

Chapter 5

EATING DISORDERS IN ADOLESCENTS

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Introduction

Eating disorders (EDs) are characterized by physical, psychological, and social impairment, and excessive preoccupation with food and body image. Although the rates of morbidity and mortality are high in all adolescents and young adults, EDs are seen more frequently in females. While it was originally thought to be a disorder unique to western and industrialized countries, EDs have become a widespread disorder globally, especially due to the influence of television and the Internet. Aim of this article is take attention to the characteristics, diagnostic criteria, prevalence, and etiological factors of EDs. EDs have also many risk factors, such as weight concerns, media influence, social pressure, diet, body dissatisfaction, traumatic conditions, negative emotions (such as depression or anxiety), perfectionism, and low self-esteem. This article will be focused on factors such as prevalence of eating disorders, risk factors, as well as treatment and prevention programs.

Definition and Features of Adolescence

Adolescence involves change, metamorphosis, and transformation that childhood is completed and the individual becomes fertile and productive (Parman, 2000: 17).

Adolescent growth and maturation involves hormonal, sexual, social, emotional, personal, and mental changes and developments (Kulaksizoglu, 2011: 34). It occurs physical, mental and social developments and changes during adolescence. The main characteristics of adolescence are exaggerated, extreme, rapid, and easily changing feelings and wants (Koknel, 2010: 91-95). Identification and friendship, which is adolescents' most significant resource, are two important facets of adolescent social and emotional development (Cuceloglu, 1991: 359).

Adolescence is thus period of rapid change in which the individual first identifies him or herself as the subject and creates an identity (Parman, 2000, Erikson, 1968). As a transition to adulthood, it is a critical period with important implications for future achievements and behaviors. On the one hand, adolescence is a transitional period involving physical, sexual, and social changes, and efforts to create an identity, while on the other hand, it also contains many dangers. Moreover, due to these transitions and changes, adaptive behaviors can become maladaptive. Therefore, a

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Conclusion

This article aimed to draw attention to ED risk factors and prevention programs. It therefore considered EDs in terms of risk factors, diagnostic criteria, prevalence, etiological reasons, treatments, and prevention programs.

EDs are serious common diseases affecting a significant proportion of individuals, and that require fairly costly treatment. Thus, EDs are a public health problem, especially affecting young people, so it is important to determine the risk factors in order to implement appropriate prevention programs. According to a recent systematic review, there are a number of promising preventive interventions for ED risk factors (Le, Barendregt, Hay, & Mihalopoulos, 2017).

Given its young population, EDs are clearly a significant issue for Turkey. As reviewed in this article, there is a large literature on EDs in other countries, which considers the issue from a range of perspectives. However, more screening studies should be conducted to determine the etiological factors or risk factors unique to Turkey. Such epidemiological studies are essential for the preparation of effective prevention programs for EDs in Turkey.

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