



Changes in mental health, eating habits, and physical activity levels of elite athletes during the Iranian COVID-19 pandemic lockdown

Oral Presentation

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Abstract

Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic is a major health crisis that has changed the lifestyles of millions worldwide. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between Covid-19-Induced mental health, physical activity levels, and eating habits of elite athletes in the Iranian COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

Methods: 401 elite athletes were used in this study (168.82 ± 0.07 cm; 63.92 ± 7.42 kg; the body mass index (BMI): 22.3 ± 0.78 kg/m²). International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ), Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21), and the Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R) were used to measure the level of physical activity and mental health status, respectively. The emotional eater questionnaire (EEQ) was used to assess food emotions.

Results: It was suggested that depression and anxiety were moderate and severe, respectively, whereas stress was normal in most elite athletes. It was also found that elite athletes had low emotional eating during the COVID-19 pandemic. The physical activity levels were negatively correlated with psychological mood measures ($p \leq 0.05$). Moreover, there was a positive correlation between emotional eating behavior and depression ($r = .35$; $p < 0.01$); anxiety ($r = .77$; $p < 0.01$); stress ($r = .61$ $p < 0.01$) and DASS ($r = .45$; $p < 0.01$). As indicated, the non-emotional eater was positively correlated with moderate ($r = .11$; $p < 0.05$) and light activities ($r = .23$; $p < 0.05$). More results included a positive correlation between very emotional eater with vigorous activities ($r = .33$; $p < 0.01$) and IPAQ total score ($r = .23$; $p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: This study is the first preliminary evidence about elite Iranian athletes that shows that the lockdown condition in the Corona pandemic might have negatively influenced their eating habits, level of physical activity, and mental health, so it is necessary to consider strategies to improve their lifestyle in the pandemic.

Keywords

Eating habits; Corona Pandemic; Lockdown; Elite; mental health

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