

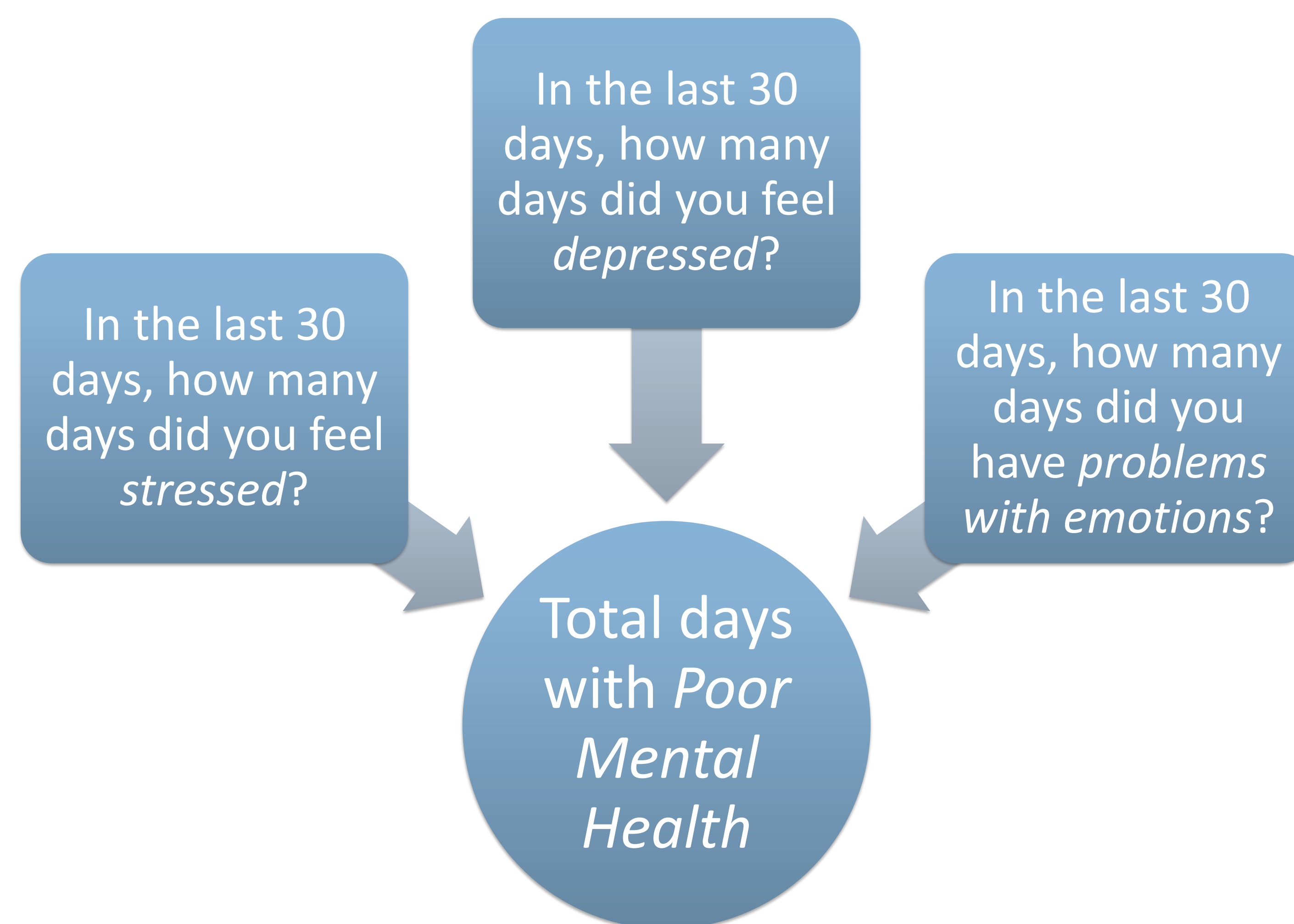


The Effects of Weight and Associated Perceptions on the Mental Health of College Students

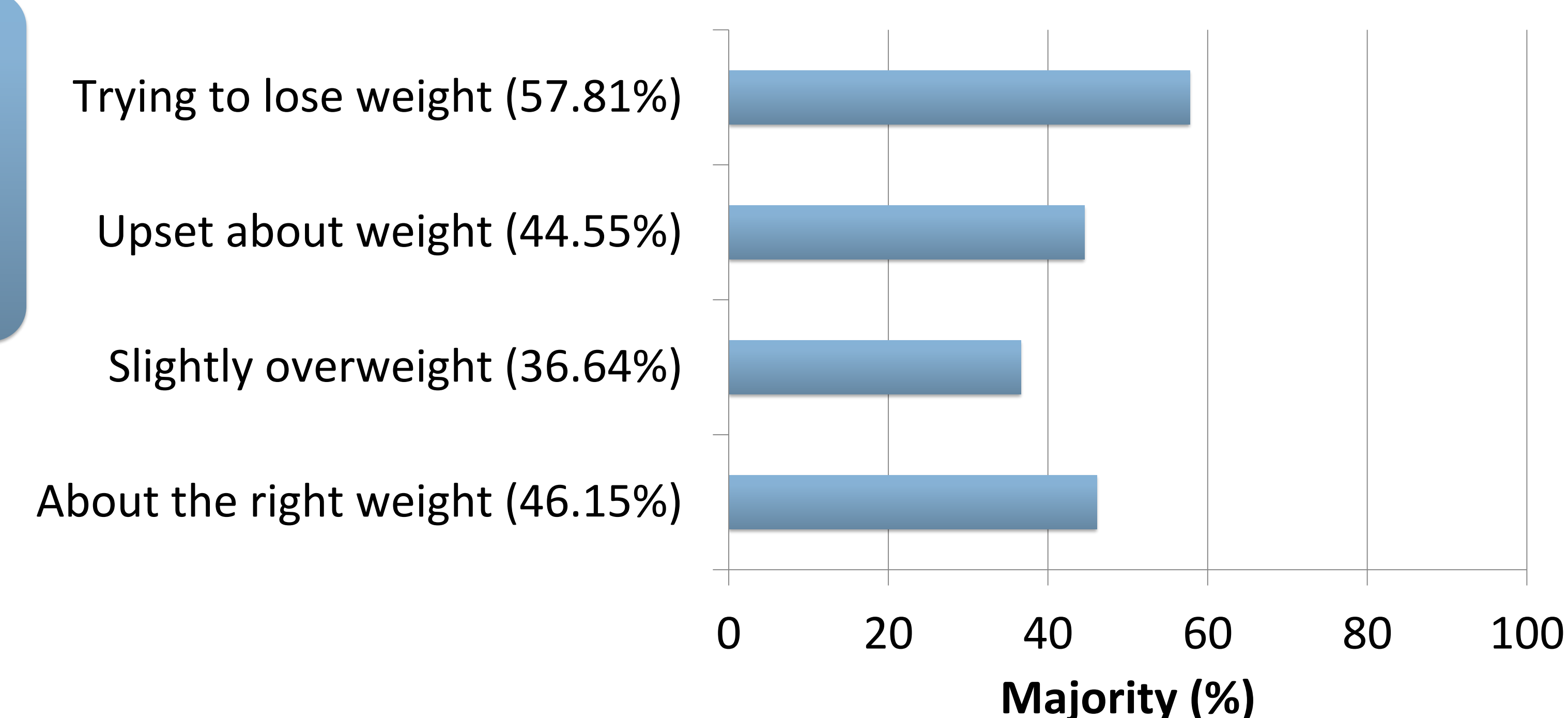
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Introduction

- As obesity levels continue to rise across the country, it is necessary to consider not only the physical, but also the mental toll that it plays on individual's health and wellness.
- Body Mass Index (BMI) is the most commonly used method in determining someone's weight status.
 - A healthy BMI falls in the range of 18.5 - 24.9 kg/m².
 - Overweight is considered 25.0 - 29.9 kg/m²,
 - while Obese is considered above 30 kg/m².
- The objective of this study is to examine BMI and perceptions of weight status on mental health among college students.



Majority Reporting on Perception of Weight Status



Results

- Respondents (n=1169) were predominantly Appalachian (64.5%), female (67.4%), with an average BMI of 25.23 ± 5.46 and averaged 12 ± 9.37 days with poor mental health in the previous month.
- A positive correlation between BMI and mental health status was shown (p=0.0060), representing the higher an individual's BMI, the more poor mental health days incurred.
- Self-perceptions and actions regarding weight also influenced the days of poor mental health individuals incurred.
 - When asked about weight, majority reported being about right (46.15%) or slightly overweight (36.64%), yet reported being upset about their weight (44.55%) and trying to lose weight (57.81%).
- These variables increased the number of poor mental health days with differences in the number of days in those that reported being very or slightly overweight, upset about their weight, and trying to lose weight (p<0.001 respectively).

Discussion

- An individual's actual weight status impacted the number of days students reported poor mental health, highlighting that the higher a student's BMI then the more poor mental health days experienced.
- Additionally, self-perceived weight status impacted days with poor mental health in those that reported being overweight, upset about their weight, and trying to lose weight.

Conclusions

- There is evidence to suggest that weight and self-perceptions can impact mental health among college students, since increased BMI, reporting overweight, being upset about weight and attempting weight loss were all associated with increased poor mental health days experienced.
- This research demonstrates need for campus resources to aid students in healthy weight loss strategies and healthy weight perceptions.

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