

Mental Health of Female Runners - Results of a Pilot Study

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Abstract : Introduction: On a worldwide scale running has become an increasingly popular leisure time activity during the past decade. Since the participation rate of women has risen significantly the aim of our study was to analyze the mental status, sleeping habits and the prevalence of depression among female runners. Methods: Cross-sectional analysis included the use of validated and globally used surveys for the comprehensive evaluation of insomnia (AIS), depression (BDI), exercise dependence (EDS) and exercise addiction (EAI). Recreational and amateur female runners participating at half-marathon events in Hungary were asked to take part in our pilot study. Results: Participants mean age was 42.03 ± 9.03 years. The prevalence of insomnia was 18.87%. 60.34% has worries regarding their weight and 43.1% think that they have an actual weight problem. 77.6% stated that their body weight has an influence on their mood. 2.7% displayed borderline clinical depression, the prevalence of mild mood disorders was 10.81%. 17.2% had previously problems with disordered eating. Participants had a mean total EDS score of 46.94 ± 15.55 and a mean total of 13.49 ± 3.80 on EAI. Component scores were the highest for tolerance (a need for increased amounts of exercise to achieve the desired effect or a diminished effect occurs with continued use of the same amount of exercise). Conclusion: Even though running can help improve mental health, tackle depression and overcome adversity, athletes are at risk of experiencing psychological difficulties which have an impact on their physical performance as well. Further research can help initiate targeted educational and screening programs to ensure that female athletes find a path to emotional well-being.

Keywords : depression, eating disorder, exercise addiction, exercise dependence, insomnia, running

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