

Abstract

The present study examined the prevalence of disordered eating attitudes and behaviors among Chinese high school girls in Hong Kong. A sample of 4,641 high school girls between age 11 and 22 completed a self-report Eating Symptoms Checklist. Although the subjects were 'underweight' by Western standard, the majority of them wanted to weigh less. The majority of subjects (84%) concerned about their weight and shapes. Meanwhile, 31% of subjects were fear of gaining weight despite being underweight and 13% wanted to lose weight even other think them as underweight. Although the desire for slimness is widespread, the prevalence of extreme weight loss behaviors was low. Only 6.6% of subjects dieted weekly and less than 1% engaged in regular purging behaviors. Older subjects showed stronger concerns about weight and body shape and reported more weight loss behaviors. According to the DSM IV criteria, 0.08% were diagnosed with anorexia nervosa and 0.7% met the criteria of bulimia nervosa. Moreover, 7.4% displayed subclinical eating disorders. Although the prevalence rates were higher than past research of Hong Kong, they were relatively low when compared to the West. Results were discussed with reference to the Western findings, highlighting cultural differences that might lead to the low prevalence of weight loss behaviors.