

Emotional Eating Facilitates the Relationship Between Food Insecurity and Obesity in Latina Women

Overview

A disproportionate number of Latino households do not have access to enough nutritious food, and so face food insecurity. Research has found that food insecurity is a risk factor for obesity, especially among Latina women. Research has also found that food insecurity can cause people to feel more stressed, and that emotional eating can be a coping mechanism. Little is known, though, about the role that emotional eating might have in the relationship between food insecurity and obesity.

Main Questions

- Is there an association between food insecurity and obesity among this group of Latina women?
- What is the role of emotional eating in this group of women who face both food insecurity and obesity?

Study

This study is a secondary analysis of the Latino Health and Well-Being Study, which took place in the largely Latino city of Lawrence, Massachusetts. From 2011-2013, Latino men and women were recruited from the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center. The current study only focused on the 297 recruited Latina women. Food insecurity was measured with 6-item US Department of Agriculture Household Food Security Scale. Emotional eating was measured by 6-items from the Three-Factor Eating Questionnaire (2nd version). Body mass index was measured by height and weight. Analysis consisted of multivariable logistic and linear regressions, mediation testing and proportion calculation.

The Bottom Line

Emotional eating may play a role in increasing the risk for obesity among Latina women who face food insecurity. If so, it would be important to screen for emotional eating and develop interventions to help.

Source

López-Cepero A, Frisard C, Lemon SC, Rosal MC. Emotional Eating Mediates the Relationship Between Food Insecurity and Obesity in Latina Women. *J Nutr Educ Behav*. 2020 Nov;52(11):995-1000. doi: 10.1016/j.jneb.2020.08.007. PMID: 33168208; PMCID: PMC7656045.

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Acknowledgement

This research was supported by the National Institute of Mental Health (R01MH085653). Dr Lemon and Dr Rosal received funding from the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (5 P60 MD006912) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1 U48 DP005031). Dr López-Cepero received funding from the National Institutes of Health (5T32DK007703-24).



Source: www.beautiful.ai

Spotlight on Results

- **36.7% of women were food insecure**
- **Food insecurity was associated with both obesity** (odds ratio [OR] = 1.79; 95% CI, 1.08-2.97; P = 0.02) **and emotional eating** (β = 0.22; 95% CI, 0.001-0.44; P = 0.05)
- **Emotional eating was associated with obesity** (OR = 1.82; 95% CI, 1.37-2.42; P < 0.01).
- **When emotional eating was included in the main effects model, food insecurity was no longer associated with obesity** (OR = 1.64; 95% CI, 0.97-2.76; P = 0.06).
- **Emotional eating explained 21% of the association between food insecurity and obesity.**

Call for Action

- **Research needed to confirm findings, develop & test interventions for emotional eating among Latina women facing food insecurity.**
- **Health care providers can screen for emotional eating in Latinas facing food insecurity.**