

Eating Disorder Behaviors and Attitudes in College Athletes

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Background

- 40-49% of collegiate athletes experienced disordered eating, while 30.7% of them were also dissatisfied with their body image¹
- 84% of these athletes have engaged in maladaptive eating and weight control behaviors such as self-induced vomiting, strict dieting, binge eating, and fasting¹
- Studies show for student athletes, eating disorders can lead to malnutrition, which can hinder or prevent them from performing their best²

Objectives

To assess if stigma and perceptions held by athletic support personnel contribute to the development of disordered eating behaviors, characterized by weight loss due to excessive dieting and/or exercising in UCSD student-athletes

Methods

- In April 2023, an online cross-sectional anonymous survey was conducted via google forms, a total of (n=70) participants were recruited.
- **Eligibility:** UC San Diego club or NCAA athlete
- **Recruitment:** Digital survey was disseminated on social media platforms and messaging applications, as well as emails sent out by UCSD's Public Health department.
- **Exclusion Criteria:** Not a UCSD club or NCAA athlete

Results

Figure 1. Sports Participation Breakdown (n=70)

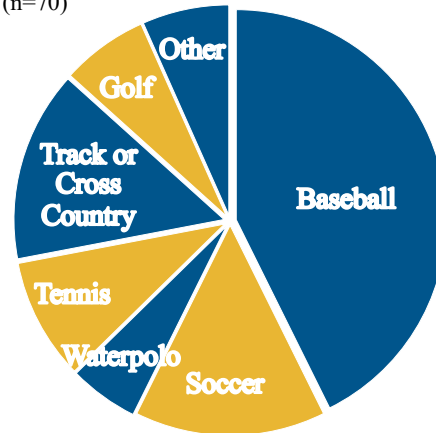


Figure 2. Gender Distribution of Survey Participants

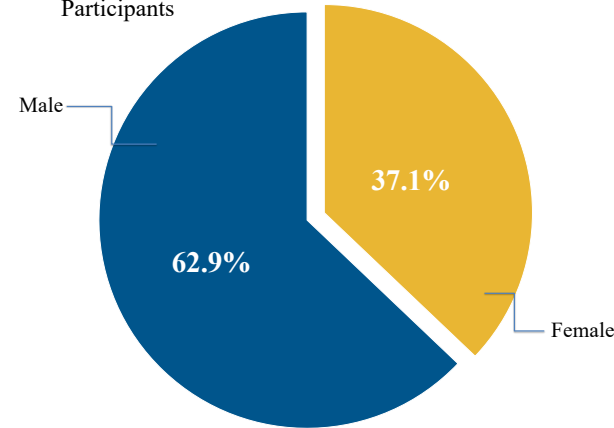


Figure 3. College athletes develop disordered eating habits as a result of stigma held by coaching staff and teammates.

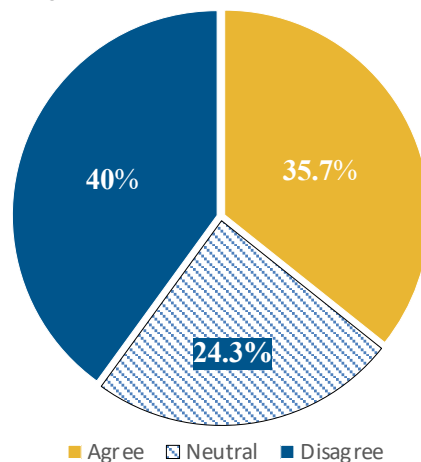
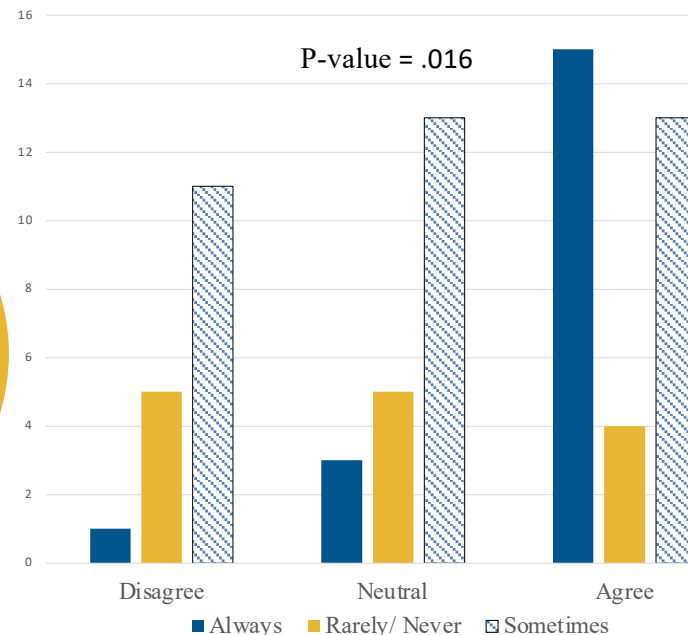


Figure 4. Relationship between the evaluation of a player's worth and athletes changing their eating habits based on the stigma



Conclusions

Our findings showed a positive statistically significant association between perceptions of comments on body image and disordered eating behaviors among UC San Diego student athletes.

Policy Implications

Implementing policies that would require colleges to develop and implement education and awareness programs about the potential negative impacts of comments of body image, as well the development of eating disorders.

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