

Emotional dysregulation and emotional eating in hospitalized adults with obesity: the mediating role of worry and rumination.

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Background: emotional dysregulation has been strongly linked to maladaptive eating behaviors in obesity. Worry and rumination are frequently implicated in emotional dysregulation and may serve as pathways linking emotional regulation difficulties to emotional eating. The current study examines the mediating role of worry and rumination in the relationship between emotional dysregulation and emotional eating among individuals with obesity.

Methods: ninety hospitalized Italian adults were involved in the study with 53 obese males, 37 obese females, mean age \pm SD: 50.1 + 10.9 years; mean body mass index: 46.4 \pm 9.4 kg/m². To assess worry, rumination, emotion dysregulation, and emotional eating, the participants were asked to fill in, respectively, the following questionnaires: The Penn State Worry Questionnaire; The Ruminative Response Scale; The Anger Rumination Scale; The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale; Emotional Eating subscale of the Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire. Three mediation models were tested to examine the relationships between difficulties in emotional regulation as a predictor, worry and rumination as mediators separately, and emotional eating as the dependent variable.

Results: the mediation analyses revealed significant indirect effects across all models, suggesting the presence of mediation effects of worry and rumination in the relationships between emotional dysregulation and emotional eating.

Conclusions: these findings highlight the critical mediating role of worry and rumination that drive the observed relationships between emotional dysregulation and emotional eating. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the cognitive-emotional mechanisms involved in emotional eating in individuals with obesity. Such results can contribute to developing targeted interventions aimed at improving emotional regulation and reducing maladaptive eating behaviors.

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