



**The relationship between sports practice and risk of eating disorders among young Italian adults: a cross-sectional study**

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**Abstract**

*Introduction:* Eating disorders are characterized by the presence of a disrupted perception of weight and one's body image. Although the prevalence of eating disorders in athletes has not been sufficiently analyzed, it is known that concern about body weight and one's fitness is more prevalent in athletes than in the general population. This study aims to investigate eating behaviors and one's body's perception in a sample of athletes and to assess the existence of specific sports characteristics or activities that may exacerbate the risk of occurrence of dysfunctional eating behaviors. *Methods:* An online data collection was performed through the Qualtrics platform, and it's still ongoing. The sample included 562 subjects (n= 395 females; n= 161 males; n= six non-binary) with a mean age of 25.6 at the moment. Eating disorder inventory 3 (EDI-3), Uneasiness Test (BUT), Muscle Dysmorphic Disorder Inventory (MDDI), and Recovery Stress Questionnaire were used to assess the presence of eating disorders, the perception of body image, body dysmorphism, and bigorexia, and the perceived stress during sports activity respectively. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (version 25.0) for Windows. Specifically, analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess perceived stress in training, the  $\chi^2$  statistical test to assess possible differences between the risk ranges of EDI, BUT, and MDDI scores, depending on the level of sports activity and the type of sport played. *Results:* According to the literature, preliminary results show that women have higher scores ( $p<0.01$ ) than men in all EDI-3 scales except B and OC ( $p<0.05$ ) and in the BUT scale ( $p<0.01$ ). In contrast, men scored higher than women on the MDDI ( $p<0.05$ ). The prevalence of a moderate/high score in the EDCR, IC, IP, and GPM scales of the EDI-3 is significantly lower in subjects who participate in sports than in those who do not, while the prevalence of a high MDDI is significantly higher in subjects who participate in sports. *Discussion:* In contrast to the literature, these



preliminary results show a generally lower tendency for athletes to develop eating disorders than the general population; deeper analysis will be performed, and more results will be presented at the conference.