The Impact of COVID-19 on the Eating Behaviors of Black Women Who Binge Eat

Background: While COVID-19 has affected every American, little is known on how COVID-19 has affected women with binge eating disorder, particularly Black women. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the impact of COVID-19 on the eating behaviors in women of color who binge eat.

Methods: We recruited a community-based sample of Black women with self-reported binge eating episodes (N = 20) to participate in a semi-structured interview to explore the impact of COVID-19 on their eating behaviors. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. We used In Vivo coding to analyze the data to find associated themes.

Results: We identified 6 themes that describe the impact of COVID-19: increase in binge eating due to triggering environment (e.g. proximity to foods at home), lack of structure (e.g. irregular meal times), lack of control (e.g. uncertainty of duration of pandemic), limited access to typical foods (e.g. grocery stores running out of milk, eggs, etc.), and the use of food as a coping tool (e.g. dealing with loneliness of social distancing).

Conclusion: Our findings suggest that Black women in this sample felt COVID-19 negatively impacted their eating behaviors. Furthermore, our findings add to the limited research of Black women who binge eat, and provide a glimpse on the impact of COVID-19 among this population. Future research should focus on the development of culturally-relevant interventions to support those managing eating disorders.