

Abstract

In its theoretical part, the thesis covers the elucidation of food intake's regulation mechanisms, family's influence over the children's eating habits, eating habits of children aged 2 to 6 years, and specifics of eating behavior of children with autism spectrum disorder. The methodology and results of the executed research are introduced next. The parents of children with ASD ($N = 34$) and typically developing children ($N = 24$) at the ages of 2 to 6 filled out a set of questionnaires. The groups of children differed in fondness for the "fruit" food category (less popular with children with ASD, $M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.9$, $Mdn = 3.86$ vs. $M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.61$, $Mdn = 4.17$, Mann Whitney $U = 236$, $p = 0.046$); in the amount of food never tasted (more prominent among children with ASD, $M = 15.2$, $SD = 11.7$, $Mdn = 10.5$ vs. $M = 5.6$, $SD = 6.4$, $Mdn = 4.0$, $U = 134$, $p < 0.001$); and in the frequency of emotional over-eating (more frequent in children with ASD, $M = 1.84$, $SD = 0.846$, $Mdn = 1.75$ vs. $M = 1.38$, $SD = 0.466$, $Mdn = 1.25$). The parents of children suffering from ASD gave their children food more often when these were experiencing strong emotions ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 0.646$, $Mdn = 2$ vs. $M = 1.35$, $SD = 0.550$, $Mdn = 1$).

Keywords

eating, autism spectrum disorder, pre-school age