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RELATION BETWEEN CHARACTERS TRACES AND THE FUNCTION OF OVERWEIGHT: THE IMPORTANCE AND POWER OF THIS RELATION IN THE WEIGHT LOSS PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Obesity, a growing threat to health systems worldwide, is associated with biological cultural, socioeconomic, and psychological factors, as too to the understanding of the individual's body structure. This structure can be evaluated using the body analysis technique, which allows the individual to know his behavioral and emotional patterns by knowing the percentage of character traces (schizoid, oral, psychopathic, masochist and rigid), helping to identify the functions of excess weight. This research was made to demonstrate how the knowledge of character traces can help in the weight loss process. This is a retrospective, exploratory study, with a qualitative approach. We gathered the data by searching the open comments posted by followers on the social medias of The Body Explains ®. Those that mentioned the relation of character traces and the weight loss process went for a content analysis, which valued the significance in the data and their correlation with the issues investigated. Of the 55 individuals who participated on the sample of this study, 45% mentioned that their character traits "were in pain". After learning it and getting control of the role weight has in their life, 40% reported having lost an average of 20 pounds.

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INTRODUCTION

Obesity is a phenomenon that appears as one of the most important epidemics of the 21st century (Coradini *et al.*, 2017). In the latest decades, it has become a growing threat to health systems worldwide, affecting all age groups in countries in different levels of development (Di Cesare *et al.*, 2019). Worldwide, about 3.8 million people die each year of obesity (Herrmann *et al.*, 2018). This happens because of its high prevalence and the significant negative impacts it produces both at the individual and collective level, including its relation with other pathologies, especially chronic, cardiovascular, and psychiatric diseases (Herrmann *et al.*, 2018; Wagner *et al.*, 2018). On a global scale, the percentage of people with obesity has increased for both men and women (Ng *et al.*, 2014). Between the years 1980 and 2014, the proportion of obese people more than doubled (Ferreira *et al.*, 2019). This increase in prevalence can be explained by behavioral changes that have happened in recent decades, pointing out modifications in family dynamics, poor eating habits, and sedentary lifestyle (Ferreira *et al.*, 2019; Mishima-Gomes *et al.*, 2014).

The increase can be explained by the exposure to socioeconomic conditions in the early years, influences body composition in the later stages of the cycle of life (Wagner *et al.*, 2018). Because of that, the role of the family has been regarded in providing an emotional environment that contributes to the development and maintenance of childhood obesity (Mishima-Gomes *et al.*, 2014). Peng *et al.* (2019) it was observed an increase in overweight and obesity among adolescents who had emotional dependence on their parents and lived without siblings, presenting a greater risk of showing psychosocial consequences, as increased feelings of loneliness, sadness, and anxiety, which is associated with a predisposition to more food intake (Peng *et al.*, 2019). In this context, obesity is seen as a chronic and multifactorial disease, aggregating both biological, metabolic and genetic aspects, as well as cultural, social, economic and psychological aspects (Pinheiro *et al.*, 2004). So, to understand the phenomenon of obesity and its evolution, an extended approach is needed, in which the focus is not only on the affected individual, but their entire social (Coradini *et al.*, 2017) and environmental context. Obesity is defined by a phenotype resulting from a disequilibrium between energy intake and spent, that favors a positive energy balance, therefore, weight gain. And this imbalance should be

reversed by energy restriction and increased physical activity. However, the effectiveness in the medium or long term of interventions goes to weight reduction, on this base, is shown that obesity is a disease determined, and kept, by more complex mechanisms (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2015). Besides the changes in eating routines and lifestyle habits of the population, other factors may contribute to it (Coradini *et al.*, 2017). Because of that, the creation of protocols and behaviors related to the prevention and control of obesity has been a major challenge to health professionals and services (Pinheiro *et al.*, 2004). In this context, understanding how the person thinks, acts, and feels in various daily situations can be crucial for weight loss. Having clarity on how he/she works, the individual will realize how difficult it will be to lose weight in environments that can generate anxiety, compulsive eating, and, consequently, fat accumulation (Reis, 2022). Understanding how the person thinks, acts, and feels is possible when the percentage of characters traits (schizoid, oral, psychopathic, masochist, and rigid) that each individual presents in his or her body is known by the body analysis. Body analysis is a technique that recognizes, from the body structure, behavioral and emotional patterns of a person (Maia and Reis, 2022). From these patterns, it is possible to identify the functions of excess weight in people's lives, which allows them to be aware of why they put on weight or cannot maintain their "ideal" weight, as well as to take control of their weight loss in a permanent way (Reis, 2022). Thus, this research was targeted to demonstrate how knowledge of characters traits, as well as allowing them to live in environments that favor their resources, can help in the weight loss process.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a retrospective study with a qualitative approach, paying attention in the depth and comprehensiveness of the understanding of the social group; and exploratory for allowing the observation of facts in their spontaneous occurrence. Consequently, there is the familiarization with a subject that is still little obscure, little explored (Minayo *et al.*, 2007). For the data collection, the strategy used was a simple search for open comments posted by followers on the social medias of The Body Explains®. All comments made by users on posts about the studies were recruited and analyzed. Those that were described in verbal language and talked about overweight or weight loss process were included in this study. The use of social medias for data collection in scientific productions in the health area is a new field with the prospect of increasing expansion, due to the great popularity of its use and wide reach as a result of the number of connections established among the people who use it (Araújo *et al.*, 2019). In addition, the use of information technology makes it possible to obtain reliable, fast, low-cost data (Araújo *et al.*, 2019). The qualitative analyses were done through content analysis, as proposed by Bardin (2004), which values the meanings present in the data and their correlation with the questions asked. It was made in two stages: In the first (pre-analysis), an exhaustive contact was made with the material, through repeated readings (fluctuating readings), simultaneously resuming the questions and creating indicators that guided the final interpretation. From the guiding nucleos, the context units were separated from the text. The second phase consisted of exploring the material or codification, in which the registration units were classified and grouped according to their meanings and the analysis categories emerged. The present study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of of the Institute of Science and Technology of the Paulista State University (Unesp), by Opinion no. 5.411.261/2022.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three posts on the social medias of The Body Explains® were identified, one on Youtube® (2019), one on Facebook® (2022), and one on Instagram® (2022). There were 55 comments in which followers mentioned in some way the relationship of character traces and the weight loss process. To ensure confidentiality, the followers were identified as P1 to P55. Three groups of followers were identified: Group 1: they could not lose weight or stay slim; Group 2:

they were aware of the weight function. This group included individuals who before seeing the posted content did not understand why they put on weight, and after they began to identify with one or more of the functions of weight in their lives; Group 3: had the awareness and control of the function of weight. This group included individuals who lost weight by identifying the function of weight in their life and the character traces involved, and how they took care of these traces by sourcing them. Of the 55 individuals who tried this study, 40% reported how many pounds they eliminated after becoming aware of and in control of the function of weight in their lives. It was observed that the weight loss ranged from 5 to 65 kilos, with an average of approximately 20 kilos per person. After analysis, the answers were organized into five categories: can't lose weight or won't stay slim; toxic environment and emotional dependence; relationship between character traces and function of weight excess; character traces in pain and; attention for character traces and weight loss.

Can't lose weight or won't stay slim: Individuals affected by obesity usually need to treat it through their lives, since its clinical course is slow, prolonged, and permanent (World Health Organization, 2015). Thus, the treatment of obesity has been a great challenge for health professionals, since the great difficulty is the long-term weight maintenance (Pinheiro *et al.*, 2004). This difficulty was confirmed in this study. It was observed that a considerable percentage of people (24%) reported that they could not lose weight or stay slim even on a diet, through physical activity or other procedures. It really calls attention that 17% of them had already done bariatric surgery.

"... I used to go on torturous diets, I took several different types of teas and nothing worked, I even lost a little weight, but then it all came back hard..." (P5)

"...I have been fighting the scales since I can remember, and it has been one tragedy after another, I even have done bariatric surgery... and I don't know how to recede that weight..." (P33)

Even with so much scientific and financial investment, most of the therapeutic tools used has failed, not allowing the person to stabilize their weight (Coradini *et al.*, 2017). Because of that, when the subject is weight loss, it is important to pay special attention to character traces, because they shape the body and define a person's physical composition (Lowen, 1982), that is, their biotype. Through Body Analysis, it is possible to verify the percentage of the five characters traces, which allows a person to understand how his or her mind works (Maia and Reis, 2022), including in relation to being overweight (Reis, 2022). This pattern of functioning refers to the combination of pain and feature of the character traits. This combination will define thinking, feeling, and attitude when they are interacting with the environment, that is, with people and situations (Maia and Reis, 2022).

Identifying Toxic Environment and Emotional Dependency: People can live in environments that are conducive to using the resources of their character traces or in an environment that causes them to resent and relive the basic pains of each: rejection, abandonment, manipulation, humiliation, and betrayal (Lowen, 1982). In this study, about 25% of the participants informed living in toxic or emotionally dependent environments. They said that living in these environments was unfavorable to their traces, that they felt repressed, and that they could not express their feelings:

"I lived in an unfavorable environment for my traces..." (P1)

"I was always repressed, I was forbidden ... from putting my feelings out there ..." (P2)

It was also mentioned that emotional dependence and the toxic environment made it difficult to lose weight for good:

"Even the weight cycling ... is related to the emotional dependency that I had developed ... My levels of emotional dependency and an aggressive environment for my traces have done the rest..." (P9)

It was also reported that even environments with people close to them, who they believe they love, can hurt and make the weight loss process hard:

"It's amazing how toxic the environment can be even with the people you believe love you!!!" (P12)

"...my mother would make me eat everything on the plate and I would eat it so she wouldn't hit me or just be happy with me and love me..." (P49)

The transmission of patterns that support the arise and development of obesity is involved with the maintenance of affective bonds in the family relational dynamics (Coradini *et al.*, 2017). The identity of being "fat" sustains an invisible loyalty towards the family, making difficult the weight loss process in these subjects, since it would imply a disengagement from the sense of belonging to the family identity (Coradini *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the family environment and the quality of relationships in the family are pointed out as an important influencing factor in excessive weight gain (Coradini *et al.*, 2017). There is a tendency to use food as a way to express affection (Ramalho *et al.*, 2016; Otto and Ribeiro, 2012) and to avoid conflicts (Otto and Ribeiro, 2012). By avoiding conflicts, the family establishes dysfunctional patterns of communication, which may favor the development of obesity, since there is a difficulty in dealing with the expression of feelings (Otto and Ribeiro, 2012), which can reinforce the bonds of emotional dependence sustained by food (Ramalho *et al.*, 2016). It is perceived that food is used as a way to supply an emotional need due to the lack of communication between the family. Thus, the meaning of feeding, or overeating, may be related to the experiences acquired during childhood and the life context of each one of them (Coradini *et al.*, 2017).

Relation between character trace and the function of excess weight: The Schizoid character trace was formed from the pain of rejection and has its body and mind shaped so as to avoid contact with people and the "outside world" as much as possible (Lowen, 1982). Being overweight, therefore, has no role or utility for this character trait (Reis, 2022). The Oral character trace, on the other hand, was formed from the pain of abandonment, the pain of feeling alone, without having someone to attend to the needs. Because of this pain, is developed the resource of communicating and connecting with people (Lowen, 1982). However, when the person lives in an environment that does not allow, encourage, or even punish the connection, expression, and intensity, she/he cannot use his resources to have his/hers needs met. Thus, by making his body "bigger" she/he is seen, is noticed, and receives attention, and the excess weight becomes the function of prominence (Reis, 2022). The Psychopathic character trace was formed from the pain of manipulation (Lowen, 1982) and, by itself, does not tend to seek or avoid excess weight. This trait will act more as a potentiator, the benefit that the other traits have from the excess weight or lack of the same, so person with Psychopathic trait will seek to leverage in some way (Reis, 2022). The pain that originates the Masochist character trace is of humiliation. During the time of formation of this trace, the child learns and realizes that the parents have expectations of him, especially about the behavior and actions, and in order not to disappoint them she/he learns that he needs to be strong (Lowen, 1982). The stronger she/he is or appears to be, the more valued he is going to have. Thus, excess weight, will have the function of strength, because with a "bigger" body, which appears stronger and more robust, the person can bear more weight to "carry the weight of the world on his back" if needed (Reis, 2022). The pain that originates the Rigid character trace is that of betrayal, exchange, or exclusion (Lowen, 1982). When experiencing a betrayal in the parents' marriage and this brings pain and suffering to the family, the person with a high Rigid trace grows up with the feeling that they need to contain their sexual energy, and it is better to put on weight and become "less attractive." If they have experienced episodes of sexual abuse, especially in childhood, being overweight also serves as a way to protect themselves and avoid going through this type of situation again. Sexual abuse, especially when it involves someone close to

you, a family member, is also a form of betrayal, because the trust that you had in that abuser was betrayed. So, being overweight starts to have a protective function (Reis, 2022). In the comments of the followers in the social medias, the three functions of weight excess in a person's life were identified: Protection, Prominence, and Strength. The function that appeared most in the comments was Protection. The followers reported that they were afraid of being attractive, desired by men, and that they felt uncomfortable when they realized they were being watched:

"...I didn't want him to look at me like that...so I needed to protect my body." (P7)

"...I understood that the fear I took from men keeps me very fat..." (P34)

It was also reported that they were unable to lose weight because they had conflicts with their partner:

"... I've been having conflict at home with my partner and I've been gaining weight... I try not to eat much, and I don't eat, even so my body is getting bigger and bigger..." (P39)

Another fact mentioned was not being able to lose weight due to the abuse suffered:

"... when I lose weight and the looks change, I panic. I was always a thin child, but after adolescence where the abuse started, I put on weight..." (P41)

A secret, such as sexual abuse, within the family system, can modulate the intensity and type of existing relationships, and may contribute to children not acting autonomously, causing an invisible psychological burden, which can become an important factor in the development of diseases such as obesity (Tassara *et al.*, 2010). (Appart *et al.* 2007) point out that obesity reveals, in addition to the dynamics of the individual's eating behavior, also that of his family, adding that excess fat works as a protection against stressful situations. The second most frequently cited role of weight was Emphasis. There were several reports about the lack of welcome, affection, abandonment, and feeling alone even though they were surrounded by people.

"As a little girl I had no affection from my mother...and I felt abandoned..." (P24)

"...I feel lonely even with people around me..." (P42)

The expression of what cannot be said with words within the family is able to manifest itself in the body, which is in evidence and reveals, even if silently, a cry for help (Coradini *et al.*, 2017). Fact noted in the following speech:

"My mother never hugged me when I was a child...I don't even eat that much, but... avoiding crying is what makes you fatter, much more than food!" (P51)

The need to feel strong to carry the weight of others, take care of the family, and have to please and serve others was also mentioned by the followers:

"It was over 10 years of being overweight until I realized that I was hiding and carrying others' weight." (P13)

"... besides just taking care of the family, I was carrying a lot of weight." (P14)

Unfavorable socioeconomic conditions in early childhood can have an influence on body constitution at other stages of life (Wagner *et al.*, 2018). Initially obesity that was prevalent in higher income economic classes, has presented more frequently in low-income populations (Pinheiro *et al.*, 2004). The fact is that overweight is

present in both people of more or less favored economic classes, which suggests that family income alone is not the only factor to be evaluated. In their study, Berge *et al.* (2014) found that families with positive family dynamics, with moments spent in group, having fun and good relationships, had lower prevalence of overweight in childhood. While those with negative family dynamics, with the presence of parental hostility, permissiveness, or indiscipline, had an increased level of overweight (Coradini *et al.*, 2017). Children/adolescents from more dysfunctional families showed the highest interest in food. Children who felt their family environment was supportive and had the freedom to express their feelings demonstrated more controlled food intake and healthier eating styles (Silva *et al.*, 2021).

Identifying the character trace in pain

Knowing your character trace and identifying which of them are in the pain is very important for the weight elimination process. In this study, 45% of the followers mentioned that their character traces were in pain. Of these, 92% of the oral trace, 48% of the masochist trace, and 36% of the rigid trace were mentioned. No followers reported the schizoid and psychopathic traces.

"...I am ...oral and was very much in pain.... I let that trace go and let myself go real." (P3)

"...I understood that my Masochist and Oral peaks in pain were responsible for my weight gain..." (P9)

They lost weight by taking care of character traces: For the process of eliminating excess weight, it is important to understand the function of weight in the person's life and to identify which character traces are in pain, but this alone will not be enough. After becoming aware of the function of the weight, the person needs to take control of the situation. To assist in this control, the Master Key tool is used, which objective is to identify what has been causing the pain of their traces, whether in their environments, situations, or relationships, and define actions to make the necessary adjustments to activate their resources (Reis, 2022). For thousands of years, being overweight has been important to millions of people who need protection, prominence, or strength. Now that it is possible to understand the reasons why people become overweight, they can choose another way to survive in environments and in relationships without having to have a big body to feel protected, seen, and/or strong, i.e. by taking care of their character traces (Reis, 2022). In this study it was found that the group of followers who had the awareness and control of weight function, 45% reported that they lost weight and maintained their weight just by taking care of their character traces:

"...I lost 10 pounds in 3 months, just by taking care of my character traces, without dieting and exercising." (P2)

"...I did nothing but taking care of my character traces and by December I had lost 12 kg..." (P19)

"I eliminated 12 kg and... I could have a "lighter" life, with all my character traces in the resource.... I've been maintaining my weight for almost a year now.... That was the first time I've ever made it." (P21)

"After I changed (toxic environment) I lost 65 kg without bariatric, medicine or any other form of shortcut." (P25)

In this context, eliminating excess weight being more related to "power" than to "wanting". If the person no longer needs the function of weight they can and will be able to lose weight and, best of all, they will not need to put on weight again (Reis, 2022). Finally, it is considered that the results found can be important subsidies to be used with the intention of expanding the preventive aspects, as well as to value actions directed toward the control of overweight in the population.

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