

3.3. Abstract

This interdisciplinary study investigates the development of behavior change processes in obese patients who achieve successful behavior modification (weight loss and its maintenance) with those who were unable to reach lasting weight loss. The participants were recruited through media calls and interviewed in a two-step selection telephone interview to ensure theoretical quota requirements. For the first time in Switzerland, such a large group of individuals who have overcome their obesity problem without professional help has been studied. Our results revealed that successful weight losers – with and without professional help - report more daily physical activity compared to failing persons. They control their body weight more regularly, are less snacking, and exhibit more often an internally driven motivation in order to maintain their achieved weight loss on longer terms. Moreover, successful individuals (with or without professional help) have a better quality of life. Irrespective of success or failure regarding weight loss maintenance, all participants dispose of the knowledge to eat healthy food, to follow a relatively regular meal schema, to eat less fat and carbohydrates, and to perform sufficient daily physical exercising. According to studies, females seek professional help more often and earlier than males. The differences between self-helpers and those who were professionally treated seem to rely on the fact that people seeking help display reduced daily physical activity, although they refer to physical activity as one of the most important factors of successful weight loss. The achievers dispose of higher levels of intrinsic motivation than those who failed to maintain their weight loss. This significance clearly outweighs the relevance of medical problems or socially determined ideals of beauty. The project helps to make offers of help in obesity in a customizable and cost-efficient way and fills a major gap in research, as to the natural positive gradients of “obesity careers” little is known so far. Finally, the obtained results will serve to the preparation of a follow-up project, which will examine the effectiveness of different interventions using the effective weight stabilizing strategies of everyday.