



# DO CHILDCARE TEACHERS RATE PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S WEIGHT STATUS MORE ACCURATELY THAN PARENTS? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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## 01 INTRODUCTION

Parents tend to underestimate their young children's weight (1,2). It is not yet clear if childcare teachers experience the same difficulties when assessing children's nutritional status (3). We aimed to determine how accurate is the teachers' and parents' evaluation of the child's weight and how the caregivers' perception of the child's weight varied according to their BMI nutritional status.

## 02 METHODS

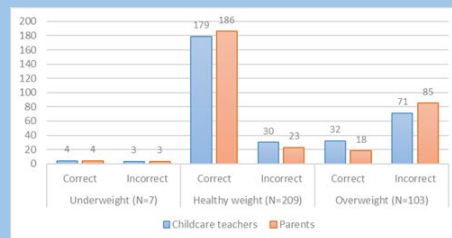
319 parents of preschool (2-6 y old) children and their 33 childcare teachers from 15 public and state-funded kindergartens near Lisbon evaluated the children's weight, considering their height and age. Children's weight and height were assessed, to determine the BMI percentile and nutritional status (CDC standards).

## 03 RESULTS

Childcare teachers were all female, aged 25 to 64 years old, with a degree in early childhood education. Most parents were mothers, aged 25 to 44 years old, and had completed a higher education degree. The children's mean age was 4.45 years old ( $SD=0.85$ ); 32.3% had excessive weight.

Approximately 2/3 of the children were accurately rated by teachers (67.4%) and parents (65.2%). The incorrect assessments were mainly underestimations of the child's weight regarding overweight children. The proportion of children with overweight correctly assessed differed significantly (McNemar value = 7.682;  $p .004$ ) between parents (17.5%) and teachers (31.1%) (Fig.1).

Fig. 1. Caregivers' correct/incorrect perception of the child's weight, according to the child's BMI nutritional status.



## 04 CONCLUSIONS

Although teachers were better than parents at evaluating children with overweight, the percentage of children they misclassify is still high. Specific training can improve teachers' interpretation of physical cues related to childhood overweight.

Thus, teachers can be better prepared to advise parents about their children's health and nutrition and implement early school actions to promote children's healthy eating and physical activity.

**Research project *Food Parenting: study of a new web-based parent intervention***  
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