

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Student Research Symposium

Student Research Symposium 2024

May 8th, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Talking about Weight: Weight Stigma and Information Seeking

Alexandra N. Henrici
Portland State University

Lillian H. Mantel
Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/studentsymposium>



Part of the [Health Communication Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Henrici, Alexandra N. and Mantel, Lillian H., "Talking about Weight: Weight Stigma and Information Seeking" (2024). *Student Research Symposium*. 42.

<https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/studentsymposium/2024/posters/42>

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

TALKING ABOUT WEIGHT: WEIGHT STIGMA AND INFORMATION SEEKING

Authors Alexandra Henrici & Lillian Mantel
Affiliations Portland State University, Department of Communication

Weight stigma is encountered frequently by many adults and often internalized. The internalization of weight stigma is associated with negative psychological and physical effects. People do avoid discussing weight topics, potentially due to its stigmatizing capacity.

Introduction

Per Kauer and Burke (2023), weight-related communication apprehension is the “fear or anxiety of participating in weight-related communication” (p. 105). Communication apprehension has previously been found to affect health information seeking in interpersonal settings. We wondered if this applied in weight-related topics. Using the Risk Information Seeking and Processing Model (RISP), we examined how weight-bias internalization and weight-related communication apprehension impacted information insufficiency and information seeking behaviors.

Conclusion

Findings from this study indicate that higher levels of weight bias internalization correlate to higher levels of fear or anxiety of speaking about weight, or weight-related communication apprehension (weight-related communication apprehension). This relationship develops the concept of weight-related communication apprehension beyond its initial conceptualization and provides the impetus for studying the fear of or avoidance of weight-related communication further. While this small-scale study was unable to find a difference between most recently used source to seek weight-related information (interpersonal and mediated sources), future research should continue to explore the possible effects weight-related communication apprehension may have on weight-related information seeking.

Hypotheses

H1: Weight bias internalization will be positively associated with weight-related communication apprehension.

H2: Weight-related communication apprehension will be lower in individuals who recently sought information from the internet compared to those who sought information from interpersonal sources (i.e., a doctor, family, and friends).

H3: Information insufficiency will be positively associated with weight bias internalization.

Methodology

- Survey of 87 PSU communication students (N=64)
- Measures
 - Weight-Bias Internalization 3 scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$),
 - amended Weight-related Communication Apprehension scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.95$)
 - information insufficiency indicators (0-10)
 - information source used for most recent search for weight-related information
 - Demographics and perceptions of weight and health

Results/Findings

Findings from our survey found a positive statistically significant relationship between weight bias internalization and weight-related communication apprehension.

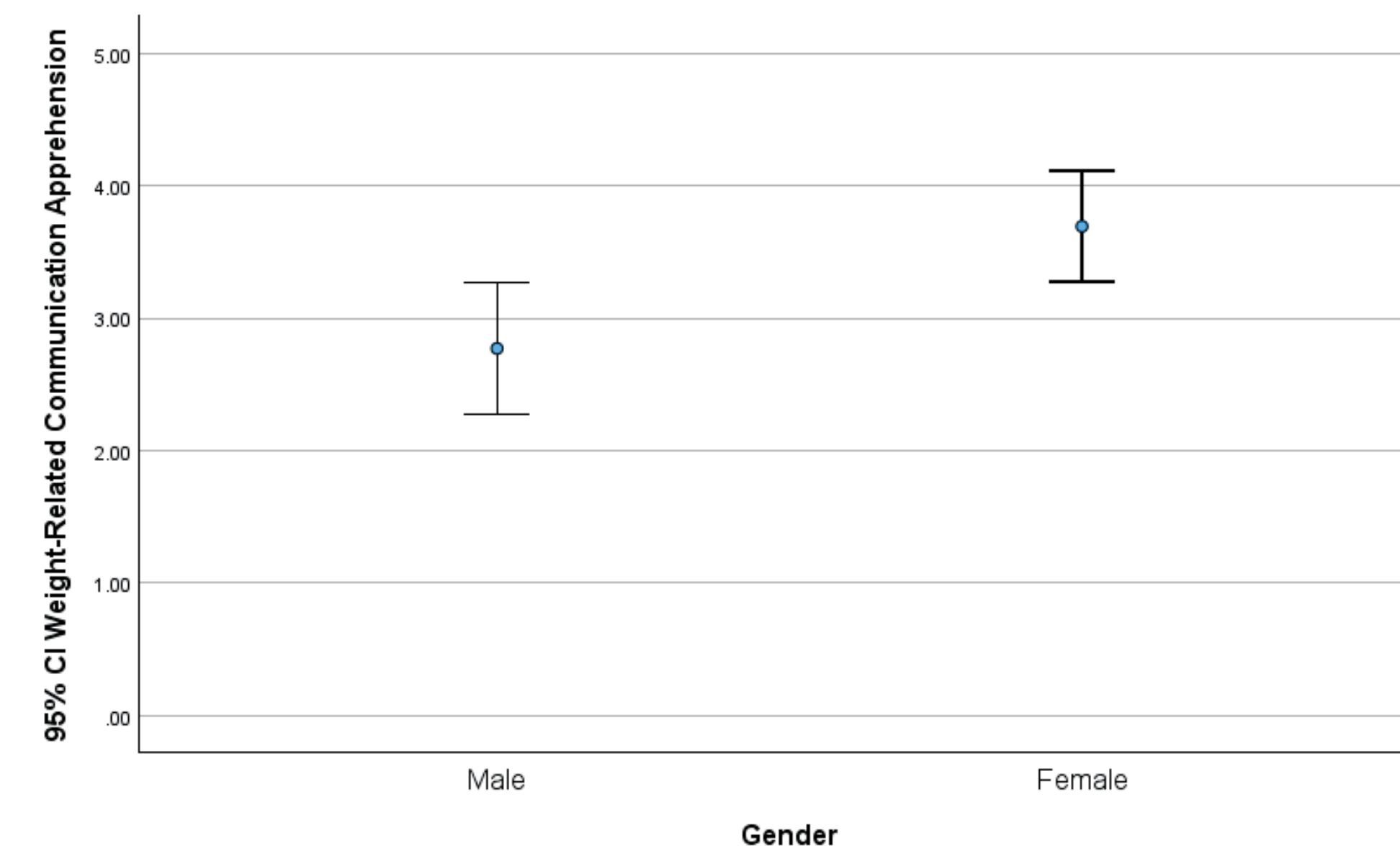
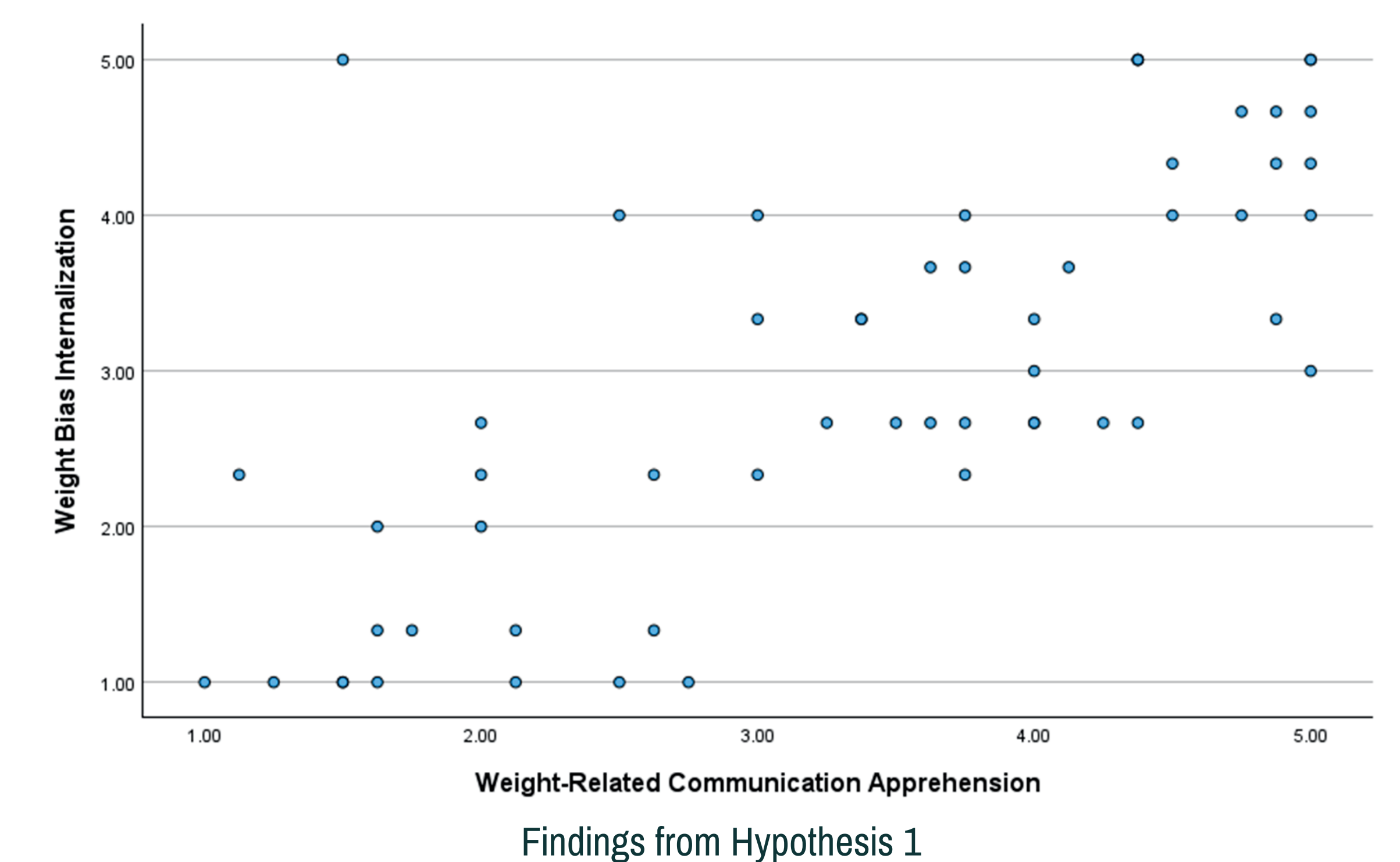
- H1 - Supported
- H2 - Not supported
- H3 - Not supported
- Positive relationship between perceptions of weight and weight bias internalization and weight-related communication apprehension
- Negative relationship between perceptions of health and weight bias internalization and weight-related communication apprehension

Analysis

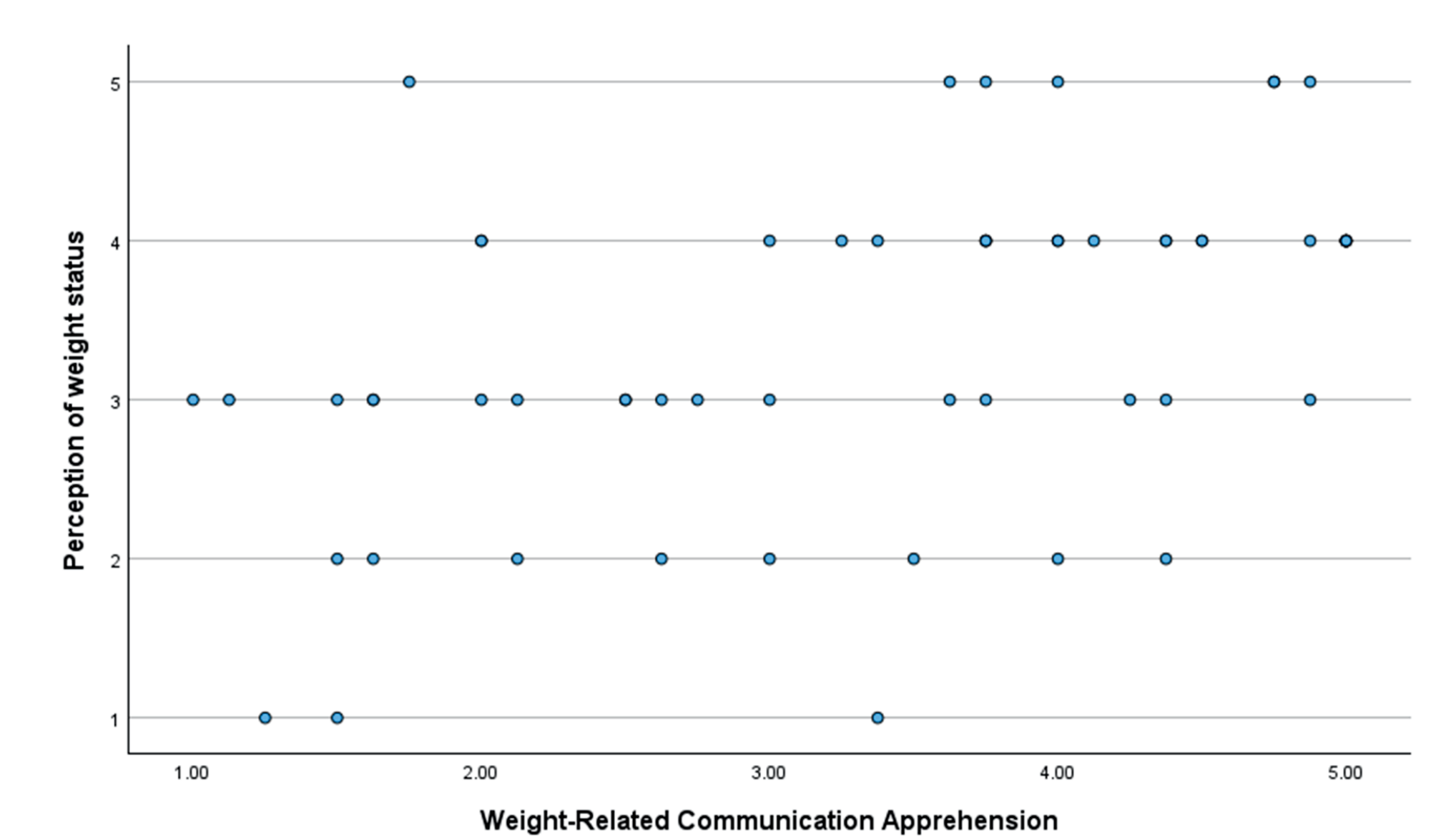
- H1: Positive relationship between weight bias internalization and weight-related communication apprehension ($r(54) = .74, p < .001$)
- H2: No difference found in weight-related communication apprehension between individuals who recently sought weight-related information from interpersonal sources versus mediated sources ($t(50) = .008, p < .994$)
- H3: No relationship found between information insufficiency and weight bias internalization ($r(62) = .177, p < .169$)

Post-hoc Analysis

- Difference in mean scores of weight-related communication apprehension by gender ($t(51) = -2.767, p < .008$). Women had higher averages than men.
- Positive relationships between perceptions of weight status and weight-related communication apprehension ($r(55) = .491, p < .001$) and weight-bias internalization ($r(60) = .348, p < .006$)
- Negative relationships between perceptions of health and weight-related communication apprehension ($r(55) = -.313, p < .018$) and weight-bias internalization ($r(61) = -.467, p < .001$)



Differences in weight-related communication apprehension by gender



Correlation between weight-related communication apprehension and perceptions of weight status

Related literature

Kauer, T., & Burke, T. J. (2023). The mediating role of social control in the relationship between family communication patterns and emerging adults' weight-related outcomes. *Southern Communication Journal, 88*(2), 103-116.

Booth-Butterfield, S., Chory, R., & Beynon W. (1997). Communication apprehension and health communication and behaviors. *Communication Quarterly, 45*(3), 235-250.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01463379709370063>