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Eating disorders prevalence and determents in Sharjah high school among Emirati young females

Alla Mansour

Supreme Council for Family Affaires in Sharjah, UAE

Objective: To assess the prevalence of Disordered Eating Attitude (DEA) and to investigate the cultural determinants of eating disorders in a representative sample of Emirati young females.

Methods: A cross sectional study of a sample of 508 adolescent females were chosen through a stratified randomization technique; where one section from each of the grade 10, 11 and 12 was chosen from each public school (n=6) located in Sharjah in the UAE. All consenting students in the selected classes filled the Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26) and Body Figure Rating Scale (BFR). From the latter, body dissatisfaction score was calculated. From the students who scored 20 or above on EAT-26 (cut off point for eating disorder) and high on body dissatisfaction, a small sample was selected (n=52) and were included into one to one interviews for further investigation on determinants of DEA.

Results: From the study sample, 37.8% scored at-least 20 on EAT-26 and 65.2% had body dissatisfaction. Significant relationships were seen between the following pairs: 1) EAT-26 and body dissatisfaction, 2) BMI and body dissatisfaction, 3) occurrence of vomiting and EAT-26. After the in-depth interviews, the following factors were noted as pre-detriments of eating disorders: 1) family has negatively influenced 76.9% of the adolescent by emphasizing on thinness, verbal insults, and non-satisfaction with girls shapes and appearances; 2) Media has negatively influenced 73.1% adolescents (western view