

A South African study of the association between global self-esteem and Body Mass Index (BMI) scores, in adolescent females: An investigation of differences in perceived weight problems, racial identity, physical exercise, weight control behaviour and stage of pubertal development.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine whether: actual and ideal body mass index (BMI) scores, perception of a weight problem, racial identity, physical exercise, weight control behaviour and stage of pubertal development predict levels of global self-esteem in average academic achieving English speaking middle-class adolescent females. The sample consisted of 90 females, ranging in age from 13 years 3 months to 18 years 7 months who were attending Benoni High School. BMI was measured and desired BMI based on self-reported weight and height. Self-perception of having a weight problem was evaluated by one question: “Do you see yourself as having a weight problem?” Self-esteem was measured in two ways: firstly participants completed the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and secondly homeroom teachers were asked to give a score of global self-esteem. A significant association was found between global self-esteem and: a perceived weight problem, actual BMI and race. No significant association was found between global self-esteem and: weight control behaviour; physical exercise, age of menarcheal onset and ideal BMI.

KEY WORDS

Global self-esteem, adolescent females, BMI, racial identity, weight control behaviour, physical exercise and pubertal development

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this research to the loving memory of Mr B.C Lotter, Headmaster Benoni High School, who passed away very sadly and unexpectedly during the course of this study.

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- Lastly but most importantly to God my absolute pillar of strength and constant support. Thank you for making this opportunity to become a psychologist possible and for laying the way for me to complete this research.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education (Educational Psychology) at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Bronwyn Anne Webber

Date

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