

PERFECTIONISM AND BODY SHAPE CONCERNS IN FEMALE STUDENTS WITH DYSFUNCTIONAL EATING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

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Introduction and background: Before fulfilling the criteria for anorexia nervosa syndrome, many young females already display symptoms of dysfunctional eating attitudes and behaviour. If also accompanied by increased perfectionism and body shape concerns and dissatisfaction, this can indicate a high-risk group for eating psychopathology.

Method: The study group consisting of 45 randomly selected female students of University of Belgrade, mean age of 22.27 years (min 19, max 27), scored above the cut-off of 30 on the Eating Attitude Test (EAT-40), indicating symptoms of anorexia nervosa. The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), which measures different dimensions of perfectionism, and the Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ), which evaluates body concerns and dissatisfaction, were applied, and the Quetelet Index (QI) was calculated.

Results: Descriptive statistics indicate as follows: EAT (M=42.71; SD=13.541), FMPS (M=104.80; SD=14.609), BSQ (M=100.69; SD=29.215), QI (M=21.21; Min 15.64, Max 29.38). Only 24.4% (N=11) of the students were not concerned with body shape. 80% of the study group were of normal weight, 11.1% were underweight, 8.9% were obese, and one member of the group (2.2%) had QI=15.64, indicating anorexia nervosa syndrome. Correlation analysis indicates that there is a positive correlation ($r=.393$) between perfectionism scores and concerns about body shape ($p < 0.01$).

Conclusions: Our results confirm previous research on the positive correlation between perfectionism and body shape concerns in females with disturbed eating attitudes and behaviour. This means that these features should be systematically assessed in female students and focus be given to prevention campaigns against eating psychopathology.