

Consequences Of Disordered Eating in Athletes

Name of Student

Instructor's Name

[Institutional Affiliation(s)]

Author Note

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Annotation: 1 (Quantitative)

Carvalhais, A., Araújo, J., Jorge, R. N., & Bø, K. (2019). Urinary incontinence and disordered eating in female elite athletes. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 22(2), 140–144.

Alice Caralhais, Joana Araujo, and fellow researchers, in their article titled “Urinary Incontinence and disordered eating in female elite athletes,” have observed the correlation between urinary disorders and eating disorders. The purpose of the study was to sketch the consequences of eating disorders evolving into bodily disorders among elite female athletes. The researchers explored in detailed the widespread consequences of disturbed eating habits among athletes, which in the long run, give rise to severe bodily disorders, especially systems that ensure the hemostasis of the body. The researchers not only aimed to highlight the negative consequences of the eating disorders but also explored the destructive lifestyle of the female elite athletes, including smoking, drinking, etc., in combination, which is responsible for intensifying the chances of accelerated bodily disorders among these athletes.

The significance of the study involved exploring the destructive lifestyle and unhealthy eating habits of female elite athletes as means to identify the potential parameters which could be adopted to minimize the development of eating disorders to subside urinary incontinence among these athletic women. The study is also significant for its pertinent awareness of this common issue among female athletes, either because of their vigorous physical routines or destructive eating habits, which further propagates eating disorders among the elite female athletes. It is commonly noticed that among female athletes, falling into the optimal body shape for their respective sports fields. For example, losing weight for gymnasts to gain flexibility and mobility, and for a weightlifter, gaining weight to develop muscle mass is important. In

attaining the desired body shape, female indulge themselves in abnormal and destructive eating habits, for example, “restrictive eating, fasting, frequent skipping meals, use of diet pills, laxatives, diuretics, enemas, overeating, binge-eating and purging” keep the body in a turbulent state, without giving their digestive system the needed time to adjust with the sudden change imposed on it (Carvalhais et al., 2019). This not only leads to an upset digestive tract but also disturbs the balance of nutrients, vitamins, and other supplementary fibers needed for the body to keep itself in a healthy shape. Consequently, eating disorders not only lead to urinary incontinence but can leads to muscle cramping, weakening of the pelvis. The study under consideration provides a detailed analysis of the consequences of disordered eating among athletes compared to non-athletes because of these disrupted and abrupt changes imposed on the body without letting it adjust.

Through a detailed quantitative cross-sectional study involving young and healthy elite athletic women from Portuguese followed by the age-matched non-athletic women, the study draws a detailed comparison and analysis between an unhealthy lifestyle and its consequence on the bodies of female athletes. To sample the data used to evaluate the association between “urinary incontinence and disordered eating, in elite female athletes,” a crossmatch analysis of 744 young Portuguese female was conducted with 273 elite athletes, 372 age-matched non-athletes with the mean age being 21 years (Carvalhais et al., 2019). Independent variables included in the study were disordered eating and urine incontinence. At the same time, the dependent variable included athletic vs. Non-athletic athletes and their background with respect to their age, lifestyle, physical health, etc. To sample the data regarding “clinical, demographic, and sport practice characteristics,” a detailed questionnaire was generated as a means to identify the problems of urinary incontinence and eating disorders. Two separate forms were generated to explore both the urinary problems and eating disorders in separate and later analyzed through a cross-sectional analysis. The first questionnaire developed focused on the

urinary incontinence inquiry, which was developed with the help of International Consultation on Incontinence. Another questionnaire focused on the examination of the eating habits among female athletes was also generated and distributed to both the experimental and control groups. Disordered eating habits among female athletes and non-athletes were analyzed using EDE-Q (Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire), which “assesses the core features of eating disorder psychopathology” (Carvalhais et al., 2019). To analyze background variables, including medical history, hormone regulation, smoking or drinking habits, age, weight, menstrual status followed by the hours spent on exercising, etc., were all collected through self-reported questionnaires. To analyze the data collected through the questionnaire, SPSS software was used to calculate mean and standard deviations in the result obtained and were evaluated using Chi-square and the Mann-Whitney test.

The result concluded that the ratio of 29.3% in comparison to 13.4% was observed in athletes and non-athletes, respectively, in relation to urine incontinence. Whereas women belonging to both groups showed little difference between eating disorders, despite their athletic or non-athletic rank with a ratio of 17.7% among athletes to 20.2% in non-athletic women. The urinary discontinuation was only associated with disordered eating habits for athletic women followed by their rigorous physical routines in comparison to non-athletic females along with the consumption of injurious substances including alcohol, tobacco serving as catalysts for the development of urinary incontinence among athletic females. As a result, the incontinence in female elite athletes was found to be three-time enhanced in comparison to the urinary incontinence issues among non-athletic female bodies.

The study has asserted its validity by highlighting its approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Sports of the University of Porto, as well as obtaining written consents from the participants of the study. The study not only provides a detailed analysis of the relationship between female elite athletes and non-athletic women in terms of their

disordered eating and urine incontinence. But it also focuses upon the underlying factors, including subjective differences of the subjects in terms of their age, body size, weight, health status, and hours of physical activity to keep in focus all the possible deviations and shortcomings involved, which can put a limitation on the study. Thus, the study offers a comprehensive study of the factors under consideration. However, there are some limitations to the study in terms of its demographic limitations. Also, the study only focuses on exploring the consequences of disordered eating on urine incontinence but does nothing in terms of studying to what extent and how it influences the lifestyle of elite female athletes. The study is open for further investigation in such a context.

The study under consideration has significantly helped me in evaluating the potential consequences of disordered eating among athletes, where one such consequence is urinary incontinence among female athletes. Incorporating the article further in my study helped me to analyze the widespread consequences of disordered eating among athletes and how it not only influences their athletic career but also promotes the development of psychological disorders among athletes.

Annotation no: 2 (Qualitative)

Vargas, M. L. F. P., & Winter, S. (2020). Weight on the bar vs. weight on the scale: A qualitative exploration of disordered eating in competitive female powerlifters. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 52*, 101822.

In the article titled “Weight on the bar vs. Weight on the scale: A qualitative exploration of disordered eating in competitive female powerlifters,” Maria Luisa and Stacy Winters have explored the disordered eating habits among female weight-class as a consequence of psychological burdens that the athletes experience. By taking into account, the reflections provided by the female athlete, the purpose of the study is to explore the consequential factors

that are involved in the perpetuation of the eating disorders among the female powerlifters. By taking into account the social and cultural insights of the athlete's geographical positioning, the purpose of the study is to highlight the psychological fears which compel the female powerlifters, who need the body muscles to lift those heavy weights, to become conscious of their eating habits leading towards eating disorders.

The study aims to explore four prominent leading factors that play a dominant role in the initiation of eating disorders among female powerlifters. They identified four factors including fear of disclosing weight-cutting concerns, the heavy diet of a powerlifter, the cultural expectations from females, the socio-cultural narrative of an ideal female body clear a paradox for the female powerlifter who are torn between pursuing their career or conforming to body ideals narrated by the society. The significance of the study is to expose, highlight and explore these narratives as means to work towards the solutions which can help create an inclusive environment for the female powerlifters to feel more comfortable with their bodies and minimize the disordered eating habits. The study also aims towards working towards a psychological implication of the body-ideals and social expectations and work towards identifying the common ground for female powerlifters to bring a balance in their athletic lifestyle and redefine the social standards for an ideal woman body.

The article under consideration is qualitative research aims to highlight the attitude of female powerlifters towards their body types, fears of social stigmatization, and psychological and cultural burdens which compels these individuals towards cutting off their diet, which consequently leads towards eating disorders among these athletes. The independent variables involved in the study include the social, cultural, and psychological concerns of the female powerlifters towards their bodies, with the dependent variable being the participants involved in the interviewing process. To observe the eating disorders, the instrument of the study employed in the research included a detailed literature review which explored that "Distinct

social and cultural narratives (e.g., sporting cultures, gendered discourses) have been shown to influence constructions of disordered eating” (Vargas & Winter, 2020). In relation to the pre-explored concepts, the study involves an interpretive paradigm allowing flexibility and subjectiveness of opinion to shape the final verdict of the significance of the study. Approved from the Institutional ethical board, the sampling method involved the recruitment of female powerlifters utilizing various social media platforms. The athletes were invited for an interview to narrate their disordered eating experiences in terms of their “thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors related to eating and the body during their participation in powerlifting” (Vargas & Winter, 2020). The participants involved in the study included the 17 British female powerlifters weighing from 47-72 KG, as per International defined weighing measures. Along with their weight category, their powerlifting-specific skills, including Wilks score (strength-body mass ratio), the number of competitions they were involved in, weightlifting in multiple categories as well their per-week training hours were also taken into consideration. Each participant was given a consent form as well as some relevant information to read. To keep the statistics relevant and consistent, they were also asked to “record their age, experience, training hours, weight-class, lifting total, and Wilks” (Vargas & Winter, 2020). In the interviews, four of which were conducted online through skype and the rest of the thirteen conducted face-to-face, the interviewees were given open-end questions including surveying their athletic background, interest, the difference in body weight before and after joining along with their food behaviors.

The results revealed that “weight-cutting” culture in powerlifting is motivated by a regulating culture within the field motivated by the external socio-cultural factors in combination contribute to the inculcation of the eating habits among the female powerlifters. Becoming acquainted with the restricted diet, food manipulation, gaining or restricting of weight based upon the weight classes in powerlifting all contribute to disordered eating habits.

Summarizing the interviews, it was concluded that athletes held an opposite perception from that of powerlifters where they found their “weight-cutting” to increase their Wilks, whereas, for powerlifters, their muscle mass is the motivator of their heightened Wilks. However, outside of their powerlifting career, the culture regulation and body ideals often compel these female powerlifters to pursue ‘weight-cutting,’ creating a disruption in their eating habits leading to eating disorders.

The study provides an authentic evaluation of the “weight-cutting” culture among the female powerlifter since the researchers drove their samples to form a diverse region of the United Kingdom, ensuring that every region gets equal representation in the statistical analysis which they observed to study the eating disorders. The study also closely took into consideration the socio-cultural differences, organizational differences, as well as the different trainers among the various UK regions, which may hinder the authenticity of the results. Therefore, adding athletes from diverse environments and taking a holistic account of their athletic background, weight-category, achievements, and practicing habits, the authors provided a diversified account while tracing intersections in the eating attitudes and the underlying reasons creating disruptions in their eating habits. However, the study is limited in the sense that it solely focuses on socio-cultural as well as the athletic accounts of UK female powerlifters. Extending the same socio-cultural diversity which the researchers took into consideration while observing eating disorders, one can conclude that the same limitations are applicable to a global level, with the reasons behind eating disorders varying with varied regional differences.

The study has helped me to not only analyze the subjective attitudes of the athletes but also to explore the diverse socio-cultural implications as well as field specification which are involved in shaping and influencing the eating habits of the athletes. Taking into consideration the diverse account of the female powerlifters have allowed me to explore the socio-cultural

regulations, field specification in addition to the psychological influences and consequences which compels the athletes to develop disorders eating habits.

Analysis

The first article under consideration titled, “Psychological risk indicators of disordered eating in athletes” by Hannah Stoyel and fellow researchers, allows a comprehensive understanding of multiple risk factors involved in determining eating disorders in athletes. A cross-sectional study was designed to explore the “social pressures, internalization, body dissatisfaction, negative affect, restriction, and bulimia” among 1017 athletes through an online survey (Stoyel et al., 2020). The study concludes that the formation of eating disorders among athletes has little to do with their athletic field but is largely determined by interrelating factors including subjective perceptions, peer competitions as well as gender differences.

In another article titled, “Body Image and Eating Disorders are Common among Professional and Amateur Athletes Using Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs: A Cross-Sectional Study,” Daria Piacentino and Georgios D. Kotzalidis have evaluated the “prevalence of body image disorders (BIDs) and eating disorders (EDs) in PIED-using athletes vs. PIED nonusers,” with PIED being an acronym for “performance and image enhancing drugs” (Piacentino et al., 2017). Analyzing the statistic from 84 professional and amateur athletes, through different testing and procedures, the study concluded that PIED-users and non-PIED athletes overlapped in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics, but the difference was clearly observed in terms of their Clinical and psychological disorders PEID users for the hormonal imbalances and fluctuations the drug-induced on the body of the athletes. Since PIED boosts the level of physical activity, the use of such heavy doses in combination with the caffeine intake results in heightened psychological disturbances among athletes. Incorporation of the study in my research has allowed me to add another external factor in my research of

reasons behind eating disorders among athletes. The study has also allowed me to add scientific evidence of drug use and abuse in combination with a disturbed psychological state as a direct contributor to disturbed eating habits.

The third article under consideration titled “Team weigh-ins and self-weighing: Relations to body-related perceptions and disordered eating in collegiate male athletes” by Nick Galli and Trent Petrie along with Justine Chatterton, examines the relation of the team and collegiate weighting in making athletes and its impact on “body ideals, social pressures about weight/body, body satisfaction, dietary intent, negative affect, drive for muscularity, and bulimic symptomatology” (Galli et al., 2017). A cross-sectional survey conducted electronically to evaluate the attitude and perceptions of male athletes in terms of their body ideals and the consequences team weighing produces on their psychology; it was reported that athletes felt pressurized and conscious of their bodies leading to muscle building, diet restrictions, or bulimic tendencies depending upon their desired body ideals. An analysis of this article in my study has allowed me to evaluate the dynamics and influence of peer pressure in determining the eating habits of athletes.

Jan H Rosenvinge, Jorunn Sundgot-Borgen, and their fellow researchers in their article titled, “Are adolescent elite athletes less psychologically distressed than control? A cross-sectional study of 966 Norwegian adolescents” have explored the attitudes of young Norwegian athletes in terms of their body language, psychological state, competence level, and mental health. The article centers around the idea of whether the ‘athletic level’ plays any contribution in determining the mental health of young athletes. The article also deals with investigating the significance of eating disorders among young athletes as a consequence of the psychological pressures and increased competitive desires to surpass their competitors. Through a cross-sectional quantitative analysis, the research targeted Norwegian athletes divided between adolescent elite athletes and regular school athletes of the same age. The parameters for this

controlled experiment included the observance of “psychological distress, perfectionism, and eating problems” (Rosenvinge et al., 2018). It was noted that psychological disorders dominated the eating disorders, causing an amplified impact on their mental health among the control ‘student’ body. This shows that there is a direct relationship between disordered eating habits and psychological distress. Eating disorders are not the motivator of psychological distress. On the contrary, it is the psychological pressure that compels individuals towards unhealthy eating habits.

Final Thoughts

A detailed analysis of the articles incorporated and discussed in my study has helped me develop multiple perspectives in identifying the root causes and consequences of eating disorders among athletes, which starts at the ground level before they enter professional athletics and continues to along their whole career along with multiple other factors influencing the eating behaviors of athletes. Irrespective of the gender, age, or athletic field, athletes suffer from unhealthy eating habits and disorders. The vigorous training hours, the strive for perfectionism, peer-pressure, subjective perceptions, socio-cultural pressures, and many other factors are all responsible factors in developing psychological distress, compelling individuals to develop unhealthy eating habits in the early days of their training till their late professional career.

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