



The “Young Athlete Body Project”—A pilot study evaluating the acceptability of and results from an eating disorder prevention program for adolescent athletes

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: The high frequency of eating disorders (EDs) in sports speaks of a need for early-stage preventive measures. **OBJECTIVES:** This study evaluated the acceptability of an age, sex, and sports adapted version of the “Body Project” (the Young Athlete Body Project) and changes in mental health symptoms. **METHODS:** This non-controlled pilot study included a class of athletes from 18 sports (N=73, 13–14 years) at a sport-specialized junior high school in six small-group workshops. We interviewed 34 athletes on program acceptability, and all athletes responded to questionnaires at pretest, posttest, and 6-month follow-up including the Body Appreciation Scale 2–Children, Social Attitudes towards Appearance Questionnaire-4 revised, Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire Short form-12 modified, and questions about body appearance pressure (BAP). **RESULTS:** Athletes found the program acceptable and beneficial, but some missed physically oriented activities or did not identify with the focus, particularly boys. There were acceptable levels in mental health constructs before the workshops. There were temporary changes in the percentage of boys experiencing “BAP in society” by \square 14.8% points (95% CI: \square .6 to .0, $p=.04$), % in total group experiencing “BAP at school” by +11% points (95% CI: .0–.2, $p=.05$), thinness idealization by girls ($g=.6, p=.002$) and total group ($g=.4, p=.006$), and muscularity idealization by

boys ($g=.3, p=.05$) and total group ($g=.23, p=.04$). **DISCUSSION:** Athletes experienced benefits from the Young Athlete Body Project. Seeing stabilization in outcomes may mean a dampening of the otherwise expected worsening in body appreciation and ED symptoms over time.

Topics: Prevention

For workshops only

No Answer Given

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