

The additive role of body image flexibility in explaining disordered eating behavior

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In treating individuals with disordered eating (DE) concerns, such as excessive dieting, bingeing, and purging, evidence shows that emotion/behavior regulation plays a principal role in the nature and treatment of DE. Body image flexibility (BIF) is a fairly new concept that reflects adaptive regulation processes in the context of DE. The purpose of this cross-sectional study is to investigate whether BIF accounts for a unique proportion of variance in DE behaviors while controlling for gender, body mass index (BMI), DE cognition, mindfulness, and general psychological inflexibility. The investigated sample consisted of male ($n=135$) and female ($n = 438$) non-clinical undergraduates of varying demographic backgrounds ($M_{age}=21$). Along with demographic information, students also completed the self-report measures of interest (MAAS, AAQ-II, MAC-R, Eat-26-Behavior, and BI-AQQ). A hierarchical regression analysis revealed that mindfulness (MAAS), psychological inflexibility (AAQ-II), DE cognitions (MAC-R) and demographics (age, gender, race, BMI) together explained 17% of the variance in DE behaviors ($R^2\Delta=.166, p<.001$). Furthermore, when BIF was added, the model then accounted for an additional 5% of variance ($R^2\Delta=.046, p<.001$). These findings suggest that BIF is a unique and useful construct in understanding DE behavior and may be beneficial to target in DE treatment.

Key words: body image flexibility (BIF), DE cognition, DE behavior, mindfulness, psychological inflexibility