

# The relationship between gym culture and disorderly eating.

Body building and people that frequent the gym are more vulnerable to disorderly eating or developing body dysmorphia (body image issues). Especially men, are more susceptible to body image issues related to not being muscular enough or not having an ideal physique. Researching the mental psychology behind disorderly eating caused by frequenting the gym would be beneficial to prevent people falling into unhealthy habits from the gym. (Figure 1)

The way this research could be completed is through first finding the correlation between disorderly eating and frequently going to the gym. This could be followed up with some interviews with some of the participants that previously had a high correlation between the two.

A study concluded that body image perception and satisfaction in bodybuilders and strength athletes can be impaired by their desire for a certain body weight/shape, leading to disordered eating behaviours. The results linked bodybuilding with a higher vulnerability to disordered eating behaviours. 18 Sept 2022

Natural Food Therapy  
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Bodybuilding And Eating Disorders - Natural Food Therapy™

study the researcher would use a random sampling technique in the already existing participants from the first part of the study to find people to interview for more in depth information on how the body images had started.

We can make a hypothesis that there will be a positive correlation between the number of times someone goes to the gym weekly and how they'd scale their body image issues (Figure 2).

The questionnaire for the first part of the study would include questions such as

- 1) On a scale of 1-10 (1 being very unhappy with your body image, 10 being very happy with your body image) how do you feel about your body physique?
- 2) How many days a week do you frequent the gym, if you go multiple times in one day please specify.
- 3) How many calories do you eat on average a day?
- 4) Do you partake in bulking or cutting.

## Bulking and cutting

Bulking and cutting is an unhealthy diet culture taken on by people who want to quickly change their appearance to increase their body mass. Bulking consists of over-eating to gain body mass and eating large quantity of calories and protein to gain body fat which can be then changed into muscle mass or used as extra energy to push to the limits at the gym. Cutting is the direct opposite and includes people under-eating and drastically changing their calorie intake to eat around 1300-1800 calories a day whilst still maintaining a protein amount, this often results in people putting off carbs and having an imbalanced diet where they are only eating proteins to hit their daily goal.

The interviews done with the participants would be to find out about how they developed this problem at first and to find out where they took information on how to follow these unhealthy dieting lifestyles and when they first began going to the gym. Usually, it is seen in social media such as Instagram or TikTok where other people that go to the gym share their workout routines and the way they are eating. This is harmful as someone who may already have a negative body image could see this and then start taking on these unhealthy habits.

This could be avoided by helping people change their body image through CBT as it aims to identify patterns and therefore would be a good step towards how to treat these eating disorders

(<https://www.healthline.com/health/eating-disorder/therapy-for-eating-disorders#types-of-therapy>).

It would be of great benefit to conduct this research as it could find new ways to tackle different types of eating disorders like orthorexia (calorie and macro counting) as most research in the current time is only to do with eating disorders where food is avoided and the body image issue is usually being overweight or having the perception you are. Orthorexia or other disorderly eating habits such as bulking or cutting is not as commonly researched (Figure 3) but is a huge problem within people of all ages who become obsessive with the gym and their physique. This would benefit people who do not know what they are struggling with as a lot of people who frequent the gym don't actually know what disorder they may have and most of the time don't notice this is a problem until it gets out of hand. Researching this could provide meaning to people who may have body dysmorphia but not know the reason. It could find new innovative ways on how to tackle these types of eating habits and could provide relief to some of those that are trying to recover from these habits.

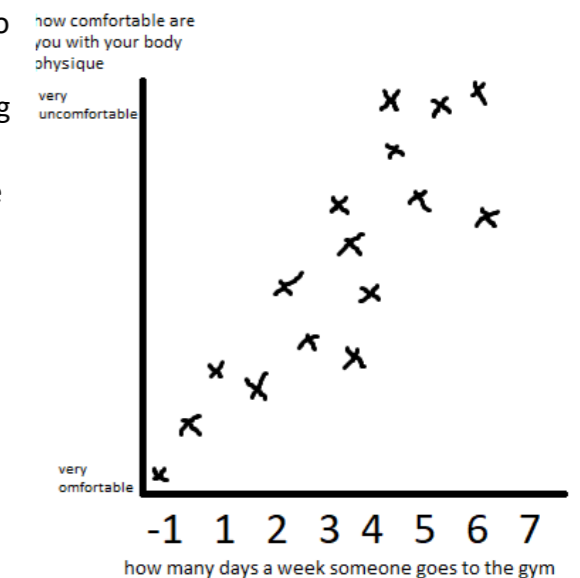


Figure 2

How Prevalent is Orthorexia Nervosa? Very few studies have been conducted to determine the worldwide presence of ON. Studies that have examined prevalence are inconclusive. In the general population, 57.5% were diagnosed with ON using a self-administered questionnaire called the ORTO-15. 18 Mar 2021

Bradley University  
<https://www.bradley.edu/sites/bodyproject/disorders>

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Figure 3