



# GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE USE AND ABUSE OF WEIGHT-LOSS SUBSTANCES

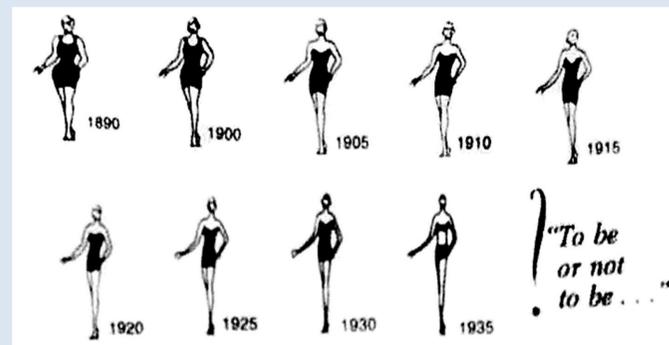
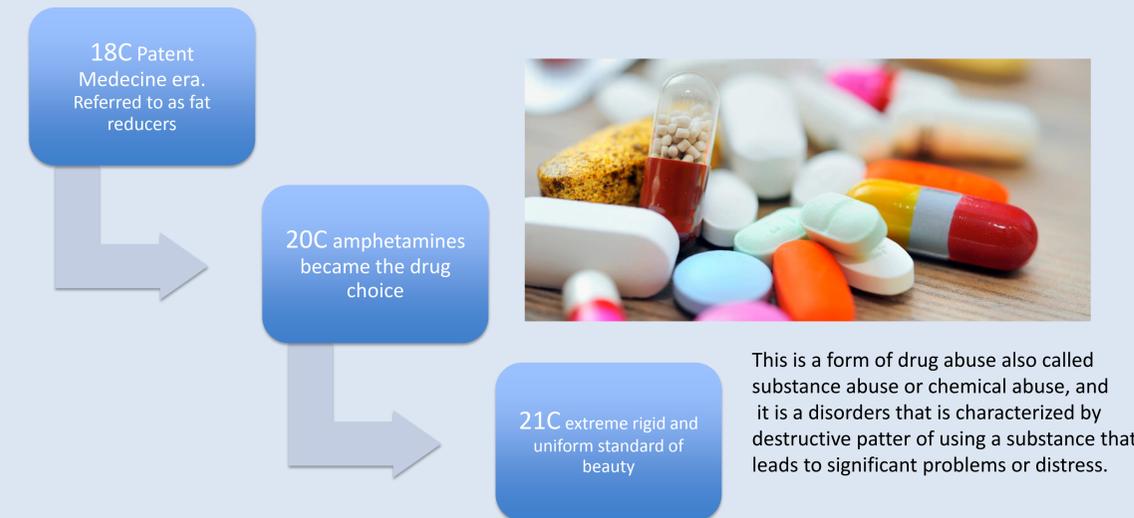
Juweria Dahir  
 Department of Sociology  
 The State University of New York



## ABSTRACT

Previous studies on the use and abuse of diet pills and related weight loss substances have frequently noted that such use tends to be more prominent among females. However, the majority of previous studies have focused on the use of diet pills by adolescents. In this study, a nationally representative sample, drawn from the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, is used to examine the use of diet pills and Xanax (a prescription drug often misused for weight loss purposes) among adults. This study also focuses upon the differences in predictors of such substance use among females and males. Using a foundation of self-determination theory (SDT), this study posits that individuals will be more likely to abuse diet pills and Xanax when their needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are not being met. In the analyses, females are shown to be more likely than males to use diet pills, yet males report a higher rate of consumption of Xanax, as compared to females. Among the various measures of well-being, depression appears to be a salient predictor of males' use of both substances, yet not among females. Males also appear to be more likely to use both substances as a function of age, while this association is less influential among females. The meanings and implications of these findings for both researchers and practitioners are discussed.

## History of diet pill



How do diet pills work?

- Diet pills often claim to achieve weight loss by increasing metabolism, altering appetite levels, or interrupting the normal absorption of fat or calories.
- There are several types of diet pills; these come in the form of pills, lubricants, liquid and even chewing gums

## Calculations

Multivariate logistic regression of Substance Abusers of Diet pills Characteristics by Gender

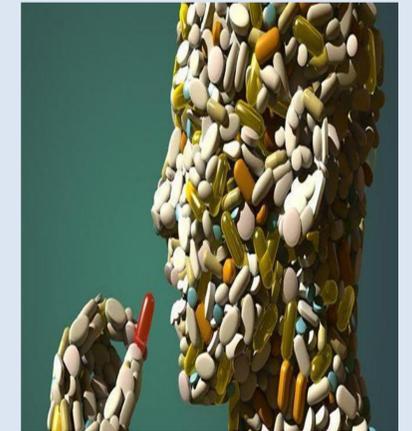
	Male	Female
Age	0.272***	0.081**
Income	-0.030	0.016
Education	0.178***	0.132***
Psychological Distress	0.054**	0.058***
Depression	-0.229**	-0.100
Anxiety	0.071	-0.079
Kids	0.054	0.238**
Married	-0.259*	-0.098
White	0.886***	0.810***
Physical Health	0.148**	0.082
R-square	0.059	0.046

2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

N= 17756 Males, 20113 Females  
 Note: Sample is limited to adults above the age of 18  
 Significance levels denoted difference between means  
 \*\*\*p < .01, \*\*p < .05, \*p < .10

## Major Findings

- Consumption of diet pill for male vs. female showed similar results but men seem to be more effected by depression then women.
- Men are more susceptible to their physical health, whereas women are significantly more likely to use diet pill when they have children, but that effect is not significant among the men.
- In terms of Xanax women are more likely to use it with higher income, but income does not yield a significant effect among the men.
- For men, depression increases their use of Xanax, but there is no significant effect shown among the women.
- When you're looking at children, the peculiar thing is that, the parents with children are more likely to use Xanax and this is true for both sexes



## Mean Calculations

Mean Levels of Substance Abusers of Diet pills Characteristics by Gender

	Male	Female
Age (1 - 6)	3.07	3.13***
Income	4.51	4.24***
Education	2.51	2.64***
Psychological Distress	4.19	4.82***
Depression	4.53	4.41***
Anxiety	4.09	3.90***
Kids	0.2347	0.3717***
Married	.3312	.3590***
White	.6247	0.6157***
Physical Health	2.21	2.22***

	Male	Female
Diet pills	.0226	0.0259**
Xanax	0.0885	0.0805***

## Conclusion

In conclusion, although diet pills can be purchased over the counter, it does not mean that they are risk free. In the US, dietary supplements and weight-loss aids are not subject to the same rigorous standards as are prescription drugs. Thus, they can be sold with limited proof of effectiveness or safety. These findings suggest that laxatives should be sold only by pharmacists, who are qualified to monitor how often a person comes in to buy them and refer them to a counselor or eating disorder charity if necessary to prevent abuse, as it can cause life threatening consequences when over dosed.