

The Growing Tendency of Anorexia in TV/Film Celebrities- an Addictive Behaviour towards Eating Disorder

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Abstract: Film and TV personalities are trendsetters of health and fitness for a particular generation, all over the world. How they look, determines how much they earn. This is a profession, where physical glamour matter, as because that is what they are doing; appearing on screens to the world. Hence, it is more important for them to have a good figure, which is never overweight, flabby or more than what is required. Appearing slim becomes a habit, and after a particular time, weight check for celebrities can turn into a manic reaction, such that they develop eating disorders like Anorexia nervosa. The objective of the study is to analyse the growing problem of eating disorders especially among screen celebrities across the world.

Method of study is based on a descriptive survey of popular examples from India and world and also, case study analysis on a three such persons.

The findings eventually establish that Anorexia is getting prominent among TV and film celebrities as they are always conscious about their weight and appearances

Keywords: Anorexia nervosa, weight check, size zero, eating disorder, celebrities, on-screen objectification

1. INTRODUCTION

We are aware that TV and silver screen personalities, including actors, models, anchors, hosts, soap-runners etc. have a displayful life, where appearance matters a lot. Hence, such personalities need to take an extra care about their weight, height, physical statistics, complexion, skin tone, in short, what appears to be good on screen. That is what they sell; glamour earns them bread. Thus, it is said, a good figure is absolutely important for a screen celebrity to flaunt. Now, the definition of good figure varies from time to time. Some eras have showed their love for curvaceous bodies while recent modern generation embraces the lean physique, and whichever trend of appearance is popular at a time, defines the health and fitness goals of the society. We can assume the amount of pressure resting on the actors and models of a generation. Unfortunately, people often tend to ignore their health and bodily requirements, in pursuance of leanness and slimness. Being thin is often equated with fitness, and based on the call of time, celebrities have to follow it and shape themselves accordingly. For a long time now, thin and petite figures are being considered as fit and good, especially for women, hence our modern-day celebrities, since the 90s have

indulged in workouts and fitness programs to shape themselves. However, dieting also becomes a major part when it comes to losing weight. For us, it is a journey over time, but for film and TV personalities, it is a routine. Sometimes, they have to change themselves overnight to look different for a role. In such a situation, moderate dieting and gradual fitness program doesn't help; they have to indulge in rigorous exercises, especially absurd diet plans to reduce weight. This can prove detrimental to physical and mental health of the person. After a time, growing thin becomes a practice, and the person feels that slimness is equal to beauty; the thinner he/she is, the more appreciation he/she will get.

It has been observed that the rate of eating disorders has increased by 28% in the last five years, and celebrities are included among them.

TV personalities, especially female, even if they are hosts or anchors, are resorting to rigid diet plans and the percentage increase in the case is 12%, globally.

Anorexia is an eating disorder which leads to extremely low body weight and often negatively affects the physical and psychological health of the person.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Anorexia nervosa increases the mortality rate. A meta-analysis showed that death due to AN is 5.1 per 1000 person-years, with 1.3 out of 5.1 being due to suicidal tendencies (Mitchell, Wales and Nielson, 2011). Thus, it is to be noted that many quit eating and suffer from anorexia because they want to die.

It is also true that Anorexia has something to do with the notion of perfectionism, especially about the body. Hence, women are found to be doing rigid dieting for beautifying themselves than men. The lifetime prevalence rate of AN is still estimated at 0.9% in women (Hudson, Hiripi Pope and Kessler, 2007).

According to DSM-IV-TR criteria, Anorexia is a refusal to maintain a normal body weight in fear of becoming fat (APA 2000); the patient quits eating till the length that the body or digestive system resists anymore food, and hence, appear extremely thin and weirdly underweight.

AN can be further subdivided into the restricting subtype, the purging subtype, and the binge-eating and purging subtype (Halmi et al., 2000). AN is associated with many serious physical health problems, such as amenorrhea (Stice, South & Shaw, 2012), damage to multiple organs, hypoglycemia, seizures, irregular heartbeat, and even cardiac arrest (www.anred.com, 2011).

This type of eating disorder can also cause damage to many parts of the brain such as insula, hippocampus and amygdala. (Nunn, Frampton, Gordon and Lask, 2008)

3. METHODOLOGY

Media celebrities are often pressurized with the thought of perfection, especially with appearance; we have not yet been able to overcome our conventional ideas about a female leading lady, being beautiful. This beauty includes everything, and since the last two decades, a beautiful heroine means she has to be slim and slender.

In 2006, a rage among female Indian actors was to become size-zero. No one knew then, what that actually meant. However, the trend was started by Aishwariya Rai Bachchan in India, where she was groomed to carry a style extremely different and unique to herself, for a film called *Dhoom 2*. An extremely lean

physique with longer appearing limbs and exposed collar and throat bones.

Though she managed to pull up a fashion statement but her weakness and poorly disposed health were evident from chapped skin, dehydrated structure and dried hair.

Later the tradition was forwarded by Kareena Kapoor Khan, in 2008 for her film, *Tashan*. The word size-zero was the only popular topic that year, in India. We saw her in an avatar like never before. The chubby, plump beauty was upgraded into a bony skeletal figure with long legs.

In both the above cases, the actresses revealed that this was a mission for their respective roles, and after the shoot of the film, they gradually transformed themselves to their normal body type. Though none of them reported of any eating disorder, publicly, the phase during which they had the massive weight loss, showed symptoms of physiological deprivation.

On the other hand, actress Illeana D Cruz openly admitted about suffering from Anorexia and said how the notion of perfectionism is imposed on celebrities, especially women, and they wrongly believe that they have to be thinner. Since society has forever, dictated the concept of beauty based on time and era, it is difficult for celebs to break away from the conventional thinking. They have to face body-shaming too for how they look. The actress confesses, "I was at my lightest weight and even then, I felt 'Oh my God I am so fat.'"

Actress Richa Chaddha openly spoke to Mumbai Mirror, recently about her bodily insecurities, the guilt associated with feeling hungry and an eating disorder she was earlier struggling with.

"There is a lot of pressure because everyone is judging you on the basis of how you look. On screen, your face is magnified so people are pointing to your nose, eyes, jawline, smile and even your eyelashes," she said.

The same pressure had overtaken actress Parineeti Chopra, who was a plump and of moderate built. She was healthy, but never fat, suddenly turned into a fitness program to transform herself. She used to do her regular exercise and diet, while posting pictures of her improvement constantly on Twitter and Instagram. This reflects the narcissistic behaviour associated with Anorexia. You are conscious about looking perfect and hence while

you quit food, you post photos on social media to gather appreciation; a way of ensuring yourself that you are doing right. Now she is terribly slim and thin.

False concepts of beauty and perfectionism for women are widespread not only in India, but also across the world.

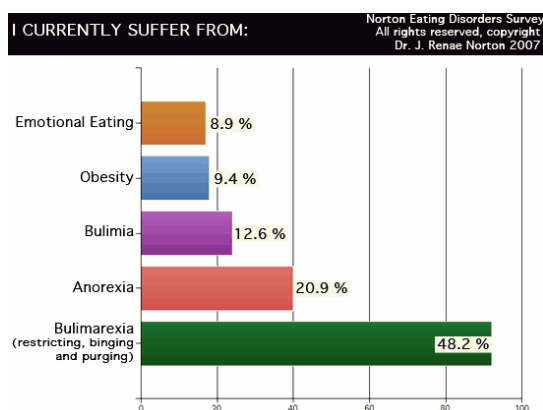
Demi Lovato, American song writer has become the spokesperson for young women with eating disorders, since she was treated with Bulimia and Anorexia in 2010. She is positively following a fitness routine and healthy eating habit to recover from it.

Paula Abdul, from the age of 7 was conscious about her muscular built, such that she started over-exercising herself in the wrong way. “Whether I was sticking my head in the toilet or exercising for hours a day, I was spitting out the food — and the feelings.” She finally checked herself into a mental health clinic in 1994.

In 2012, Lady Gaga revealed that she had been suffering from Anorexia since the age of 15.

Even male celebrities like Elton John, had a history of Bulimia.

Norton Eating Disorders survey revealed the following statistics in the recent past-



Thus, we attempted to study the cases of three such people who are in media or aspiring to be media celebrities and recorded what they were thinking about eating and good health.

Case Study 1:

Name- Ashken David

Sex- Female

Profession- Model (USA)

Report: “In our profession, showbiz is everything. We have to be beautiful on screen, we have to be beautiful on ramp, each time, as per the standards of the place and time. I am a

regular worker in aerobics, yoga, water yoga and push-ups, yet I have to do 5 hrs. of swimming every day. The day I do half-an-hour less, I feel I have added an extra pound to myself. I avoid family dinners, I am scared they will force me to eat the buttery turkey. I have to be perfect of the time, else people will call be bumpy”

Case study 2

Name- Sania Sharma

Sex- Female

Profession – aspiring actor/model (India)

Report- “I had baby fat when I was very young, later I managed to become a proper shape. Now that I am working myself in the modelling industry, I have to look fab. I cannot look a nanny. I liked food a lot, but these days, I barely want to eat. I spit of the gravy from vegetable dishes, trying to avoid oil and spices.

Case Study 3:

Name- Dennis Mitchell

Sex- Female

Profession- Anchor (Australia)

Report: “I am on the television now and then. These days, I have started getting good coverages as a host. My producers say, that my appearance will add glamour to the show and improve the popularity. The first day we were having lunch at the shoot, I grabbed a bacon burger, but it was grabbed away from me, by my dresser. She said, if I eat that stuff, I will not be able to fit in my costume. Since then I started panicking. I always look into the mirror before leaving home, I try to notice increasing inches on my waist.”

4. DISCUSSION

It is evident from the reports and responses, that media and society create a lot of psychological pressure on screen celebrities which forces them to manage with strict diet regimes, and that becomes a practice, leads to anorexia and then increases the mortality rate. Once we start eating minimal, our body, especially the intestine and digestive system gets accustomed to minimal stuffs, and later it is difficult to improve the eating habit.

Anorexia, not only affects bodily health, it can be a cause of depression, anxiety and manic disorder in the sufferers.

5. CONCLUSION

Celebrities engrossed in public appearances are overly anxious about weight management and eat less which causes anorexia. This eating disorder makes a person extremely thin, unstable and weak in health, disrupts the digestive system and may affect other organs like heart, brain, kidneys etc. Anorexia increases the mortality rate, and is seen persistent especially in female celebrities.

The concept of beauty is a relative topic and is different for different people. Thin doesn't mean beautiful. Eating healthy and following a good fitness routine, according to body type ensures good health.

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