

Title: Disordered Eating in Female Collegiate Athletes: Investigating the Relationships among Coaching and Parenting Styles, Psychological Needs, and Self-Determined Motivation

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Abstract: Female collegiate athletes are at a significantly greater risk than their non-athlete peers for developing eating disorders. Despite growing knowledge of these prevalence rates, a limited amount of research explores the factors which make female athletes uniquely vulnerable. One explanation for the development of eating disorders in female athletes derives from the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which explains that athletes who perceive themselves to be experiencing high levels of autonomy, competency, and relatedness will experience greater self-determined motivation (SDM) and ultimately less disordered eating behaviors (DE). By means of an online self-report survey, the present study investigated the mediational relationships between coaching and parenting styles, psychological need satisfaction (PNS), SDM, and DE, as well as the causal impact of increased and decreased psychological needs (i.e. autonomy, competency, relatedness) on athletes' SDM and DE. Participants were 113 varsity female athletes at a Division III liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. Results from a PROCESS mediational analysis indicated a significant indirect effect of coaching style on SDM through psychological need satisfaction, as well as significant total and direct effects of parenting style on SDM. Results from a factorial analysis of variance indicated a significant effect of increased versus decreased psychological needs on SDM. Although no significant findings were evident for DE, the present study confirms the crucial links between coaching and parenting styles, PNS, and SDM, and provides the groundwork for future studies on DE in female collegiate athletes.

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