

Prevalence of Risk of Eating Disorders and its Association with Obesity and Fitness

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Abstract

The university stage is a critical developmental period for young adults, where lifestyles can determine future health. A cross-sectional study including 481 college students was conducted, with the following objectives: 1) to examine the prevalence of risk of developing eating disorders in college students, 2) to assess differences in obesity and physical fitness in those with and without risk of eating disorders, and 3) to determine whether cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular fitness or fat mass were associated with the risk of eating disorders. We measured fat mass percentage (by densitometry), risk of feeding or eating disorders (by SCOFF questionnaire), cardiorespiratory fitness levels and a muscular fitness index. The prevalence of risk of eating disorders in women (32.4%) was higher than in men (17.4%) ($p < 0.001$). In both sexes, higher obesity indicator mean values were observed among those who were at risk of eating disorders. Men participants without risk had higher cardiorespiratory fitness means than their at-risk peers [39.4 (8.3) vs. 32.4 (5.5), $p < 0.001$], and women showed differences only in the dynamometry/weight variable. In college students, it is necessary to promote healthy habits, including good levels of physical fitness, and to prevent excess body fat to effectively prevent eating disorders.