

ABSTRACT

Existing etiological models of binge eating have focused on either the dieting or the negative affect pathway in explaining the development of binge eating. In this study, a dual process model integrating both the dieting and the negative affect pathways was proposed to explain the development of binge eating. In this model, negative self-evaluation was hypothesized to contribute to the development of binge eating via two interrelated pathways. In the first pathway, negative self-evaluation was hypothesized to contribute indirectly to binge eating through the mediation of body dissatisfaction and dieting. In the second pathway, negative self-evaluation contributed to binge eating through the mediation of negative affect. Dieting was also hypothesized to have a direct effect on negative affect. The utility of the proposed dual process model was assessed in a sample of Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong. Possible gender similarities and differences in the development of binge eating were also investigated. Participants were 1027 male and 2235 female Hong Kong high school students. They completed measures assessing self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, dieting behaviors and attitudes, depression, and binge eating. Results indicated that girls reported significantly lower self-esteem, higher body dissatisfaction, more dietary restraint, higher depression, and more binge eating behaviors than boys did. Multisample path analyses supported the utility of the proposed dual process model in explaining the development of binge eating in both boys and girls. All paths in the model were equal in magnitude except for the path from body dissatisfaction to dieting for which the magnitude of the relationship was greater in girls than in boys. The clinical significance of the findings and how the findings can explain the gender difference in the prevalence of binge eating were discussed.