

### Abstract

The present study explored the moderating effect of self-esteem on the predictive power of BMI, self-perceived weight status, body dissatisfaction and overweight concerns towards disordered eating behaviors among Chinese preadolescent girls in Hong Kong. Participants (N= 1557), aged 9 to 12 years completed measures assessing BMI, self-perceived weight status, body dissatisfaction, overweight concerns, self-esteem and disordered eating behaviors. Results indicated that low self-esteem participants reported significantly higher body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors. Regression analyses indicated that BMI, self-perceived weight status, body dissatisfaction and overweight concerns all contributed significant variance in predicting eating pathology. However, girls with high BMI, self-perceived weight status, body dissatisfaction and overweight concerns were more likely to develop disordered eating behaviors if they had low self-esteem. Path analysis results indicated that the effects of BMI and self-perceived weight status on disordered eating behaviors are mediated by body dissatisfaction and overweight concerns. These findings suggest that self-esteem is a significant variable, which may buffer the adverse effects of high BMI, self perception as overweight, high body dissatisfaction and overweight concerns on disordered eating behaviors.