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A Body-Oriented Method to Preventing Eating Disorders Among Girls and Young Women

Abstract and Keywords

Contemporary health challenges arising from the increasing prevalence of lifestyle-related diseases, including eating disorders, represent a significant societal issue. However, the rising awareness of health is not matched by sufficient access to appropriate treatment and support services. Health pedagogy, as a subdiscipline within the educational sciences, emphasizes the diagnosis of health needs, the implementation of preventive measures, and the development of educational programs aimed at mitigating disease risk, including that of eating disorders. Within this framework, health pedagogy may play a critical role in fostering informed, health-promoting social attitudes.

The objective of this doctoral dissertation was to design and empirically assess the effectiveness of a psychoeducational program for the prevention of anorexia, suitable for implementation in school environments and other educational and caregiving institutions. This program, grounded in body-oriented methodologies, was developed in alignment with the PRECEDE–PROCEED model of health education program planning. A particular focus was placed on evaluating effectiveness at both subjective (e.g., reduction of body dissatisfaction, enhancement of self-esteem, and improvement of stress-coping skills) and objective levels (e.g., alterations in psychophysiological parameters such as heart rate and heart rate variability).

The research process included a systematic literature review regarding the efficacy of body-oriented methods in mitigating risk factors and enhancing protective factors in the context of eating disorders. Additionally, an analysis of existing anorexia prevention programs was undertaken to identify their essential components and theoretical underpinnings. The empirical phase of the research involved assessing the subjective and psychophysiological impacts of the method's key components among young women at risk for developing anorexia. The findings facilitated the verification of the intervention's effectiveness and the refinement of the program's final iteration.

The developed psychoeducational program advances health education and anorexia prevention. Its interdisciplinary nature, which integrates pedagogy, psychology, and health

sciences, underscores the importance of a holistic approach to health education. The continued development of similar initiatives is recommended to effectively support the health and psychosocial development of young individuals by tailoring educational interventions to their specific needs and the prevailing social and cultural contexts.

Keywords: health pedagogy, health education, prevention, educational program, eating disorders, anorexia