



Preliminary psychometric properties of the Italian version of the Eating-Related Eco-concern questionnaire

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Abstract

Introduction: Urgent calls for research on the relationship between climate change concerns and risk of eating disorders (ED) have been made. This study aimed to validate an Italian version of the Eating-Related Eco-Concern questionnaire (EREC), a one-factor, 10-item measure for the assessment of eating behaviors related to eco-concern, while considering its possible relationship to both ED risk, as in the original study, and orthorexia nervosa risk.

Methods: Using a cross-sectional design, participants were recruited through snow-balling and social network platforms. 663 adults aged 37 ± 12 years (85% females, 43% with a university degree, 68% employed) completed the EREC and measures of worry about climate change (CCWS), orthorexia (EHQ-21), and disordered eating (EDE-Q), together with questions on dietary habits and motivations, and past experience of climate change events. Validity based on internal structure was assessed via confirmatory factor analysis. To assess internal consistency reliability, we calculated McDonald's ω , Cronbach's α , and corrected item-total correlations. Validity based on relations with other variables was evaluated by computing correlations with the criterion measures. Known-group validity was tested by examining differences in EREC scores between groups based on diet motivations and climate change events using ANOVA.

Results: A one-factor model in which the error variances of two pairs of items were allowed to correlate showed acceptable fit to the data. Internal consistency was adequate. EREC scores correlated positively and strongly with CCWS scores, and weakly to moderately with EHQ subscale and total scores. Correlations with BMI and EDE-Q were not significant, except for a small negative association with EDE-Q shape concerns. Participants who followed their diet for pro-environmental and/or ethical reasons reported significantly and substantially higher EREC scores than participants with other dietary reasons. Participants with personal experiences of extreme climate events showed significantly slightly higher EREC scores than participants with no such experience.



Discussion: The Italian EREC appears to be a valid and reliable tool for the screening of eating-related concerns and behaviors related to climate change. Ecological concerns may represent a healthy adaptive response, however careful clinical consideration is warranted as it may represent a new pathway to rigid and unhealthy eating patterns.

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