

Abstract

The present study examined the relationships between the impulsivity trait and bulimic symptoms among Chinese adolescent girls in Hong Kong. Subject, 1126 secondary school girls of age 11 to 21, completed questionnaires assessing their weight, eating attitudes and bulimic symptoms. They were also evaluated with Impulsivity, Depression and Serotonin Scales. Results indicated that impulsivity was significantly associated with bulimic symptoms. Highly impulsive girls had significantly higher score in bulimic symptoms, drive for thinness and depression than average and low impulsive girls. They also had higher score in scale measuring serotonin deficiency. Among various disturbed eating behaviors, highly impulsive girls engaged significantly more in dieting, binge eating, abusing laxatives/diuretics and self-induced vomiting but not excessive exercise. In addition, girls with bulimic symptoms, purging type tended to be more impulsive, exhibited significantly higher drive for thinness and dietary restrained than did girls who binge only. The results suggested that the impulsivity trait played an important role in the development of bulimic symptoms. Due to the prevalence of pathological eating attitudes and behaviors found among the local girls and the significant relationships between impulsivity and bulimic symptoms, specified intervention and prevention program that target impulsivity and its implications upon eating behaviors are warranted.