

ABSTRACT

This study examined the prevalence and correlates of disordered eating behaviors among Chinese athletes in Hong Kong. Two hundred and forty two athletes completed Eating Disorder Inventory (EDI), Eating Symptom Checklist- Revised (ESC-R) and Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2). Subjects were subdivided by: (i) sex (male vs. female); (ii) rank (elite vs. non-elite); (iii) sports type (shape/weight dependent vs. non-shape/weight dependent); and (iv) competition anxiety level (high vs. low). Results suggested that female, elite, non-shape/weight dependent and high competition anxious athletes were more at risk for developing disordered eating attitudes and behaviors was higher than male, non-elite, shape/weight dependent and low competition anxiety athletes respectively. Compared to Chinese college students, athletes showed elevated scores on important psychological measures of EDI. Only one athlete met the criteria of Bulimia Nervosa (male = .9%, female = 0%). Findings indicated that binge eating (40.4%) and the use of less extreme forms of weight control methods including eating low fat food (41.6%), excessive exercising (41.6%) and dieting (37.1%) were popular among the athletes. Extreme forms of weight control methods including fasting, self-induced vomiting and the use of laxatives/diuretics or diet pills/tea (5-9%) were rarely used. Male athletes attributed the "pursuit for performance excellence" whereas the female athletes attributed the "wish for aesthetic ideals of beauty" as the most important contributing factors to their weight control. Cultural differences over the prevalence and symptomatology of clinical and subclinical eating disorders were discussed.