

Relationships among Weight Status, Eating Behaviors, and Psychological Functioning in a Sample of African-American Women

Faith Summersett-Ringgold, Joneis T. Thomas, PhD., Regina C. Sims, Ph.D., Denee T. Mwendwa, Ph.D., Clive O. Callender, M.D., and Alfonso L. Campbell, Ph.D.

African-American women have high rates of obesity compared to women of other ethnicities and men of all ethnicities (Siegel, et al., 2000). African-American women report greater body image satisfaction compared to white women despite being more prone to obesity (Siegel, et al., 2000). Given that eating behaviors may contribute to body weight (Brown, et al., 2009), a consideration of eating behaviors may shed light on this inconsistent relationship between obesity and psychosocial functioning in African-American women. Participants included 55 African American women who completed self-report measures of eating behaviors, mental health-related quality of life, depression, anxiety, and hostility. Participants underwent a medical examination to determine body mass index (mean=32, Obese I) and waist-to-hip ratio (mean=.82, moderate risk). Correlation analyses indicated that trait anxiety was positively associated with emotional eating ($r = 0.364$, $p = 0.001$) and haphazard meal planning ($r = 0.435$, $p = 0.000$). Hostility was positively associated with emotional eating ($r = 0.331$, $p = 0.001$), haphazard meal planning ($r = 0.321$, $p = 0.002$), cultural lifestyle eating ($r = 0.346$, $p = 0.001$), snacking on sweets ($r = 0.228$, $p = 0.029$), and skipping meals ($r = 0.234$, $p = 0.025$). In multiple regression analyses, emotional eating (Beta = 0.257, $p = 0.031$) and haphazard meal planning (Beta = .334, $p = .005$) were significant predictors of trait anxiety. When evaluating African-American women who are obese, healthcare providers should assess eating behaviors, hostility, and anxiety as they may be targets for interventions that promote healthy eating behaviors and well-being.

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