



## Mid Atlantic Regional Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine

46<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting, November 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Conference Proceedings

International Journal of Exercise Science, Issue 9, Volume 12



### Pushing Beyond the Limits: Disordered Eating, Compulsive Exercise, and Body Image Dissatisfaction in Collegiate Athletes

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Disordered eating is highly prevalent among National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletes (Meeusen et al., 2013). Up to 84% of female and 72% of male collegiate athletes reported eating disorder symptoms, such as binge eating, fasting, restricted dieting, compulsive exercise, or using weight loss supplements (Chatterton & Petrie, 2013). These behaviors can contribute to poor health as well as suboptimal athletic and academic performance (Joy et al., 2016). Most individuals suffer with these symptoms in isolation, as these behaviors are often undetected by athletic trainers and coaches (Watson, 2006).

**PURPOSE:** To examine the prevalence of eating disorders and compulsive exercise in a sample of collegiate athletes; and to investigate the differences in athletes' disordered eating, compulsive exercise, and body image by gender, sport type, age, and level of athletic participation. **METHODS:** 128 NCAA Division I varsity and club athletes completed the Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-Q), Compulsive Exercise Test (CET), and Multidimensional Body Self-Relations Questionnaire – Appearance Scales (MBSRQ-AS). Correlational analysis, Independent two-sample, and Welch's t-tests were conducted to establish statistical significance for the relationships of interest. **RESULTS:** Eleven athletes (8.6%) met criteria for a clinical eating disorder, while 40 athletes (31.3%) reported subclinical symptoms of an eating disorder. Nineteen athletes (14.85%) scored above the clinical cut-off score for compulsive exercise. In contrast to athletes with no symptoms of an eating disorder, athletes with symptoms of an eating disorder reported using exercise as a weight control measure. Female and lean-sport athletes reported greater disordered eating and body image dissatisfaction than male and non-lean sport athletes, respectively. **CONCLUSION:** Collegiate athletes suffer from a high prevalence of disordered eating due to substantial time demands and socio-cultural pressures associated with their sport participation. **SIGNIFICANCE/NOVELTY:** In addition to focusing on disordered eating, this study explored the frequency of compulsive exercise, a compensatory behavior which is highly prevalent, but often overlooked among varsity athletes. The study findings and implications may aid coaches, athletic administration, and mental health professionals in promptly identifying at-risk athletes through screening protocols and helping them seek professional assistance.

Supported by the Temple University CPH Visionary Research Fund.