

Eating disorders: a multiple-case investigation of the Internet e-mail correspondence of women's lived experience



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Abstract

This study examines the lived experiences of women with eating disorders. The data consists of several (n=4) participants' written correspondence on a weekly basis over four months via electronic mail. Using an interpretive paradigm, the data from this multiple-case study was analyzed using a constant comparative method that employed thematic analysis and axial coding. Any themes that emerged were explicated and explored further. Accounts of the participants' lived experiences indicated that many women with eating disorders perceive that precipitating events in their childhood such as sexual abuse, perfectionism and rigidity in the family, poor communication styles in the family, and external influences such as peer and societal values and beliefs have lead to the development of disordered eating patterns in their lives. Furthermore, the participants believe that since the development of their eating disorder, there are certain factors such as feelings of guilt, shame, and low self-esteem that continue to perpetuate their disordered eating patterns.

The participants' writings further indicated that their eating disorders affect every aspect of their lives including their relationships with family and friends, their behavior in work and school settings, their emotions and cognitions, their sexuality, spirituality, and body image. These women explored their daily routines in great detail, discussing the binge experience, purging through the use of laxatives, diuretics, and excessive exercise, and environmental cues that trigger disordered eating behaviors. The participants addressed their attempts at "getting better" and described the various strategies that have employed. Overall, the participants indicate that participating in this internet-based study via electronic mail correspondence was a positive experience for them. The results of this study provide a better understanding of the daily lived experiences of women with eating disorders. The implications of this study are emancipating for these women and should lead to more sensitive treatment approaches with those who have eating disorders. Further research is needed in gaining a better understanding of women with eating disorders. Finally, future research should continue to explore the viability of the Internet as a medium for data collection.

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In severe cases, eating disorders can cause serious health consequences and may even result in death if left untreated. Those with eating disorders can have a variety of symptoms. However, most include the severe restriction of food, food binges, or purging behaviors like vomiting or over-exercising. Although eating disorders can affect people of any gender at any life stage, they're most often reported in adolescents and young women. The categories above are meant to provide a better understanding of the most common eating disorders and dispel myths about them. Eating disorders are mental health conditions that usually require treatment. They can also be damaging to the body if left untreated. in women with eating disorders or women at risk for eating disorders. KEY WORDS: self-objectification; eating disorders; internalization; sociocultural. 2University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida. 3To whom correspondence should be addressed at Department of Psychology, Syracuse University, 430 Huntington Hall, Syracuse, New York 13244; e-mail: rmcaloge@syr.edu. thus to exert some control over, how others treat. them. By coming to view their own bodies through this. objectified lens, women engage in a kind of psycho-. logically distancing from their physical bodies, which. in turn contributes to negative attitudes toward and. self to experiences of body shame and disordered. eating in women with eating disorders was consid-. ered. Eating disorders: a multiple-case investigation of the internet e-mail correspondence of women's lived experience. Article. Perry Lee Collins. Yet, a considerable proportion of the qualitative research published in top journals is still presented as the result of a linear, predictable research process, thus wrongly suggesting deductive reasoning. In this paper, we focus on a particular type of 'messiness' where during fieldwork, the research context is revealed to be more complex than anticipated, forcing the researcher to gradually refine/shift their focus to reflect 'what really matters'. Disordered eating issues can develop during any stage in life but typically appear during the teen years or young adulthood. Classified as a medical illness, appropriate treatment can be highly effectual for many of the specific types of eating disorders. Although these conditions are treatable, the symptoms and consequences can be detrimental and deadly if not addressed. Eating disorders commonly coexist with other conditions, such as anxiety disorders, substance abuse, or depression.