



## Early Intervention – The Key Priority To Prevent Eating Disorders– A Broad Observation

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### Abstract

It is an undebatable fact that most of the people have not heard of the condition and the reasons for this imbalanced eating behaviours. Infact, they are unaware of this tendency. According to a study, it was reported that cultural changes such as Urbanisation, Westernisation lead to increasing rates of eating disorders. It can be observed that very few researches focused on the Intervention strategies to prevent the occurrence of the same. There is a definite need to spread awareness and expand the knowledge base of these disorders at all levels and institutions.

**Key words:** Eating Disorders, Imbalances, Younger, Awareness, Sociological, Intervention

### I. Introduction:

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) introduce the three main types of eating disorders:

Anorexia nervosa (AN) Bulimia nervosa (BN),<sup>1</sup> and eating disorder not otherwise specified (EDNOS), which includes the standard symptoms of both anorexia and bulimia nervosa, along with Binge eating disorder (BED).

Eating disorder (ED) is a psychiatric disorder accompanied with the persistent disturbance of eating behavior or a tendency intended to control weight, which significantly handicaps the physical health or psychosocial functioning of an individual.<sup>2</sup> Anorexia nervosa (AN) is a type of eating disorder marked by an inability to maintain a normal healthy body weight, often dropping below 85% of ideal body weight (IBW).

It is an undebatable fact that most of the people have not heard of the condition and the reasons for this imbalanced eating behaviours. In fact, they are unaware of this tendency. According to a study, it was reported that cultural changes such as urbanization and westernization lead to increasing rates of eating disorders (EDs).<sup>3</sup>

Researches of historical patterns also suggest that these behaviours are prevalent in during affluent periods in more egalitarian societies. Since many theorists suggest that people's eating habits and their perception of their body image ranges within the psychological and behavioural distortions. Since the tendency may have exorbitant impact not only on the health but also have societal implications, it is necessary to review the studies on the same and to fill any gaps in the Literature.

#### a. Objectives of The Study:

The main objectives of the study are:

To focus on the Literature that:

1. Defines the concept of EATING DISORDERS since ancient theories.
2. analyses respective reasons for the occurrence of these disorders and
3. To observe the Interventions and Modalities that are necessary to prevent the occurrence of the same and create an awareness in the prevalence of the same in different sections of the society.

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## II. Review Methodology:

1. All research papers and studies on this area are collected from 1990 s to till date.
2. Much attention was paid to the causes and Interventions since many people are unaware of the implications.
3. While dealing with Interventions, opinions of some prominent Psychiatrists are interviewed and documented<sup>4</sup>

Analysis of the Literature also considers the detailed definitions of the concepts as per the authenticated standards that will be dealt in the next section.

## III. Framework of The Study:

While interacting with Psychiatrists during the initial phase of work, the following concepts were understood clinically.

Eating disorders are basically of three types

- Anorexia nervosa
- Bulimia nervosa
- Binge eating disorders

### i. Anorexia Nervosa:

This term is assumed to be in use since 1700 especially for a condition in which a person refused to maintain a healthy body weight. As per medical opinion anorexia nervosa was considered to be the result of an endocrine imbalance, and this condition is due to a disorder of the hypothalamus.

Research suggests that this disorder has the highest death rate than any other psychiatric disorder. Mainly young women in industrialised countries appear to be afflicted by this and cultural expectations also encourage women to be thin.

### ii. Bulimia Nervosa:

It is characterized by sporadic episodes of compulsive Binge eating and there is a tendency to eat lots of carbohydrate rich foods and are soft and easy to eat. Though many people are binge eaters, it is the severity and frequency of the binge eating in Bulimia that makes it such a severe disorder.

### iii. Binge Eating Disorder:

It is an overeating behaviour characterised by retaining of food intake. This term also indicates a repeated cycle of binge eating and purging. Binge eating is the abnormal over intake of large amount of food that a person takes and vomits, taking an excessive amount of laxatives, diuretics or engaging in fasting and or excessive exercise.

In Southern Europe and Northern American populations, many Epidemiologic studies about Eating disorders have been performed but, in the present context of Globalisation and technological advancements, there has been an obvious disturbance in eating patterns among all groups of population. Increasing rates of obesity, irregular patterns of dieting, stressful situations, along with proportionate passion for weight reduction are major reasons for imbalances in health conditions, particularly, youth and adolescents in India.<sup>5</sup>

**i. Literature on Eating Disorders:**

Vaidyanathan S, Kuppili PP, Menon V. "Eating disorders: An overview of Indian research.", <i>Indian Journal of Psychology Med</i> 2019;41:311-7	There is increasing research focused on eating disorders from India over the last decade, but it continues to be an under-researched area as evidenced by the relative paucity of original research.
Babu SS, Aroor AR. "Eating Disorders among Indian Adolescents" <i>Indian Journal of Youth and Adoloescent Health</i> 2017; 4(1): 11-15.	Prospective study conducted among 1855 adolescents of age group 14 years to 19 years from four schools and three colleges in Mangalore city. <i>Eating Attitudes Test</i> Questionnaire (EAT-26), consisting of 26 questions.
D. N. Mendhekar, K. Arora, D. Lohia, A. Aggarwal, R. C. Jiloha, "Anorexia nervosa: An Indian perspective," <i>THE NATIONAL MEDICAL JOURNAL OF INDIA</i> VOL. 22, NO. 4, 2009	In India, due to economic reforms, increased societal pressure and media bombardment that 'slim is beautiful', we are likely to see an increase in the number of patients with this problem in the future.

**ii. Theories of Eating Disorders:**

**The Literature was studied on the basis of the following models and theories:**

S.No	Theory	Genesis
1.	<i>BIOLOGICAL</i>	<i>Proposes that damage to various parts of Hypothalamus that monitors and controls the Endocrine and Pituitary glands is the set point to determine the symptoms.</i>
2.	<i>CULTURAL</i>	<i>Sociological Theorists believe that high standards of attractiveness lead women to focus on their appearance and body image.</i>
3.	<i>FAMILY</i>	<i>Researches prove that families that accord priority to thinness, food and body image and belong to middle class show these tendencies.</i>
4.	<i>COGNITIVE AND PSYCHODYNAMIC</i>	<i>According to Psychiatrist, Hilde Bruch, disturbed mother-child interactions lead to ego and cognitive deficiencies and hence, the symptoms.</i>

**IV. Review Discussion:**

Based on the above discussion and summary, it was proposed to study the reasons for these eating impairments in the context of Globalisation and Sustainable Goals of the Economy. Different researches and studies will be analysed for this purpose. In this context, few studies on the same are quoted.

**a. Assessment and Screening of Eating Disorders:**

Screening of disorders is considered as the significant step in the Literature of Eating Disorders. Self-report questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and other effective screening tools were developed to assess the prevalence and risk of the problem.

Screening measures, questionnaires are quick to administer but results are only indicative. Scientific propositions in self-report measures used for diagnosis may be framed in accordance with the criteria specified in the diagnostic manuals (ICD and DSM). Psychologists, Psychiatrists, CBT therapists, all mental health professionals prefer the subject under consideration to complete self-report measures periodically to validate and assess changes in symptom fluctuations.

An attempt was made to study the prevalence of Eating Disorders in the student population of Mysore, South India. 1600 students aged 15–25 years and residing in Mysore were surveyed using two standardized questionnaires. Among the 417 students who scored higher in the questionnaires, 35 students were recruited as participants. Another 35 students with low scores were considered controls.<sup>6</sup>

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 14.01 software utilizing analysis of variance tool. It was found that 26.06% of participants were prone to ED due to their abnormal eating attitudes. It was observed that significant differences between the controls and participants in relation to various parameters such as weight, waist and hip circumferences, body mass index, basal metabolic rate, fat percentage, the study concluded that Eating Disorders have a profound effect on the mental and physical health of the students with eating discrepancies.

## V. Directions for Future Research and Implications:

As per the abstract, it can be observed that very few Researches focussed on the Intervention Strategies to prevent the occurrence of the same. There is a definite need to spread awareness and expand the knowledge base on these disorders at all levels and institutions.

Earlier studies done on Indian population show that the research regarding these disorders is very limited. Few studies reported that eating disorders have been on the increase among Indians, especially among adolescent and young adult females. Many children and teens with eating disorders struggle with problems like distress, fear of becoming overweight, feelings of helplessness, and low self-esteem. Hence, craving towards irregular food habits has been on rise to overcome their struggle instantly. In recent years, several works have been carried out focusing on eating disorders through the lens of machine learning.<sup>7</sup> the literature has focused on detecting anorexia patterns on social media and had promising results.

India needs a collaborative approach to tackle this disorder, like more studies need to come up with the prevalence of the problem, causes and targeted sections. Researchers have a wide arena of subjects to deal with this and at the same time, an awareness towards possible reasons, analysis and assessment tools, Interventional modalities are also to be dealt with.

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