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Prevalence of Distorted Body Image in Young Koreans and Its Correlate

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Purpose: To define the prevalence of distorted body image in 10 to 24-year-old Koreans and determine its relationship with sex, age, body weight status, and disordered eating behaviors.

Methods: A total of 3,227 young Koreans were recruited from elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as from universities. The participants completed a self-reported questionnaire on body image, eating behaviors (Eating Attitude Test-26), and body weight status.

Results: The prevalence of a distorted body image in males was 49.7% and that in females was 51.2%. Distorted body image was more frequent in adolescents (age, 10–17 years) than in young adults (age, 18–24 years). The highest prevalence (55.3%) was reported in female elementary school students (age, 10–12 years). Distorted body image was associated with disordered eating behaviors and abnormal body weight status.

Conclusion: These results suggest that distorted body image is a public health problem, given its high frequency in young Koreans, and that it is associated with abnormal body weight status and disordered eating behaviors.