

Labelling Obesity

Most cases of obesity are "primary" according to Budd and Hayman (2008) which means that the clinical status of "obese" was not directly a result of some kind of disease as the root cause. Therefore, individuals who fall into the category of "very overweight" and "obese" in a clinical sense are often blamed for their own situation and that "they should've had it under control (willpower)" or "it's their own fault (willpower, laziness, etc.)" (Budd & Hayman, 2008).

As a result of low self-esteem to begin with compounded by the pressure and negativity of the external social environment (school, work, social situations), Budd and Hayman (2008) noted that according to research studies, obese individuals tend to avoid getting help and avoid healthcare/preventative/support-types of services.

Pearson and Hall (2013) noted that the psychological impact of being overweight or obese is less understood, but definitely is multidimensional. Women experience more body dissatisfaction than men, and at time, about 45% of women in general are trying to lose weight (Pearson & Hall, 2013). For women who are overweight, 60% of them are trying to lose weight at any given time (Pearson & Hall, 2013).

Pearson and Hall (2013) conducted a study that examined how body image might change over time with individuals participating in an 18 week cardiovascular exercise program. Pearson and Hall (2013) found that in as little as 6-12 weeks, individuals expressed more satisfaction and positivity in their appearance evaluation (AE) and body areas satisfaction (BASS). It may be that being engaged in an exercise program boosted the individuals' feeling that "they are doing something good for their body" and that might be an additional motivation. Along with developing a better body image, the participants' fitness orientation (FO) scores were also increased. FO describes how vested one is into fitness or developing healthful habits/lifestyle which includes exercise and a commitment towards fitness (Pearson and Hall, 2013). Pearson and Hall's (2013) study found a strong correlation between having a good body-image and exercise compliance/adherence.

As one way to combat the obesity pandemic and generally help everyone (including those who are not clinically obese) achieve a more healthful lifestyle, there needs to be greater acceptance for those who are struggling, and it is important to create an environment that is safe, motivational, positive, and supportive for those who are taking baby-steps towards fitness and health.

References

Budd, G. M., & Hayman, L. L. (2008). Addressing the childhood obesity crisis: A call to action. *The American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing*, 33(2), 111-120.

Pearson, E. S., & Hall, C. R. (2013). [Examining body image and its relationship to exercise motivation: An 18-week cardiovascular program for female initiates with overweight and obesity](#). *Baltic Journal Of Health & Physical Activity*, 5(2), 121-131.