

Differences between actual body mass index and perceived body mass index in female university students of Chile, Panama and Guatemala [Diferencias entre índice de masa corporal real y el percibido en mujeres universitarias de Chile, Panamá y Guatemala]

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Introduction: The self-perception of nutritional status is associated to obesity risk. **Objective:** To determine agreement between measured nutritional status and body image perception among female university students in Chile, Panama and Guatemala. **Materials and Methods:** The sample consisted of 499 university students: 247 from Chile, 187 from Panama, and 64 from Guatemala. All participants completed the EAT-26 questionnaire and were shown anatomical models corresponding to body mass index (BMI) values of 18, 22, 25, 27, 30, 35 and 40 kg/m². Students were asked to choose the model that best reflected their own body type, after which anthropometry was measured. Measured BMI was calculated and compared to perceived BMI. **Results:** Perceived and measured BMI differed significantly among students in Chile and Guatemala; no statistical difference was found for Panamanian students. Agreement between perceived and actual BMI was highest among Guatemalan students. **Conclusions:** The best agreement the Panama students, however Chilean and Guatemala students showed differences, indicating possible body image dissatisfaction or lack of accurate self-perception, which could result in risk for obtaining appropriate nutritional status.

Body image

Body mass index

Nutritional status

Obesity

University students

Tetragastris balsamifera