

Effects of weight stigma in news media on physical activity, dietary and weight loss intentions and behaviour

Weight stigma has historically been used as a tool to motivate weight loss, however the underlying assumption that it will arouse health-motivating effects is inaccurate. Weight stigma is instead associated with a multitude of negative effects including weight gain, depression, anxiety, avoidance of exercise and medical treatment.

This study aims to investigate the effect of weight stigma in news media on (a) intentions to increase physical activity (PA), improve diet quality and lose weight, and (b) changes in PA, diet quality and body mass index (BMI) over one month, in (i) women of all weight categories and (ii) a subsample of women living with obesity.

172 participants were randomly selected to read an article on either weight stigma or smoking stigma (control group). Immediately after reading the article, participants completed a questionnaire that included measurements on BMI, PA, diet quality, intentions, past stigma, and diet and PA self-efficacy. Participants also completed a 1-month follow-up survey.

Results showed that overall, there was no significant effect of weight stigma on diet quality or physical activity. However, weight stigma was associated with a significant increase in BMI at 1-month follow-up.

Lambert, Ellen R., et al. "Effects of Weight Stigma in News Media on Physical Activity, Dietary and Weight Loss Intentions and Behaviour." *Obesity Research & Clinical Practice*, vol. 13, no. 6, Nov. 2019, pp. 571–578, 10.1016/j.orcp.2019.09.001.