

Food Craving in Bipolar Disorder

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Objectives: Food craving (FC) has been linked to depressive mood before. However, no study exists evaluating FC in a sample of bipolar disorder (BD). **Aims:** This study aimed to determine the prevalence of FC in individuals with BD during euthymia. **Methods:** Fifty individuals with a BD diagnosis according to the DSM-IV guidelines were drawn from the dedicated outpatient center of the University Clinic of Psychiatry Graz. Data were compared with data from a healthy control sample (HC, n=50). All probands took part in the BIPFAT study exploring shared pathophysiological pathways of obesity and brain function in BD. Participants completed a comprehensive diagnostic battery (including the Food Craving Questionnaire by White et al. 2002) measuring anamnestic, anthropometric, and clinical data. We performed a MANCOVA controlling for key covariates including gender, age, body mass index, smoking, mood stabilizing medication, and lipid levels. **Results:** BD patients exhibited significantly more total food craving ($F=6.10$, $p=.016$) and more sweets craving than controls ($F=6.38$, $p=.014$). Additionally, levels of fat craving were higher by trend in the male patient group than in the male control group ($F=3.15$, $p=.087$). **Conclusions:** A higher prevalence of FC in BD patients than in controls suggests that FC may be of clinical importance in BD. Potentially, FC plays a role in the development of obesity, a well-known risk factor for unfavorable course of illness in BD. Furthermore, the impact of dysfunctions in the serotonergic system and/or an altered activation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis in relationship to increased FC are critically discussed.