

What Are the Barriers to the identification and treatment of Eating Disorders Amongst Ethnic Minorities Across the United Kingdom and the United States? A Narrative Literature Review.

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Background

Current literature shows that there are numbers of barriers that prevent professionals identifying eating disorder presentations in ethnic minority groups. Delayed recognition would impact on the timeline from presentation to assessment and treatment, which ultimately effects prognosis (Treasure et al., 2015). Ethnic groups are classified as the social group a person belongs to, and either identifies with or is identified with by others, as a result of a mix of cultural and other factors including language, diet, religion, ancestry and physical features traditionally associated with race (Bhopal, 2004). These are different across countries. The largest ethnic minority groups in the UK are mostly South Asians-British (including Indian, Pakistani, and Bengali populations) and Black-British (including Caribbean). On the other hand, the most prevalent ethnic minority groups in the USA these are represented by American-Hispanic populations (South Americans) and African Americans.

Aims and Objectives

To improve the understanding of ethnic minorities and eating disorders, this narrative review will examine the barriers that prevent ethnic minorities from being identified as having an eating disorder and receiving the appropriate evidence-based treatment.

Methodology

The methodology used to conduct this narrative systematic review follows the guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA).

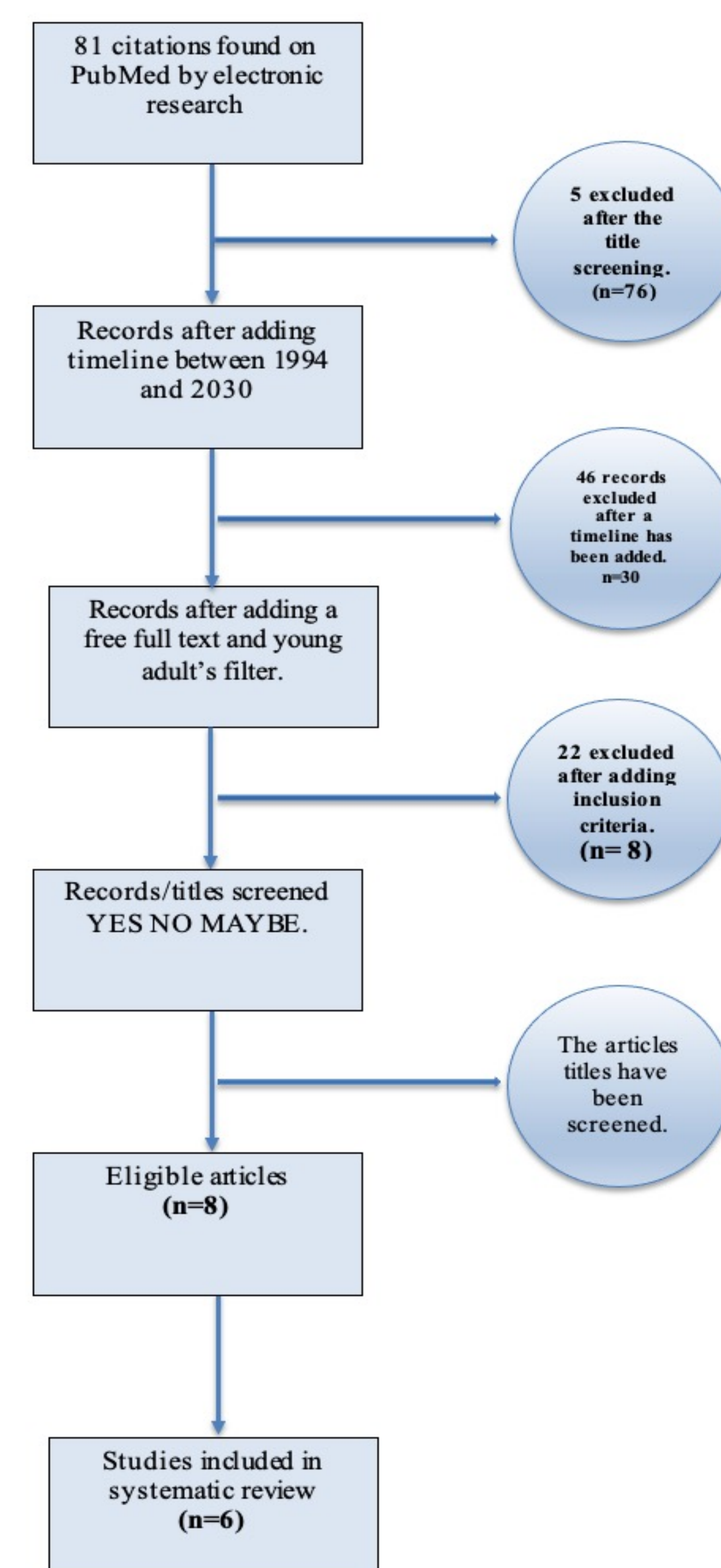
The inclusion criteria were:

- Articles in written and published in English;
- Sample population was based in the UK or the US;
- Full free text available;
- Articles published between 1994 – to date.

The exclusion criteria were:

- Articles published prior to 1994 (as the diagnostic criteria manual used would pre-date the DSM-IV and ICD-10).
- Studies focusing on white population only.

Figure 1 shows the process used to conduct the review.



Results

3 main overarching themes were determined regarding eating disorders barriers in ethnic minorities across the US and the UK including: cultural, societal and services delivery.

Table 1. shows the main overarching themes and subthemes generated from the research.

Main Overarching	Subtheme
Cultural	Religion and traditions, relationship to food and body image.
Societal	Shame, stigma and discrimination within the communities.
Services	Financial issues, therapist race and feeling of restriction.

Limitations

- This review only includes 6 articles.
- None of the papers explored language as a potential barrier to identification of eating disorders. This is a potential gap in the literature.
- Not all minority ethnic groups were represented, hence the results and recommendations are not generalizable.

Conclusion

The findings of this narrative systematic review, despite their limitations, offer valuable information for both clinicians and researchers to collect information regarding further research. The objective is that these findings will lead to the design of appropriate interventions to better detect and/or prevent the development of an eating disorder.

Recommendations

Further recommendations should include education on the clinical characteristics of eating disorders as presented in ethnic minority groups.

Management should also be more culturally sensitive, including ensuring that current screening tools are applicable across ethnicities and that staff are trained in cultural nuances on the meaning of food, mental health including eating disorders across the ethnicities present in the boroughs that they work in .

References

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