

A Study on Prevalence of Eating Disorder Among College Students with Special Reference to Nehru Arts and Science College, Coimbatore

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Abstract:- An eating disorder is a mental health condition that affects your food habit and body image. Eating disorders affect your physical and emotional health and can be life-threatening if left untreated. Eating disorders are behaviour condition which is characterized by persistent and severe disturbances in eating behaviour and associated thought and emotional distress. Eating disorders were less concerning area in India before the popularity of social media and its influence. In the era of social media young adults especially women are being very conscious about the body size and type. The standards set by the social media have drastically influenced the way of self-perception of individuals body. These appearance related standards glorify certain body size and its social acceptance contribute to change in the dietary habits and practices among young adults. These habits also contributed to the upraising of eating disorders

Keywords: *body image, bulimia nervosa, anorexia nervosa.*

1. Introduction

Food habits play an important role in shaping our physical health and any conditions which affect the eating may affect the individual's health and appearance. An eating disorder is a mental health condition that affects your food habit and body image. Eating disorders affect your physical and emotional health and can be life-threatening if left untreated. Eating disorders are behaviour condition which is characterized by persistent and severe disturbances in eating behaviour and associated thought and emotional distress. The Eating Disorder is classified under Behavioural Syndromes Associated with Psychological Disturbances and Physical Factors (F50-F59). This condition may affect physical, psychological and social functioning of the individual. Preoccupation with food, body weight, and shape may also signal an eating disorder. Common types of eating disorders are:

1.1 ANOREXIA NERVOSA: Anorexia Nervosa (AN) is an eating disorder that can be defined by the restriction of nutrient intake relative to requirements, which leads to significantly low body weight. Patients with this eating disorder will have a fear of gaining weight and a distorted body image with the inability to comprehend the seriousness of their condition.

1.2 BULIMIA NERVOSA: Bulimia nervosa (BN) also known as bulimia, is a serious eating disorder characterized by recurring episodes of binge eating followed by purging or compensatory behaviours to rid the body of consumed calories.

1.3 BINGE EATING: Binge Eating Disorder (BED) disorder is an eating disorder in which the individual consumes large amount of food in a relatively shorter period of time. This leads to severe discomfort and guilty feeling in them.

1.4 PSYCHOGENIC VOMITING: Psychogenic nausea and vomiting have been defined as nausea and vomiting without any obvious organic pathology.

1.5 OBESITY: Obesity is a complex and multifaceted health condition that is often misunderstood as a simple issue of overeating or lack of willpower. Obesity can also be considered an eating disorder, as it is often characterized by disordered eating patterns, emotional eating, and a complex interplay of genetic, environmental, and psychological factors. Obesity caused by drugs or endocrinal factors, or due to constitutional factors is not considered a psychiatric disorder.

2. Objectives

The objectives are to study the prevalence of body image issues among college students. study the prevalence bulimia nervosa. study the number of respondents who is preoccupied with food and explore the number of respondents who experienced body shaming.

3. Methods

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN:

The researcher planned to conduct quantitative research design to study the prevalence of eating disorder among students. Through the study researcher focuses on the number of students having eating disorder and prevalence of its risk factors. The study was conducted by analysing primary data with simple percentage method and the data was collected with standardised questionnaire.

3.2 SAMPLING DESIGN:

The sampling technique used in this is simple random sampling in which each member has equal chance of being selected.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION:

Primary data was collected indirectly through online questionnaires using standardized questionnaire on eating disorder prepared by the eating disorder foundation. Secondary data was collected through online articles and books.

3.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Young adulthood is period which individuals may be overly conscious of their bodies and this may lead to body image concerns. These concerns often result in development of unhealthy eating habits and lifestyle and low self-esteem. Along with this the unrealistic beauty standard created by the society, now a days the same is promoted through social media. Influencers in social media often encourages people to be very thin and advices to take fasting, over exercise and starve in order to lose weight. According current society being thin is more important than being healthy and also consider it as beautiful. The over attention to body image and increasing social media influence may increase the chances of developing eating disorders among young adults. Eating disorders have significant impact on the physical health, psychological wellbeing as well as the social health of an individual. Severe eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are life threatening disorders if it left untreated. It is important to identify and treat eating disorder. Many studies underline the relationship between eating disorders and social media usage. Since the usage of smart phones and social media has been increased lately it is important to analyse does this contribute to the development of eating disorder among the young adults. Through this research, researchers study the prevalence of eating disorder among college students.

4 Results

The collected data was analysed through simple percentage method. The result showed a significant majority of respondents (68.3%) reported experiencing body shaming, indicating a high prevalence of this issue. The finding suggests that nearly 7 out of 10 respondents have been subjected to body shaming. In the total 41.7% respondents isolate themselves while having their meals which is to avoid the guilt after having good meal. More than half of the respondents (56.7%) reported not spending a lot of time watching diet or exercise videos. A significant minority of respondents (43.3%) reported spending a lot of time watching diet or exercise videos.

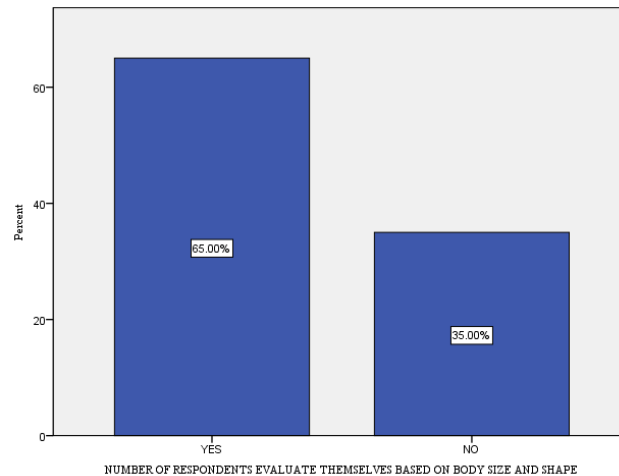


Figure 4.1

The table presents the frequency of respondents who evaluate themselves based on body size and shape. A significant majority of respondents (65.0%) reported evaluating themselves based on body size and shape, indicating a substantial concern about body image and self-perception. In the 60 respondents 68.3% of students have experienced body shaming which may lead to negative body image. Data showed 22 respondents which makes 36.7% of the respondents are preoccupied with food and body size.

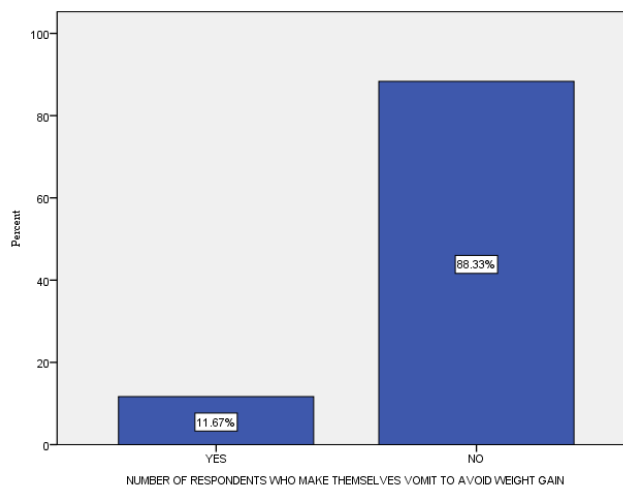


Figure 4.2

As per figure 4.2 total of 7 respondents which make 11.7 % of the total respondents recorded having a habit of self-induced vomiting in order to avoid weight gain. Data showed 22 respondents which makes 36.7% of the respondents are preoccupied with food and body size.

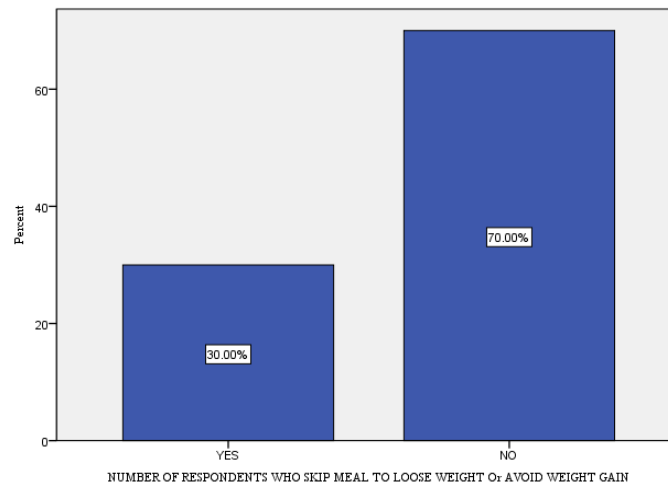


Figure 4.3

A significant proportion of respondents (30.0%) reported skipping meals to lose weight or avoid weight gain, indicating a concerning trend of restrictive eating habits. The finding suggests that nearly 1 in 3 respondents may be using meal skipping as a weight management strategy.

Among the total 60 respondents 17 students which is 28.3% of total respondents take medicine or does exercise instead of taking food which is the prominent symptom of bulimia nervosa. A significant proportion of respondents (36.7%) reported being preoccupied with food or body size, indicating a substantial concern about body image and food-related thoughts. The finding suggests that more than 1 in 3 respondents tend to have intrusive thoughts about food or body size, which can have negative effects on mental health. Findings shows slight majority of respondents (51.7%) reported engaging in binge eating, indicating a significant concern about disordered eating habits where the other 48.33% does not engage in such pattern of eating.

5 Discussion

The study concludes by underlining the importance of identification and treatment of eating disorders. This study focused on prevalence of eating disorder among college students explored the prevalence of disordered eating habit of college students at Nehru Arts and Science College, Coimbatore. It revealed the existence of severe eating disorders such as bulimia nervosa and anorexia nervosa among the student respondents. As mentioned in the study eating disorders have multiple effects on an individual various aspects of life. It has adverse and severe effect on physical, mental and social health of an individual. This study is significant as the increase in the usage of social media influence the beauty concept, self-perception and the eating habit of the current population. As intervention awareness sessions can be organized to create insight among the college students on eating disorders and its effects on physical, mental and social wellbeing of the individuals, campaigns can be conducted with the supervision of professionals to identify eating disorders and can provide interventions for those who is in need of it and programmes can be conducted to break the stigmas about body image and size. For individuals who has diagnosed with any eating disorder or body image concerns can be connected with peer support groups.

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