

ABSTRACT

The rates of childhood obesity are on the rise as children are consuming more unhealthy foods and are less likely to be obtaining adequate physical activity levels. Interventions have been put in place in the school setting, but the integration of mood recognition in education on healthy lifestyles is lacking. This study was a part of a multimodal pediatric prevention study. It is hypothesized that gender distinctions between dietary intakes, emotions and other lifestyle practices may exist. Upon receipt of ethical and parental approval and consent, children in grades three to six from Wolfville Elementary School were invited to participate in the study (n=43). Survey data were analyzed by two-tailed logistic regression to identify potential gender differences among usual food, mood and lifestyle choices. Gender differences were found in regards to stress ($p=0.037$), energy levels ($p=0.015$) and daily physical activity levels ($p=0.035$). Gender-specific trends for food choices, mood states and activity choices were further identified from baseline self-reported data: males consumed “junk food” more frequently than females; felt more bored and less energetic; and participated in more screen time activity compared to female participants. Although limited by sample size and probable geographic variation, study findings elevate the need to further examine gender-specific interventions for children with the inclusion of emotional awareness and education, particularly as they relate to lifestyle choices and practices such as screen time, nutrition and physical activity.