Abstract

The main purpose of this paper was to present the construct validity of an instrument for the detection of risk factors for eating disorders in Mexican adolescents and young women, such that professionals in this area have a reliable and valid instrument for the detection of risk factors with qualitative and quantitative specifications, for the discrimination of risk severity in conjunction with decision-making related to prevention and treatment. This has been a theoretical and practical issue lacking issue in our present socio-cultural context. As systematic research on eating disorders is recent in Mexico, and because the low prevalence of these diseases has limited the access to clinical populations, their cause may be explained based on other cultural contexts research findings. Therefore it has become an important task to enrich such information with the Mexican eating disordered womens experience, related to cultural issues. It may appear reiterative to develop new assessment instruments for this purpose, considering that international workings are abundant and some of them have been already validated with Mexican populations, for instance the Eating Attitudes Test, a self-report screening test of the symptoms and concerns characteristic of eating disorders, and the Eating Disorders Inventory, that measures traits and symptom clusters presumed to have relevance for the understanding and treatment of eating disorders. However, it is important to highlight the cultural differences of a particular culture and their relationship to psychopathology. The results obtained in different cultures, question the universal meanings for psychological disorders challenging the validity of standardization for non-occidental cultures. These views support the development of appropriate assessment instruments in different cultures. The main contribution of this instrument is that it was developed based on the information provided by Mexican eating disordered patients in relation to the development of their illness. Risk factors associated with the development of eating disorders were assessed in a sample of 332 Mexican adolescents and young women (average age 19.1 years, SD=3.8), high school and college students at public and private schools in Mexico City. The study was carried out in two phases: in the first, the individual (eating behaviors, body weight history, curriculum, dating and violence), psychosocial (self-esteem, body image, depression, personality traits, identity and sexuality) and sociocultural (interpersonal relationships, career choice and values towards the body) factors associated with the development of eating disorders were assessed using a qualitative methodology (in-depth interviews) with 10 Mexican eating disordered patients in treatment at the Eating Disorders Unit of the National Institute of Psychiatry Ramón del Fuente in Mexico City.
Keywords
Eating disorders, risk factors, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, validation.