

# **Body Perceptions and Weight Control Behaviors among An-Najah National University female Students**

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## **Abstract:**

### **Introduction:**

Eating behaviors and body perceptions is an increasingly relevant and important topic in public health; due to its ultimate impact on health and human wellbeing in general.

**Objectives:** The aim of this study is to assess the current body perceptions and dieting behaviors among female students at An-Najah National University in Palestine. Furthermore, it tried to assess the relation between the body weight and image perceptions and weight control practices among the female students.

### **Materials and methods:**

A cross-sectional study was conducted among the university female students on April 2015. The study included 420 female students aged 17-27 years. A convenient sample was selected to achieve the study objectives. We invited students from all faculties; including the faculty of medicine and health sciences, economic and social studies, educational sciences and teachers' training, engineering and information technology, fine arts, humanities, Islamic law, science and faculty of law. The data collection tools included questionnaire, body image perceptions scale, and measurement scale for weight and height. The questionnaire contained three major parts: sociodemographic variables, perception of body weight and eating attitude test (EAT-26), all were completed.

### **Results:**

About 37% of female students had participated in risky eating behaviors, and reported a great level of concern about diet and weight (95% CI: 32% - 41%). In general, most of the study sample was dissatisfied with their bodies; in particular, 55.7% of participants were suffering from negative body image, while 24.5% showed positive body image. The majority of participants who were engaging in risky eating behaviors XI were in a normal BMI category, and 15.5% were either overweight or obese and 9% underweight. Regarding body weight perception, most of participants had an accurate estimation to their body weight. The logistic regression analysis revealed that, weight control behaviors were mainly associated with perception of body image.

### **Conclusion:**

The results showed a high level of concern about food and weight by the female students. Additionally, it showed that they are prone to risky eating behaviors. Therefore, interventions are needed in order to promote healthy eating behaviors and body image among university students.