

BODY DISSATISFACTION PROFILE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS EATING DISORDERS AMONG STUDENTS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION, NUTRITION, MEDICINE, AND AESTHETICS AND COSMETICS TECHNOLOGY AT THE EVANGÉLICA UNIVERSIDADE DE GOIÁS

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ABSTRACT

Body dissatisfaction seems to be one of the predisposing factors for the onset of eating disorders (ED), which can result in serious deficiencies in a person's nutritional status, physical and mental health, and can be potentially fatal if not treated properly. Due to the increased prevalence of EDs and their impact on the quality of life of affected individuals, an in-depth study on the subject is necessary to establish possible correlations between their development and etiological causes. The objective of this study is to evaluate the relationship between body image dissatisfaction and attitudes toward eating disorders in university students enrolled in Physical Education, Medicine, Nutrition, and Aesthetics and Cosmetics Technology courses at the Evangelical University of Goiás. This is a descriptive, cross-sectional, analytical study with a quantitative approach. Data were collected through the application of questionnaires validated in the literature, such as the Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26) and the Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ), in addition to a socio-demographic questionnaire. The study was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee (CEP/UniEVANGÉLICA) in accordance with Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council (CNS), which regulates research involving human subjects. Thus, discussing intervention and prevention strategies is essential to address EDs in students. This includes early identification of warning signs, promotion of a positive body image, education on nutrition and healthy eating, reduction of stigma, and creation of a supportive environment in educational institutions.

Keywords: body image disorders; eating behavior; school performance.

INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that college students may be at greater risk of developing eating disorders due to factors such as changes in routine, academic stress, social pressures, cultural influences, and other challenges of student life. (BENTO et al., 2016; OLIVEIRA et al., 2017).

Discussing intervention and prevention strategies is essential to address eating disorders in students. This includes early identification of warning signs

, promoting a positive body image, educating about healthy nutrition, reducing associated stigma, and creating a supportive environment in educational institutions. (MENON; BLANCO; BERNARDELLI, 2019).

Given this, exploring the risk factors and causes of eating disorders in students is essential to understanding the context in which these conditions develop (SOUZA et al., 2017).

Another study (PINTO; QUADRADO, 2018) shows that in addition to the impacts already mentioned, eating disorders can negatively affect concentration, cognitive performance, motivation, energy, and the ability to cope with stress, which can compromise students' academic performance. These impacts can cause cardiovascular disease, diabetes, liver disease, sleep apnea, and respiratory disorders (XIMENES, 2019).

College students are at risk for developing eating disorders due to the unique vulnerability of this group, which faces significant changes in routine, intense academic pressure, and social and cultural influences that can exacerbate inappropriate eating behaviors (BENTO et al., 2016; OLIVEIRA et al., 2017). This combination of factors places university students in a particularly susceptible position for developing eating disorders. The need for intervention and prevention strategies, such as promoting a positive body image and nutrition education, is also clear. Given the high risk, early intervention is essential to minimize the negative effects of eating disorders.

METHOD

This is a descriptive, cross-sectional, analytical study with a quantitative approach, which was conducted among students in higher education courses in Physical Education, Nutrition, Medicine, and in the higher technology course in Aesthetics and Cosmetics at the Evangelical University of Goiás, in the city of Anápolis, Goiás. All were invited to participate in the research.

This study was conducted by collecting data through the application of questionnaires validated in the literature, such as the Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26) (COOPER et al., 1987), Body Shape Questionnaire (BSQ) (GARNER et al., 1982), and a sociodemographic questionnaire.

socio-demographic questionnaire. Participants were asked to sign a Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), thus guaranteeing the rights of those surveyed, as prescribed in Resolution 466/12 of the National Health Council (CNS).

The study was accepted by the Research Ethics Committee—CEP/UniEVANGÉLICA in accordance with Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council (CNS), which regulates research involving human subjects.

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 2023 software. Pearson's chi-square statistical test was used for bivariate analysis and frequency counting. Variables were considered significant if their identified association had a significance level (p) of less than 0.005.

RESULTS

The survey involved students from the Medicine, Nutrition, Physical Education, and Aesthetics and Cosmetics Technology courses at the Evangelical University of Goiás, totaling 350 participants, including 136 from the medicine course, 98 from the nutrition course, 86 from the physical education course, and 30 from the aesthetics and cosmetics technology course. The results of the questionnaires, EAT and BSQ, were analyzed and compared with each course participating in the research. When analyzing the BSQ, 273 students had no concerns (78%), 47 students had mild concerns (14%), 22 students had moderate concerns (6%), and 8 students had serious concerns (2%).

The data show that students of Aesthetics and Cosmetics are proportionally the most concerned about body image (50%), followed by students of Medicine (24%), Nutrition (19%), and Physical Education (13%). It was noted that there is a high prevalence of body dissatisfaction in the Aesthetics and Cosmetics course, which is probably due to the fact that it is an all-female course. This finding corroborates the study by (UCHÔA, et al., 2019), which identified a higher prevalence of body dissatisfaction among females (19.6%) than among males (9%). (Table 1)

Table 1. Comparative analysis between the results of body dissatisfaction in different courses, according to BSQ.

| BSQ classification | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| No concern | Mild concern | Moderate concern | Severe concern |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----|----|---|
| Medicine | 104 | 25 | 5 | 2 |
| Course Nutrition | 79 | 12 | 6 | 1 |
| Physical Education | 75 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| Aesthetics | 15 | 5 | 7 | 3 |
| Total number of students | 273 | 47 | 22 | 8 |

When analyzing the EAT-26 dietary pattern, 302 students had a normal dietary pattern (86%) and 48 had an abnormal dietary pattern (14%).

The data show that medical students proportionally demonstrate the highest level of abnormal eating patterns (21%), followed by students in the Aesthetics and Cosmetics course (17%), then students in the Nutrition course (8%), and finally students in the Physical Education course (7%). A high prevalence of abnormal eating patterns was observed in the total population (14%), when compared to other studies, for example (UCHÔA, et al., 2019), which shows a lower prevalence (7%). (Table 2)

Table 2. Comparative analysis between the results of eating patterns of different courses, according to EAT-26.

| | EAT-26 classification | | | |
|--------|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| Course | | | | |

After analyzing the data using Pearson's chi-square statistical test for bivariate analysis and frequency counts, the results were (p) value= 0.000 for the BSQ analysis and (p) value = 0.005 for the EAT-26 analysis. These figures show that the research results were significant.

CONCLUSION

Given the facts, it can be concluded that students are more prone to developing abnormal eating patterns, probably due to factors caused by individual difficulties faced during graduation, such as routine changes, academic stress, social pressures, cultural influences, and other associated challenges, while females are more prone to developing body dissatisfaction.

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