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Weight stigmatization among undergraduate students of medicine and allied health sciences of public sector institutes

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Abstract

Objectives: To estimate the magnitude of weight stigmatization and identify high risk groups in tomorrow's health professional.

Methodology: A cross-sectional analytical study was conducted [March to December 2012] in six different institutes in Karachi, Pakistan. Data were collected from undergraduate students of medicine, dentistry, physiotherapy, pharmacy and nursing through self-administered questionnaires. Stigmatization occurred if colleagues/friends made fun of participant's weight. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Sheffield, UK and Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan. Logistic regression was used to determine the factors associated with weight stigmatization.

Results: Of 2114 participating students, 27.1% reported feeling stigmatized because of their weight. Men were more likely to report stigmatization compared to women [OR=2.25 (95%C.I: 1.72-2.93)], and compared to normal weight individuals, individuals in all other categories were more likely to report stigmatization: underweight [OR=2.52 (95%C.I: 1.93-3.28)], overweight [OR=1.44 (95%C.I: 1.03-2.02)], Obese [OR=2.29 (95%C.I: 1.73-3.05)]. Compared to medicine/dentistry/physiotherapy students, both pharmacy and nursing students experienced stigma: pharmacy students [OR=1.52 (95%C.I: 1.15-2.00)] and nursing students [OR=3.37 (95%C.I: 2.33-4.87)]. Stigmatization was more likely for participants who received weight-related comments from parents [OR=1.89 (95%C.I: 1.48-2.41)], and siblings [OR=2.89(95% C.I: 2.29-3.66)].

Conclusion: Weight stigmatization is highly prevalent among undergraduate students of medicine and allied health sciences in Karachi with over a quarter of respondents having experienced it.

Biography

Sajid Mahmood earned his MBBS degree in 2005 followed by MSc. Epidemiology & Biostatistics degree in 2009. Recently he completed his Master of Public Health programme from United Kingdom. At the moment he is doing his PhD (public health) from University of Sheffield, UK. His area of interest is childhood obesity and its prevention. He has published couple of papers in reputed journals even during his student life. He is a member of International Epidemiological Association (IEA) and reviewer of Journal of Pakistan Medical Students (JPMS).