Reviewer’s report

Title: Quality of Life Impairment Associated with Body Dissatisfaction in a General Population Sample of Women

Version: 2 Date: 5 November 2012

Reviewer: Kyle De Young

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the manuscript entitled “Quality of Life Impairment Associated with Body Dissatisfaction in a General Population Sample of Women.” All of the praise from my previous review still applies. The authors were generally responsive to my and the other reviewers’ comments; however, there was one exception that I will highlight.

Major Compulsory

1. It the last paragraph of the introduction, the authors state that they are interested in the “effects of BD on quality of life”, and indeed this is also reflected in the title of the article. They further eliminate “probable eating disorder cases” from the sample in later analyses in an attempt to confirm that the associations discovered between BD and quality of life cannot be accounted for by “eating disorder symptoms.” I raised a similar concern in my initial review about this method of testing an alternative hypothesis, and I do not believe it has been sufficiently addressed. I will try to be clearer about the issue as I see it.

The authors note that “probable eating disorder cases” are defined by the combination of “undue influence of weight or shape self-evaluation” and “the regular occurrence of any eating disorder behavior”; however they repeatedly refer to the process of having removed these probable cases from the sample as having controlled for “eating disorder symptoms.” In the two cited studies by this group for this operational definition of “probable eating disorder cases” (and in the name itself), this operational definition is used to identify individuals who suffer from clinically significant eating disorders. I think it is fair to say that eating disorders and eating disorder symptoms are not one and the same.

In my initial review, I suggested that the authors pick a continuous measure of eating disorder psychopathology to use as a statistical control in the same way they used BMI. The authors noted in their response to this suggestion that a continuous measure of “attitudinal and behavioral components of eating disorder psychopathology in needed,” but go on to say that since this is not an eating disorder journal, they would “prefer not to go into further detail concerning the distinction between and assessment of BD vs eating disorder symptoms.” This is a bit confusing for two reason: first, in other publications by these authors and in this manuscript, the authors refer to the EDE-Q as an attitudinal and behavioral measure of eating disorder psychopathology, and second, regardless of the journal, if the authors wish to assert that the effects of BD on QOL are not
accounted for by eating disorder symptoms, an adequate control of eating disorder symptoms is required. That the EDE-Q global score is strongly associated with the BD items of the EDE-Q underscores (rather than undermines) this point.

Nevertheless, I recognize that an adequate and distinct continuous measure of eating disorder psychopathology may not be available. In this case, the authors should be more circumscribed in their assertions. For instance, the authors should refer to the exclusion of probable eating disorder cases rather than eating disorder symptoms, as in the following examples (though there are more): “The observed associations between BD and quality of life impairment could not be accounted for by an association between BD and eating disorder symptoms.” (bottom of pg 12); “the findings were strikingly similar when participants with eating disorder symptoms were excluded from the analysis” (second to last paragraph on pg 14).

Discretionary

2. Finally, in the last paragraph on pg 4, the phrase “eating disorder symptoms behavior” appears in the first line. I trust the authors meant either “eating disorder symptoms” or “eating disorder behavior.”

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.