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Life-Meaning Orientations, Attitude to Time and Resilience in Women with Various Types of Eating Behavior

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Abstract

Introduction. The increasing prevalence of obesity underscores the importance of examining eating disorders as a key contributing factor. Eating disorder tendencies are frequently linked to individuals' psychological characteristics, particularly their capacity to manage challenges in the contemporary world. The present study aims to investigate life-meaning orientations, time perspectives, and resilience among women exhibiting varying degrees of eating disorder severity. Methods. The sample comprised 152 women aged 18–56 years. Participants were categorized into groups based on low versus high severity of eating disorders. **Methods.** 'Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire'; ' Life-meaning Orientation Test';' Time Perspective Questionnaire'; 'Resilience Test', body mass index. Statistical analysis: U-Mann-Whitney criterion, r-Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. **Results.** In groups with different severity of eating disorders, differences in the parameters of life -meaning orientations 'Process' and 'Locus of Control-I', aspects of the time perspective 'negative past', 'hedonistic present', 'fatalistic present' and all parameters of resilience were confirmed. In both groups, there were direct links between the restrictive type of eating disorders and the body mass index: the higher the actual weight of the respondents, the greater the tendency to establish strict dietary requirements and restrictions. The 'negative past' in both groups of respondents is directly related to the severity of eating disorders. Eating disorders of the emotionogenic type

are inversely related to all scales of resilience and meaningfulness of life, and directly to the level of negative past and fatalistic present. **Discussion.** It is promising to develop a program for psychological correction to reduce the severity of eating disorders in terms of strengthening the individual's ability to cope with stress, working out negative past experiences, developing meaningful life and goal-setting skills, and reducing anxiety.

Keywords

For citation

Introduction

Despite the abundance of information on a healthy lifestyle, the dangers of improper nutrition, and modern medical and nonmedical ways to combat excess weight, population obesity will remain one of the most pressing problems (Alferova, Mustafina, 2022). The main cause that leads to obesity and increases the risk of other comorbidities is eating disorders (hereinafter referred to as ED) (Mikhailova et al., 2023; Akhriani et al., 2025, Anil et al., 2025). Several studies have proved the association of overweight with restrictive (Bessolitsyna et al., 2024), emotionogenic (Ermakova et al., 2024), and external (Lyasnikova et al., 2024) types of eating behavior.

Researchers in the medical field have shown a link between AP disorders and type 2 diabetes mellitus (Kristo et al., 2024; Demicheva and Smirnova, 2023; Alekseeva, 2022); irritable bowel syndrome (Jia et al., 2022); an increase in gastroenterological symptoms (Shklyaev et al., 2022); and the prevalence of dependence on nonalcoholic alcohol. fatty liver disease in children (Gibson et al., 2015); clinical anxiety (Yankova et al., 2022); sensitivity to bitter taste (Lin et al., 2025); cardiac and gastric interception (Tiemann et al., 2025).

A study of gender aspects of eating disorders has shown that men are more prone to an external type of eating behavior (Vetoshkin et al., 2023), while women are more characterized by emotionogenic eating behavior or a combination of emotionogenic with restrictive or external types (Halashte et al., 2023).

At the same time, eating disorders can be a consequence of the psychological instability of the individual caused by stress or personal characteristics. Thus, situational

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anxiety is directly related to emotsiogenic eating behavior (Chapala and Ilich, 2022); the level of depression in young men correlates with the severity of emotsiogenic and external EB (Filatova et al., 2022); the severity of eating disorders in adolescent girls is associated with dissatisfaction with their own body image (Dorraj & Hatamipour, 2025); external depression in young men is associated with the severity of emotsiogenic and external EB (Filatova et al., 2022). Emotsiogenic eating behavior reduces the quality (Shafiee et al., 2025); a direct linkbetween emotsiogenic eating behavior and the component of perfectionism was revealed (Krapivina, 2023). People with a high level of willpower are less likely to eat stress, are less sensitive to external stimuli to eat, and at the same time, they are more often resorting to self-control. excessive self-restrictions in nutrition, which subsequently lead to breakdowns and overeating (Grafova, 2024; Petrova and Kozyreva, 2022). There is a direct link between restrictive eating behavior and cycloid, sensitive, excitable types of character accentuations and emotionogenic eating behavior with hyperthymic, asthenoneurotic, and sensitive types, as well as direct links between restrictive and emotionogenic eating behavior and orientation to the negative past (Avdulovaand Antonikova, 2023). Direct relationships are also revealed between the characteristics of a person's self-attitude and types of eating behavior. Therefore, external eating behavior is associated with an indicator of closeness, restrictive EB with self-confidence, emotionogenic eating behavior with factors of internal conflict and self-blame (Chernyaeva, 2023).

Therefore, the problem of eating disorders is the focus of research by various authors, but its connection with the semantic sphere of the individual, combined with the attitude to time and resilience, is poorly understood.

The purpose of this work is to study life-meaning orientations, attitudes toward the time perspective, and resilience of women with different degrees of eating disorders.

Research hypotheses:

1. Life-meaning orientations, attitudes towards time perspective, and resilience indicators may differ between women with different degrees of eating disorders.

2. The psychological characteristics of the individual (life-meaning orientations, attitude to time, resilience) and types of eating disorders can be interrelated.

Methods

The study involved 152 women aged 18 to 56 years (mean age 23 years, standard deviation 9.1 years).

To achieve the research goal, the following methods were selected:

1. 'Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire' T. Van Strien et al. (translated by I. G. Malkin-Pykh, 2007) for studying the peculiarities of eating behavior, including the scales of 'Restrictive eating behavior', 'Emotionogenic eating behavior' and 'External eating behavior';

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2.   The test of life-meaning orientations (adapted by D. A. Leontiev) to identify the main characteristics of life-meaning orientations, including the scales "Goals", "Process", "Result", "Locus of control - I', 'Locus of control-life", and "Overall score of meaningfulness of life".

3.   F. Zimbardo's 'Time Perspective Questionnaire' (adapted by E. T. Sokolova, O. V. Mitina, etc.) for diagnosing attitudes to time, including the scales 'Negative Past', 'Hedonistic Present', 'Future', 'Positive Past', 'Fatalistic Present';

4.   'Resilience test' by S. Muddy (adapted by D. A. Leontiev and E. I. Rasskazova) for studying the ability to cope with stress, including the scales 'Involvement', 'Control', 'Risk acceptance', 'Overall resilience score';

5.   For each respondent, the body mass index was calculated using the formula BMI = weight (in kg) / rost2 (in m).

To analyze the results of the study, two groups with high and low scores were selected using the 'Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire' method. Respondents whose results fell in the middle range were not taken into account in the study. Group 1 (n=55) -women with low severity of eating disorders, group 2 (n=61) -women with high severity of eating disorders.

The obtained data were processed using standard methods of descriptive statistics, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of the distribution, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U-test was used to analyze the significance of differences, and significant correlations were studied using the calculation of the rank correlation coefficient r-Spearman. The data obtained were processed using Jamovi 2.3.28 software.

Results

As a result of the study using the method of 'Life-meaning orientations' by D. A. Leontiev, the following results of comparing groups were obtained and presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Results of the study using the method of 'Life-meaning orientations' D. A. Leontiev for groups with different levels of severity of eating disorders (in points)

Variable	Averages		Statistics	p
	Group 1	Group 2		
Goals	34.21	32.2	1440	0.188
Process	33.27	29.54	1288	0.031*
Result	28.76	26.75	1394	0.116
Control locus-I	23.05	20.93	1297	0.035*

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Variable	Averages		Statistics	p
	Group 1	Group 2		
Locus of control-life	33.04	31.44	1433	0.176
Total life meaningfulness score	110.42	102.95	1377	0.097

Notes: the symbol ' * ' indicates differences at the level of p <0.05. Group 1 — women with low severity of EB disorders, group 2 — women with high severity of EB disorders.

According to the results of statistical data analysis, significant differences were found between the groups on the 'Process' scale (33.27 and 29.54, U=1288, p <0.05) and 'Locus of control I' (23.05 and 20.93, U=1297, p <0.05). Therefore, respondents with a high level of severity of eating disorders are less satisfied with their lives and believe in the possibility of changing it for the better than the group with a low severity of eating disorders. Consequently, in the absence of severe eating disorders, women perceive their lives as more emotionally rich, filled with meaning, and feel able to build it according to their own plan.

As a result of the study using the 'Time Perspective Questionnaire' method by F. Zimbardo, the following comparison group results were obtained, presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Results of the study using the 'Time Perspective Questionnaire' method by F. Zimbardo for groups with different levels of severity of eating disorders (in points)

Variable	Average values		Statistics	p
	Group 1	Group 2		
Negative past	2.49	3.1	1039	<. 001***
Hedonistic Present	3.17	3.46	1182	0.006**
Future	3.69	3.64	15.79	0.587
Positive past	3.62	3.46	14.44	0.196
Fatalistic present	2.51	2.83	1207	0.009**

Notes: the symbol ' * * 'indicates differences at the level of p <0.01, the symbol' * * * ' indicates differences at the level of p < 0.001. Group 1 — women with low severity of EB disorders, group 2 — women with high severity of EB disorders.

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Significant differences between the groups were found on the scales of 'Negative past' (2.49 and 3.1, U=1039, p <0.001), 'Hedonistic present' (3.17 and group 3.46, U=1182, p <0.01) and 'Fatalistic present' (group 2.51 and group 2.83, U=1207, p<0.01). It can be concluded that respondents with a high level of severity of eating disorders have a statistically significantly higher perception of their past as painful, an important aspect of the present is getting pleasure 'here and now', and life events are seen as predetermined and subordinate to fate. Whereas a person without pronounced eating disorders differs more than in the other group in accepting their past, the ability to sacrifice something in the present for the sake of reward in the future, and the belief in the possibility of their own influence on their own lives.

As a result of the study using the 'Resilience Test' method by S. Muddy, the following results of comparing groups were obtained, presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Results of the study using the S. Muddy 'Resilience Test' method for groups with different levels of severity of eating disorders (in points)

Variable	Average values		Statistics	p
	Group 1	Group 2		
Engagement	38.4	31.02	1008	<. 001***
Monitoring	31.64	26.85	1123	0.002**
Risk	acceptance	19.53 16.46	1139	0.003**
Overall Resilience	Score	89.56 74.33	1021	<. 001***

Notes: the symbol ' * 'indicates differences at the level of p <0.01, the symbol' * * * ' indicates differences at the level of p < 0.001. Group 1 — women with low severity of EB disorders, group 2 — women with high severity of EB disorders.*

According to the 'Resilience Test' method, differences in groups on all scales of the method were revealed: 'Engagement' (group 1— 38.4, and group 2— 31.02, U=1008, p <0.001), 'Control' (31.64 and 26.85, U=1123, p <0.01), 'Risk taking' (19.53 and 16.46, U=1139, p <0.01) and 'Overall resilience score ' (89.56 and 74.33, U=1021, p <0.001). Respondents with a high degree of eating disorders are more likely to feel out of life, their own helplessness, and the desire for comfort and safety as a means against everyday stress. On the contrary, a person with a low level of eating disorders is more confident in their own ability to influence their life, actively takes steps to improve it, even in the absence of reliable guarantees of success, and generally successfully copes with stressful situations, perceiving them as less significant.

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The results of a comparative analysis of data for all methods according to the Mann-Whitney criterion allow us to conclude that hypothesis 1 is confirmed. Respondents without pronounced eating disorders are more active in their lives, are focused on building and implementing long-term plans, which is made possible by their ability to take risks and believe in the ability to manage their life events. Although respondents with a pronounced violation of the AP are more passive, the past is painful for them and the future is not subject to the individual, one of the behavioral strategies is to enjoy the present. Food, in this case, is an affordable and guaranteed pleasure, as well as a temporary cure for painful experiences.

To study the relationship between the severity of eating disorders and the psychological characteristics of the respondents, a correlation analysis was performed using Spearman's criterion. The results are presented in Tables 4,5.

Table 4 shows the results for group 1 (women with a low level of severity of eating disorders).

Table 4

Analysis of correlations in the group of respondents with a low level of severity of eating disorders (group 1)

№	Parameters	Spearman's criterion
's Criterion 1	Restrictive EB / BMI	0.468***
2	Restrictive EB / emotionogenic EB	0.268*
3	Emotionogenic EB / external EB	0.352**
4	External EB / negative past	0.336*
5	External EB / future	0.326*

Note: *the symbol '* * 'indicates differences at the level of p <0.01, the symbol' * * * ' indicates differences at the level of p < 0.001*

Correlation analysis revealed a number of relationships between indicators. Thus, the external type of eating behavior in the group with low severity of eating disorders is positively associated with the parameters 'future', 'negative past', which indicates that an external type of eating disorder in this group is possible in respondents with a rejection of their past and/or in respondents who are highly focused on achieving their goals in the future. It can be assumed that their lifestyle includes frequent business events that involve eating, which contributes to an increase in the food intake.

Interestingly, restrictive eating behavior in this group is positively associated with body mass index. So, the higher the actual weight index, the higher the tendency of the individual to set strict limits in nutrition and the tendency to self-blame in case of breakdowns.

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There were no correlations of eating disorders by emotionogenic type and psychological characteristics of the individual in this group.

Consider the results for group 2 (women with a high level of severity of eating disorders), which are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Analysis of correlations in the group of respondents with a high level of severity of eating disorders (group 2)

№	Parameters	Spearman
1	Restrictive EB / BMI	0.442***
2	Restrictive EB / external EB	-0.261*
3	Emotionogenic EB / BMI	0.295*
4	Emotionogenic EB / negative past	0.509***
5	Emotionogenic EB / positive past	-0.277*
6	Emotionogenic EB / fatalistic present	-0.395* *
7	Emotionogenic EB / engagement	-0.525***
8	Emotionogenic EB / control	-0.455***
9	Emotionogenic EB / Risk taking	-0.534***
10	Emotionogenic AP / Overall resilience score	-0.533***
11	Emotionogenic EB / goals	-0.474***
12	Emotionogenic EB / process	-0.375**
13	Emotionogenic EB / result	-0.384**
14	Emotionogenic AP / locus of the ego	-0.464***
15	Emotionogenic EB / locus life	-0.399**
16	Emotionogenic AP / Overall life meaningfulness score	-0.479***
17	External EB / positive past	0.317*
18	External EB / fatalistic present	0.340**

Note: *The symbol ' * 'indicates differences at p <0.05, the symbol '* * 'indicates differences at p <0.01, and the symbol' * * * ' indicates differences at p <0.001.*

Summarizing the results of the correlation analysis in the group with a high severity of eating disorders, we note that the types of eating behavior have a greater number of relationships with the parameters studied than in the group with a low severity of eating disorders and they are closer. Thus, emotionogenic eating behavior has an inverse relationship with all parameters of resilience and life-meaning orientations, which characterizes this group of respondents as prone to eating in response to stressful factors and situations, in other words, to 'jamming' problems, using food as coping behavior. With regard to the attitude to the time perspective, we note that feedbacks of the emotionogenic type of eating disorders with the parameter 'positive past' and direct

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links with the 'negative past', fatalistic present ' indicate that in the case of weak ability of women from this group to cope with negative experiences of the past and trust external circumstances in solving important issues, they are ready to take food in response to their emotional experiences.

External eating behavior has direct connections with the parameters 'positive past', 'fatalistic present', and feedback with restrictive eating behavior. So, the more 'warm' the attitude to their past and a fatalistic view of life, the more typical for women from this group is eating under the influence of external stimuli (an attractive type of food, eating in a company). The relationship between the actual weight index-the body mass index-and the restrictive type of eating behavior shows that the greater the weight, the more a person is prone to excessive self-restrictions in the diet, leading to breakdowns and, ultimately, to overeating.

Discussion

After reviewing a number of recent works, we note several interesting related studies. Surkova E. G. writes that people with eating disorders "*are distinguished by their focus on their own needs, a weak desire to control their own impulses, a low level of purposeful behavior, high sensitivity to stressful situations, and the ease of negative emotions*." This conclusion is consistent with our results on a low level of meaningfulness of life, resilience, and higher rates of negative past in the group with a high severity of eating disorders (Surkova, 2015, p. 463).

The study of Danilova M. A., Fil A. S. concluded that emotionogenic overeating, night snacking, and other forms of eating disorders become habitual ways of regulating the psycho-emotional state and existing internal contradictions. The author's data are consistent with our conclusions about the positive association of negative past experiences with emotionogenic overeating. Therefore, food intake acts as a coping behavior that reduces negative experiences (Danilova, Fil, 2019).

Prodovikova A. G., Zyryanova K. K. obtained a negative relationship between body attitude, body mass index and indicators of resilience, and also identified coping strategies that are more often used by overweight people - avoidance and accepting responsibility. The authors' results overlap with ours in terms of reduced resilience indicators in the group with low severity of eating disorders (Prodovikova, Zyryanova, 2023).

Therefore, the study revealed differences in life-meaning orientations, attitudes toward the perspective of time, and resilience in women with low and high levels of severity of eating disorders. Respondents of both groups differ in the relative formation of the value-semantic sphere, and the results are within the average range. However, significant differences were obtained on the scales 'life process' and 'locus of Control-I', so, in the group with a low severity of eating disorders, the pleasure of living in the present and greater faith in the ability to influence the events of one's own life were significantly higher.

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The time perspective also differs. So, in the group with a high degree of eating disorders, the level of negative past, hedonistic present, and fatalistic present is significantly higher, which allows us to characterize them as less resistant to negative experiences, more likely to receive momentary pleasures, and believe in the power of external circumstances.

The level of resilience in the group with a high level of severity of eating disorders is significantly lower in all indicators, which shows a reduced ability to take risks, control the situation, and less involvement in activities.

The interrelations between the psychological characteristics of the respondents and the types of eating disorders are revealed. Therefore, in the group with a low level of severity of eating disorders, positive relationships were found between the external type of eating disorders and the negative past and future.

In the group with a high degree of eating disorders, positive correlations of emotionogenic overeating with a negative past, fatalistic present and inverse relationships with all scales of resilience and meaningfulness of life were revealed. That is, the higher the level of resilience and meaningfulness of life, the less the individual's desire to use food intake as a coping behavior. Since both groups showed positive associations with a negative past, it can be stated that the inability to cope with negative experiences is a common factor of maladjustment and increases the risk of eating disorders. Also common among the two groups is the relationship between body mass index and the restrictive type of eating behavior, indicating an increase in restrictions, prohibitions, and strict dietary requirements with actual weight gain.

Thus, both hypotheses of the study were confirmed. The prospect of further research may be to increase the sample size, analyze the results according to gender and age criteria, and develop a program to correct for eating disorders.

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Natalia E. Komerova — selection of diagnostic methods, data collection, participation in the discussion and preparation of the sections "Methods" and "Results", participation in the preparation of the final text of the article.

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Luiza A. Etumyan, Natalia E. Komerova, Daria P. Shchetinina, Tatiana G. Anistratenko
Life-Meaning Orientations, Attitude to Time and Resilience in Women with Various Types of Eating Behavior
Russian Psychological Journal, 22(4), 2025

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Conflict of Interest Information

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.