

Body image dissatisfaction and emotional eating across age and weight status: a comparative cross-sectional study.

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Background: Obesity in older adults is associated with significant medical, functional, and psychological consequences, including body image dissatisfaction and maladaptive eating behaviors such as emotional eating. Although these associations have been extensively studied in younger populations, limited evidence is available in older adults with obesity. This study aimed to examine differences in body dissatisfaction by age and weight status and its association with emotional eating in adults and older adults with obesity.

Methods: 108 participants were included and divided into four subgroups based on age and weight status. Body dissatisfaction was assessed using the Body Uneasiness Test (BUT-A). Emotional eating was evaluated using the Emotional Eating subscale of the Dutch Eating Behaviour Questionnaire (EE-DEBQ). Twoway ANOVAs were conducted to examine the effects of age, weight status, and their interaction on body dissatisfaction, while Pearson correlations were used to assess associations between body dissatisfaction and emotional eating.

Results: The analysis showed significant main effects of both age and weight status on global body dissatisfaction, with higher BUT-GSI scores observed in adults than in older adults and in participants with obesity compared with normalweight individuals. Across all BUT dimensions, participants with obesity reported higher levels of body image concerns, avoidance, compulsive self-monitoring, and depersonalization. Significant age $\times$ weight status interactions emerged for weight phobia and body image concerns. Age significantly affected body image concerns and avoidance. Positive correlations between body dissatisfaction and emotional eating were found in adults with obesity ($r=0.443$, $p=0.024$) and older adults with obesity ($r=0.480$, $p=0.004$), as well as in normal-weight adults ($r=0.573$, $p=0.001$).

Conclusion: The findings highlight the significant role of both ageing and obesity in shaping body image experiences.

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