

Study: Disordered eating is not only a disease of affluent girls

January 30 2023



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Predominant stereotypes about eating disorders suggest that it is a condition mainly associated with girls from wealthy backgrounds. However, a new study from Michigan State University found that boys

living in disadvantaged circumstances are at an increased risk for disordered eating, particularly if they have underlying genetic risk factors.

"This is critical information for [health care providers](#) who might not otherwise screen for or recognize disordered eating in this population," said Megan Mikhail, lead author of the study and Ph.D. candidate in the MSU Clinical Psychology program. "It is also important for the public to recognize that eating [disorders](#) can affect everyone, including people who do not fit the historical stereotypes."

[The study](#), published in the *Journal of Psychopathology and Clinical Science*, is the first to look at associations between multiple forms of disadvantage and risk for disordered eating in boys, as well as how disadvantage may interact with biological risks to impact disordered eating in boys.

Using a large population-based sample of male twins from the [Michigan State University Twin Registry](#), the researchers found that boys from more disadvantaged backgrounds reported greater disordered eating symptoms and had earlier activation of genetic influences on disordered eating, which could lead to increased long-term risk.

The population-based sample allowed the researchers to avoid overlooking individuals who may not be able to afford access to [mental health care](#). They examined factors such as parental income, education and neighborhood disadvantage to see how those factors related to disordered eating symptoms in the boys. Since all the participants were twins, researchers were also able to study genetic influences on disordered eating.

"This research is particularly relevant following the COVID-19 pandemic when many families experienced [financial hardship](#)," said

Kelly Klump, MSU Foundation Professor of Psychology and co-author of the study. "Those financial stressors are putting many young people at risk for an [eating disorder](#), so it's vital that there be increased screening and access to care for these [young people](#)."

More information: Megan E. Mikhail et al, Disadvantage and disordered eating in boys: Examining phenotypic and genotype × environment associations across development., *Journal of Psychopathology and Clinical Science* (2023). [DOI: 10.1037/abn0000791](https://doi.org/10.1037/abn0000791)

Provided by Michigan State University

Citation: Study: Disordered eating is not only a disease of affluent girls (2023, January 30) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-01-disordered-disease-affluent-girls.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.