
The Role Of Social Identity In Eating Disorder

Eating disorders are known to be more prevalent in women, it is fairly reasonable to question why does the uncivilized society exhibit such gender? Western culture of the contemporary time not only prefers 'thinness' in women but also a curvy figure. Is it possible that they are aspects other than social and emotional that influence people to cut down or increase diet and chase the ideal body? People who routinely work out are admired disregarding their miserable mental state since 'working out is the new sexy norm; which should be chased by all those who want to conform. Nowadays, women also prefer men with six-packs and six feet height; so it can be assumed that there might be some sort of pressure on men as well. Therefore, even if a small percentage of men suffering from eating disorders are well-thought-out, the question I further ask is that why are women more prone to the disorder?

To begin with, what is an eating disorder? It is a state where an individual either eats or diets in an extreme way that confines their daily life activities. In what organ do you think consumption and satiety are being controlled by your body? It is our brain. Then why is it still not acknowledged as a mental disorder in several states or even countries? There are numerous potential reasons: it could be due to the inefficiency of the medical research or techniques, insufficient medical providers, or even economic factors because insurance companies have to pay for an additional range of medical complications. In my opinion, besides the factors mentioned, social acceptance and emotional distress are the major contributors towards eating disorders and not medicinal problems/heritability. The article written by "Garner & Garfinkel about the social factors" stated that the disorder is more common amongst upper-class women than the labor class. It is very likely that these women face persuasion to dress up in a certain way to maintain their 'successful' standard in society. The preference of thinness begins during the adolescence stage where girls may either choose professions that require them to be of thin shapes, such as models, dancers, other performers, or just due to social norms.

In the video, "Pretty Hurts", by Beyoncé, it was observed how models were constantly measuring their waist size and body weight to remain an active contestants in the competition. And from the newspaper advertisement, even though the girls were not professionally enrolled in any career, yet it was proven that those young teenagers were miserable because of their disorder; probably due to social pressures.

Famous pageants like Victoria's Secrets fashion show, Miss Universe/World, have very strict policies choosing models on the basis of a certain height, body weight, waist, and generally a model figure. These kinds of restrictive rules align the young generations' minds towards feeling bad about those certain things they are missing. Instead of focusing on the good, they tend to focus on everything that they do not reflect as compared to those models. Overall, career choice and position in society have been known to be promoting the disorder in women.

The gender discrepancy could be rationally attributed to the recent cultural alteration that has impacted individuals, especially women's, self-concept. Women are naturally more emotional than men. I would not certainly say that they are less confident but due to their emotional side, they are more worried about society's philosophy about them. Society tends to judge women on their external appearance—the clothes they wear, hair, nails, make-up, etc—men could literally

wear the same jean for a whole week and no one would bother. Despite the societal judgment though, the 'thinner' thoughts may also procure from the inside.

In comparison, Indian culture is also confined with the thought process of the Western culture, that is, the thinness of women plays a major role. I have experienced real-life instances where the man prefers a skinny wife but disregarding his own body size. Furthermore, even the general audience believes that it will be easier to get the skinny girl married. Given this fact, it can be estimated that many diverse cultures exhibit identical types of feelings.

Women are more probable to suffer from eating disorders, though it is significant to note that it commences during youth years. Adolescents endure a lot of peer pressure all through their school years; they might go through bullying, family matters, emotional & study pressure, and judgments. Teens who have grown up watching Disney Channel may also feel persuaded by those perfect-sized Disney princesses. It is apparent to say that, in general, our society prefers skinny figures; however presenting only one kind of body image on television is not a very good learning message for children. Moreover, social media can be a beneficial and the most devastating thing, depending on the usage. On platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, we see beauty bloggers and other fitness freaks demonstrating the best of them by posting pictures in different postures. I can undoubtedly comment that we cannot relate to them, so they should not be considered ideal role models. Surrounding yourself with people who would understand you and guide you through these difficult phases of life is very essential as it is one step forward towards treating one's mental health rights. Peers may body shame one another and as a result, the victim begins to feel depressed and may walk on the path that obliterates their health. Personally, I also feel complex in my own body since I don't feel as lean as my boyfriend. Therefore, I prefer to have a specific type of body to complement him. I have had instances in my life where I would be worried about what people say or think about me. Although societal judgment is not the only factor that urges me to feel that way, it's also because of my own inner satisfaction. Therefore, I believe that eating disorders arise from one's own self-scheme.

Moreover, I do believe that people should not be considerate of what the world thinks of them. This is something that I continue to work on daily—that is to stay away from the negativity and focus on things that are much more important than unintelligent judgments. Nonetheless, people should never comment on someone's weight gain/loss. A few years ago, I was constantly losing weight and I cannot even describe the happiness that I felt stepping on the weighing machine. The numbers were going down, and so was my health. I had no energy at all, and sometimes while walking my eyes would go blank, so I had to stop right there for a few seconds to revive my vision. I was diagnosed with Tuberculosis at the age of 16 the youngest patient that my rehab center had treated. I lost more than 20 pounds and I looked thinner than ever. Not to mention, I felt miserable at that time because just like those teenage girls I mentioned before, I had to live away from my home for 4 months and that too in an isolated unit.

Therefore, obtuse judgments should not be given such preference that they exceed the human value itself. Our precious time should not be wasted in trying to impress everyone. Even though my story does not include any eating difficulties, I did lose a lot of weight, which was certainly very harmful to my inner body systems. Similarly, weight loss for anorexic patients is indeed very dangerous and may result in life-threatening conditions. Eating disorders must be strictly implemented as mental disorders in all countries in order for individuals to seek proper treatment.

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