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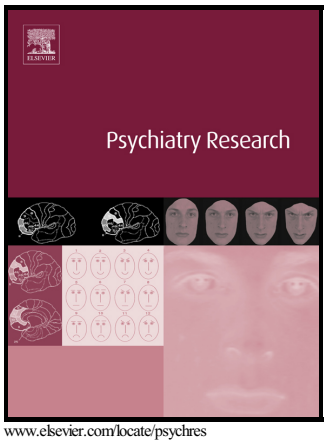

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The influence of parent's body mass index on peer selection: An experimental approach using virtual reality

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Abstract

Relatively little is known about the influence of psychosocial factors, such as familial role modelling and social network on the development and maintenance of childhood obesity. We investigated peer selection using an immersive virtual reality environment. In a virtual schoolyard, children were confronted with normal weight and overweight avatars either eating or playing. Fifty-seven children aged 7 to 13 participated. Interpersonal distance to the avatars, child's BMI, self-perception, eating behavior and parental BMI were assessed. Parental BMI was the strongest predictor for the children's minimal distance to the avatars.