



OPEN ACCESS

EDITED AND REVIEWED BY
Boris C. Rodríguez-Martín,
International University of La Rioja, Spain

*CORRESPONDENCE
Antonio Cepeda-Benito
✉ antonio.cepeda-benito@uvm.edu

RECEIVED 30 August 2023
ACCEPTED 25 September 2023
PUBLISHED 04 October 2023

CITATION
Cepeda-Benito A, Ugarte Pérez C,
Lizana-Calderón P and Moreno-Domínguez S
(2023) Editorial: Food-cravings, body image and
eating disorders: perspectives across cultures
and genders. *Front. Psychol.* 14:1285834.
doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1285834

COPYRIGHT
© 2023 Cepeda-Benito, Ugarte Pérez,
Lizana-Calderón and Moreno-Domínguez. This
is an open-access article distributed under the
terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution
License \(CC BY\)](#). The use, distribution or
reproduction in other forums is permitted,
provided the original author(s) and the
copyright owner(s) are credited and that the
original publication in this journal is cited, in
accordance with accepted academic practice.
No use, distribution or reproduction is
permitted which does not comply with these
terms.

Editorial: Food-cravings, body image and eating disorders: perspectives across cultures and genders

Antonio Cepeda-Benito^{1,2*}, Carla Ugarte Pérez³,
Paula Lizana-Calderón³ and Silvia Moreno-Domínguez²

¹Department of Psychological Science, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT, United States, ²Departamento de Psicología, Universidad de Jaén, Jaén, Spain, ³Centro de Estudios de la Conducta Alimentaria (CECA), Escuela de Psicología, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Santiago, Chile

KEYWORDS

food craving, body image, cross-cultural, eating disorders, eating awareness, weight loss

Editorial on the Research Topic

[Food-cravings, body image and eating disorders: perspectives across cultures and genders](#)

The present Research Topic revives a previous, successful attempt by Frontiers to foster cross-cultural research on phenomena once believed circumscribed to white, upper-middle-class women from the US and other Western, economically rich countries (Swami et al., 2010; Valderrama-Zurián et al., 2017). About 4 years ago, Frontiers published seven original research articles that together studied participants from across five continents, contrasting groups from the same nation but different ethnocultural heritages (Akoury et al., 2019; Wilhelm et al., 2019), or groups from different countries but with a common language and similar cultural heritage (Moreno-Domínguez et al., 2019a), or simply living in vast, highly populous non-Western nations (Chapuis-de-Andrade et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2019). The current, small collection of research articles also represents a wide range of nations and cultures that together contribute to advancing our understanding of eating disorder (ED) phenomena within and outside cultural and geopolitical boundaries.

The idea that body image (BI) dissatisfaction and ED emerge from Western (Anglo) cultural ideals and expectations about women's social roles and bodies grew rapidly from the late 1980's through the 1990's and the first decade of the twenty-first century (Valderrama-Zurián et al., 2017). Although BI and ED research with non-Anglos and people of color began to emerge in the 1990's and grew throughout the early 2000's, interest in BI and ED declined significantly in the second decade of the twenty-first century (Cepeda-Benito and Moreno-Domínguez, 2019). The present Research Topic aimed to examine the connection between food cravings, BI, and ED in different cultural settings. The present Research Topic of articles reports results from four culturally distant countries (Chile, China, Iran, and the US), broaching a broad set of important theoretical, applied, and methodological questions.

Sahlan et al. could not directly compare US and Iranian college students across various ED-related variables because their data lacked metric and scale measurement invariance across samples. These authors settled for conducting separate but parallel analyses to descriptively compare variable correlation patterns across the samples. Sahlan et al. reported that body mass index (BMI), pressure to conform to Western ideals of female beauty, and internalization of those ideals uniquely predicted ED symptoms in both samples (albeit with different degrees of association). Thus, the inclusion of an Iranian sample extended the generalizability of the finding that cultural pressures imposed on women's physical appearance, and that the internalization of these pressures correlate negatively with BI satisfaction (e.g., Warren et al., 2005; Moreno-Domínguez et al., 2019b).

Yan et al. recruited a large, mixed-gendered sample of young adults from six Chinese universities to examine moderated mediational relationships between one antecedent (BI), one mediator (perceived stress), three moderators (self-acceptance, cognitive reappraisal of emotions, and expressive suppression of emotions), and one outcome (binge eating). They found that perceived stress mediated the relationship between BI dissatisfaction and increased binge eating, but that the relationship between BI dissatisfaction and perceived stress was stronger at very low levels of self-acceptance. In addition, although the relationship between perceived stress and binge eating was relatively stronger at low than high levels of emotional regulation, there was no interaction between perceived stress and cognitive reappraisal. Overall, the results were congruent with theoretical formulations developed and shaped by Western research.

Coping with COVID-19-mandated confinements, Ugarte Pérez et al. adapted two weight-loss interventions to telehealth: Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT) and Behavioral Weight Loss (BWL) counseling. To test their relative efficacy, these authors recruited Chilean participants through online social network announcements to conduct a randomized clinical trial (RCT). The authors found that both interventions produced comparable significant increases in eating mindfulness and interoceptive body awareness, as well as significant decreases in binge eating and body mass index (BMI). That is, Ugarte Pérez et al. replicated findings previously reported for Anglophone samples from economically developed countries. However, these authors also reported increases in anxiety and depression at the end of treatment, a finding that contradicts previous Western investigations (e.g., Salvo et al., 2022).

Using data from the Chilean Health Survey 2016–2017, Nazar et al. investigated discrepancies between respondents' BMI and their perceived weight status across four categories: underweight, normal weight, overweight, and with obesity. They examined the extent to which the size and direction of the discrepancies were cross-sectionally predictive of engaging in weight control practices.

As previous research from various countries, these authors found that about half of their sample misperceived their BMI, and misperceptions were more likely to be underestimations than overestimations, particularly among those with BMIs indicative of overweight or obesity. Importantly, the self-perception of being overweight or having obesity was a stronger predictor of engaging in weight control practices than having a BMI within the overweight or obesity ranges.

Finally, Cai et al., developed and validated a picture library of high-calorie (starches, salty, fatty, and sugary drinks) Chinese foods (PLCF) for use in food craving research. These authors demonstrated that craving reactivity to the food images correlated with food-addiction scores, a relationship often found with Western samples (e.g., Delgado-Rodríguez et al., 2023). However, whereas Western researchers often report that sweets and fatty foods elicit the strongest cravings (e.g., Gearhardt and Schulte, 2021), Cai et al. found that pictures of salty foods and sugary drinks evoked the strongest cravings. Their PLCF can be accessed online through a link within their manuscript.

In conclusion, this collection of research articles that included non-Western samples revealed findings that were largely congruent with theoretical formulations and empirical findings previously obtained with Western, Anglo samples. However, each of the studies also revealed nuanced and unique findings that validate the importance of continuing to expand research on food addiction, eating disorders, and body image by including culturally and internationally diverse samples.

Author contributions

AC-B: Conceptualization, Writing—original draft, Writing—review and editing. PL-C: Writing—review and editing. CU: Writing—review and editing. SM-D: Writing—review and editing.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

References

Akoury, L. M., Warren, C. S., and Culbert, K. M. (2019). Disordered eating in Asian American women: sociocultural and culture-specific predictors. *Front. Psychol.* 10, 1950. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01950

Cepeda-Benito, A., and Moreno-Domínguez, S. (2019). Beyond eating and body image disturbances: cultural, transcultural and accultural perspectives. *Front. Psychol.* 10, 2601. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02601

- Chapuis-de-Andrade, S., Moret-Tatay, C., Costa, D. B., Abreu da Silva, F., Irigaray, T. Q., and Lara, D. R. (2019). The association between eating-compensatory behaviors and affective temperament in a Brazilian population. *Front. Psychol.* 10, 1924. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01924
- Chen, S., Jackson, T., Dong, D., Zhuang, Q., and Chen, H. (2019). Effects of palatable food vs. thin figure conflicts on responses of young dieting women. *Front. Psychol.* 10, 1025. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01025
- Delgado-Rodríguez, R., Moreno-Padilla, M., Moreno-Domínguez, S., and Cepeda-Benito, A. (2023). Food addiction correlates with emotional and craving reactivity to industrially prepared (ultra-processed) and home-cooked (processed) foods but not unprocessed or minimally processed foods. *Food Qual. Prefer.* 110, 4691. doi: 10.1016/j.foodqual.2023.104961
- Gearhardt, A. N., and Schulte, E. M. (2021). Is food addictive? A review of the science. *Ann. Rev. Nutri.* 41, 387–410. doi: 10.1146/annurev-nutri-110420-111710
- Moreno-Domínguez, S., Rutzstein, G., Geist, T. A., Pomichter, E. E., and Cepeda-Benito, A. (2019a). Body mass index and nationality (Argentine vs. Spanish) moderate the relationship between internalization of the thin ideal and body dissatisfaction: a conditional mediation model. *Front. Psychol.* 10, 582. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00582
- Moreno-Domínguez, S., Servián-Franco, F., del Paso, G. A. R., and Cepeda-Benito, A. (2019b). Images of thin and plus-size models produce opposite effects on women's body image, body dissatisfaction, and anxiety. *Sex Roles* 80, 607–616. doi: 10.1007/s11199-018-0951-3
- Salvo, V., Curado, D. F., Sanudo, A., Kristeller, J., Schweitzer, M. C., Favarato, M. L., et al. (2022). Comparative effectiveness of mindfulness and mindful eating programmes among low-income overweight women in primary health care: a randomised controlled pragmatic study with psychological, biochemical, and anthropometric outcomes. *Appetite* 177, 106131. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2022.106131
- Swami, V., Frederick, D. A., Aavik, T., Alcalay, L., Allik, J., Anderson, D., et al. (2010). The attractive female body weight and female body dissatisfaction in 2 countries across 10 world regions: results of the international body project I. *Personal. Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 36, 309–325. doi: 10.1177/0146167209359702
- Valderrama-Zurián, J. C., Aguilar-Moya, R., Cepeda-Benito, A., Melero-Fuentes, D., Navarro-Moreno, M. Á., Gandía-Balaguer, A., et al. (2017). Productivity trends and collaboration patterns: a diachronic study in the eating disorders field. *PLoS ONE* 12, e0182760. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0182760
- Warren, C. S., Gleaves, D. H., Cepeda-Benito, A., Fernandez Mdel, C., and Rodriguez-Ruiz, S. (2005). Ethnicity as a protective factor against internalization of a thin ideal and body dissatisfaction. *Int. J. Eat. Dis.* 37, 241–249. doi: 10.1002/eat.20102
- Wilhelm, L., Hartmann, A. S., Becker, J. C., Kisi, M., Waldorf, M., Vocks, S., et al. (2019). Thin media images decrease women's body satisfaction: comparisons between veiled muslim women, christian women and atheist women regarding trait and state body image. *Front. Psychol.* 10, 1074. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01074