

## Factors Relating to Motivation to Change Behaviors in Individuals Who Are Overweight

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**Abstract :** Background: Obesity is an emerging healthcare epidemic affecting virtually all age and socio-economic groups and is one of the most serious and prevalent diseases of the 21st century. It is a public health challenge because of its prevalence, associated costs and health effects. The increasing prevalence of obesity has created a social perception that overweight body sizes are healthy and normal. This normalization of obesity within our society and the acceptance of higher body weights have led to individuals being unaware of the reality of their weight status and gravity of this situation thus impeding recognition of obesity. Given the escalating global health problem of obesity and its co-morbidities, the need to re-appraise its management is more compelling than ever. It is widely accepted that the causes of obesity are complex and multi-factorial. Engagement of individuals in weight management programmes is difficult if they do not perceive they have a problem with their weight. Recognition of the problem is a key component of obesity management and identifying the main predictors of behaviour is key to designing health behaviour interventions. Aim: The aim of the research was to determine factors relating to motivation to change behaviours in individuals who perceive themselves to be overweight. Method: The research design was quantitative, correlational and cross-sectional. The design was guided by the Health Belief Model. Data were collected online using a multi-section and multi-item questionnaire, developed from a review of the theoretical and empirical research. A sample of 202 men and women who perceived themselves to be overweight participated in the research. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed to describe relationships between variables. Findings: Following multivariate regression analysis, perceived barriers to weight loss and perceived benefits of weight loss were significant predictors of motivation to change behaviour. The perceived barriers to weight loss which were significant were psychological barriers to weight loss ( $p = < 0.019$ ) and environmental barriers to physical activity ( $p = < 0.032$ ). The greatest predictor of motivation to change behaviour was the perceived benefits of weight loss ( $p < 0.001$ ). Perceived susceptibility to obesity and perceived severity of obesity did not emerge as significant predictors in this model. Total variance explained by the model was 33.5%. Conclusion: Perceived barriers to weight loss and perceived benefits of weight loss are important determinants of motivation to change behaviour. These findings have important implications for health professionals to help inform their practice and for the development of intervention programmes to prevent and control obesity.

**Keywords :** motivation to change behaviours, obesity, predictors of behavior, interventions, overweight

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