

# Affective Style and Eating Disorders: a Field Study

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### Abstract

Eating disorders (ED) are a heterogeneous group of problems related to restraint and/or overeating. It is proposed that individual differences in affective reactivity and moods (affective style) might be related to these behaviours. Variations in affective style are expressed by differing levels of sensitivity to the motivation systems of approach and avoidance. The present study tested whether a relation exists between ED and variations in the sensitivity of motivational systems as well as mood dispositions. A total of 2020 undergraduate students completed the Eating Disorder Diagnostic Scale (EDDS), the Behavioural Inhibition System and Behavioural Activation System Scales (BIS/BAS), and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). The results showed a significant within-subject interaction of Alimentary group x Motivation ( $F=4.056$ ;  $p<0.007$ ). It was also observed that the Overeating group had lower levels of motivation asymmetry than the Normal ( $p<0.01$ ) and Restrictive ( $p<0.005$ ) groups and marginally lower levels than the Purgative group ( $p<0.07$ ). The study results suggest mainly that the avoidance/inhibition motivational system is related to eating problems connected with overeating, including chronic alimentary restraint (chronic dieters). The theoretical and clinical implications of these findings are discussed. (Eating Weight Disord. 16: e73-e80, 2011). (C)2011, Editrice Kurtis

### Keywords

**Author Keywords:** Anorexia nervosa; bulimia nervosa; binge eating; restrained eaters; affective style; motivational system; descriptive study by survey