

The Desire to be Thin: Motivating Factors for Weight Loss among Men Who Auditioned for NBC's the Biggest Loser

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore motivating factors for weight loss among men who auditioned for NBC's "The Biggest Loser," a popular weight-loss reality television show. Utilizing Conventional Qualitative Content Analysis, the authors analyzed 30 YouTube video submissions from obese men who desired to lose weight and earn a spot on the show. The study revealed four themes which included: 1) The desire for improved health, 2) The desire for enhanced role in the family, 3) The desire for increased social interaction, and 4) The desire for advanced employment. This article includes a rich description of the data, as well as a discussion regarding implications for medical professionals and allied health professionals, who may be interested in developing weight-loss interventions targeted at the reduction of obesity among the male population.

Keywords: Men; Obesity; Weight Loss; Motivation

Introduction

Obesity has become an epidemic in our society, affecting a significant number of individuals without discrimination related to contextual factors such as race/ethnicity, class, gender, nationality, or age [1]. While obesity has been found to impact both men and women at similar rates [2]. Researchers have found that men may be significantly at risk of developing obesity and related co-morbidities (diabetes, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, and various cancers, among others), due to current beliefs, attitudes, practices, and other barriers to seeking treatment [3-5]. Other researchers discovered that a lack of available resources exist specifically for men who may suffer from morbid obesity (body mass index of 35 or higher) [6]. For example, some researchers have found that a significant disparity exists among males who utilize bariatric surgery [7], among males who utilize non-surgical weight loss programs [6], and among males who utilize services for the treatment of eating disorders when [4,8] compared to their female counterparts.

When considering non-surgical weight-loss interventions, some researchers have reported that men are more interested in programs that focus on exercise as opposed to dieting. One scholar [9] noted that the males' emphasis on exercise is due to the perception that physical activity contributes to weight loss and muscle tone more than dieting. While numerous men in society may share this belief which exhibits a potential correlation to dominant notions of masculinity, this perspective creates a potential barrier for men.

Competition-based or "Incentive-based" weight-loss programs represent one strategy utilized to address weight loss among obese male populations [10,11]. However, the number of researchers analyzing

the motivating factors of obese men regarding their participation, involvement, and engagement, and uptake of various competition-based and incentive-based weight loss strategies remains significantly low. The current study focused on exploring the motivation for weight loss among obese men who attempted to utilize a unique and very popular competition and incentive-based weight-loss program, referred to as NBC's "The Biggest Loser." "The Biggest Loser," may provide insight as to what compels some men to broach competition and incentive-based, weight-loss programs. In addition, exploring motivation utilizing NBC's "The Biggest Loser" may assist medical and behavioral specialists as well as organizations (employee wellness programs as well as church-based intervention programs) in developing new health promotion strategies that attract men and that are inclusive of men [12].

Relevant Literature

Obesity among men

Research has proven that obesity affects men biologically as well as in mental health and overall quality of life [13]. A variety of researchers address the fact that men may be significantly at risk for increased mortality due to central adiposity [14]. Other researchers assert that obesity contributes to a decreased sperm count and increases the prevalence of abnormal sperm counts among men [15] and may contribute to infertility [16,17]. Weight-based discrimination and weight bias represent other issues that affect obese men [18,19]. For example, [20] conducted a study and found that while women report higher perceptions of weight bias and discrimination in the workplace, obese men experience higher rates of perceived weight bias in employment when compared to normal weight men. Related issues that affect obese men include topics such as negative body image and social physique anxiety [21]. Likewise, matters related to intimacy, sexual functioning, and sexual satisfaction represents concerns that impact obese men [22]. In addition, researchers have also found that when attempting to lose weight, some obese men encounter problems in gaining social support from their spouses and outside of the home [23]. Researchers attest to a correlation between obesity and depression. One study [24] revealed that obese men showed more at-risk signs for developing depression and other mental health issues when compared to normal weight men as determined by body mass index.

Weight loss and masculinity

The notion of masculinity constitutes one contextual factor discussed in literature regarding men and weight loss [25]. According to Courtenay, masculinity comprises the sex role for men that represent their innate psychological needs for gender-stereotypic traits and personality. In addition, [26] Mishkind et al. described the masculine stereotype as "aggressive, independent, dominant, self-confident, unemotional, active, competitive, persistent, and feels superior" (p.545). Some researchers have found that dominant notions of masculinity prevent some men from asking for help and seeking treatment for obesity, overeating problems, and other weight-related concerns [4,8,27]. Men's failure to ask for help may inadvertently contribute to them suffering in silence. Also, barriers to seeking help may contribute to some of the current health disparities that impact men [8].

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Although masculinity may prevent some men from asking for help, other men may find motivation in their desire to obtain a certain type of ideal masculine body image. The desire for a masculine body may, in fact, contribute to one's decision to consider various weight-loss interventions such as bariatric surgery, male plastic surgery, and exercised-based weight-loss programs. Some scholars suggest that masculinity may contribute to men's emphasis on working out over food restriction [28,29]. In particular [26], Mishkind et al. posited that men will shy away from endurance workouts in order to focus on body-building due to their goal for muscularity.

Motivation for weight loss

According to some researchers [30], motivation for change represents one of the most important factors regarding weight loss. Defined as the urge for modifying a set of unhealthy behaviors, motivation for men encompasses a variety of factors, but researchers contend that the most common factors include health and social pressure. For example, Lemon et al. [31] analyzed motivations for weight loss among men and women. In this study, researchers found that the most significant factors included improving health (74.4%), improving appearance (70.3%), improving self-esteem (65.5%), and improving one's ability to fit into clothing (53.1%). Other researchers [32] reviewed factors associated with weight loss maintenance and weight regain. In the study conducted by Effhag & Rossner, [32] researchers found that motivation, realistic goals, diet and eating habits, involvement in physical activity, and coping, assist with obtaining and maintaining weight loss.

The transtheoretical model represents one theoretical framework to conceptualize motivation for change [33]. This model describes how people modify a problem behavior or acquire a positive behavior [34]. Researchers discuss the transtheoretical model in the literature in relation to various health concerns including smoking, sexual risks behaviors, and weight loss [35-37]. In particular, researchers can best utilize the transtheoretical model when assessing the effectiveness of dietary and physical interventions among obese populations [38,39].

However, little research exists that explores how masculinity may intersect with weight loss among obese men [40]. In addition, researchers often overlook the factors that may contribute to success for men in weight loss [13]. The marginalization of men in research in this area, has contributed to a lack of discussion and gender specific interventions made available by medical professionals [23]. Likewise, to date, there has been a minimal discussion about motivation for participation in popular weight-loss competition and incentive-based interventions, such as NBC's "The Biggest Loser" and similar programs.

"The Biggest Loser"

"The Biggest Loser," a reality television show developed in 2004 by NBC media [41], originated in the United States, but has been duplicated in various countries such as Australia [42]. Each year, thousands of hopefuls including obese men stand in long lines that extend several blocks to audition for the weight-loss show (<http://iquestgain.com/weightloss-articles/what-happens-at-a-biggest-loser-audition>). The show's producers request that those individuals unable to make an in-person casting call develop a video audition tape which is uploaded on internet video platforms such as YouTube and submitted on the show's website. If selected to participate in the weight loss program, obese individuals (at least 75 pounds overweight) undergo a significant diet and exercise intervention in an effort to lose significant amounts of weight [43]. By working with personal trainers and other experts, these men and women embark on a journey to induce weight loss, and many often lose upwards of a hundred pounds. As part of the weight loss intervention, auditionees compete for incentives and a \$250,000 cash prize [12]. Likewise, the model for NBC's "The Biggest Loser" represents the framework for a spate of new weight-loss intervention programs that include community and corporate-based weight-loss competition and incentive-based programs [44,45].

Methodological Approach

The researchers launched this study to explore motivational factors for weight loss among men who auditioned for NBC's "The Biggest Loser." To assess this phenomenon, authors conducted a content analysis utilizing footage from YouTube videos. While contacting the show and recruiting auditionees from live auditions may have been preferable, gaining access from a major media conglomerate may have proven to be fruitless. According to Krippendorff [46], [much content analysis research is motivated by the search for techniques to infer from symbolic data what would be either too costly, no longer possible, or too obtrusive by the use of other techniques" (p. 51). Therefore, reviewing and analyzing audition tapes of NBC's "The Biggest Loser" constituted the most feasible and effective method for capturing the phenomenon regarding motivation for weight loss. Content analysis consists of "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" [47]. Content analysis does not consist merely of written texts, but can also include analyzing and making inferences regarding audio and visual messages, among other types of communication [48]. Researchers use content analysis as a research methodological approach to explore and construct meaning around various topics related to health [49,50].

In addition, YouTube, a public video-sharing and social engagement website [51], has been widely used for research involving content analysis. In particular, YouTube provides a medium by which to explore topics such as obesity and fat stigmatization among other topics [52,53]. For this study, researchers employed Qualitative Conventional Content Analysis. According to Hsieh and Shannon [54], "Conventional Content Analysis is generally used with a study design whose aim is to describe a phenomenon" (p.1279). Conventional content analysis researchers focus on an inductive process when analyzing content, allowing concepts and themes to emerge from the data, without having a pre-existing coding scheme [55]. The overarching research question used to underscore the study was: "What motivates men to pursue weight loss via NBC's "The Biggest Loser"?"

Selection of Videos

After Institutional Review Board approval, the researchers accessed YouTube, utilizing the following website: www.youtube.com. The Principle Investigator (PI) originally assessed the website in January 2016 and formulated the following terms when searching for videos ("The Biggest Loser" audition; "The Biggest Loser" audition-men, men audition for "The Biggest Loser," men try out for "The Biggest Loser"). Based on the general search, YouTube reported 40,900 results. The PI decided to restrict the date and time of the content by focusing on videos uploaded within the last six years to focus on the most recent seasons of the show. Therefore, researchers studied videos uploaded by individuals between 2009-2015, encompassing seasons 7-16. The researcher restricted the dates of the videos by selecting the "filter" button below the search box on the YouTube website. Restricting the dates narrowed the results by several hundred videos. The PI decided to review a total of 50 videos, focusing on those that emerged at the top of the search list (based on popularity) as well as incorporating snowball sampling [56] as a list of related videos emerge after clicking on each video.

The PI reviewed each video and then sent it to the research team (consisting of two consultants) in the form of a video bibliography. After the research team reviewed each video, they reduced the sample to 30 videos based on inclusion criteria and based on obtaining saturation [57]. For the study, the researchers focused on men who auditioned for NBC's "The Biggest Loser." Therefore, the selected videos consisted exclusively of men who auditioned for the show. For inclusion in the study, videos had to feature men who specifically stated their height and weight (for BMI calculations) in addition to auditioning as individuals (not part of a couple or partner audition submission). Researchers did

not include audition videos where men did not provide their height and weight or those that featured female auditionees, couples, partners, or team editions of the show. The research team did not include any videos in the study that not fall within the selected timeframe. Other videos excluded from the sample consisted of those where auditionees used incomprehensible language, those who auditioned for a non-US-based version; videos that consisted mainly of text and music, with little to no speech; and videos where auditionees did not disclose in an in-depth fashion, their motivation to lose weight loss and audition.

Analysis

For this study, each audition video served as a unit of analysis. The authors did not use video segmentation, a process that may be used when analyzing lengthy content, but used each video in totality as a unit of analysis as common in content analysis [52]. The authors focused on the words and statements of the participants in each video. The research team, which consisted of the PI and two research consultants, observed each video independently. Each team member viewed the videos multiple times, paying close attention to primary communication (verbalization, speech, language) as well as secondary or meta-communication (paralanguage and kinesics, in addition to other video features). During the observation of the audition videos, each member of the research team logged initial thoughts and reactions regarding the content. The researchers specifically examined the communication and made note of what each respondent stated in his video, specifically regarding his interest in weight loss. Each member documented key phrases and statements verbalized by the auditionees. Likewise, teammates also observed nonverbal communication, which included body posture, facial expressions, vocal pitch, into nation, rate/speed of speech delivery, volume when speaking, inflection, and vocal intensity during speech.

In addition, members of the research team assessed not only verbal and nonverbal communication, but also noted signs and signifiers in the videos, referred to as semiotics [58]. Some signs and signifiers included the setting of the videos, space usage and locations depicted in each video, the environment, video graphics, use of movement and action, clothing/attire (highlighting body parts), music selection, and use of humor and comedy, which highlighted barriers to weight loss, motivation for weight loss, and perceptions of what auditionees thought might be helpful in being selected for the show. The researchers also examined other aspects of the videos, such as the type of audition format (individual or interview style) as well as endorsements by friends, family members, spouses, co-workers, and other members of individual's social network. Furthermore, the research team utilized YouTube video analytics to contextualize each video, including length of video, number of views since being uploaded, number of "likes," number of "dislikes," number of YouTube subscribers, in conjunction with comments shared by other YouTube members.

After reviewing videos individually and documenting emerging themes, the research team convened to discuss the findings. During this meeting, members discussed their perspectives regarding the videos and reported on their interpretation of the results, as well as clarifying any areas that merited discussion regarding the phenomenon. During the meeting, there were no instances of disagreement in relation to the final list of emergent themes. The research team did not statistically calculate inter-rater reliability (Cohen's Kappa) as this was a qualitative study [59,60] and all three researchers came to an overwhelming consensus regarding the emergent themes.

Demographics

Individuals trying out for "The Biggest Loser" resided in a variety of locations, spanning the Northeastern, Western, Midwestern, and Southern areas of the United States. The sample consisted of individuals who auditioned for seasons 7-16. In terms of employment status,

auditionees reported holding various positions from social services, manual labor, and medical fields, with a small number who reported being unemployed or underemployed. A majority of auditionees (n=25) self-identified as Caucasian; a very small number of African American men and Hispanic/Latino men rounded out the sample. With an average age of 32 years, auditionees ranged in age from 27-65 years. In terms of auditionees' weight and height, their average weight was 407 pounds, with a range from 315-575 pounds. The average height was 6 feet tall, ranging from 5 feet 8 inches to 6 feet 7 inches. The average Body Mass Index (BMI) was 54.6 with a range of 39.4 to 84.4. Most of the auditionees chose to conduct individual interviews of themselves, though a few men had spouses or wives to interview them. The average length of each video was eight to nine minutes with a range of three to 20 minutes. Auditionees posted their videos and then received an average number of 8,715 views with ranges from 201 to 54,770 views at the time of the study. These posted videos averaged 30.7 "likes" with ranges from 0- 178. Viewers posted an average of 1.67 "dislikes" regarding the videos with ranges from 0-8 "dislikes." The auditionees mentioned several overlapping health issues, including Obstructive Sleep Apnea, shortness of breath, other respiratory issues, and hypertension. Although these health issues represented the most common ones, other issues ranged from depression to Type II Diabetes. (See Table 1 for sample demographics).

Emerging Themes

A total of four major underlying themes emerged in the study regarding motivation for weight loss which included the following: 1) The desire for improved health, 2) The desire for enhanced role in the family, 3) The desire for increased social interaction, and 4) The desire for advanced employment. Discussion of these four themes follows below.

Theme 1: The desire for improved health

"I have to use a CPAP machine at night. When the doctors were conducting the sleep test, there were several times the doctors woke me up because they thought I had died. I was told the amount of oxygen I was getting was less than a dead person" (Aspirant 15, Age 41).

The desire for improved health constituted the first theme that emerged. In the videos, 21 men (n=21, 70%) stated that their health played a crucial role in their desire to lose weight and gain selection for "The Biggest Loser" weight-loss program. One individual, Aspirant 28, stated the following:

The last time I weighed 200 pounds I was in elementary school, so I was around the age of 8 or 9. I am 33 years old now, and I cannot live my life another minute like this... Today I am weighing in at 500-plus pounds.

Likewise, Aspirant 24 shared a similar sentiment and stated:

In the span of my lifetime, I have been told by doctors since I am so heavy, my quality of life would be terrible. I wouldn't be able to live past 16...then 18...then 21... I am now 22, and I don't think I can continue this lucky streak.

In the videos, men mentioned a willingness to do "whatever it takes" to lose weight and expressed this as a rationale for potential casting on the show as an initial step to improve their health. For example, Aspirant 3 stated, "I will show you every aspect of my life that helps explain the negative impact of my weight in everyday life, no matter how uncomfortable it is." One individual expressed just how uncomfortable he was regarding his body size and clothing. Aspirant 4 stated, "While recording the video audition for 'The Biggest Loser,' I was trying to demonstrate how large I was... I found a pair of jeans and BOTH of my parents could fit into them at the same time--damn." Similarly, another Aspirant verbalized, "If selected, I will not back down

Participants, N:30	Age	Height	Weight	BMI	Health Issues
Participant 1	27	5'9	420	62	Depression
Participant 2	39	6'0	398	54	Obstructive Sleep apnea
Participant 3	27	5'11	340	47.4	None reported
Participant 4	38	6'2	435	55.8	None reported
Participant 5	40	5'7	350	54.8	None reported
Participant 6	22	6'0	330	44.8	Obstructive Sleep apnea
Participant 7	N/A	6'3	450	56.2	None reported
Participant 8	43	6'0	440	59.7	None reported
Participant 9	36	6'0	490	66.4	None reported
Participant 10	37	6'2	510	65.5	Type II Diabetes
Participant 11	32	6'1	400	52.8	None reported
Participant 12	41	6'1	380	50.1	Obstructive Sleep Apnea, Hypertension Type II Diabetes, Depression
Participant 13	41	5'10	315	43.9	Obstructive Sleep apnea, Hypercholesterolemia, Hypertension
Participant 14	19	6'2	420	53.9	Obstructive Sleep Apnea, Congestive Heart Failure
Participant 15	22	6'0	450	61	None reported
Participant 16	N/A	6'3	315	39.4	None reported
Participant 17	24	5'11	360	50.2	Depression, Back problems.
Participant 18	26	5'11	320	44.6	None reported
Participant 19	43	6'2	341	43.8	None reported
Participant 20	65	6'0	365	49.5	Type II Diabetes
Participant 21	33	6'6	476	55	Obstructive Sleep apnea
Participant 22	22	6'4	400	48.7	None reported
Participant 23	32	5'8	400	60.8	Morbidly obese
Participant 24	22	5'11	365	50.9	None reported
Participant 25	29	6'0	320	43.4	Shortness of breath
Participant 26	N/A	5'9	575	84.8	Shortness of breath, Depression
Participant 27	33	6'7	540	60.8	Depression, had to have gallbladder & ankle surgery, shortness of breath
Participant 28	N/A	5'10	510	73.2	Fatigue, Obstructive Sleep Apnea, shortness of breath, severe headaches.
Participant 29	N/A	6'3	375	46.9	Pancreatitis, Obstructive Sleep apnea, Hypertension, Hypercholesterolemia
Participant 30	N/A	5'10	375	53.8	Weak immune system, Chronic feet pain, Soreness in body, breathing problems

NA=Data not available

Table 1: Sample Demographics.

from any challenge that is thrown at me on the ranch... I WILL be the biggest loser."

In the study, 16 individuals reported on the types of health issues that they wanted to resolve through weight loss. The medical concerns the auditionees discussed included: Obstructive Sleep Apnea, shortness of breath, Type II Diabetes, hypertension, depression, constant fatigue, congestive heart failure, and back problems. For example, one individual stated, "I have to take so many pills because of my being overweight and having Diabetes...one day I hope to no longer be taking pills." Likewise, nine auditionees reported having Obstructive Sleep Apnea and stated their desire to lose weight as a path to no longer experience such a poor quality of sleep at night. Furthermore, a number of men actually displayed their Continuous Positive Air Pressure (CPAP) devices on camera. Some men pointed to their devices and discussed their level of discomfort due to having to wear a full-face mask. Others mentioned wearing a CPAP mask as an element of discomfort within the context of their romantic relationships. During one of the videos, an Aspirant stated, "Because of my Sleep Apnea, I am forced to wear a mask on my face every single night." In the study, Aspirant 4 stated, "Every night I have to fill this tank up with water [points to Continuous Positive Air Pressure device], and this is the process I have to do in order to go to sleep at night." The videos reflected that obesity negatively impacted these men's overall sleep quality due to respiratory issues; Obstructive Sleep Apnea tended to represent a primary medical concern warranting the desire for weight loss.

Theme 2: The desire for enhanced role in family

"My daughter is one of the reasons I want to lose weight and be healthy. She is going to get married, and I want to be able to walk her down the aisle and see my future grand kids" (Aspirant 2, Age 39).

The study's second emergent theme consisted of a desire for an enhanced role and presence in the family. A total of 21 men (n=21, 70%) reported that their weight status prevented them from having meaningful relationships and added that their family played a major role in why they wanted to lose weight. Some of the auditionees discussed having an extensive family history of obesity and other related comorbidities, which they did not want to project onto their children. For example, Aspirant 40 stated:

"I have a family history of people dying at a young age. My grandfather died at 28, my mom died at 46, and my dad died at 42. Earlier this year, I turned 40 years old and my wife and friends threw me a party. It seemed great, but I started to realize if I don't change, this could be the last party I ever have and that is terrifying" (Aspirant 6, Age 40).

Additionally, in the study 11 men specifically reported that they wanted to lose weight in order to improve their relationships with their spouses and/or children. For example, Aspirant 22 discussed how his obesity status negatively impacted his level of intimacy with his wife. Aspirant 22 mentioned that he and his wife sleep in separate beds, to

ensure that his wife has enough space to sleep comfortably. Aspirant 22 stated:

“I have had to wear a CPAP machine for sleep apnea every night for the last three years. My wife actually doesn’t even sleep with me anymore; because I make so much noise at night, she can’t ever sleep. That has got to change.”

Aspirant 24 noted that his weight negatively impacted his ability to go on a honeymoon. He stated:

“I was trying to book the flight for our honeymoon, and when I told them my weight, they told me I would have to purchase not just one ticket but TWO plane tickets! I was speechless.”

In addition, men not only reported that their weight negatively affected their relationships with family members, but also confided that it diminishes the quality of time spent with family. For example, men shared that while they make attempts to spend quality time with their families, a majority of this time falls into the category of mealtimes. Men also reported that they lacked energy and often fall asleep at inopportune times, which negatively affect their ability to interact with family.

The 21 men who mentioned family as a theme verbalized that weight loss would improve their family relationships. Men viewed weight loss as a mechanism to demonstrate effective leadership skills in the family system. Furthermore, men reported wanting to lose weight to motivate their family members to improve their health. Men also described losing weight as a mechanism to enhance their role in the family, by positioning themselves as “good role models” and leaders for their families. Spouses and family members also supported the role of men being leaders by setting a good example of healthy behavior. For example, during one of the videos, Aspirant 11’s wife described her husband as “the man of the house, the motivator.” She later stated that “If he brings good eating habits and good exercise habits and good life-long habits back home, then we will incorporate them in our life as well.”

During the audition videos, men and their families discussed how being overweight prevents men from fulfilling their role as husbands and fathers, and in one video, an individual expressed that the weight issue can serve as an impediment to establishing and maintaining relationships. Aspirant 23’s family expressed how his weight negatively impacts his ability to parent. To illustrate, Aspirant 23’s family member stated, “He has a child, and I would like for him to be around to raise that child.” Similarly, Aspirant 19 mentioned that he was uncomfortable being obese and stated, “I just don’t want my kids to have a fat dad.” Other auditionees also cited wanting to lose weight in efforts to live longer and raise their children. For example, Aspirant 10 stated, “I have a beautiful wife and a wonderful one-year-old daughter who I wanted to get healthy for... I want to be able to go out and do things without all the limitations because I am so fat.” Likewise, Aspirant 15 stated, “I have a son with special needs, and I cannot imagine leaving him behind because of being overweight.” Interestingly, Aspirant 19 also noted that he does not want to have additional children and expand his family until he loses weight.

During the video audition films, four men specifically discussed wanting to lose weight to start a relationship and to gain confidence when approaching the opposite sex. Aspirant 30 stated, “I have an issue having relationships because I am afraid I could hurt somebody if I tripped or fell.” Comparably, Aspirant 20 commented, “Being this big affects my lifestyle...my love life... the relationships I am in, both past and what’s to come.” Despite representing a small percentage of the sample, these four men discussed how their obesity prohibited them from attempting to start a relationship and from being comfortable in public settings.

Theme 3: The desire for increased social interaction

“I want to be able to go to a restaurant with friends and not have to

request a table and a chair with no arms because I am too big to fit in them. That is so humiliating, and I just want to be normal” (Aspirant 10, Age 36).

The researchers cited the desire for increased social interaction as the third emergent theme of the study. In the sample, 16 men (n=16, 53%) reported wanting to lose weight to establish a better social life. For example, Aspirant 16 stated, “It would be nice if when I did go eat breakfast, I didn’t have to sit alone... I see all the football players sitting together and talking, and I am alone.” Other auditionees reported that they wanted to lose weight so that they could become more active. For example, one Aspirant mentioned that he wanted to be able to run up and down the field while coaching football. Aspirant 10 stated:

“I want to be able to go out and do things without all the limitations because I am so fat. I want to be able to do normal things like gardening, riding roller coasters, running in a marathon, riding bikes... ‘Biggest Loser,’ I really need your help-please!

Another Aspirant mentioned a desire to put on his own shoes without struggling. This Aspirant stated, “Instead I am forced to wear shoes that have Velcro on them.” Auditionees described “The Biggest Loser” as a mechanism to experience rebirth, since they viewed losing weight as providing an opportunity to have a new life, increase their level of self-esteem, and increase their ability to engage socially. Additionally, auditionees described what life could be like if they lost weight. Some examples auditionees mentioned included being able to 1) walk around the block without being stared at by others, 2) go on a ride at an amusement park, and 3) go swimming and not feel self-conscious about their bodies, 4) walk without becoming winded, 5) get out of a car easily without struggling, 6) fit in a booth at a restaurant, and 7) not have to eat alone at a restaurant. Aspirant 25 offered an illustration of this when he stated:

I love Six Flags (amusement park) because they have awesome roller coasters. I can’t go there anymore because it is too embarrassing. Imagine waiting in line for three hours to ride the newest roller coaster only to be told, “I am sorry, but you’re too big to ride this.” That feeling is devastating.

In addition, five auditionees (n=5, 16%) reported wanting to lose weight to be able to engage in more sporting activities. One Aspirant mentioned a desire to run a marathon. Aspirant 14 stated, “I want to compete in the New Orleans triathlon... I want to swim, ride my bike, and run... I want to be able to be active and do things.” Others mentioned wanting to lose weight to feel comfortable working out at the gym. Aspirant 1 stated, “I can only work out for a few minutes because of how tired I get. I couldn’t imagine being at a gym with other people.”

Theme 4: The desire for advanced employment

“I am a golf cart technician, and I am fearful of losing my job every day because my stomach is too big to fit under a golf cart. It would be humiliating to be terminated because I was too fat” (Aspirant 30, Age N/A).

The research team determined that the fourth emergent theme was a desire for advanced employment. In the study, nine men (n=9, 30%) reported that losing weight would have a positive impact on either their employment and/or finances. Aspirant 15 stated, “I go to work, and the days I have to drive the forklift... it is hard for me to get in and out of the forklift because it’s so tiny.” Likewise, Aspirant 13 stated, “One of the tough things at work is my scrub outfit. It is so tight and I wear the biggest size available, so when I am sitting at my desk it is extremely uncomfortable.” Aspirant 3 stated the following:

I had a really good friend that asked me if I was interested in helping him with his business of selling fireplaces. Naturally, I said, “Of course!” After the first day on the job, my friend told me I couldn’t work there because I was too heavy and couldn’t keep up with him and fit into small

areas. I literally have four dollars in my bank account. Nobody will hire me.

Although a significant number of the men did not identify employment as a reason for wanting to lose weight, this theme played a very important role because it elicited a great deal of emotion from the men in the videos. The auditionees discussed their perception of their weight as a barrier to job advancement. Specifically, men reported gaining weight since starting employment, and noted that their employers seemed to view their weight as a negative aspect of their job performance. For example, Aspirant 13 stated:

Now is the most embarrassing part, me showing you what I look like without my shirt on. I need this opportunity to lose weight so I can continue my work in theater being casted with important roles instead of being asked to play Santa Claus because of my belly.

Another individual mentioned how his job and the lack of substantial work contribute to his sedentary lifestyle and eating unhealthy foods. Aspirant 19 stated the following:

My buddies and I from college decided to go into the marketing business doing things like graphic design, film, and Web production. Bad news is I spend a lot of time in coffee shops, which is an extremely bad place for my health. I can't help but to have several pastries in a day. I hope we can pick up our business soon because my health can't continue this way because of my job.

Other individuals mentioned how their weight status negatively impacted safety while on the job. For example, as a police detective, Aspirant 11 described how his weight played a role in this aspect of his job. Aspirant 11 stated, "To the dismay of my wife, I do not wear my [bulletproof] vest anymore because it doesn't protect much due to it being too small." Other men discussed how their weight negatively affected them financially since it prevented them from earning promotions. During the audition videos, men cited the importance of losing weight in order to advance in their current careers. In the sample, three men explicitly discussed the potential cash prize available to winners of the show as an incentive to pursue weight loss. Most notably, Aspirant 20 stated, "Put me on your show, PLEASE... I am going to change my lifestyle, and your show is how I am going to do it." Aspirant 20's statement proved powerful since he delivered this message after discussing living on a friend's couch and not having any transportation due to inadequate finances. Similarly, other auditionees discussed their lack of financial stability and expressed how the extra income earned from participation would benefit their home and family. In the videos, two men also articulated their desire to win the prize money to provide a means to assist their families and extended communities in becoming financially secure. In particular, Aspirant 30 discussed his plan to give a portion of his winnings to a local nursing home. In the study, researchers determined that finances and the ability to improve financial stability represented motivating factors for participation and motivation for weight-loss.

Discussion

The research team found the results of the study to be consistent with previous research specifically regarding health being noted as the most significant motivating factor for men attempting to lose weight [61]. Researchers suggest that men's desire to improve their health serves as a key motivator to pursue weight loss, rather than issues related merely to physical appearance or body image. While it may be accurate that men did not report the desire to want to improve their body image as a top motivating factor, this may also correlate with the notion of masculinity. Within the literature regarding weight loss, researchers have flagged body image as a topic that males may not feel comfortable discussing [62]. Some researchers have discussed the increased pressure among men to have a certain body size or shape [63], but men may still harbor some discomfort in discussing body size within a public setting.

Furthermore, researchers have suggested that the experience of weight discrimination among men may exacerbate issues for these men and contribute to a threat to their self-concept and sense of masculinity [64].

Historically, researchers have also stated that based on the socialization of men within the context of gender and masculinity, men may be more reluctant to discuss issues related to health issues unless they deem these severe enough to warrant a medical concern or emergency [13]. Unfortunately, this also increases men's potential mortality rates due to a delayed diagnosis of obesity and other related health issues, which negatively impacts the prognosis of treatment [65]. In lieu of this fact, medical providers (who may be male or female) may perpetuate gendered bias in their referral practices when it relates to eating disorders, obesity, weight-loss surgery, and other weight-loss programs (MacCaughy, Wagner, & Rufino, 2016). Therefore, medical professionals may need additional training to ensure that they refer patients equitably for additional obesity-related services.

The research team determined that the family roles and relationships represented a key factor to motivate men who auditioned for NBC's "The Biggest Loser"-an extremely unique finding. Men reported that weight posed a barrier to their ability to fulfill an active role within their relationships with spouses as well as children. While researchers have yet to explore in-depth the family as a distinct unit as a potential motivator for weight loss, some scholars have suggested that spouses may play a role in the decision-making process regarding weight loss among men [13]. Furthermore, some researchers suggest that men may exhibit a greater inclination to participate in health interventions when prompted by their female counterparts or when they attend a health intervention with their spouse [67].

Likewise, other researchers determined that some men find motivation to lose weight in an effort to lead their family system by demonstrating good health and eating behaviors [27]. One interesting finding in this study revealed that men reported that their weight served as a barrier to establishing romantic relationships as well as maintaining existing romantic relationships. Other researchers have not suggested that men desire to lose weight to establish romantic relationships. This may be due to gender scripts and men's reluctance to discuss intimate issues typically associated with women, such as body image, eating disorders, and dating relationships [68].

In the audition videos, men reported weight loss as a means to decrease social anxiety and the stigma attached to obesity. In addition to health and the family serving as motivating factors for the study's auditionees, men also verbalized an interest in wanting to "feel" normal and avoid the stigma of being obese in a "thin" society. This finding is unique in that researchers have not reported on men's discussions about feeling uncomfortable related to scenarios, such as not being able to fit in a booth at a restaurant. This may be attributed to the lack of research conducted regarding men's experiences of obesity-specifically those related to obesity stigma. Some researchers have focused their work on depression among obese men, while others have reported that obesity is correlated with lower rates of depression (i.e., The Jolly Fat Hypothesis) [69]. However, this research team's findings aligned with other researchers who have reported that obese men may be at a higher risk for depression and other related mental health issues given their negative experiences [24].

Another intriguing finding in the research related to the topic of employment. A number of the auditionees mentioned wanting to lose weight in an effort to gain advanced employment and improve job performance. In the audition videos, men reported that their weight prevented them from performing some job duties, including those that required standing for long periods of time, bending, and repetitive movement of their bodies. Consistent with some other researchers [70], the research team determined that men perceived their weight as a barrier to career advancement and promotion. Perceptions of weight

servicing as a barrier to advancement on the job may correlate with the discussion of weight-based discrimination in the workplace (real or perceived).

Weight bias and weight-based discrimination represents areas of increasing focus in scholarly literature [71-74]. Likewise, given that some societies often view men as breadwinners [75]; employment may continue to serve as a motivating factor for men's participation in weight-loss programs. Surprisingly, while some men expressed an interest in participating in "The Biggest Loser" in an effort to shed weight and improve their performance on the job, only three auditionees explicitly discussed the grand prize as a motivating factor. The possibility exists that men felt uncomfortable disclosing their desire to obtain the cash prize. Also, men may have assumed that this disclosure could negatively affect their ability to earn a spot on the show. In addition, some men may find it uncomfortable to disclose their desire for monetary gain, as it may relate to dominant notions of masculinity in terms of men not wanting to promote the perception of failing at financial stability or management [76]. However, a few men in the study vocalized that winning the grand prize could assist them in paying off their debts and could contribute to men living a happy life. The research team addressed the topic of financial incentives for participation in workplace settings in the literature [77,78]. Additionally, incentive-based health and wellness programs may represent one aspect that warrants future investigation in the consideration of methods to impact health outcomes for men.

Clinical Implications

Based on the findings of the research regarding men who auditioned for NBC's "The Biggest Loser," a number of motivational factors emerged that contribute to men's decisions to engage in a weight-loss program. While NBC's "The Biggest Loser" constitutes a unique weight-loss program given that it includes a significant cash prize as well as the fact the show's directors film and air the series on national television, results may readily apply to other incentive-based weight-loss programs. According to researchers [3], weight-loss programs continue to struggle on the front of engaging men in health interventions. Likewise, weight-loss programs fail to promote the uptake of specific interventions among male populations. One recommendation for stakeholders invested in promoting health among men would be the consideration of incentive-based and competition-based weight-loss programs. In addition, medical professionals and allied health professionals might find merit in introducing alternative methods to connect with men, specifically those approaches rooted in men's positive individual and social identities. Those individuals who decide to establish weight-loss programs might want to frame the participating men's health concerns or benefits in terms of establishing and maintaining one's role as a male, father, husband, and employee. Tying a man's health to his ability to perform duties as a husband and father may ignite his desire to participate in health initiatives.

Men do not only care about health regarding eliminating physical ailments; they also care about their role in their family system. Therefore, interventionists may need to appeal to men's perception of masculinity and their desire to lead their families. In conjunction with this, coordinators of weight-loss programs may need to situate health within the context of work productivity, which may increase the utilization of interventions. In the study, men discussed wanting to perform adequately at their jobs and desiring advancement in employment. This may also correlate with their desire to produce revenue in an effort to provide for their families. Therefore, those individuals launching men's health initiatives might consider including a discussion about how improved health translates to increased earning potential over time. This may also be of interest to employers who inadvertently benefit from having healthy employees due to reduced medical costs associated with health insurance premiums as well as increased productivity due to reduced time away from work related to sickness. Therefore,

coordinators of weight-loss programs may consider discussing how becoming physically fit could contribute to financial fitness, as opposed to only discussing medical conditions.

Limitations and Future Research

The research team noted that one limitation of the study relates to the methodological approach used to frame the research. Using qualitative content analysis to explore major themes regarding a given topic or phenomenon [79] introduces certain limitations. Video audition tapes provided information which assisted the research team in answering the research questions regarding motivation for weight loss among men. However, qualitative interviews would offer another viable approach. Conducting semi-structured interviews with individuals who auditioned for the show could have provided an opportunity for the PI to ask probing follow-up questions—a useful option that is unavailable in the process of solely viewing videos. In a future study, contacting men who auditioned for "The Biggest Loser" to inquire about their thoughts regarding motivation for weight loss could provide valuable insight and more rich data.

As an alternative, a focus group represents another way to inquire about motivation for weight loss. Specifically, a focus group could provide additional information about motivation that may not have been captured by viewing audition videos. The use of YouTube to access audition videos may have affected the number of auditionees included in the study, a potential limitation. Since the audition videos posted on YouTube consisted primarily of the work of individuals interested in sharing their audition process with others, the possibility exists that other men who created an audition tape for "The Biggest Loser" did not share their videos online via YouTube. In that same vein, men who could not attend an in-person audition for "The Biggest Loser" created audition videos, which potentially could impact the outcome of the study. Researchers addressing this in the future could compare audition tapes made by individuals to in-person auditions to see if any differences exist regarding what motivates male auditionees. However, it may be difficult to gain access to in-person auditions as the show's production team may not allow researchers onsite to ask questions of the show's auditionees. Quantitative methods could also be utilized in future research.

The research team focused on exploring motivating factors for men who auditioned for "The Biggest Loser," but a future study could explore motivation for women who attempted to earn a spot on the show and the differences and similarities that exist across gender lines as well as other contextual factors. A future study could also include the review of audition tapes of members who appeared on "The Biggest Loser." Evaluating the major differences between the factors that motivated individuals who competed on the show and those who did not might provide some useful research material. Comparing the audition tapes of these two groups of individuals could provide some insight regarding trends or patterns that contribute to a person's potential as a candidate for the show and may provide information about the entertainment industry in terms of what professionals may consider as a "good candidate" for any show of this nature.

The purpose of "The Biggest Loser" is to assist people with inducing significant weight loss. In conjunction with this fact, one cannot ignore that the show represents an iteration of reality television. Therefore, motivation represents one of many factors taken into account regarding the show's casting. Arguably, a television show must elicit positive ratings in order to stay on the air, and this may have an impact on the way individuals earn a spot on the show. Future research options for a PI might include reviewing audition tapes of individuals who "won" the \$250,000 grand prize to see if any specific factors exist that contrast with those who failed to appear on the show. Reviewing the tapes of individuals who won may provide some insight regarding the type of motivation that led to a victory on the show. However,

another important option for gathering data would include analyzing the audition tapes of individuals who were on “The Biggest Loser” television show-and able to maintain weight loss after their time on the show. Recently, the show has fostered discussion about weight loss in some select circles [80]. According to some researchers [81], a number of auditionees who initially lose weight, end up gaining weight and struggling with maintaining weight loss after their participation on the show. Evaluating the major differences between the audition tapes of those who lose weight and gained it back as compared to those who lose weight yet could not maintain their weight loss offer another potential avenue for future research.

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