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CHILDHOOD RISK FACTORS IN KOREAN WOMEN WITH ANOREXIA NERVOSA: TWO SETS OF CASE-CONTROL STUDIES WITH RETROSPECTIVE COMPARISONS

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Objective: The aim of this study was to investigate the characteristics of the risk factors for anorexia nervosa (AN) in East Asian subjects.

Method: Two sets of case-control comparisons were conducted, in which 33 women with lifetime AN from Seoul, S. Korea, were compared with 42 women with lifetime AN from the UK and also with 90 Korean healthy controls in terms of their childhood risk factors. A questionnaire designed to conduct retrospective assessments of the childhood risk factors was administered to all participants.

Results: There were no overall differences in the childhood risk factors between the Korean and British women with AN. The Korean AN patients were more likely to report premorbid anxiety, perfectionism and emotional undereating and were less likely to report having supportive figures in their childhood than the healthy controls.

Conclusion: Our findings support the theory that AN is not a culture-bound syndrome. Larger epidemiologically based studies would be needed to validate these preliminary findings.