

What Relationship Between Eating Disorder and Alexithymia in Sports?

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INTRODUCTION: The athletic population seem to be vulnerable to eating disorders (ED) but is this in relation to their ability to express their emotions or alexithymia?

OBJECTIVE: Studying the prevalence of ED in a population of athletes, and establish the relationship between the ED and alexithymia .

METHODS: It was a descriptive and analytical cross-sectional study of 45 persons practicing sport. We used:

-The Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26).

-The Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20).

RESULTS : The average age of participants was 26,44 years ; the sex ratio (M/W) was 0,5. Their average weight was 67.18% Kg, their average size was 1.68 m and had an average BMI of 23.45 ; 73,3% had a normal BMI and 26,7% were overweight (BMI \geq 25). They practiced a collective sport in 53.3% of cases, with an average number of hours / week: $4.18 \pm 2,70$.

The average score of the EAT-26 was 12.71 ± 6.75 and prevalence of TCA was 22.2%. The average score of TAS-20 was 49,93 9,77 and alexithymia was found in 17.8% of participants. A significant correlation was found between alexithymia and ED ($p = 0,03$) and between ED and the nature of sports ($p = 0,01$).

CONCLUSION : It's clear from our study an association between alexithymia and the ED. The practice of sport is a way to express themselves, lack of verbal expression. Hence the importance of educating people with ED and encourage them to practice sports, so ideally with psychotherapeutic care.