

Hanswijck de Jonge, P. van, Waller, G., Fiennes, A., Rashid, Z., & Lacey, J.H. (2003). Reported sexual abuse and cognitive content in the morbidly obese, *Eating Behaviors*, 4, 315-322.

This study investigated whether a reported history of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) in morbidly obese adults is associated with a higher level of negative core beliefs (unconditional, schema-level representations regarding the self, the world, and others), and whether those beliefs are significantly associated with weight levels and weight fluctuation. A cross-sectional design was used, with comparative and correlational elements. The participants were 30 morbidly obese patients (age range=27-61years; body mass index [BMI] range=40.8-73.5), awaiting surgical intervention. Each completed standardized self-report measures of childhood traumatic experiences, core beliefs, and weight history. BMI was obtained from clinical interview. In terms of weight variables, the individuals with a reported history of sexual abuse (n=10) did not differ from those with no such history (n=20). However, those with a reported abuse history had higher levels of specific negative core beliefs. This group also showed more extensive associations between their BMI and their core beliefs than the nonabused group. Core beliefs, which are often associated with personality disorder pathology, were associated with the reported presence of a history of sexual abuse among the morbidly obese. The group differences (in levels of core beliefs and in their association with weight variables) suggest that there might be different mechanisms to explain weight levels in those obese patients who do or do not have a history of CSA. When psychological interventions are used in support of other treatments (e.g., surgery), they might be most productively targeted on those with such an abuse history.