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THE FEATURES OF PERSONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAITS IN PEOPLE WITH OVERWEIGHT

У статті вивчалися особистісні психологічні риси людей з надмірною вагою. Суспільство сприймає повноту як щось негативне і як те, чого потрібно соромитися. Проте ожиріння і супутні йому розлади харчової поведінки продовжують неухильно зростати останні кілька десятиліть. Мета статті – порівняти особистісні риси людей з нормальною і надмірною вагою для виявлення психологічні особливості людей із зайвою вагою.

В результаті емпіричного дослідження та теоретичного аналізу встановлено: 1) досліджувані із зайвою вагою мають здебільшого негативний образ власного тіла; 2) досліджувані із зайвою вагою гірше контролюють діяльність, не завжди здатні використовувати поточну ситуацію на власну користь, для досягнення цілей, які у таких досліджуваних можуть бути розмитими і не чіткими. Також, досліджувані із зайвою вагою мають знижене самоприйняття. Тому в цілому психологічне благополуччя людей із зайвою вагою знижене. Ми не знайшли відмінностей за шкалою автономії, і не можемо стверджувати, що люди із зайвою вагою надмірно покладаються на чужі думки, бажання і погляди; 3) люди із зайвою вагою мають тенденцію до розвитку депресивних станів. Ми вважаємо, що це відбувається, перш за все, через тиск суспільства, через наявний у суспільстві ідеал стрункої, навіть іноді занадто худі людини; 3) досліджувані із зайвою вагою схильні до песимізму, у романтичних стосунках схильні дистанціюватися від партнера. Досліджувані із зайвою вагою більш схильні до холодних стосунків із батьками. Вони також бачать стосунки між своїми батьками як напружені, близькі до появи конфліктів.

Виходячи з отриманих даних, ми вважаємо перспективним дослідження, спрямоване на покращення виявлених характеристик, що може допомогти таким людям скинути зайву вагу.

Ключові слова: індекс маси тіла, образ тіла, психологічне благополуччя, самоприйняття, стосунки з рідними.

Introduction

Problem statement. Obesity and related eating disorders are growing steadily over the past few decades. At the same time, in Western culture (to which Ukrainians are also belong) great attention is paid to the ideals of a slender body, a person without excess weight is considered attractive and healthy. Society perceives corpulence as something negative and something to be ashamed of. And all this against the background of the fact that obesity is becoming more and more common. Obviously, under such conditions, overweight people feel pressure from society and try, or at least intend, to bring their weight back to normal. However, they do not always achieve this goal. In this article, we will examine several personal psychological traits that, we believe, distinguish between overweight and normal-weight individuals, in order to identify factors that prevent overweight individuals from reducing their weight to socially acceptable limits.

Theoretical analysis

Review of recent research and publications. Many researchers believe that certain personal traits contribute to appearance of excess weight and that some psychological factors are of significant importance in eating disorders preceding the overweight. In particular, a detailed review of modern literature by A. Areej confirms the positive relationship between overweight, health problems and difficulties in family and interpersonal relationships (Areej, 2017).

In our opinion, excess weight is most closely related to a person's body image. Body image is a complex formation that includes perceptions, attitudes, evaluations, ideas related to physical appearance and body functions (Roosen & Mills, 2014; Stice et al., 2017). The researchers (Herbert et al., 2013) have suggested that certain relationship exists between how a person perceives his/her body image and eating disorders, and as a result, body weight problems.

R. Comer emphasizes that people with disturbed eating behaviour rely excessively on other people's thoughts, wishes and views. They worry more than other people about how others see them, tend to adapt to others' views, and think that they have little control over their lives (Comer, 2001, 303-314). The task of L. Absalyamova's work was to determine the psychological features of eating behaviour, its types and disorders. She has claimed that overweight people are less satisfied with life than people with normal weight. Excess weight can act as a factor that prevents feeling satisfied with life, and dissatisfaction with life can also act as a factor that affects

the appearance of eating behaviour disorders, which further adds to excess weight (Absalyamova, 2014)..

The work (Stice et al., 2017) showed that interpersonal problems and negative emotions were also risk factors. There is a hypothesize that overweight people experience social pressure to be fat, which affects their social interactions (Friedman et al., 2002). Self-acceptance decreases and self-esteem suffers in overweight people in this way. High self-blame and low self-acceptance was also strongly associated with the onset of eating disorders (Mantilla & Birgegård, 2015); eating disorders were associated with low self-esteem and self-worth (Biney et al., 2022).

Some researchers assume that there is a relationship between excess weight and depression. According to (Cassin & von Ranson, 2007), increased body weight affects in many cases the quality of life, leading to social isolation, manifestations of depression and lower self-esteem.

According to the positive psychotherapy method, the cause of a symptom is tension arising as a result of conflicting feelings, needs or concepts (beliefs). This method considers a symptom as a manifestation of an internal conflict, and also suggests that suppressed or insufficiently formed primary abilities (needs) are possible sources of conflicts and disorders in the psychological and interpersonal spheres and can be manifested in a psychosomatic disorder. A lack of attention or development in one of these areas creates a deficit that appears in life as dissatisfaction, despair, conflict or illness. Therefore, various disorders of eating behaviour, excess weight appear due to the influence of an individual's family education system, as well as the current views of the individual on his/her life and place in the world (Peseschkian, 1997).

The article purpose is to compare personality traits of people with normal and excessive weight in order to identify overweight people's psychological characteristics.

Research methodology

Presenting main material. In order to study the psychological characteristics of overweight people, we performed psychological empirical study using the following set of methods:

- 1) D. Jade's body image questionnaire;
- 2) C. Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale (adapted by T. Shevelenkova and T. Fesenko);
- 3) Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (NADS).
- 4) V. Stolin and S. Pantileev's Test-Questionnaire of Self-Attitude;
- 5) Wiesbaden Inventory for Positive Psychotherapy and Family Therapy (adapted by L. Serdyuk, S. Otenko).

Totally, 184 people participated in the study; 137 were women and 45 were men. People of active age were involved in the study - from 18 to 55 years old, the average age was 35 years old. The experimental work was organized taking into account the ethical principles of psychological research. All respondents participated in the empirical study exclusively on a voluntary basis. It was explained to them that there were no right answers to the questions asked, and the respondents were encouraged to give their most honest answers. For further analysis, the answers were taken only in a statistically generalized, anonymous form, that is, the respondents' names, surnames, addresses were not taken into account and were not studied, thus maintaining the confidentiality of the data.

Statistical processing of empirical data was carried out using the IBM SPSS Statistics 23 software package.

Results and discussion

To study the personal characteristics of overweight respondents, we calculated the body mass index (BMI) for each participant according to the formula: $BMI = WEIGHT / HEIGHT^2$, where weight was determined in kilograms and height was in centimetres. Normal BMI is in the range of 18.5-25; values greater than 25 indicate overweight. In the studied sample, 28 people were underweight, 59 were overweight, 85 had normal weight, the rest did not indicate their weight. A statistical analysis using the Student's method for independent samples for the entire sample did not reveal differences between men and women as for their body mass indices, so we study the sample without dividing it into men and women.

Body mass index is a physical indicator that significantly affects the psychological indicator of one's own body perception, namely "body image". In the broadest sense, body image is the extent to which a person considers their body to be aesthetically perfect and attractive. As already mentioned above, modern society believes that excess weight does not suit a person; an overweight person is considered unhealthy, unattractive, someone who does not take care of oneself, etc. The calculated correlation between the respondents' body mass index and their body image (determined according to D. Jade's body image questionnaire) was 0.414 ($p < 0.01$). According to the questionnaire, the more points are scored for the answers, the worse an individual feels about his/her body. It is clear that body image consists not only of perceived weight of own body, other physical factors and their perception by society also affect an individual's body image, so the obtained value can be considered as a rather strong connection between a person's weight and his/her body image. In addition, 69.2% of overweight respondents were rather dissatisfied with their own body image or not at all satisfied with it. As for people with normal weight, the picture was the opposite: 69.4% of the respondents were almost satisfied

with their own body or completely satisfied with it. We should note that in the group of underweight people, as many as 89.3% of the respondents were almost satisfied with their own body or completely satisfied with it. From the medical point of view, underweight is a defect because it reduces the body's protective reserves. However, society has become so obsessed with the fight against excess weight that excessive "slenderness" is not considered as a defect, but as a sign of beauty. The prevalence of such views in society puts even more pressure on overweight people, worsening their views on their own bodies.

Regarding the differences between men and women, a statistical analysis using the Student's method for independent samples for the entire sample did not reveal differences in the perception of one's own body between men and women. However, it should be noted that in the overweight group, 55.6% of men and 73.3% of women were rather dissatisfied with their own body image or not at all satisfied with it. Statistical analysis by the Student's method for independent samples for the group of overweight respondents revealed differences between men and women at the trend level ($p < 0.14$). We can say that women are concerned about the problem of excess weight a little more than men.

We planned to compare two groups using the Student's test for independent samples: the group with a normal body mass index (85 people) and the group with an excessive body mass index (59 people).

A limitation of Student/s method for independent samples: it is applied only to samples with a normal (Gaussian) distribution (Romakin, 2006). Therefore, we initially checked for asymmetry and kurtosis for the studied groups.

For the group with a normal body mass index, asymmetry was equal to 0.39, standard error of asymmetry = 0.26. The distribution is considered symmetrical if the deviation of the asymmetry value from 0 does not exceed two values of the standard error, in our case ± 0.52 . Accordingly, the distribution was symmetric. The kurtosis was -0.65, the standard error of the kurtosis = 0.52. The distribution is considered normally distributed, that is not very short and without excessive tails, if the deviation of the kurtosis value from 0 does not exceed two values of the standard error, in our case ± 1.04 . Accordingly, the distribution was normally distributed. We can consider the distribution as corresponding to a normal (Gaussian) distribution.

For the group with excessive body mass index. Asymmetry was equal to 0.61, standard error of asymmetry = 0.38. The distribution was symmetrical. The kurtosis was 1.05, the standard error of the kurtosis = 0.74. The distribution was normally distributed. We can consider the distribution as corresponding to a normal (Gaussian) distribution.

Based on this calculation, we can apply the Student's test for independent samples in our study.

We have noted in the theoretical review that overweight people have reduced autonomy, poor control over their own lives and are generally less satisfied with their lives. To confirm or refute these views, we compared groups according to C. Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale (adapted by T. Shevelenkova and T. Fesenko). Table 1 shows the Student's test for the two samples compared on the basis of the results obtained with C. Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale.

Table 1

Calculation of the t-test for the equality of means (C. Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale)

	t- criterion for equality of means					
	t	Sig. (two-tailed)	Mean difference	Mean squared error of difference	95% confidence interval	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
Positive relations with others	1,30	0,19	2,61	2,00	-1,37	6,60
Autonomy	0,11	0,91	0,19	1,72	-3,23	3,62
Environmental mastery	2,74	0,00	5,24	1,90	1,45	9,03
Personal growth	1,62	0,10	2,87	1,76	-0,62	6,37
Purpose in life	2,29	0,02	4,91	2,14	0,65	9,18
Self-acceptance	2,43	0,02	5,16	2,12	0,94	9,37
Psychological well-being	2,29	0,02	21,414	9,33	2,87	39,96

Differences between the groups were found according to indicators: environmental mastery, purpose in life, self-acceptance, psychological well-being. Table 2 shows the average values of these indicators for both groups.

Table 2

Average values for four indicators of psychological well-being for both groups of respondents

	Group	Average	Squared deviation
Environmental mastery	Normal weight	58,0	8,13
	Overweight	52,8	9,66
Purpose in life	Normal weight	60,2	10,10
	Overweight	55,3	9,01

Self-acceptance	Normal weight	57,0	9,38
	Overweight	51,8	10,14
Psychological well-being	Normal weight	351,7	42,95
	Overweight	330,3	41,40

All four indicators were higher in the group with normal weight. The respondents with excess weight were less able to control activities, were not always able to use a current situation to their own advantage, to achieve goals that could be blurred and not clear in such respondents. Also, overweight people had low self-acceptance, that is, they were often not satisfied with themselves, worried about certain personal qualities that they considered to be shortcomings. All this reduced psychological well-being of overweight people. However, we did not find differences for autonomy and we cannot support the claim (Comer, 2001) that overweight people rely excessively on others' opinions, wishes and views.

The theoretical review has showed that some researchers believe that overweight people are prone to depression. To find this out, we compared the groups with the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale. We did not find differences for anxiety, but we found differences on the trend level for depression ($p=0.053$). Indeed, people with excess weight have a tendency to develop depressive states. We believe that this happens, first of all, due to the pressure of society, due to the ideal of a slender, even sometimes too thin person existing in society.

Also, many researchers note that overweight people have low self-esteem, self-acceptance and a poor self-attitude. In order to confirm or refute these views, we compared the groups with V. Stolin and S. Pantileev's Test-Questionnaire of Self-Attitude. We found differences only according to the "self-acceptance" indicator, which describes a degree of positive attitude towards oneself, agreement with oneself, approval of one's plans and desires, emotional acceptance of oneself as a person is, even with some flaws. Self-acceptance was reduced in overweight people. Other indicators included into a global self-attitude, such as: self-confidence, self-interest, self-understanding, self-management, self-blame did not differ. Therefore, although an average global self-attitude was lower in the group of overweight respondents, the difference was not sufficient to speak about its significance. That is, the ideas put forward in (Mantilla & Birgegård, 2015) and (Biney et al., 2022) were only partially confirmed by us.

Table 2.3 shows the Student's criterion for two samples compared based on the data obtained from the Wiesbaden Inventory for Positive Psychotherapy and Family Therapy (adapted by L. Serdyuk, S. Otenko). To reduce the volume, the table indicates only those indicators for which significant differences (highlighted in bold) or differences as trends were found.

Table 3

Calculation of the t-test for the equality of means (Wiesbaden Inventory for Positive Psychotherapy and Family Therapy)

	t- criterion for equality of means					
	t	Sig. (two-tailed)	Mean difference	Mean squared error of difference	95% confidence interval	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
Hope	2,26	0,025	0,91	0,40	0,11	1,71
Love	2,48	0,015	0,89	0,36	0,18	1,61
I-mother	2,23	0,028	1,21	0,54	0,13	2,28
I-father	1,88	0,062	1,17	0,62	-0,05	2,41
You	1,73	0,085	0,95	0,55	-0,13	2,04

Significant differences between the groups were found for three indicators: actual abilities (needs) for tenderness and love and relations with the mother. Differences as trends were determined for the indicators: I-father, You. Let us consider these indicators in more detail. According to the Inventory, the average values of indicators are normative, they indicate a developed actual ability. Indicators at the scale ends means an underdeveloped ability or an existing corresponding need. Table 4 shows the average values for the specified indicators for both groups.

Table 4

Average values for indicators of Wiesbaden Inventory for Positive Psychotherapy and Family Therapy for both groups of respondents

	Group	Average	Squared deviation
Hope	Normal weight	10,0	1,70
	Overweight	9,1	2,39
Love	Normal weight	10,0	1,46
	Overweight	9,1	2,24
I-mother	Normal weight	9,1	2,50
	Overweight	7,9	2,88
I-father	Normal weight	8,2	2,89
	Overweight	7,1	3,26

You	Normal weight	8,1	2,48
	Overweight	7,1	3,01

The indicators of “hope” and “love” refer to the so-called “primary” abilities. Based on the obtained data, we can say that the respondents with normal weight were more optimistic or felt the need to be optimistic; they were also more open to emotions and showed or felt the need to positive emotional attitudes towards their partners. Overweight people were more pessimistic, tended to distance themselves from their partner, which definitely affected their interaction with other people. The “I-mother” indicator reveals a respondent’s current feelings towards their mother. The respondents with normal weight mostly perceived their relationship with their mothers as positive and warm. The same can be said about relationships with their fathers, although the difference for this indicator was found as a trend. Overweight respondents were more likely to have a cold relationship with their parents. They also saw the relationship between their parents as strained, close to conflict. To some extent, this coincides with the psychodynamic theory of H. Bruch, according to which a violation of “mother-child” relationship provokes eating behavioural disorders (Bruch, 1978) and the appearance of excess weight. The obtained results are also consistent with the idea (Stice et al., 2017) that interpersonal interaction problems are also risk factors for overweight. In other words, we can say that overweight people are more likely to withdraw into themselves, do not allow themselves to open up in relationships with others and believe in happiness.

Conclusions

The article compared two groups of people, with normal and excessive weight, in order to identify differences in their personal psychological characteristics. The conducted empirical research and analysis showed the following:

1. Overweight people mostly had a negative image of their own body.
2. Overweight people were less able to control activities, were not always able to use a current situation to their own advantage, to achieve goals that could be blurred and not clear in such people. Also, overweight people had lower self-acceptance. Therefore, in general, overweight people’s psychological well-being was lower. We did not find differences for autonomy, and we cannot claim that overweight people excessively rely on other people’s opinions, wishes and views.
3. Overweight people tended to depressive states. We believe that this happens, first of all, due to the pressure of society, due to the ideal of a slender, even sometimes too thin person existing in society.
4. Overweight respondents tended to be pessimistic, to distance themselves from their partner in romantic relationships. They also were more likely to have

a cold relationship with their parents and saw the relationship between their parents as strained, close to conflict.

Prospects for further research. The obtained results do show that some psychological characteristics were reduced in overweight people. Therefore, we see promising research aimed at improving the identified characteristics, which can help such people lose excess weight.

Declaration of conflict of interest. The author declares no potential conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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Abstract

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THE FEATURES OF PERSONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAITS IN PEOPLE WITH OVERWEIGHT

The article studied the personal psychological traits of overweight people. Modern society perceives body corpulence as something negative and something to be ashamed of. However, obesity and related eating disorders have continued

to grow steadily over the past few decades. The purpose of the article is to compare the personality traits of people with normal weight and overweight people in order to identify the psychological characteristics of people with excess weight.

The conducted empirical research and analysis showed: 1) overweight respondents mostly have a negative image of their own body; 2) overweight respondents had a worse control over their activities, were not always able to use the current situation to their own advantage, to achieve goals that might be blurred and not clear for such respondents. Also, overweight respondents had low self-acceptance. Therefore, in general, the psychological well-being of overweight people was reduced. We did not find differences on the scale of autonomy, and we cannot claim that overweight people excessively relied on other people's opinions, wishes or views; 3) overweight people tended to have depressive states. We believe that this happens, first of all, due to the pressure of society, due to the ideal of a slender, even sometimes too thin person existing in society; 4) overweight respondents were prone to pessimism, tended to distance themselves from their partner in romantic relationships. Overweight respondents were more likely to have a cold relationship with their parents. They also saw the relationship between their parents as strained, close to conflict.

Based on the obtained data, we see a promising study aimed at improving the identified characteristics, which can help such people reduce excess weight.

Key words: *body mass index, body image, psychological well-being, self-acceptance, relationships with relatives.*

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