

Is the low weight a good indicator of the severity of anorexia nervosa?

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Aims: Some authors have been defending that DSM-IV diagnostic criteria of anorexia nervosa (AN) are not homogeneous, assuming different importance levels. In this study we looked into the analysis of the variation of the AN criteria's severity through the *Interview for the diagnosis of Eating Disorders – IV* (IDED-IV; Kutlesic et al., 1998).

Method: The Portuguese version of IDED-IV was applied to 80 females with AN diagnosis aging between 12 and 34 y.o. The IDED-IV assesses the presence and the severity of specific symptoms of eating disorders. Each symptom is rated in a scale between 1 and 5. The level 3 indicates the pathological presence of the symptom.

Results: Item-total correlations were calculated to evaluate the strength of the relationship between each symptom rate and the total of the interview. The results suggested that some ratings have more significant contributions to the IDED-IV total score, in concrete: fear of gaining weight (.64) and feel fat even though under-weight (.61). The low weight (.07) and the amenorrhea (.19) symptoms presented a low contribution to the total score.

Conclusion: The results suggest that fear of gaining weight and disturbance in the way one's body weight or shape is experienced have a higher impact on AN severity and are probably central criteria in the differentiation of the AN from other eating disorders. These observations are compatible with the conceptualization of AN as a continuum defined not only by food restriction but also by its multiple associated features.