

BMHP5019_BIRM – Introduction to Independent Research Skills
Component 1: Written Assignment (Research Proposal)

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Module Title: Introduction to Independent Research Skills

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Assignment Title: A Scoping Review of Weight Stigma in UK Healthcare Settings:
Identifying Themes Using Aveyard's Simplified Thematic Analysis

Title

A Scoping Review of Weight Stigma in UK Healthcare Settings: Identifying Themes Using Aveyard's Simplified Thematic Analysis

Background and Rationale

Weight stigma is the social devaluation of individuals based on weight. In UK healthcare, patients with obesity report negative attitudes and discrimination from professionals, leading to poorer outcomes (Ryan et al., 2023; Flint et al., 2025). 64% of English adults are overweight or obese (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2025). Weight bias remains prevalent among professionals (Liang et al., 2025), while interventions show variable effectiveness (Kalea et al., 2022). Persistent bias despite awareness suggests education alone is insufficient, requiring a map of contributing factors. A scoping review will map literature, identifying themes and gaps (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005; Aveyard, 2014).

Research Aim and Objectives

The aim is to map research on weight stigma in UK healthcare settings through a scoping review. Objectives are to:

1. Identify and categorise key themes.
2. Highlight evidence gaps.
3. Explore implications for UK health and social care practice.

Methodology

Scoping Review Framework

The review will follow Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage framework: formulating the question, identifying studies, selecting studies, charting data and synthesising findings. A scoping review suits heterogeneous evidence where a narrow systematic question is premature. Data will be charted by author, year, setting, population, methodology and key findings.

Research Question

What are the key themes in peer-reviewed literature regarding the experiences and impacts of weight stigma on adult patients within UK healthcare settings?

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- Inclusion: Peer-reviewed primary or secondary research published in English between 2016 and 2026, conducted in the UK and involving adults.
- Exclusion: Non-peer-reviewed articles, studies outside this period or the UK and research unrelated to weight stigma.

Data Collection and Analysis

CINAHL, PubMed, PsycINFO and Scopus will be searched using terms including "weight stigma," "weight bias," "obesity stigma," "healthcare," "patient experience" and "UK." Titles and abstracts will be screened against criteria, followed by full-text assessment. Aveyard's (2014) simplified thematic analysis will identify recurring patterns by summarising papers, identifying themes and synthesising findings. This method suits diverse designs but lacks formal quality appraisal.

Expected Outcomes

The review will map key themes in UK healthcare weight stigma, clarify current knowledge and identify research gaps.

Ethical Considerations

As this review collects no primary or identifiable data, NHS ethics approval is generally not required, institutional requirements will be followed. Sources will be accurately cited using UWTSD Harvard style to avoid plagiarism. Analysis will be objective and reporting transparent.

References

- Arksey, H. and O'Malley, L. (2005) 'Scoping studies: towards a methodological framework', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), pp. 19–32.
- Aveyard, H. (2014) *Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care: A Practical Guide*. 3rd edn. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Flint, S.W. et al. (2025) 'Addressing weight stigma and communicating with patients', *Archives of Endocrinology and Metabolism*, 70(special 1), p. e250335.
- Kalea, A.Z. et al. (2022) 'Effective strategies in ending weight stigma in healthcare', *Obesity Reviews*, 23(10), p. e13494.
- Liang, J.W. et al. (2025) 'Implicit and explicit weight bias among healthcare professionals', *International Journal of Obesity*, Online ahead of print. doi: 10.1038/s41366-025-01878-3.
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2025) *Obesity profile: short statistical commentary*, May 2025. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/obesity-profile-may-2025-update/obesity-profile-short-statistical-commentary-may-2025> (Accessed: 7 October 2026).
- Ryan, L. et al. (2023) 'Weight stigma experienced by patients with obesity in healthcare settings: A qualitative evidence synthesis', *Obesity Reviews*, 24(10), p. e13606.