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The Impact of Worksite Weight-Related Social Norms on Associated Behaviors

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Et al.

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OBJECTIVE AND RATIONALE

Objective: To assess the association between descriptive social norms for weight and weight-related behaviors and associated behaviors at the worksite

Background and Rationale:

- Obesity and weight gain clusters in social networks
- However, little is known about the psychosocial mechanisms by which this happens
- Social norms are defined as: “How the majority of individuals in a group think or behave; group standards and values for a particular behavior”
 - Descriptive social norms, defined as “perceptions of the occurrence or frequency of the health-related behavior in a population” may be of particular importance for obesity-related behaviors
- Few studies have examined the association of social norms with dietary and physical activity behaviors in adults
- No study has examined social norms for weight-loss specific behaviors
- Most adults under the age of 65 spend significant amounts of time at work. Thus, the worksite social norms can influence an individual’s behavior

METHODS

Design and Sample:

- Baseline data from site-randomized trial of a worksite ecological intervention for weight control
- 12 public high schools in central Massachusetts
- Sample of 844 employees enrolled (~ 2/3 of all employees)

Worksite Weight-Related Social Norms (WWSN) Survey:

Developed by study team to assess descriptive social norms at the worksite for weight loss behaviors, physical activity and eating. Asks respondents to rate “Most people I work with.....” on a 5 point scale. Psychometric testing using principal component analysis. Cronbach’s alpha of final scores were:

- Weight loss descriptive social norms (4 items): .78
- Physical activity descriptive social norms(10 items): .83
- Eating behavior descriptive social norms (7 items): .83

Behaviors:

Weight Loss Attempts: Single item re: whether currently trying to loss weight (yes/no)

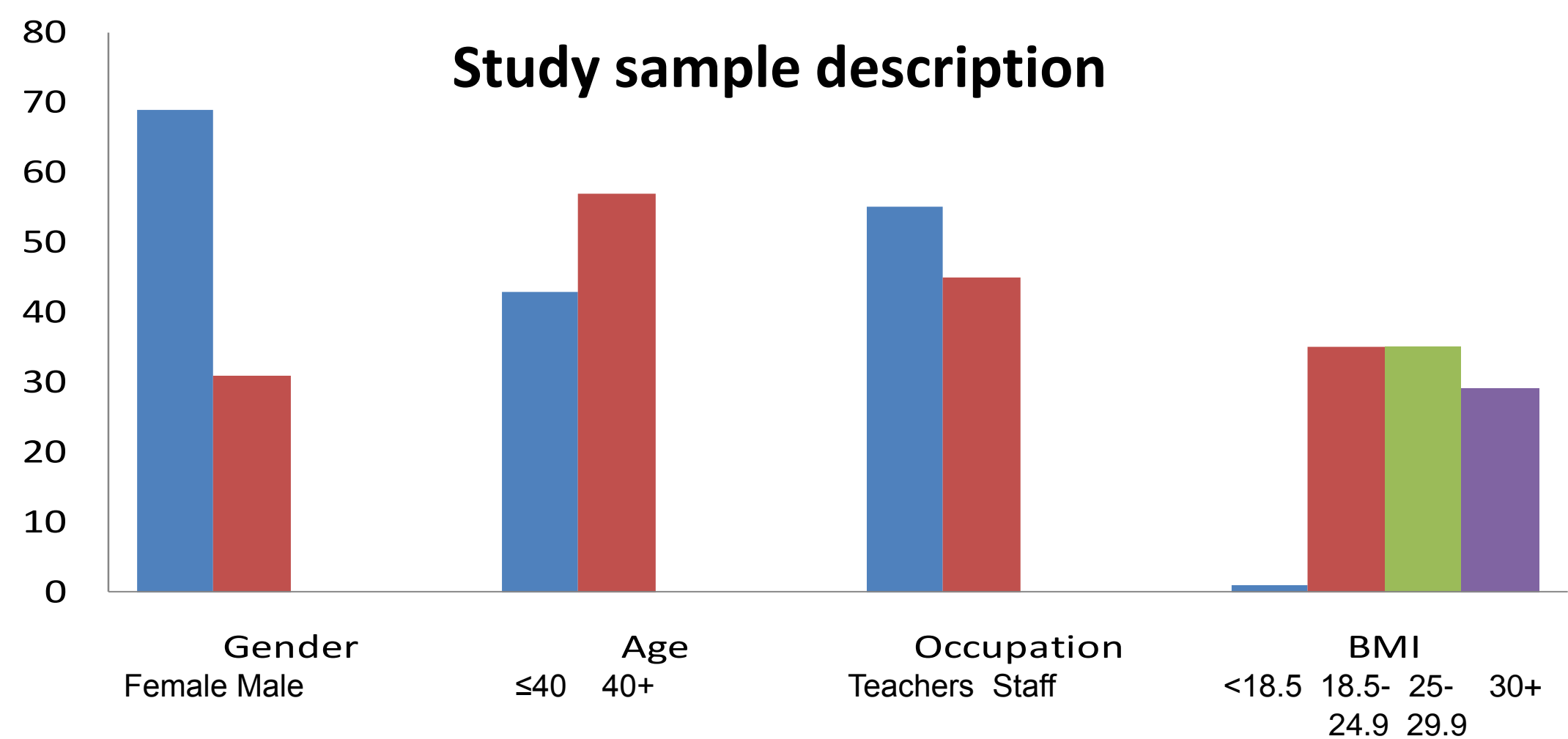
Walking: Arizona Physical Activity Questionnaire sub-scale (MET hours per day)

Eating Behaviors: 26-item Eating Behaviors Inventory (EBI)

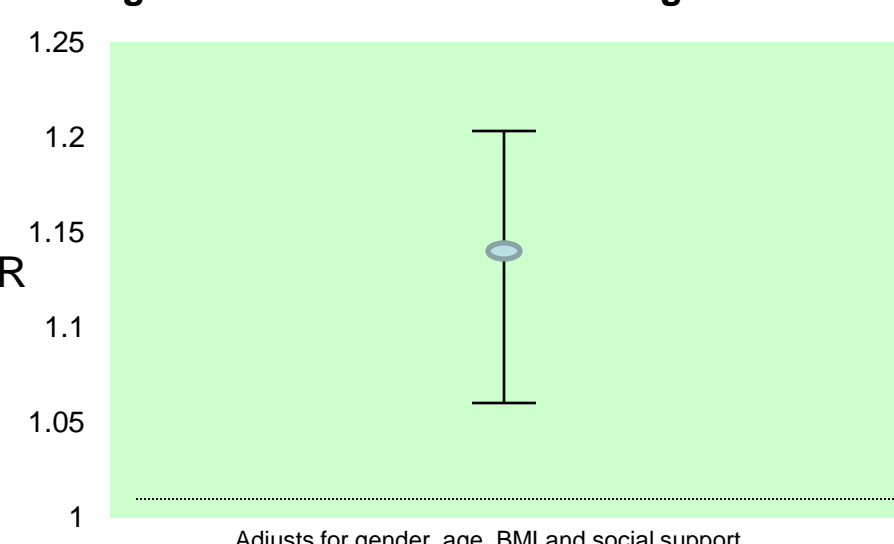
Co-variates: Age, gender, BMI diet and physical social support at the worksite

Analysis: Multivariate linear (walking and EBI) and logistic (weight loss attempts) regression models

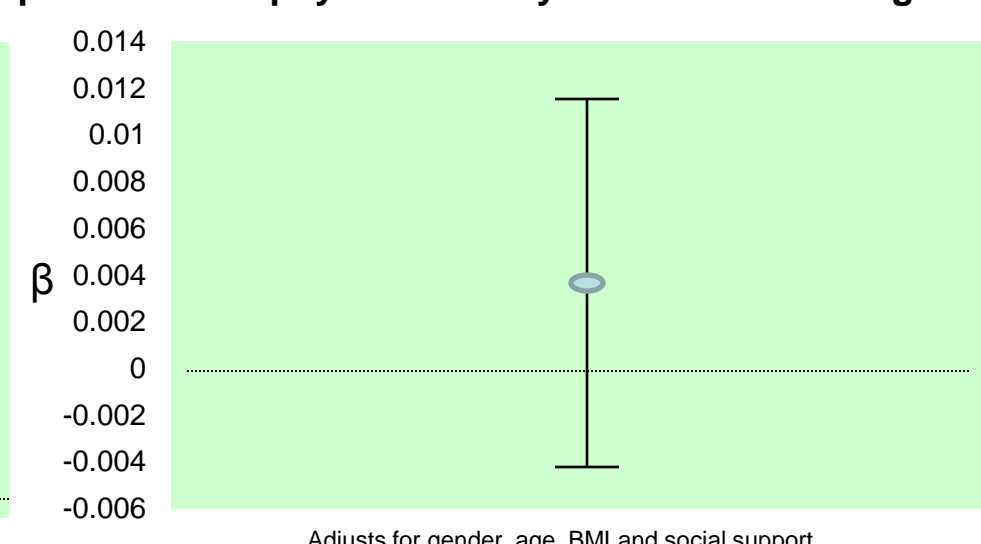
RESULTS



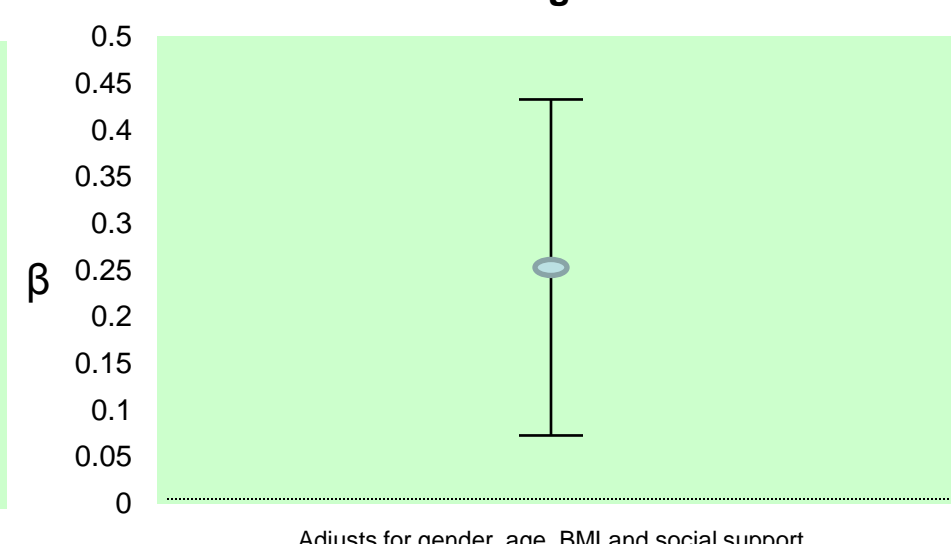
Multivariate logistic regression model: Association of weight loss social norms with weight loss attempt



Multivariate linear regression model: Association of physical activity norms with walking



Multivariate linear regression: Association of eating norms with the EBI



LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Limitations: 1) Causality can’t be assessed; 2) Social desirability bias; 3) Limited generalizability

Conclusions:

- Associations of weight loss and eating social norms with behavior
 - Unique from social support
- No association of physical activity social norms with physical activity
 - May be little opportunity for and therefore little exposure to physical activity during the workday
- Results support the development of weight loss interventions that address social norms for weight loss and eating behaviors at work

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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