SELF-IMAGE IN A SAMPLE OF ITALIAN WOMEN WITH EATING DISORDERS

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Introduction: Structural Analysis of Social Behaviour by L.S. Benjamin as revised by Scilligo represents self image by two axes: affiliation with love and hate as extreme points; interdependence with freedom and control as extreme points. Axes define a circumplex with 4 quadrants: loving freedom; hostile freedom; hostile control, loving control. Psychic wellness consists of high loving control and freedom and low hostile control and freedom. Quadrants are divided into 12 clusters: self-emancipation, self-affirmation, self-exploration, self-acceptance, self-protection, self-regulation, self-limitation, self-blame, self-attack, self-rejection, self-neglect, self-isolation.

Objective: The present study aims to enrich knowledge about intrapsychic world of people with Eating Disorders by analyzing self image of diagnostic subtypes.

Aims: Differentiating diagnostic subtypes self image in order to have a new key to choose therapeutic interventions.

Methods: 250 women with ED, outpatients of the ED Unit of an Italian General Hospital, were administered the Intrex questionnaire, the operational definition of the 12 clusters. One-way ANOVA and post-hoc comparisons between diagnostic subtypes were performed.

Results: Results indicate that ED patients have negative self-image. Bulimics show the highest level of self-blame, self-attack and self-rejection and the lowest of self-affirmation, self-exploration, self-acceptance, self-protection; anorexics show the highest level of self-regulation and self-limitation together with poor self-affirmation, self-exploration, self-acceptance. BED and EDNOS profiles appear less self attacking and more self acceptant.

Conclusions: Eating disorder diagnostic subtypes seem to have distinct intrapsychic profiles that can be reflected in different interpersonal behaviours. Such knowledge may help the therapist to choose the better interpersonal position to support therapeutic change.