

Attitudes, Experiences, and Meanings of Mealtimes Among Male Collegiate Athletes

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Introduction

- The current literature focuses on eating disorders among female athletes with little qualitative research focusing on male athletes.
- Prevalence rate for disordered eating (DE) in this population is 16.6%-19.2%¹
- DE may develop due to socio-cultural norms, biological phenomenology, social pressures of the ideal athlete body, and sport norms.²

What are the attitudes, experiences, and meanings of mealtimes for male collegiate level athletes?

Methods

- Qualitative study using a phenomenological approach
- One-on-one interviews and food diaries representing intake for 3 days prior to interview
- Data analysis was completed using a 4-step process³

Results

Autonomy

"I'll eat a lot later during the season, later at night. Then in the off season, I just kind of snack a lot more probably because I'm not busy with school and football all the time, so I have more time to kind of eat whenever I feel like."

"You'll see dudes have one meal a day for a week leading up to it [official weigh in] just because their weight is not right."

Weight Control

Food, Body, & Performance

"We can absolutely feel it if we don't eat right and we're out there and were like 'goodness gracious' and you just feel heavy."

Discussion

- Athletes may experience **occupational deprivation** and **poor mental health** due to **lack of autonomy** from sport.
- Athletes may experience **stress during mealtimes** and be at risk for **developing DE** and eating disorders due to pressure to achieve **weight standards** and match **ideal body norms**.
- **Confidence** in performance and **desire for a healthy lifestyle** may protect against DE development.

OS/OT Implications

OTs can prevent DE in male athletes by:

- Advocating for autonomy in player's mealtime occupations
- Creating environments that promote positive social engagement during mealtimes
- Educating players to have occupational balance in all areas of occupational performance.

Reference

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