

There is a subset of middle-school-aged children engaging in both extreme weight control and suicide behaviors. These early adolescents are at elevated risk for engagement in other risk behaviors (e.g., substance use).



An Examination of the Clustering of Weight Control and Suicidal Behaviors in Adolescents: Associations with Substance Use, Violence, and Victimization

Rowan A. Hunt, B.A.,¹ Nicholas C. Peiper, Ph.D., M.P.H.,^{1,2} & Cheri A. Levinson, Ph.D.¹

¹ University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, ² Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), Louisville, KY.

INTRODUCTION

- Suicidal behaviors (SB) are elevated in people with eating disorders (EDs)
 - Adults engaging in SB and ED behaviors have increased risk for other maladaptive behaviors (e.g., substance use)
- Both SB and ED behaviors emerge in early adolescence
 - Research on SB and ED behaviors in this group is needed
 - Research needed on associations between ED and SB and developmentally-specific risk factors

METHOD

- Data was a large, state-wide (N=3,811), representative epidemiological sample from middle school students
- Examined prevalence of ED behaviors by grade
- Latent class analysis (LCA) was used to evaluate eight lifetime suicide and weight control behaviors (WCB) in early adolescence
- Examined the relationship between class membership and association with other risk factors
 - E.g., substance use, violence, peer victimization

RESULTS

- Disordered eating behaviors were highly prevalent (see fig. 1)
- The final model identified six independent classes with differential risk of engaging in other problematic behaviors (see fig. 2)
- Specifically, we identified an ultra-high-risk group (4.3%) who had the highest probabilities of engaging in all weight control and suicidal behaviors
- This class was also associated with the highest lifetime prevalence of substance use, violence, and peer victimization

DISCUSSION

- ED behaviors need to be screened in children as young as 11
- There are specific groups of individuals at risk for multiple problematic behaviors
 - Targeted prevention efforts for a wide-range of adolescent risk behaviors are needed
- Future research needs to examine the temporal relationship between engagement in multiple risk behaviors

FIGURES

Fig 1. Lifetime Prevalence of Weight Perceptions and Disordered Eating Behaviors by Grade, 2009-2011 KY YRBS (N=3,811)

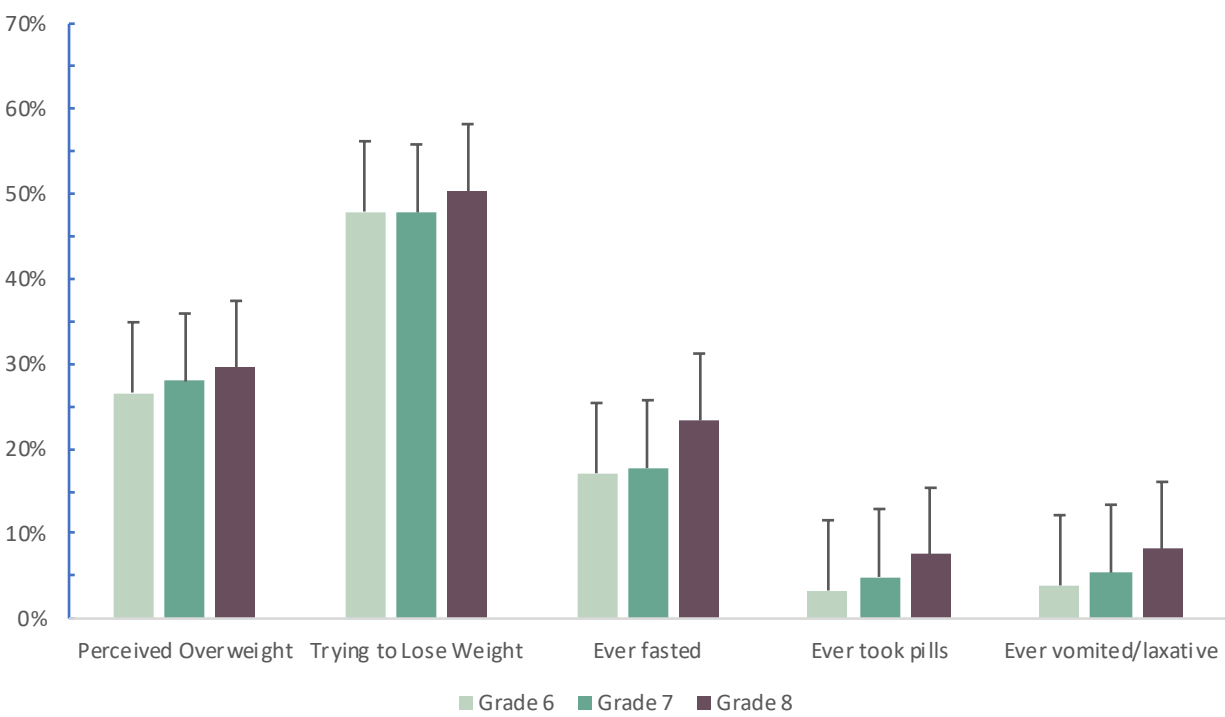


Fig 2. Final LCA Probability Plot of ED and Suicide Behaviors

