

WEIGHT PERCEPTION IN RELATION TO WEIGHT CONTROL BEHAVIOURS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Background: The prevalence of obesity is increasing, but the concern for and attempts to control weight are widespread (Bhurtun and Jeewon 2013). More and more individuals, especially females, are accepting an unhealthy light weight as normal (Johnson, et al. 2008). Corresponding to this trend, there has been a global increase in weight loss efforts resulting from high levels of weight dissatisfaction within the population (Mikolajczyk, et al. 2010).

Objective: To examine how weight control practices are affected by the weight perceptions of university students.

Design: A self-administered questionnaire, which consisted of three sections (demographics: age, race, relationship status, gender, residential status and self-reported weight and height), weight perception and weight control behaviours, was used to examine the relationship between weight perceptions and weight control practices. The SPSS version 21.0 software was used to analyse data.

Results: Based on BMI 23.3%, 13.8% and 8.8% of students were underweight, overweight and obese, respectively. An overall of 39.8% of students were attempting to lose weight (12.0% males and 27.3% females). Majority of students (63.4%) correctly perceived their weight. Females (15.5%) tended to overestimate their weight than males (5.3%). Students most commonly used five practices to lose weight: increasing fruit and vegetable consumption (94.9%), reducing sugar intake (94.0%), consuming a balanced meal (93.5%), decreasing fat intake (93.4%) and exercising (93.0%).

Conclusion: Body weight perception strongly correlated with actual weight and weight control behaviour.