

A study on body image and influences on the intention to reduce food intake of female high school students

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This study was conducted to examine the perception of body image and specific factors influencing intentions to reduce food intake with The Theory of Reasoned Action. The subjects were 472 female high school students residing in Kyongju, Korea. A questionnaire included items about demographic factors, dieting behaviors, and body image. It also was developed to measure belief, value, social influence, body dissatisfaction, nutrition knowledge about weight control, and self-esteem for predicting their intention to reduce food intake. The major results are as follows:

1. The subjects perceived their current body image correctly when evaluated by body mass index in all groups of underweight, normal weight, and overweight. However, the subjects perceived very thin figures as ideal and attractive in all groups. Therefore, overweight students showed significantly higher dissatisfaction about their body image than others. The perception of ideal and attractive figures of subjects who had attempted dieting were significantly thinner than those of the subjects who had not attempted, so their dissatisfaction about body image was significantly higher.
2. The Subjects had considerable nutrition knowledge about weight control(score 7.5 out of 10).
3. The subjects showed moderate self-esteem scores. There were no differences in the scores of self-esteem according to grade and body weight, but students who majored in humanities and had not attempted dieting showed significantly higher scores compared to students who majored in business and had attempted dieting.
4. The subjects showed a favorable attitude toward reducing food intake. The third grade students, students majoring in business, overweight and normal weight students and students who had attempted dieting showed more favorable attitudes than the first and second graders, students majoring in humanities, underweight students, and students who had not attempted dieting.
5. The subjects were influenced a little by their reference groups. There are no significant differences according to grade, major, body weight, and dieting experience.
6. Regression analysis revealed that both attitudes toward the behavior and body dissatisfaction predicted the subjects' intention of reducing food intake. Body dissatisfaction was a more important factor in predicting behavior.