

PATTERNS OF EATING DISORDER BEHAVIOURS AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS AMONG WOMEN IN TREATMENT FOR SUBSTANCE USE: A LATENT PROFILE ANALYSIS APPROACH

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Introduction and Aims: Eating disorders are a complex mental illness that can coexist with substance use disorders. Treatment for substance use can be a catalyst for engaging, or re-engaging in eating disorder behaviours, making recovery more difficult. Developing an understanding of comorbid disorders in treatment is important. We used latent class analysis to identify distinct subgroups of women attending substance use treatment based on eating disorder symptoms and substance of use.

Design and Methods: Participants were 1155 women attending residential treatment for substance use issues in Australia between 2008 and 2017. Latent Class analysis was conducted using the Eating Disorders Screen for Primary Care, and items from MHSF-III and Addiction Severity Index.

Key Findings: Model fit indices showed that a 3-class model had the optimal fit. Class 1 (11.6%) reported the highest rates eating disorder symptoms, half nominating alcohol as primary substance. Class 2 (42.5%) reported weight-related concerns but not eating in secret. Class 3 (45.9%) had the lowest rate of eating disorder symptoms and highest alcohol use. The odds of a history of depressive disorder, and sexual or physical abuse were significantly higher in Class 1 than other classes.

Discussions and Conclusions: Distinct subgroups of eating disorder symptoms exist within the sample. More than half of women in treatment have weight-related concerns and one in ten are at high risk of comorbid eating and substance use disorders. This highlights the need to address eating weight-related concerns during treatment and that some women need specialised treatment for both disorders.

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