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Georgia Southern Partners with NYU in Study of the association of Perceived and Actual Overweight on School Absenteeism

November 29, 2016



Excess body weight has been reported to be associated with excessive school absenteeism (ESA), but less is known about the association with perceived body weight. The study objective was to assess the relative influence of perceived and measured weight status on school attendance.

We used the data from 3113 adolescents age 12–19 years who were interviewed as a part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES), 2003–2008. Body weight and height were measured during the physical examination, while self-perceived body weight and the number of school days missed was assessed. Missing

one or more days per school month (nine days per school year) was defined as, and indicative of, experiencing Excessive School Absenteeism (ESA).

ESA was reported from 12.31 (SE = 0.89) % of adolescents. The highest prevalence occurred among healthy weight adolescents who erroneously self-perceived as overweight [21.6 (4.77) %], two times higher than adolescents with obesity who self-perceived as “just right weight” [10.3 (2.87) %]. The adjusted prevalence ratio (PR) of ESA for healthy weight adolescents who erroneously self-perceived as “overweight” was 1.91 (95%CI = 1.10–3.32) compared to healthy weight peers who correctly self-perceived as “just right” (reference group). The PRs were 0.99 (0.48–2.06) and 1.41 (0.86–2.32) respectively for adolescents with obesity who believed that their body weight was “just right” or “overweight”. No significant differences were observed between boys and girls, young (12–15 years) and older adolescents (16–19 years).

In Conclusion, perceived overweight rather than actual overweight is significantly associated ESA among adolescents.

“[Perceived not actual overweight is associated with excessive school absenteeism among U.S. adolescents](#),” was published in Obesity Research & Clinical Practice.

Dr. Andrew Hansen, Assistant Professor of Community Health and Behavior Education, Ms. Ashley Hill, alumni, and Dr. Jian Zhang, Associate Professor of Epidemiology at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health Georgia Southern University were co-authors in this study. Dr. Dustin Duncan, Assistant Professor in the department of population health at the NYU School of Medicine was the lead author.

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