

AN INVESTIGATION INTO ATHLETES' EATING ATTITUDES

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Abstract

This aim of this study is to investigate eating attitudes among athletes who do active exercise.

The study was conducted with 161 individuals 19±1.86 years of age who are students at Atatürk University Sport Sciences Faculty in Erzurum. Two different scales were applied to individuals participating in the study.

The first applied scale is the ID form which is designed to obtain personal information. The second scale applied is the Eating Attitude Test (EAT) which is to determine eating disorders and eating attitudes. The analysis of acquired data is done using SPSS (version 22) and Significance for statistical data was selected being $p<0.05$.

As a result of study, individuals participating in the study's EAT levels were found to be fairly high. According to these results, it can be said that Athletes have eating disorders. Nevertheless, there were no significant differences in EAT levels according to state of family income, abode, smoking, or alcohol use.

Key words: Attitude, Eating, Athlete, Sport

Introduction

Good and bad eating habits which are embedded in societies have been confronted over a variety of ages and gender as a problem. An increase in eating disorders and environmental warnings have been experienced, and the crucial role of a healthy life has recently gained much more importance result in new behavior disorders.

In eating disorders, body, body weight, energy values of food, excessive efforts to become slim, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) resemble each other. Eating disorders contain serious anxiety such as an unreliable decrease or increase in the buying of food, or excessive anxiety about body weight and appearance which occurs in eating behaviors (1). Eating disorders might improve when normal behaviors and attitudes to the control of body weight, physical appearance, and consumption

of food become excessive. Basic known eating disorders consist of not eating (Anorexia Nervosa), eating excessively and vomiting (bulimia nervosa), and binge-eating (2). It is reported that eating disorders are mostly observed together with other psychiatric disorders such as depression, substance abuse, and anxiety disorders (2). One of the first steps causing these disorders is a rise in awareness. Also, the outbreak of the disorder is often associated with an event which leads to stress (3). Eating disorders are described as a chronic health problem which stimulates adolescents in western societies and ranks third. In addition to the fact that these disorders are observed in western societies more frequently, it is stated that today, they affect most of the societies all over the world. Especially in recent years, eating disorders have become the center of attention among researchers and clinicians in Europe and America (21).

Eating disorders are destructive diseases resulting from a combination of many factors. Some of these are emotional dysregulation, personality disorders, parental pressure, genetic - biological susceptibility, physical - sexual abuses, social culture inclined to the excessive consumption of food, and also obsession with slimness (4-5). Generally, these are diseases which become chronic and lead to serious complications. The desire to have ideal body sizes in society clarifies why eating disorders have so widespread (4).

The change in the concepts of beauty and attractiveness and the fact that slimness is considered as the most essential aspect of physical beauty have led to a change in eating habits. These disorders include medical illnesses that can be treated and real ones which are not based on the lack of behaviors or desires (2). Thus, medical nutrition therapy is growing in importance with regard to eating disorders day by day (6,7).

The increase in eating disorders has led to various health problems. Regarding this, these fundamental health problems include excessive slimness, obesity, and bone problems. Eating habits and disorders occupy an important position considering the issue of sport. As is known, in many studies previously conducted, nutrition is as important as training in order to achieve success and physical accomplishments at the highest level. From this perspective, it is crucial to prevent eating disorders for athletic skills and success. Considering the purposes of current research, this study was designed to explore the eating habits of individuals who do physical exercise actively.

Methodology

A total of 161 people who are majoring at the Sport Sciences Faculty at Erzurum Atatürk University and who do exercise actively at about 19 ± 1.86 ages participated in the study. 109 of these participants were male and 52 of them were female students. Two different surveys were administered to the students within the scope of this study.

Personal Information Form; This consists of questions about age, gender, income status and some habits.

Eating Attitudes Test (40/YTT-40/EAT-40)

The eating attitude test which was originally designed in English (YTT-40) was developed by Garner and Garfinkel (50) in 1979 as a self-assessment scale which objectively measures the symptoms of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. As it provides more detailed information in clinical evaluation, it also depicts the changes that come out at the end of treatment. On the other hand, it is used as a scanning tool in order to examine the cases of anorexia nervosa which have not been diagnosed before in high-risk group societies for the disease (8).

YTT-40 is a paper and pencil test which is a graded scale with 40 items and 6 choices, is administered to adolescents and adults without time limitation. Items take the form of a graded scale" in multiple choice format with 6 scales ranging from "always", "very often", "sometimes", "rarely", to "never (8). In measurement of the test, 3 points are given for every extraordinary response and 2-1 point(s) are given for other options. The total score is obtained after the scale is graded. 30 points and above are considered significant. The top point is 120 (9).

Validity and reliability analyses of the test was carried out by Işık Savaşır and Neşe Erol (10) in Turkish in 1989.

YTT is a valid and reliable scale which is widely used in an attempt to scan eating disorders and translated into Turkish, and psychometric studies of which have been done (11). YTT measures possible eating disorders in normal individuals as much as behaviors and attitudes of individuals who have these eating disorders (10).

Results

The table above displays the relationship between eating attitudes and other variables including gender, smoking, alcohol use, physical pleasure and income status of participants. There was not a statistically significant difference between participants' eating attitudes and the variables such as gender, smoking, alcohol use, physical pleasure, and income status.

Table 3.1. The relation between eating attitude and gender, smoking, alcohol use, physical pleasure, income status.

Eating Attitude	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	p
	Male	109	87,8532	12,63360	-1,663	,098
	Female	52	91,3077	11,64262	-1,712	,090
	Smoking					
	Yes	49	90,2653	12,69640	,877	,382
	No	112	88,4018	12,27130	,866	,389
	Alcohol Use					
	Yes	61	86,1538	16,40169	-1,267	,207
	No	100	89,5111	11,46042	-,998	,326
	Physical Pleasure					
	Yes	141	89,2270	12,13400	,700	,485
	No	20	87,1500	14,24492	,619	,542
	Income	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	F	p
	≤1400TL	46	87,4565	13,79325		
1401-2500TL	64	89,5469	10,98040			
2501-3500TL	32	91,3125	9,60993	,859	,464	
3500TL≥	19	86,7368	16,92087			
Total	161	88,9689	12,39225			

*p<0.05

Table 3.2. Eating Attitude Scores

Eating Attitude	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
	161	49,00	117,00	88,9689	12,39225

The average score of participants in the eating attitude test was found to be 88,96±12,39. Considering this finding, it is obvious that participants of the current research have eating disorders to a considerable extent.

Discussion-Conclusion

This study was carried out in order to determine eating disorders of individuals who do exercise actively.

52 of the participants were female (32.3%), and 109 of them were male students (67.7%). The age range of the individuals on average was between 19±1.86. While 49 of the participants (30.4%) smoke, 112 of them (69.6%) do not smoke. Apart from that, while 61 of the participants (37.9 %) use alcohol, 100 of them (62.1%) do not use alcohol. In addition, considering income status, the income status of 46 participants (28.6%) was found to be 1400 Turkish liras and below, and the income status of 64 participants (39.8%) was found to be between

1400-2500 Turkish liras, while that of 32 participants (19.9%) was found to be between 2501 and 3500 Turkish liras. Lastly, the income status of 19 participants (11.8%) was stated to be 3500 Turkish liras and above.

Eating disorder scores of participants were found to be 49,00 at minimum, 117 at maximum, and 88.96±12.39 on average. According to these findings, it can be stated that the participants have problems related to eating disorders.

It is known that desires, demands, and expectations of all human beings are different, and therefore this case also changes people's consumption habits. Global developments in recent years have considerably increased the expectations, desires and needs of people as they change their consumption habits. People may be motivated to desire something which is far away thanks to information and communication technology.

One of the significant concepts resulting from changing consumption patterns is nutrition.

The attitudes of people to the concept of 'nutrition' changes day by day and this case also changes and their eating habits too. One of the groups whose consumption patterns change particularly, mostly due to dynamic environmental factors, is adolescents. The consumption patterns of college students who comprise a crucial percentage of adolescent groups change too. Eating habits that especially constitute a significant part of physiological stimuli consistently undergo change. In this sense, in the relevant literature, there have been substantial numbers of studies conducted in this field of research and many are still being conducted regarding the eating habits of adolescents (12, 13, 14, 15).

Çehreli and Özarslan who examined students' eating habits and the relationship between their physical conditions and nutrition in their research, focused on the participants who had an age range of between 16-23. 140 of these participants were males whereas 60 of them were females. The participants were students majoring at sports academy, studying at different sports branches and who were active athletes. The findings of the study showed that most of the participants consumed dairy products, meat, eggs, legumes, and sugar-grain

in the recommended quantity or above whereas they consumed fruits and vegetables less than the recommended quantity (16).

In another piece of research, Öztürk examined general eating habits of individuals who often went to the gym, and consequently found out that their eating habits were bad (17).

Kayatürk focused on the knowledge regarding eating and eating habits of individuals who did aikido at an advanced level or lower levels in his research. As a result, Öztürk established that participants had sufficient knowledge about eating whereas their eating habits were not good (18).

In another study, Dülger found out that among the participants, 20 % of college students did not regularly have breakfast, 35.5 % of them did not regularly have lunch, and 5.2 % of them did not regularly have dinner. According to data obtained from another study which was carried out in the same field of research, it is stated that 35 % of students did not regularly have breakfast, 46.2 % of them did not regularly have lunch, and 29.6 % of them did not regularly have dinner. These results support the findings of our study.

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