Using the principles of existential psychotherapeutic theory to enrich understanding of eating disorder etiology: A theoretical study

ABSTRACT

This theoretical study was conducted to make connections between existential psychotherapeutic theory and existing theories of eating disorder etiology. The dearth of literature connecting these two suggests room for further study. An in-depth exploration of existential theory as it applies to psychotherapy, showing the pervasiveness of existential concerns in human psychological functioning was conducted. A review of each of the major categories of eating disorder etiology; sociocultural/feminist, psychological (including psychodynamic, familial and cognitive-behavioral perspectives), biological, and spiritual, was undertaken. Eating disorder treatment approaches and epidemiology were also explored. Finally a synthesis of existential psychotherapeutic theory with existing eating disorder etiology was attempted in an effort to enrich understanding of the dynamics and factors which lead to the development and maintenance of eating disorders. Recommendations for future research were made.