
Disordered Eating Behaviors, Perfectionism Cognitions and Perseverative Negative Thinking

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Introduction: Perfectionism and perseverative negative thinking/PNT are both associated with eating disorders symptoms. PNT is a prime candidate when investigating the pathway that links perfectionism to psychopathology.

Objectives: To investigate if PNT mediates the relationship between perfectionism cognitions and ED symptoms.

Methods: 114 young women (mean age=23.78±6.340; mean BMI=21.59±3.127; 49.4% students) fill in the Portuguese validated versions of Eating Attitudes Test/EAT-25 (to evaluate Bulimic behaviors, Diet and Social pressure to eat), Multidimensional Perfectionism Cognitions Inventory (Concern over mistakes/CM, Personal standards/PS, Pursuit of Perfection) and Perseverative Thinking Questionnaire/PTQ-15 (Repetitive Thought/RT, Cognitive interference and unproductiveness). Only variables significantly correlated with the outcomes (EAT-25_Total and its dimensions) were entered in the multiple regression models. Mediation analyses using Preacher and Hayes bootstrapping methodology were performed.

Results: Significant predictors of EAT_Total were CM (b=.180) and RT (b=.169) (both p<.05). RT partially mediated the relationship between EAT_Total and CM. (95%CI=.0671-.0290).

Bulimic behaviors were predicted by the same variables (b=.359; b=.154; p<.05) and RT also partially mediated the relationship between Bulimic behaviors and CM (95%CI=.0071-.0190). Diet and Social Pressure to Eat were only predicted by PS (b=.154; b=.257, respectively; p<.05).

Conclusion: Although PNT mediates the relationship between perfectionist cognitions and bulimic behavior, the effect of the perfectionism on other disordered eating dimensions, such as diet and SPE, seems to be independent of the PNT levels. As previously reported in other studies with community samples, disordered eating behaviors are associated to negative perfectionism dimensions, but also to dimensions that have been considered not entirely maladaptive.