Optimistic and pessimistic self-assessment of own diets is associated with age, self-rated health and weight status in Danish adults - DTU Orbit (18/01/2019)

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The aim of this study was to analyse concordance between Danish adults' recorded diet quality and their own assessment of the healthiness and to examine socio-demographic, health and behavioural characteristics associated with an optimistic or pessimistic self-assessment. Data were derived from The Danish National Survey of Diet and Physical Activity 2011-2013 and included a random sample of 3014 adults (18-75 y). Diet quality was evaluated on the basis of seven-day pre-coded food diaries and categorised 'unhealthy', 'somewhat healthy' and 'healthy'. Self-assessment of the healthiness of own diets was registered via personal interviews and categorised healthy enough 'to a high degree', 'to some degree' or 'not at all/only partly'. Highly and somewhat optimistic self-assessment, respectively, were defined as assessing own diets as healthy enough to a high degree or to some degree while having unhealthy diets. Highly and somewhat pessimistic self-assessment, respectively, were defined as assessing own diets as not healthy enough or healthy enough to some degree while having healthy diets. Multiple logistic regression models were used to examine characteristics associated with optimistic and pessimistic self-assessments, respectively. Among individuals with unhealthy diets, 13% were highly optimistic and 42% somewhat optimistic about the healthiness of their diets. Among individuals with healthy diets, 14% were highly pessimistic and 51% somewhat pessimistic about the healthiness of their diets. Highly optimistic self-assessment was associated with increasing age, excellent self-rated health, normal weight and a moderate activity level. Highly pessimistic self-assessment was associated with decreasing age, good self-rated health and being overweight or obese. The findings indicate that people seem to use personal health characteristics as important references when assessing the healthiness of their diets.

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