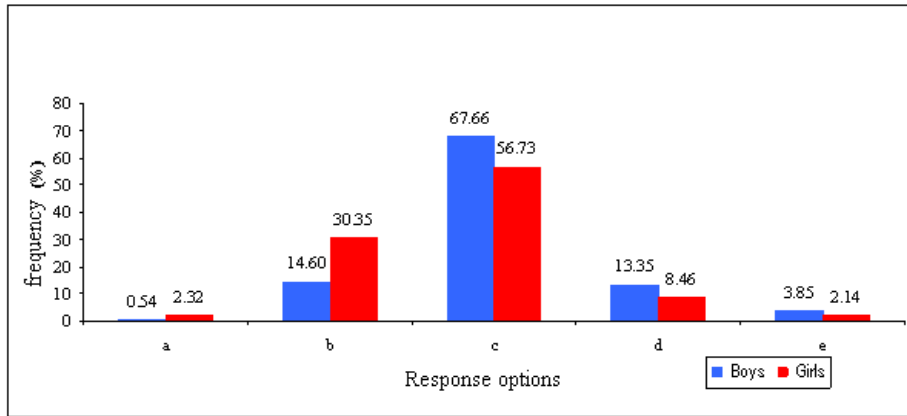
In order to emphasize the risk factors in terms of excess weight in adolescents, a study was conducted on adolescent high school students from Braşov municipality at the National Collegium *Unirea*, the Technical Collegium *Mircea Cristea*, the Natural Sciences Collegium *Emil Racoviţă*, and the Music High School *Tudor Ciortea*, between October-November 2012, including a number of 471 girls and 349 boys.

To obtain the data regarding the structure of the diet principles, the type of physical activities performed

during and after school as well as the changes that are considered necessary in terms of lifestyle, a questionnaire-based survey was applied containing 15 questions whereby the most relevant results were selected and presented below.

**RESULTS**

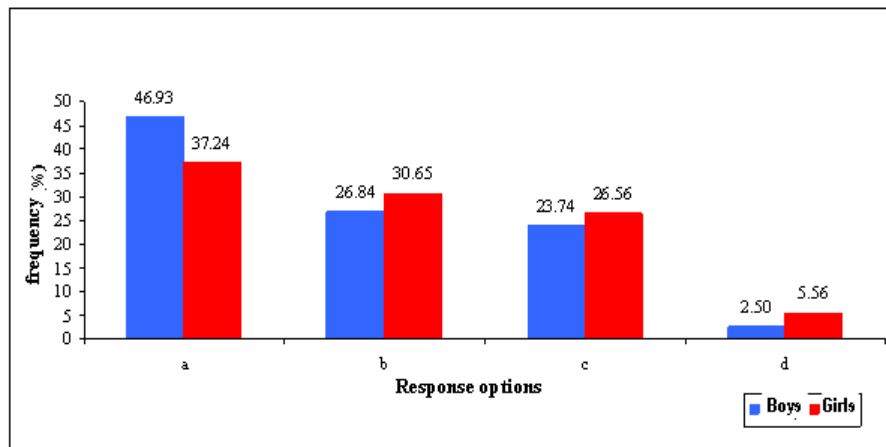
With regard to boys, the percentage of those who have 3 meals a day is 67.66%, while the percentage of the girls is 56.73%. In a lesser proportion, 14.40% of the boys and 30.45% of the girls declared to have two meals a day, while the proportion of those who have one meal per day is even lower (Graph 1).



Graph 1 [12]

A proportion of 46.93% of the boys declared to eat breakfast meals while in girls the percentage is 37.27%. However, the number of those who rarely

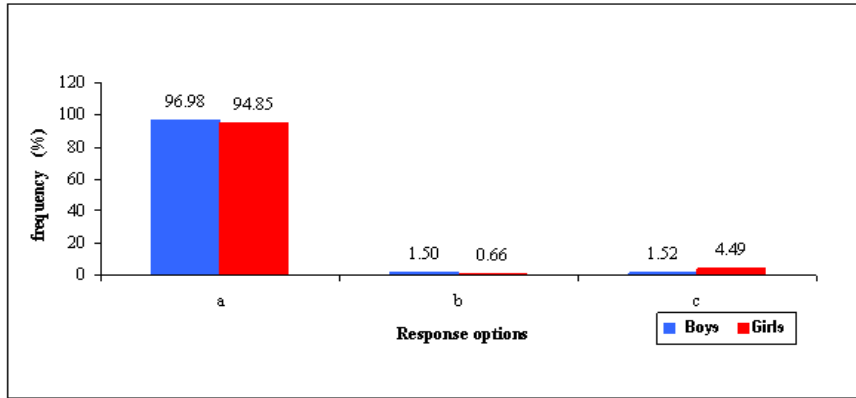
eat or even skip breakfast meals is high in both boys and girls. (Graph 2).



Graph 2 [12]

Most of the respondents declared to eat breakfast at home, 96.98% of the boys and 94.85% of the girls.

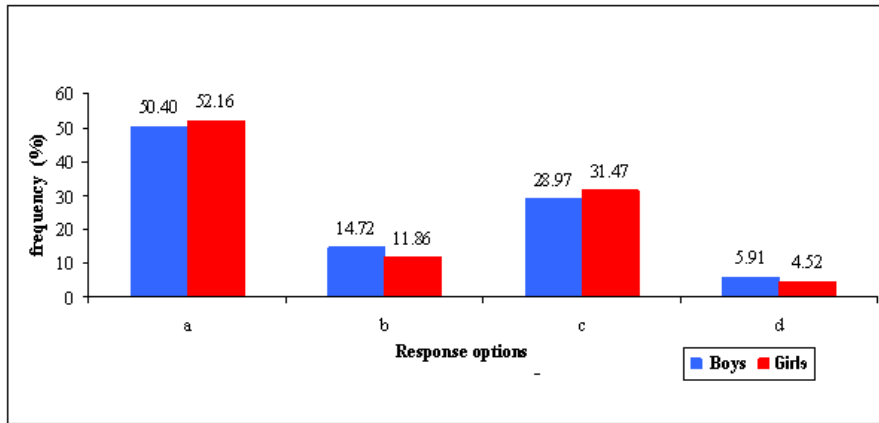
There are however cases when breakfast is eaten in fast-food restaurants or skipped (Graph 3).



Graph 3 [12]

Snacks that are eaten between the main meals are formed of fruit as declared by 52.16% of the girls

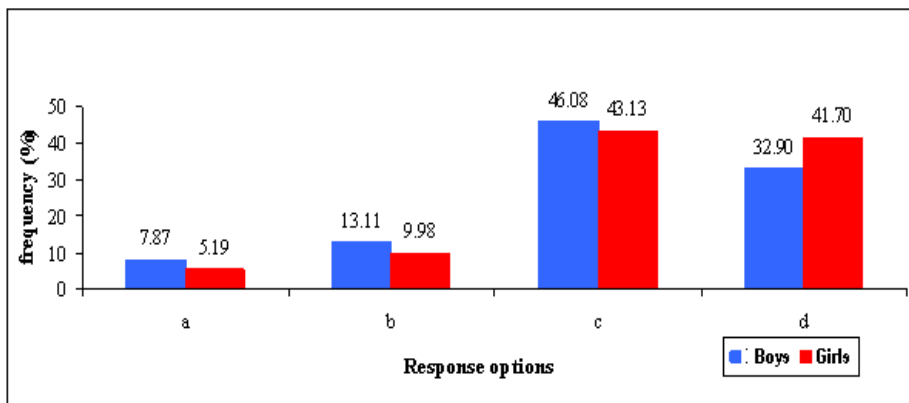
and 50.40% of the boys while around 30% of both girls and boys prefer sweets (Graph 4).



Graph 4 [12]

Fried potatoes and hamburgers are consumed in a smaller proportion, 5-7%, while other food contents vary between 46.08% in boys and 43.13% in girls.

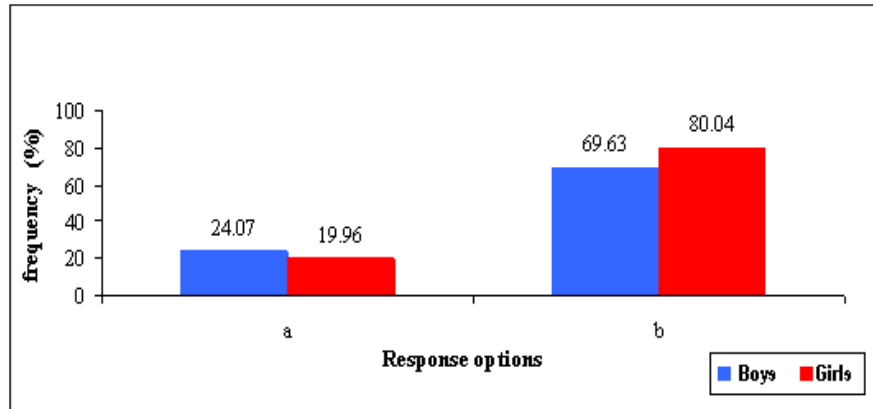
The above foods are rarely consumed by 28.97% of the boys and 41.70% of the girls (Graph 5).



Graph 5 [12]

When asked about their opinion on smoking, 19.96% of the boys and 24.07% of the girls at

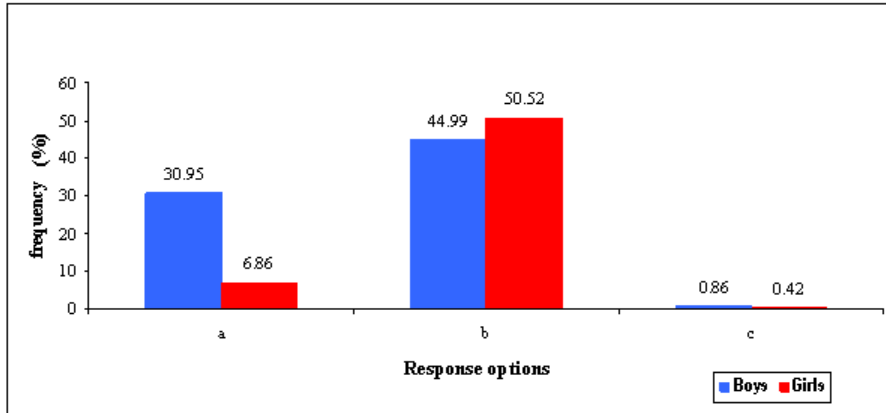
puberty declared themselves as smokers (Graph 6).



Graph 6 [12]

Coffee and alcohol consumption is however high, 6.86% of the girls and 30.95% of the boys. The

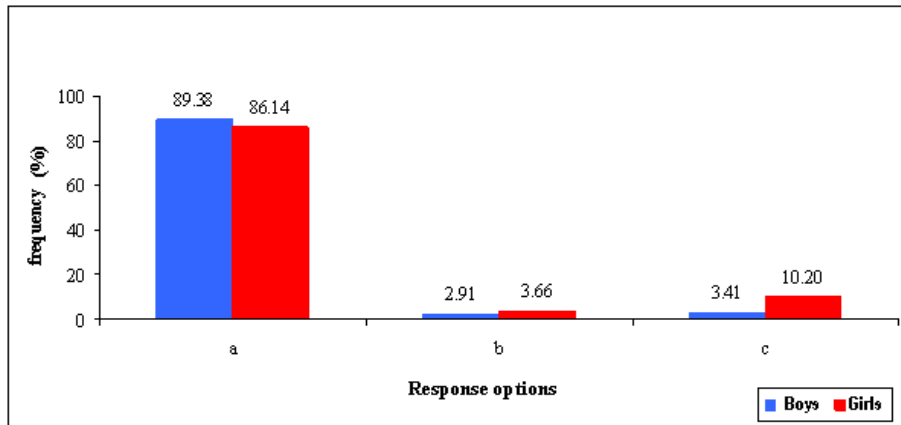
proportion of ethnobotanicals consumers is comparatively low (Graph 7).



Graph 7 [12]

Participation in physical education classes at school include 89.38% of the boys and 86.14% of the girls. The proportion of students who do not participate in

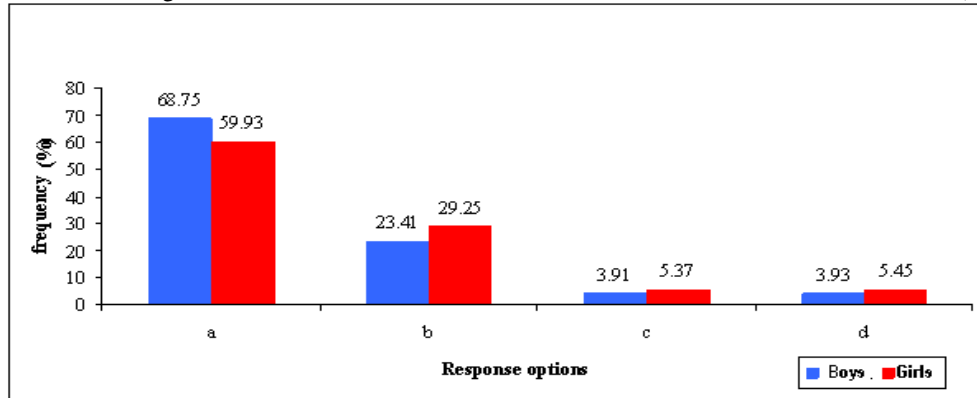
physical education classes or are medically exempted is low (Graph 8).



Graph 8 [12]

Leisure time activities include 68.75% of the boys and 59.93% of the girls. However, there still

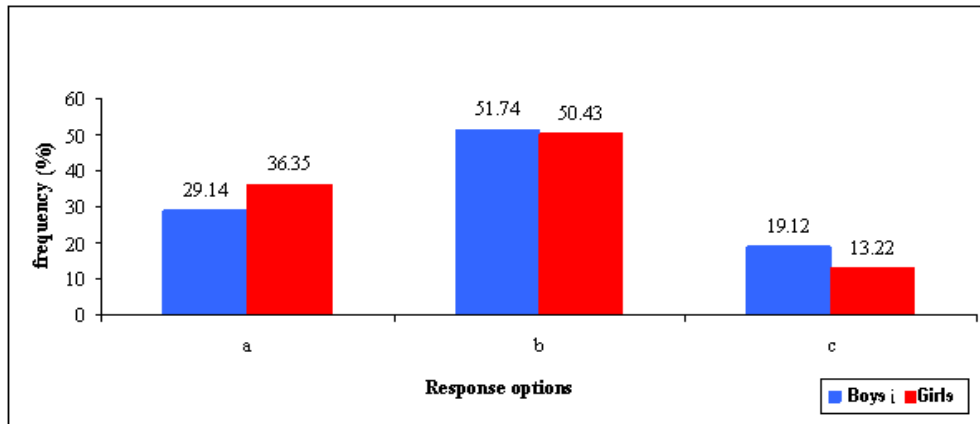
remains a significant proportion of youths who do not involve themselves in these activities (Graph 9).



Graph 9 [12]

Computer time or television watching between 2 and 4 hours per day are specific for around 50% of the adolescents, extreme values being declared by

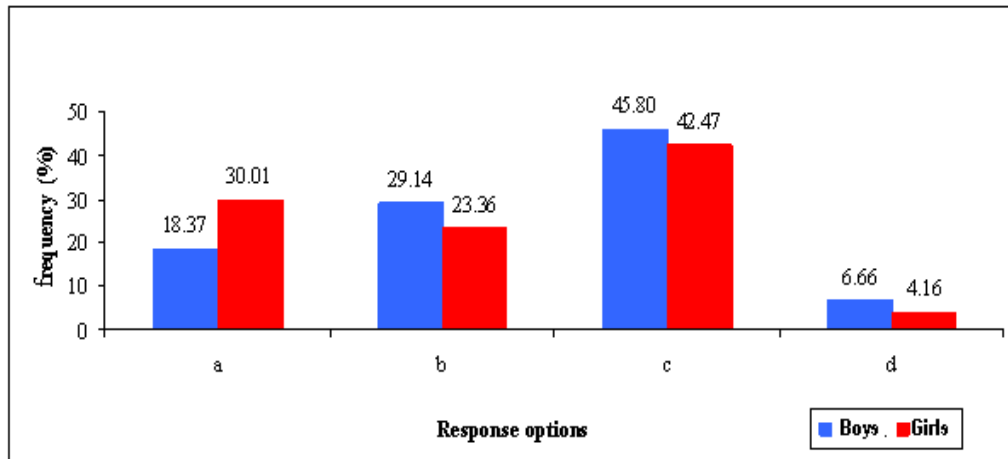
19.12% of the boys and 13.22% of the girls (Graph 10).



Graph 10 [12]

Most of the students conscientize the importance of lifestyle and nutrition changes, whereas school

schedule and sports activities are considered as priorities. (Graph 11).



Graph 11[12]

## CONCLUSIONS

Regular breakfast menu is not a constant priority for the questioned adolescents, as declared by 46.93% of the boys and 37.24% of the girls.

Fast foods consumption is dominant due to extensive lack of parental guidance. Consumption of alcoholic beverages, coffee, and tobacco is high for the considered population segment.

Leisure time activities represent a constant concern for only a small number of students.

The changes desired by most students envisage their lifestyle, the school schedule, as well as leisure time and recreational activities.

## REFERENCES

1. Mincu, I și Marinescu, E., (1984). *Alimentația rațională și sănătatea*, Edit. Sport – Turism, București, p. 74 – 76;
2. Scurt, M. (2013)., *Studiu constatativ privind corelația dintre stilul de viață și parametrii creșterii și dezvoltării la nivelul populației școlare de vârstă pubertară și adolescenților, din mediul urban*. Lucrare de disertație, FEFSM, Univ. Transilvania, Brașov.
3. <http://pentrufamilie.ro/2007/11/29/ce-cuprinde-alimentatia-adolescentilor/> (7.04.2013)
4. [http://www.gghjournal.com/volume24/1/pdf/vol24\\_no1.pdf](http://www.gghjournal.com/volume24/1/pdf/vol24_no1.pdf) (21.04.2013)
5. <http://www.garbo.ro/articol/Sanatate/7682/Beneficiile-psihologice-ale-sportului-pentru-dezvoltarea-adolescentilor.html> (21.04.2013)
6. <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/physical-activity-recommendations-5-17years.pdf> (28.04.2013)
7. [http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/factsheet\\_young\\_people/en/](http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/factsheet_young_people/en/) (22.04.2013)
8. <http://www.education.com/reference/article/teens-health-physical-activity-benefits/> (23.04.2013)
9. <http://www.nestle.ro/nhw/activitatefizica> (21.04.2013)
10. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/physicalactivity/guidelines.htm> (21.04.2013)
11. <http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf> (22.04.2013)
12. <http://www.rri.ro/art.shtml?lang=1&sec=27&art=340635> (19.04.2013).