

Weight Discrimination and Selected Health Behaviors

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Background: Discrimination has adverse consequences for public health. Our objective was to improve understanding of weight discrimination's influence on health behaviors. **Methods:** We conducted two studies. First, data from the 2010 and 2012 waves of the Health and Retirement Study were analyzed to examine relationships between weight discrimination and physical inactivity among older adults. Second, a qualitative analysis of posts from three online weight loss forums explored how weight-related discrimination in healthcare settings might influence weight loss information-seeking. **Results:** The quantitative study found that, among older adults, weight discrimination was negatively associated with any vigorous (AOR=0.75; 95% CI: 0.62, 0.89) and any moderate (AOR=0.75; 95% CI: 0.59, 0.94) physical activity. Weight discrimination partially mediated the relationship between BMI and both moderate and vigorous physical activity. The qualitative study found that providers' management of affect, including shame and embarrassment related to weight, "pushed" some individuals to seek weight loss information from forums. Forum users described anticipatory, as well as lived experiences of, discrimination in healthcare, which led to provider avoidance and hindered patient-provider communication about weight. **Conclusion:** Our findings suggest that experiences of weight discrimination influence health behaviors, including physical activity, weight loss information-seeking, and utilization of healthcare.

Learning Objective(s):

1. Describe the relationship between BMI, perceived weight discrimination, and physical inactivity among older adults.
2. Discuss how healthcare experiences (i.e., discrimination, stigma, or shame from providers) might influence use of Internet weight loss forums for health information.