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### What are the Effects of Implementing a Rewards System on Individuals with Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviors?

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# What are the effects of implementing a rewards system on individuals with body-focused repetitive behaviors?

References:



## Introduction

Body-focused repetitive behaviors (BFRBs) are self-destructive habits that individuals perform to feel satisfaction, including but not limited to: hair twirling, nail biting, skin picking, or teeth grinding. This satisfaction can be achieved in multiple ways, which differs from person to person.

Overtime, there have been multiple treatment attempts with varying success used to reduce BFRBs. One that is not commonly discussed in this particular matter is known as the “rewards system”. The rewards system entails receiving some sort of prize, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, in exchange for good behavior, habits, and/or performance.

## Purpose

In past studies, it has been indicated that the rewards system has had a positive impact on different types of behaviors. This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing a rewards system on BFRBs, a treatment and disorder combination not frequently discussed.

The physical and mental consequences that BFRBs can cause convey its significance to research and discuss.

## Methods & Materials

**Databases:** Binghamton University Libraries, Google Scholar, PubMed

### Sources:

- ❖ Primary research studies done on individuals with behavioral, habitual, and/or learning disorders OR in a work environment utilizing a rewards system
- ❖ First-hand accounts of individuals that have experience with BFRBs
- ❖ Secondary sources that define BFRBs, the rewards system, or some combination of both
- ❖ Systematic literature reviews related to either BFRBs or the rewards system

**Keywords:** rewards system, body-focused repetitive behaviors, modifications, obsessive-compulsive disorder, habits

**Analysis:** A mixed-method, primarily qualitative approach was used for this research.

**Field:** Health and Behavioral Sciences

**Approach:** This research was conducted using methods similar to that of a systematic literature review. Sources containing the keywords were analyzed and connected with each other.

### Target Themes:

- ❖ *The Effectiveness of the Rewards System*  
The success (and failure) of the rewards system with behaviors and habits other than body-focused repetitive behaviors.
- ❖ *How BFRBs Have Been Treated*  
Approaches that have been used in the past to treat body-focused repetitive behaviors were compared to the rewards system.
- ❖ *Rewards are Not Just Extrinsic*  
Rewards can also be intrinsic, they do not have to all be tangible.

## Results & Discussion

### Benefits:

- ❖ Rewards system has seen success in other behavioral and habitual aspects
  - Binge eating
  - Learning in the classroom
  - Increasing healthy habits
  - Employee motivation
- ❖ Approaches that have been used to treat BFRBs have similarities to the rewards system
  - Habit Reversal Therapy
  - Retraining from negative to positive behavior
- ❖ Rewards can result in new satisfactions
- ❖ Small rewards are feasible

### Limitations with Potential Solutions:

- ❖ Rewards systems work temporarily
  - Lesser rewards over longer time period
  - Coexist with other existing treatments
- ❖ Unable to tell if it works
  - Physical damage/growth observed and tracked with before and after photos
- ❖ Works on some, not all
  - More so intended for individuals who are aware of their engagement in BFRBs

## Conclusion

The rewards system, with modifications, can be a successful approach to reducing body-focused repetitive behaviors in individuals who engage in them. Future studies and experiments should explore this type of treatment for this disorder to further determine its effectiveness.

