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EATING BEHAVIOUR AND PERFECTIONISM IN STUDENTS: A PROSPECTIVE STUDY

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Aim: To investigate the role of perfectionism in the development of disordered eating behaviours.

Method: 382 female university students completed the Hewitt & Flett MPS and the EAT-40 at baseline, one year after (T1) and two years later (T2).

Results: Perfectionism at baseline was significantly associated with long-term abnormal eating attitudes/behaviours. Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP) and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP) were significant predictors of disordered eating behaviours. SOP at baseline was predictive of diet concerns, at T1 and T2. Baseline SPP was correlated with overall eating disturbance at T1 and T2. Regression analysis revealed that only SPP was a significant predictor of bulimic behaviours and social pressure to eat at T1, but not at T2.

Conclusion: Our findings contribute to a more clear understanding of the association between perfectionism and eating disorders. SOP and SPP were prospectively associated with abnormal eating attitudes/behaviours and SOP was found to be predictive of diet concerns.