

Disclosing the Complexities of Eating Disorders: Comprehensive Perspectives, Demographic Implications, and Research Advancement

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Introduction

- Eating disorders (EDs), with the highest psychiatric mortality rate, impose a significant societal and economic burden. In 2018, every 52 seconds, an ED death occurred in the US, costing \$4.2 billion annually (Archer, 2022). Historical roots trace back centuries, from early instances of appetite repression to modern-day behaviors like restrictive diets and fasting (Bemporad, 1997; Harris, 2014; Veblen, 1899).
- Psychiatric recognition began in 1950 with the DSM-I's inclusion of anorexia nervosa (AN) (Dell'Osso, 2016). Bulimia Nervosa (BN) followed in the DSM-III (Castillo, 2017), and Binge Eating Disorder (BED) was added in the DSM-5 in 2013 (Amianto et al., 2015). EDs are multifactorial illnesses, extending beyond Western thinness ideals, with challenges in diagnosis and treatment for men, racial minorities, and ethnic groups (Schaumberg et al., 2017; Moreno, 2023). This review will cover ED categorization, demographics, and detection/treatment, aiming to guide future research for prevention and treatment.

Conclusion

- This review highlights the multifaceted nature of EDs, encompassing psychological, physiological, social, and cultural factors. Studies show that perfectionism and social pressures contribute to conditions like AN, while comorbidity between AN and BN emphasizes the need for comprehensive diagnostic and treatment approaches.
- Demographics play a crucial role, challenging stereotypes and emphasizing tailored interventions based on intersectionality. Early detection, supported by proposed strategies involving education and medical professionals, is key to successful treatment outcomes.
- However, limitations such as the lack of intersectionality studies and age range variations in research subjects are noted. Future research should prioritize comparative studies across diverse backgrounds and emphasize qualitative analysis for personalized treatment approaches, aiming to reduce stigma and improve overall outcomes for individuals with EDs.

RESULTS

Perfectionism and Psychological Factors in AN:

- Study involving 193 hospitalized AN patients:
- Elevated levels of perfectionism correlated with:
- Depression (13.9%)
- Concurrent hospitalization (2.7%)
- Eating-related neurosis (3.7%) (Longo et al., 2023).

Comorbidity and Transition between AN and BN:

- Long-term investigation with 216 female patients:
- 75% of AN patients received an additional diagnosis within seven years.
- One-third transitioned to a diagnosis of BN (Eddy et al., 2008).

Association with Depressive Symptoms:

- Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) prevalence among individuals with EDs:
- 39% of individuals with AN, 50% with BN, and 39% with BED (Hudson, 2007).

Impact of Pro-Anorexia Websites:

- A pilot study with female undergraduate students exposed to a pro-anorexia website:
- Lowering in confidence and belief in abilities.
- Increased negative emotions and concern about body size (Bardone-Cone & Cass, 2006).

Environmental Influence and Behavioral Changes:

- Comparative evaluation of Fijian teenage girls:
- Increase in self-induced vomit behavior associated with increased TV exposure (Becker et al., 2004).
- Association between binge eating and overweight conditions:
- 25% to 50% of individuals with obesity attempting weight management encounter challenges associated with BED (Spitzer et al., 1992).

Physiological Consequences of AN:

- Global population of 2.9 million individuals afflicted with AN (Pereira et al., 2024):
- Dysregulation of vital physiological systems.
- Reduced bone mineral density leading to broken bones (Schorr et al., 2017).
- MRI study on recovering anorexics:
- 5% reduction in gray matter volume in the brain's anterior cingulate cortex (Mühlau et al., 2007).

Genetic Factors in AN and BN:

- Cross-sectional study with 7000 Swedish twins:
- 27% of individuals with BN had records of AN.
- Hereditary link coefficient of 0.46 between AN and BN (Bulik et al., 2010).

Methodology

This research paper focuses on recent studies conducted between 1980 and 2024 related to eating disorders. Inclusion criteria for studies required: 1) Publication in a peer-reviewed journal; 2) Use of statistically valid and quantitative methodology; 3) Inclusion of empirical studies or meta-analyses; 4) Written in English or Spanish. Studies were not excluded based on the subjects' demographics. A total of 56 papers were retrieved from databases including Google Scholar, EBSCO, Wiley Online Library, Scielo, PubMed, PsychINFO, APA search, ScienceDirect, and Harold B. Lee Library. The retrieved papers were categorized into themes: categorization, demographics, and detection and treatment of EDs. A manual inspection led to the final selection of 42 articles, which will be extensively cited in the study.

Keywords: eating disorders (+ related terms), anorexia nervosa (+ related terms), minorities (+ related terms), bulimia nervosa (+ related terms), and other terms were used for meticulous paper selection.

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