

Looking at Eating Behaviors and Food Eaten in Puerto Rico

Overview

What is the connection between eating behaviors and the food that people choose to eat? This study looked at dysfunctional eating behaviors (DEB) and what is eaten among adults residing in Ponce, Puerto Rico. There are numerous DEB, including 1) emotional eating, or eating due to inability to cope with emotions; 2) uncontrolled eating, or eating without hunger; and 3) cognitive restraint, or limiting food for weight loss or weight maintenance. Research has found that DEB are prevalent among Latinos who live in the mainland United States and may influence what people eat. Nonetheless, DEB have not been studied among people who live in Puerto Rico. This study fills that gap.

Main Questions

The researchers wanted to know:

1. How many participants experienced emotional eating, uncontrolled eating and cognitive restraint?
2. How were emotional eating, uncontrolled eating and cognitive restraint related to consumption of calories from fat, saturated fats and fruits and vegetables?

Study

The study used data from the Ponce, Puerto Rico cohort of the Latino Health and Well-Being. Individuals (N=92) who self-identified as Puerto Rican, English/Spanish speaking, and between ages of 21-85 were recruited from May 2014 to April 2015 from three health clinics serving low-income patients. Emotional eating, uncontrolled eating and cognitive restraint were measured with the Three Factor Eating Questionnaire (TFEQ) R18- V2. Dietary intake was measured with the Block Fruits and Vegetable and Fat screener. Socio-demographic characteristics included sex, age, employment status, education and marital status.

The Bottom Line

A large percentage of the sample experienced some level of DEB. Emotional eating was associated with more consumption of fats and cognitive restraint with more consumption of fruits and vegetables. Research is needed to understand how these associations are related to health in Puerto Rico.

Source

López-Cepero AA, Mattei J, Frisard C, Riseberg E, Jimenez J, Lemon SC, Rosal MC. Dysfunctional Eating Behaviors and Dietary Intake in Puerto Rico. *J Immigr Minor Health*. 2021 Aug;23(4):867-870. doi: 10.1007/s10903-021-01156-0. Epub 2021 Mar 18. PMID: 33733376.

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Acknowledgement

This research was supported by the National Institute of Health (TL1TR001454) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (U48DP005031-01). This publication is also a product of a Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research Center from the CDC. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors.



Spotlight on Results

1. 76% of participants reported emotional eating which was associated with calories from fats ($\beta=1.95$, 95% CI 0.40, 3.51) and saturated fats ($\beta=3.26$, 95% CI 0.67, 5.85).
2. 87% of participants experienced cognitive restraint, which was associated with eating fruits and vegetables ($\beta=0.69$, 95% CI 0.20, 1.19).
3. 88% of participants reported uncontrolled eating, which was marginally associated with percentage of total calories from fats ($\beta=1.70$, 95% CI -0.21, 3.6) and from saturated fats ($\beta=2.83$, 95% CI -0.35, 6.01)

Call for Action

Research is needed to understand how these associations are related to health in Puerto Rico in order to take action to promote health.