DO OVERLAPPING NEGATIVE AFFECTIVE TRAITS HAVE INDEPENDENT ASSOCIATIONS WITH OBESITY?

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**Problem:** Multiple investigations have examined the association between negative affective traits (i.e., depression, anxiety, and hostility/anger) and obesity. Most studies have examined only one or two of these traits and obesity; however, the considerable overlap among these traits poses problems when attempting to interpret and apply this research. The purpose of this review was to ascertain whether depression, anxiety, and/or hostility/anger are independently associated with obesity.

**Method:** We searched databases for observational studies examining obesity-related outcomes (e.g., body mass index, waist-to-hip ratio) and two or more of the following negative affective traits: depression, anxiety, and hostility/anger. Studies conducting adjusted analyses (i.e., examining a particular affective trait while controlling for other affective traits) were selected.

**Results:** We identified 16 studies which examined multiple affective traits and obesity using adjusted analyses. Most studies examined depression and anxiety ($n = 12$), whereas 4 studies of depression and hostility were identified. Among these studies, 69% indicated that depression had unique associations with obesity, independent of anxiety or hostility. After adjusting for depression, 55% of studies indicated that anxiety has independent associations with obesity. Only 33% of studies found independent associations for hostility and obesity, after adjusting for depression.

**Conclusions:** The data presented here provide evidence that depression has unique associations with obesity, independent of anxiety and hostility. The evidence for anxiety and hostility was mixed and could not be clearly interpreted. More studies are needed to clearly establish whether these three traits have unique influences on obesity.