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IMPLICIT ASSOCIATIONS IN EATING DISORDERS: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY USING IMPLICIT ASSOCIATIONS TEST

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**Introduction:** Greenwald et al. (1998) developed The implicit Association Test (IAT) to measure automatic concept-attribute associations. The assumption of the test is that strongly associated (compatible) attribute-concept pairs should be easier to classify together than are weakly associated or opposed (incompatible) attribute concepts. Ease of classifying is measured by the response times and errors in performing such categorizations.

**Objectives:** The aim of this study was the evaluation, at an implicit level, of the attitude concerning fat people in a sample of Eating Disorders (ED).

**Methods:** A IAT modeled to assess self-esteem the attitude concerning fat and slim persons has been administered to 17 Anorexia Nervosa (AN), 14 Bulimia Nervosa (BN), 17 Binge Eating (BED) patients and 32 healthy controls (HC). In IAT, the target categories were represented by the words "FAT-SLIM" and «good / bad». Stimuli were images of faces of overweight and normal weight people and positive/negative word. A positive IAT effect underline an implicit tendency to associate the category "FAT" with positive attributes, instead a negative IAT effect suggest an implicit tendency to associate the same category with negative attributes.

**Results:** Results showed a significant difference between HC and clinical groups in implicit attitude concerning overweight persons. HC showed positive IAT effect, instead AN, BN and BED showed a negative IAT effect. No correlations between implicit attitude and clinical variables were found.

**Conclusion:** These results suggest a common implicit tendency in ED's groups, compared with controls, to negatively judge overweight persons.