

Nutrition and Dietetics Students' Attitudes towards Obesity

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Abstract: The aim of this article is the investigation of Nutrition and Dietetics students' attitudes towards obesity. Since these students will be in helping position for obese people their attitudes are accepted as important. Therefore attitudes of university students who are studying nutrition and dietetics towards obesity aimed to be investigated in this study. The Obesity Prejudice Inventory which is aiming to measure negative attitudes towards obesity and developed by Ercan, Akçil Ok, Kızıltan, & Altun, (2015) was used. According to data analysis no gender or class based statistically differences significant differences have been found. According to descriptive analysis range for participants' obesity prejudice inventory mean scores have been found as 58 to 122. Mean score for whole sample has been found as 81,7. According to developers of the scale which is aiming to measure negative attitudes towards obesity mean scores above 68 shows a negative inclination towards being prejudicial. Since these students will be prospective health workers who are going to serve to people with obesity, existence of mentioned attitudes must be considered as important topics that should be included in professional education curriculums to be able to decrease possible undesirable effects on people with obesity.

Keywords: Obesity, attitudes, health outcomes

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I. INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of obesity on the base of body mass index (BMI) explains obesity as having BMI bigger than 30kg/m² (WHO, 2013). Obesity which is related with lots of health problems is accepted as an epidemic (Ogden, Carroll, Kit, & Flegal, 2014). According to changing lifestyle and eating habits obesity becomes more epidemic. Changing occurs due to many factors such as socioeconomic and demographical (Popkin, 2001).

There are lots of research conducted about the negative attitudes towards obesity (Berryman, Dubale., Manchester, & Mittelstaedt., 2006, O'Brien et al., 2008; Okumuşoğlu, 2016). Negative attitudes might have an undesirable impact as creating negative mood in individuals (Okumuşoğlu, 2016) and its known that negative mood is related with negative health consequences and difficulties in terms of coping with the problems (Okumuşoğlu, 2017a). Because of these several studies it was intended to examine the *Nutrition and Dietetics students' attitudes towards obesity*.

II. METHOD

II.1. Participants

Data collected from 80 university students who are studying nutrition and dietetics in a private University in North Cyprus. It was intended to have 40 males and 40 female subjects. Since some of the participants did not completed demographic parts despite the fact they volunteered to participate, these uncompleted scales eliminated. As a result, there are 38 female and 36 male participants and total participants are 74 university students. Mean age of the participants have been calculated as 20,6 (SD:1,8).

II.2. Instruments of Data Collection

II.2.1. Obesity Prejudice Inventory

This scale is aiming to measure negative attitudes towards obesity and developed by Ercan, Akçil Ok, Kızıltan, & Altun, (2015). Scale has 27 item and 5 point Likert type rating of answers. Possible scores that would be handled from mentioned scale are between 27-135 range. Higher scores inform higher negative attitudes towards obesity. In terms of participants scores which handled from the inventory,

scores above 68 (68.01-84.99) are accepted as a negative inclination towards being prejudicial. Beside, scores above 85 are mentioned as pointing out highly negative attitudes (Ercan et al., 2015).

II.2.2. Demographics Questionnaire

Demographics of subjects as age and sex who enrolled to participate was collected by this questionnaire.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

III.1. Procedure

Collected data was analyzed by SPSS 21. Level of significance have been determined as 0,05 for all statistical analysis.

III.2. Descriptive Analysis

Mean score in terms of participants' obesity prejudice inventory scores which were handled from the completed scales has been found as 81,7 (SD=11,3). The range for total scores of participants have been found as 58-122.

III.3. Independent Samples t-test for gender differences

According to independent samples t-test analysis, no differences was found between male and female students in terms of Obesity Prejudice Inventory scores of participants ($t=-0,414$, $p=0,6$).

IV. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Attitudes of university students who are studying Nutrition and Dietetics towards obesity aimed to be investigated in this study. Since these students will be in helping position for obese people, their attitudes are regarded as important.

According to data analysis no statistically significant differences between males and females have been found. Also in study of Okumuşoğlu (2016) that has been investigated prejudicial attitudes of prospective professionals (counsellors, educators, and psychologists) no gender based differences was found.

According to descriptive analysis participants' obesity prejudice inventory mean scores ranged between 58 to 122. Mean score has been found as 81,7. According to developers of the scale which is aiming to measure negative attitudes towards obesity mean scores above 68 shows a negative inclination towards being prejudicial. In literature there are studies which points out the importance of cognitions in terms of desired weight loss success realization for people with overweight or obesity (Okumuşoğlu, 2015; Dirikli & Okumuşoğlu, 2015).

According to Okumuşoğlu (2017b) time to time health interventions especially public level interventions might carry some possible counter indications as unwanted effects. It is obvious that fighting to handle a healthy body weight and creating public awareness about the dangers of obesity is important. But while working for this aim, intervention planners and professionals must be careful about unwanted effects as increasing prejudicial attitudes which are harmful for people who has to deal with weight based problems.

Because of possible unwanted effects of negative attitudes towards obesity, existence and effects of these attitudes should be considered as important topics that should be included in professional education curriculums (Okumuşoğlu, 2016; Setchell, Watson, Gard, & Jones, 2016).

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