Depression and Obesity: Does Depression Cause Obesity, or Obesity Cause Depression, or Both?
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BACKGROUND

There is evidence to support the argument that obesity causes depression. However, is it also possible that depression causes obesity? The purpose of this study is to consider whether or not depression causes obesity.

METHODOLOGY

This research will conduct a longitudinal study using survey research to explore whether or not depression causes obesity. There are many factors that could lead to obesity from depression, either in a direct or indirect way. I will concentrate my survey research on two indirect factors, anti-depressant medications and body temperature levels, and one direct factor, eating habits during depression.

This survey will be conducted on a sample of students at the University of North Texas. A random sample of 50 students will be interviewed every two months for one year. The survey questions will be short, clear, and precise.

REFERENCE


Images:

FURTHER READINGS


LITERATURE REVIEW

Agreements and Disagreements in the Literature

Agreements

There is some agreement that obesity could cause depression. Hilton (27) suggests that the patient’s unhappiness about their weight causes them to enter into a mode of depression. She shows that after reducing the weight of the patient, depression scores improve and there are better results among the successful patients. Additionally, the researcher found that depressed patients avoided the need for medications (Hilton 27). Goldfield et al. (187) state that weight status affects the anhedonia subscale, the negative self-esteem scale, and the total CDI depression scores. Their study found that obesity in youth can lead to depression (Goldfield et al. 187). Blaine (1191) confirms that many studies have found that the obese are twice as likely to be depressed. However, he suggests that other studies have not found a longitudinal relationship between obesity and later depression and he goes on to state that, in the long-term, no relationship between depression and obesity have been found.

Disagreements

While there is some agreement, there is also disagreement surrounding the debate that depression could cause obesity. Hilton’s (27) study found that the improvements in depression did not correlate with weight loss. However, Goldfield et al. (187) show that “the social stigma associated with obesity is believed to engender shame, guilt and intense feelings of body dissatisfaction.” Moreover, “a negative body image also serves as the impetus to engage in strict dieting and unhealthy eating and weight control practices. [Dietary restraint has also been cross-sectionally associated with obesity and is predictive of future weight gain in youth” (Goldfield et al., Page 187). They, therefore, conclude that depression from body image could cause obesity. Blaine (1180) directly asks the question “Does Depression Cause Obesity?” His study focuses specifically on whether depression causes obesity (or not). Blaine (1191) states that “depressed compared to nondepressed people were at significantly higher risk for developing obesity.” The study also finds that “the effect of negative moods on eating was moderated by dieting status: dieters ate more when depressed than when nondepressed and the reverse was true for nondieters” (Blaine 1191).

Comparison

The three articles relate obesity and depression using a variety of studies, research methods, and participants. There are both agreements and disagreements on the effect of obesity on depression. Hilton (27) did not find support for the argument that depression causes obesity. Goldfield et al. (187) showed that dissatisfaction with one’s body image causes obesity through strict dieting. Blaine (1191) suggested that dieters will eat more when depressed. The results of these three studies suggest that more research needs to be conducted to explore the relationship between depression and obesity.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Warren Burggren, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Vish Prasad, Ph.D., Vice President for Research and Economic Development
Michael Monticino, Ph.D., Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Gloria C. Cox, Ph.D., Dean, Honors College
Art Goven, Ph.D., Chair, Department of Biological Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences