

Cognitive fusion and emotional eating among adolescents with obesity: a preliminary cross-sectional study.

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Cognitive fusion and avoidance are supposed to exert a key role in the development and maintenance of disordered eating behaviors related to obesity, such as emotional eating. A large portion of the research has focused on adult populations, while few data are available on adolescents so far. The current cross-sectional study is intended to explore the association between cognitive fusion, avoidance, and emotional eating in a sample of fifty-six Italian adolescents (13–17 years) with obesity (body mass index > 97th centile). For this purpose, participants attending a 3-week body weight reduction program were assessed using demographical, physical, and clinical data. A multivariate linear regression model was performed in order to preliminarily investigate the predictive role of cognitive fusion on emotional eating, controlling for possible confounding factors. Results showed a significant association between cognitive fusion and emotional eating. Regression revealed that cognitive fusion was a significant contributor for explaining emotional eating (controlling for sex) [$R^2 = 0.551$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.534$; $F(2,53) = 32.5$; $p < 0.001$]. Even if preliminary, our findings suggest a predictive role of cognitive fusion on emotional eating, and also suggest that cognitive fusion can be considered a key component in understanding and addressing of disordered eating behaviors related to obesity. Future replications are required to expand the sample and collect longitudinal data. Intervention programs for childhood obesity could benefit from this line of research.

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