

AN ASSOCIATION OF BODY IMAGE AND EATING DISORDERS IN A GROUP OF SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN JAMAICA

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Background: Many studies have shown that adolescence females have a negative body image, which place them at risk for an eating disorder.

Objective: The main objective of the study was to establish an association between body image dissatisfaction and eating disorders among teenagers in Jamaica.

Design: One hundred and twenty teenage students from 6 high schools were randomly selected. The self-administered questionnaire consisted of questions on diet and eating, exercise, body image and body weight, psychological association and demographics. Data were analyzed by SPSS version 16 by descriptive analysis and chi squared tests. Only significant ($P < 0.05$) results were recorded.

Results: Most (64.2%) respondents were 'not always' preoccupied with food. Few (7.5 %) considered meal portion size as 'very large.' Although, approximately half (52.9%) were 'very' concerned with their body and weight, they felt 'happy' and 'very satisfied'. Although the preference was for a 'small body frame' 50.8% still nearly half 45.8% felt that 'medium to large frame' was more attractive the 'most' frequent weight loss method was by non-strenuous or non-excessive exercise. Many (41.7%) indicated that they 'sometimes' felt stressed but would 'never' overeat (66.7%). There were significant associations between body image and the eating disorders.

Conclusion: Students who were 'often' satisfied with their body shapes, their eating attitudes were 'often' positive with no significant eating disorder.

