

ADOLESCENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS EATING AND THEIR BODY IMAGE

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Abstract

Eating disorders, anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, are the third most common chronic diseases occurring in adolescents that result from various combined factors (personality disorders, emotional disturbances, family pressure, possible genetic or biological predisposition, and culture) and are most common mental disorders associated with physical complications involving risk of death. The aim of the paper is to present the relations and attitudes of adolescents based on their way of life - their eating habits and body image.

The survey was conducted on 118 Medical School students from Croatia with their School Board and parents' prior consent. It consists of two groups of questions: questions related to eating habits typical of the restrictive diet (counting calories, reducing food, and skipping meals), and those related to appearance and satisfaction with one's own body. The results obtained were analyzed using statistical data analysis software.

Analysis of the food-related responses indicates that the participants do not show significant concern regarding the subject: 94 respondents do not avoid food that contains fat, do not eat food that has less calories, and do not have smaller portions of food; 8 respondents avoid eating between meals; and 7 respondents skip meals (to avoid weight gain). 34 do not care about gaining weight, 54 of them do, and 88 think their body is not fit enough (they believe they must exercise); 35 use laxatives to control their body weight; 18 participants express satisfaction with their body. Only one male and 60 female respondents want to reduce weight, while 15 males and 24 females want to increase weight. The small number of participants satisfied with their body weight and the number of people at this age using laxatives to control body weight are cause for concern. They represent the population prone to developing eating disorders.

The key factor in the treatment of eating disorders is a highly educated, therapeutic, interdisciplinary team.

Key words: *Eating disorders, Adolescents, Anorexia, Bulimia.*