

## Sigma's 30th International Nursing Research Congress

### Satisfaction With Daily Life, BMI, Perception of Weight, and Nutritional Intake in Undergraduate Nursing Students

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**Background:** Creating a culture of self-care among nursing students is vital to the physical and mental health of future nurses who will be caring for our nation. Research indicates that current practicing nurses often have sub-optimal physical and mental health (Melnyk et al, 2017). Specifically, nurses have higher rates of depression, compassion fatigue, and burnout, and exhibit less healthy lifestyle behaviors and work-life balance (Priano, Hong, & Chen, 2017). It is critical for nursing students to be taught how to form a healthy foundation of self-care including maintaining a healthy body mass index, developing eating habits conducive to a healthy weight, and making time to find satisfaction with daily life. Research evidence posits that self-care training can help improve the likelihood that nursing students will be successful in their roles as future nurses caring for others (Bartlett, Taylor, & Nelson, 2015). The purpose of the current study was to examine nursing student satisfaction with daily life by obtaining self-report data on height and weight (BMI), the perception of weight, and current eating behaviors.

**Methods:** After Institutional Review Board approval, a cross-sectional, correlational study was conducted in spring 2018 with  $N=215$  undergraduate university nursing students through an anonymous online survey. Measures included: BMI calculated from height and weight (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017); a portion of the BUCS: Live Well Survey (Lee, 2013), which examines satisfaction with daily life (7 questions); perception of weight; current attempts to lose weight; healthy eating habits (3 questions), and nutritional intake behaviors over the last 30 days from a detailed list of food items. The analysis included descriptive, multinomial logistic regression, correlations, and structural equation modeling analysis.

**Results:** Most participants were female (92.2%), White (71.6%), and lived on campus (54%). Almost half of the nursing students (44.9%) were in the overweight, obese, or extremely obese categories. Nursing students who were satisfied with daily life had higher odds of being in the "about right weight" category, being in the normal BMI category, and eating healthy foods, and they consumed less alcohol and energy drinks.

**Conclusions:** To create a culture of wellness that may lead to satisfaction with daily life for students while in nursing school, it is important to help students to improve healthy habits such as increasing consumption of healthy foods and decreasing consumption of alcohol and energy drinks. These changes must be incorporated into the environment of nursing school. Faculty must provide the necessary tools through knowledge, activities, and a supportive atmosphere to help future nurses to successfully practice a healthy lifestyle (White et al., 2016).

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#### Title:

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**Keywords:**

Body Mass Index, Satisfaction with Daily Life and Undergraduate nursing students

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## **Abstract Summary:**

Researchers conducting this study found that nursing students had an increased likelihood of a higher level of satisfaction with daily life when they self-reported healthy eating, drinking fewer energy drinks or alcohol and being in the “about the right weight” and normal body mass index (BMI) categories.

## **Content Outline:**

### **Background**

1. Evidence reflects that current nurses have higher rates of depression, compassion fatigue, and burn-out; exhibit less-healthy lifestyle behaviors and work-life balance; and are at higher risk of suicide than the general population.
2. Practicing nurses often have sub-optimal physical and mental health compared to physicians and the public in general.
3. Research focused on improving health and satisfaction with daily life in nursing students may have positive implications related to future nurses caring for patients in the U.S.

### **Methods**

1. Cross-sectional, correlation study of  $N=215$  undergraduate nursing students using a self-report online-survey via Qualtrics
2. Measures included Body Mass Index (BMI) from student self-report height and weight, Satisfaction with Daily Life, the perception of current weight, attempts to lose weight, healthy eating, and nutritional intake behaviors in the previous 30 days

### **Results**

1. 44.9% of students were in the overweight (20.8%) obese (21.9%), or extremely obese (2.2%) category
2. One unit increase in satisfaction of daily life was associated with a modest (36%) decrease in the odds of being overweight/obese.
3. One unit increase in satisfaction with daily life was associated with a 106% increase in the odds of being “about the right weight.”
4. Higher satisfaction with daily life was associated with lower odds of actively trying to lose weight.
5. Higher levels of satisfaction with daily life was modestly associated with less consumption of energy drinks and alcohol.

### **Discussion:**

1. Students in this study had a higher percentage in the overweight, obese, or extremely obese category as compared to the overall rates in the U.S. and in the state where the study was conducted.
2. Like other studies, students had higher satisfaction in daily life if they had lower rates of overweight and obesity, were not trying to lose weight, and were in the “about the right weight” and Body Mass Index (BMI) categories.
3. Students with higher satisfaction with daily life consumed less alcohol and fewer energy drinks.

### **Conclusions:**

1. To create a culture of wellness that may lead to satisfaction with daily life for students while in nursing school, it is important to help students improve their habits such as increasing

consumption of healthy foods, improving their physical and mental health, and decreasing consumption of alcohol and energy drinks.

2. These changes must be incorporated into the environment of nursing school.
3. Faculty must provide the necessary tools through knowledge, activities, and a supportive atmosphere to help future nurses successfully practice a healthy lifestyle.

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**Author Summary:** Susan G. Williams PhD, RN is a faculty member at the University of South Alabama College of Nursing and is part of an inter-professional team of researchers focusing on a culture of self-care and wellness in the nursing program. She finished her PhD in 2015. Her research focus prior to this study has been related to parental weight related teasing in nursing students, perceived stress, stressful life events, cortisol, depressive symptoms, bullying, and adolescents.