Eating Disorders In Athletes

Athletes are not immune to mental illness. They suffer from a variety of psychiatric conditions. Ranging from depression and anxiety to eating disorders. Disordered eating in athletes is quite common, especially in female athletes. Many female athletes feel pressured into fitting into the stereotypical appearance of thin and toned. This pressure along with low self-esteem leads to unhealthy habits of losing weight through the control of food. There is consistent evidence that eating disorders are prevalent in female athletes participating in weight-sensitive sports which can lead to significant physical and psychological impairment.

Numerous studies have revealed that female athletes in particular experience an immense amount of stress that results in negative body image. Female athletes are at greater risk for eating disorders due to the experience and internalization of pressures regarding various aspects of their bodies, including weight and appearance. Claudia Reardon identifies that female athletes are tasked with the challenge of training their bodies and developing a level of muscularity. This development is to aid them in their sport, but outside their sport, they carry a different mindset regarding their body image. She makes the claim that “risk factors for athlete development of eating disorders include the following: Participation in “leanness” sports in which there are weight classes or in which lean physique is regarded as physically or aesthetically advantageous...” (Reardon, C. L. 2017). Disordered eating behaviour becomes a

the clear problem for athletes, who may be particularly vulnerable given many of the expectations and norms within the athletic environment.

Pressures from the environment of the sports culture can also encourage athletes to be body and weight focused. Carrigan (2018) reviewed the subject regarding the different effects of variable on female athletes and states that if athletes are required to maintain a specific weight it would be expected for the athlete to “experience increases in body dissatisfaction and psychosocial distress” (p.70). This article explores the emphasis on an ideal body type and specific requirements in a sport, females are more susceptible to developing an eating disorder due to low self esteem in body issue.

Female athletes hold themselves to high standards in order to be seen as strong yet aesthetically pleasing. In Thomas’ (2017) article through The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) portrays the different aspects of a sport environment and how the participation in certain sports can increase the risk of eating disorders in athletes. While the pressures of the sport may be a factor such as “sport body stereotypes” and the idea that the ideal athletic image needs to be accomplished (Thomas 2017). While Hendrix, C. W. (2014). has suggested that the most influential factors derive from sociocultural influences such as family, peers, and coaches. However, both argue that there is no one issue that leads to eating disorders in female athletes. Multiple factors arise that are the cause for such behaviours to develop.

Female athletes in intense sports may tend to engage in disordered eating behaviours. The sensitivity around weight and in some sports as well as the outside pressures of societal standards may lead some athletes to developing eating disorders. There is consistent evidence

that eating disorders are prevalent in female athletes participating in weight sensitive sports which can lead to significant physical and psychological impairment. The pressures that arise from intense sports lead athletes to want to have control over how they perform and how their body looks as well. These factors leads to unhealthy habits of losing weight through the control of food.

References

1. Carrigan, K. W. (2018). Self-Weighing: Longitudinal And Cross-Sectional Relation