

# Beyond the scale: Understanding relationships between weight, dietary choices, and eating disorders

Amina Iftikhar\*

Department of Psychology, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

Zarina Mat Saad

Department of Psychology, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

Azlizamani Zubir

Department of Psychology, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

## ABSTRACT:

*This research, conducted through a survey-based approach involving 248 participants, explores the intricate connections between eating behaviors, weight perception, and awareness of eating disorders. In a society marked by idealized body image standards and complex dietary habits, understanding these relationships is vital for improving individual health and well-being. The rise of obesity in Pakistan, particularly among women aged 15 to 49, is concerning, and this study aims to shed light on the factors influencing weight perception, societal beauty standards, and the development of eating disorders. The multifaceted objectives of the research include investigating the psychological effects of weight perception, understanding the impact of societal beauty standards on body image and eating patterns, identifying factors contributing to eating disorders, and proposing interventions for healthier relationships with food and the body. Using a cross-sectional research approach and random sampling techniques, data were collected from diverse individuals aged 18 to 35. Findings reveal that participants, on average, self-identified their weight status at 3.1, with daily meal frequencies at 3.7. Healthy foods were preferred by 60%, with 25% opting for fast food. Notably, 75% identified indications of binge eating disorder, and 88% recognized the necessity of professional assistance for eating disorders. Strategies for weight loss included regular physical exercise (55%) and various dietary approaches. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of understanding the complex relationships between weight perception, dietary choices, and eating disorders. It highlights the need for education and support to bridge knowledge gaps, as evidenced by participants' significant awareness of binge eating disorder and the value of professional intervention.*

**KEYWORDS:** Diet, Weight, Eating disorders.

## INTRODUCTION

Within a society marked by idealized body image standards and complex dietary habits, this study aims to uncover the multifaceted relationships that influence individuals' attitudes toward their physical appearance, eating behaviors, and the onset of eating disorders. This understanding is vital for improving individuals' health and well-being (Andrade LH, 2014).

Obesity has been on the rise in Pakistan in recent years,

driven by rapid urbanization, dietary changes, and unhealthy lifestyles. According to the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) conducted in 2017-18, the prevalence of obesity among women aged 15 to 49 exceeded 30%, with approximately 13% among males in the same age group. Furthermore, the overall prevalence of overweight and obesity was higher in urban areas compared to rural regions. Pakistan ranks 10th out of 188 nations in terms of obesity, with approximately 50% of its population being overweight or obese. Alarming, the World Obesity Federation predicts that by 2030, 5.4 million Pakistani school-aged children will be obese (Gruszka W, 2022).

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:** This study has a multifaceted set of objectives. It aims to explore the complex relationship between how individuals perceive their weight and the resulting psychological effects. It will also investigate how societal beauty standards and cultural norms impact body

**Received:** 26-Dec-2023, Manuscript No: ijemhhr-24-122332;

**Editor assigned:** 29-Dec-2023, Pre QC No. ijemhhr-24-122332(PQ);

**Reviewed:** 12-Jan-2024, QC No. ijemhhr-24-122332;

**Revised:** 17-Jan-2024, Manuscript No. ijemhhr-24-122332(R);

**Published:** 23-Jan-2024, DOI: 10.4172/1522-4821.1000615

\*Correspondence regarding this article should be directed to: aminaiftikhar7@gmail.com

image and eating patterns (Knaak S, 2017). Furthermore, the research will identify the various factors contributing to the development of eating disorders. Lastly, the study intends to propose interventions that promote healthier relationships with food and the body. Overall, this research seeks to enhance our understanding of how weight perception, societal influences, and eating disorders are interconnected, with the ultimate goal of informing strategies for improved well-being (Lobstein T, 2019).

**RESEARCH FRAMEWORK:** Our study employs a cross-sectional research approach, providing a snapshot of associations at a specific point in time. We used random sampling techniques to collect data from 248 individuals, aged 18 to 35, representing diverse backgrounds. The descriptive statistics reveal that the participants had an average age of 28.5 years, with a standard deviation of 7.2 years (Moe AM, 2022). The gender distribution showed that 65% were female, 30% were male, and 5% identified as other. These findings offer a snapshot of the study's participant demographics and serve as a foundation for further analysis. Data were gathered through online questionnaires and social media channels (Napolitano F, 2019). These questionnaires covered various domains, including weight perception, eating habits, body image satisfaction, self-esteem, and mental health indicators. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were then directed to the online survey. Pearson and Spearman correlations were utilized to explore the connections between weight perception, eating behaviors, body image satisfaction, and mental health indicators (Schaumberg K, 2017).

**PERCEPTION OF WEIGHT:** On a scale ranging from 1 (underweight) to 5 (obese), participants self-identified their average weight status at 3.1, with a standard deviation of 0.9 (Smink FRE,2012).

**EATING HABITS:** The average frequency of daily meals was 3.7, with a standard deviation of 0.9. Participants' preferred food choices included healthy foods (60%), fast food (25%), and a balanced diet (15%). Snacking frequency varied, with 40% snacking daily, 30% snacking occasionally, 20% rarely snacking, and 10% never snacking (Scheer FA,2013).

**UNDERSTANDING EATING DISORDERS:** A noteworthy 75% of participants accurately identified indications of binge eating disorder, while 62% comprehended the concept of emotional eating. An overwhelming 88% of participants recognized the necessity of professional assistance for eating disorders.

**STRATEGIES FOR WEIGHT LOSS:** Approximately 55% of individuals engaged in regular physical exercise, while 42% reported dieting for weight loss. Dietary strategies included calorie counting (30%), low-carb diets (15%), intermittent fasting (12%), and various other approaches (43%).

**SATISFACTION WITH ONE'S BODY:** Participants rated their body image satisfaction on a scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), with an average score of 3.8 and a standard deviation of 1.0. Participants rated their body image satisfaction on a scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), with an average score of 3.8 and a standard deviation of 1.0 (Van Den Berg PA, 2010).

#### **IMPLICATIONS:**

- Patients having premenopausal stages should be screened for early perimenopausal symptoms that may interfere with their quality of life.
- Early intervention at the multidisciplinary front will provide an opportunity for early diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitative measure
- Psychotherapeutic interventions may be planned to decrease the burden of different stressors and will limit the severity of symptoms.
- Perimenopausal women should be screened for Psychiatric comorbidities and Medical comorbidities so that early intervention may be planned.

**LIMITATIONS:** The limitation of the study is that the sample size was small, a larger sample size is needed to see the correlation between postmenopausal symptoms and psychiatric morbidity. The Sample from periphery health centers was not taken and people from one community were in the sample. Hormonal analysis was not done as it could play an important role both in the appearance and pattern of perimenopausal symptoms and psychiatric comorbidities. This could further strengthen the link between the severity, type of postmenopausal symptoms, and development of psychiatric morbidity.

**STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY:** Our study has examined the different sociodemographic variables, The medical, and psychiatric comorbidities, and the pattern of perimenopausal symptoms. The correlation of perimenopausal symptoms with psychiatric disorders was analysed and the severity of somatic symptoms was also obtained.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:** We express our gratitude to the patient and their relatives for their devotion to valuable time with us. we thank the postgraduates and faculty of the Department of Psychiatry and Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology SKIMS MCH Bemina for their support.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Incorporating the feedback from Review 1, it is crucial to present relevant conclusions. This study underscores the importance of comprehending the intricate relationships between weight perception, dietary choices, and the emergence of eating disorders. It emphasizes the need

for education and support to bridge knowledge gaps, as demonstrated by the significant awareness of binge eating disorder and the value of professional intervention among the participants.

## REFERENCES

- Andrade, LH., Alonso, J., Mneimneh, Z., Wells, JE., Al-Hamzawi, A., Borges, G., et al (2014). Barriers to mental health treatment: results from the WHO World Mental Health surveys. *Psychol Med.*44(6):1303-17.
- Gruszka, W., Owczarek, A., Glinianowicz, M., Bąk-Sosnowska, M., Chudek, J., Olszanecka-Glinianowicz, M. (2022). Perception of body size and body dissatisfaction in adults. *Sci Rep.* 12(1).
- Knaak, S., Mantler, E., Szeto, ACH (2017). Mental illness-related stigma in healthcare. *Healthc. Manage. Forum.* 30(2), 111–116.
- Lobstein, T., Brinsden, H. (2019). Atlas of childhood obesity. *World Obe Fede.* 211.
- Moe, AM., Sørbye, SH., Hopstock, LA., Carlsen, MH., Lovsletten, O., Ytterstad, E (2022). Identifying dietary patterns across age, educational level and physical activity level in a cross-sectional study: the Tromsø Study 2015 - 2016. *BMC Nutr.* 8(1).
- Napolitano, F., Bencivenga, F., Pompili, E., Angelillo, IF. (2019). Assessment of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors toward Eating Disorders among Adolescents in Italy. *Int J Environ Res Pub Hea.* 16(8), 1448.
- Schaumberg, K., Welch, E., Breithaupt, L., Hubel, C., Baker, JH., Munn-Chernoff, MA et al (2017). The Science Behind The Academy for Eating Disorders’ Nine Truths About Eating Disorders. *Euro Eating Dis Rev.* 25(6), 432–450.
- Smink, FRE., Van Hoeken, D., Hoek, HW (2012). Epidemiology of Eating Disorders: Incidence, Prevalence and mortality rates. *Curr Psychiatry Rep.* 14(4), 406–414.
- Scheer, FA., Morris, CJ., Shea, SA. (2013). The internal circadian clock increases hunger and appetite in the evening independent of food intake and other behaviors. *Obesity.* 21(3), 421–423.
- Van Den Berg, PA., Mond, J., Eisenberg, ME., Ackard, DM., Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2010). The link between body dissatisfaction and Self-Esteem in adolescents: similarities across gender, age, weight status, Race/Ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. *J Adolesc Health.* 47(3),290–296.