

**The Influence of an Education Program Directed at
Dysfunctional Eating On Female Distance Runners**

by

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Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of a multi-dimensional education program in facilitating attitude changes in adolescent female athletes away from dysfunctional eating behaviours and restrictive body image. Although research is available for diagnosing and identifying the problems associated with dysfunctional eating behaviours and attitudes in female athletes, few preventative tools have been proposed in order to address the problem. This study involved the design, delivery and the evaluation of a proposed a multi-dimensional education model as a preventative tool. The research design involved 18 teenage female middle/long distance runners, aged between 13 and 19, who were registered with the ACT Cross Country Club. The study was a quantitative and qualitative investigation employing a pre and post test design and using the process of triangulation to increase the study's validity. It was proposed that a multi-dimensional education program might be effective in steering attitudes away from dysfunctional eating behaviours and body image and that a mixed method design may corroborate and elaborate on the findings of the study to strengthen the understanding of the potential benefits of such an education program has to its participants. Results showed that education proved to be a successful tool in facilitating attitudinal changes in a positive direction, across a number of variables such as menstrual functioning, nutrition, flexibility, strength, and general awareness, on what constitutes a balanced healthy athletic body.

Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Certificate of Authorship of Thesis	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables and Figures	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	1
1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM	3
1.2.1 Background of the Problem	3
1.2.2 Implications for the Athlete	4
1.2.3 Implications for Thin Build Sports	5
1.2.4 Implications for Females	11
1.2.5 Implications for Adolescents	13
1.3 RATIONALE	17
1.4 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS	17
1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	18
1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS	18
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	21
2.1 INTRODUCTION	21
2.2 A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY EDUCATION PROGRAM	27
2.2.1 Education Considerations	27
2.2.2 Psychological Considerations	28
2.2.3 Medical Considerations	42
2.2.4 Nutritional Considerations	58
2.2.5 Anthropometric Considerations	69

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	76
3.1 INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	76
3.2 DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	76
3.2.1 Mixed-method Evaluation Design.	77
3.2.2 Pre-test, Post-test Control Group Design	83
3.2.3 Dependent and Independent Variables	85
3.2.4 Predicted Outcomes	89
3.2.5 Participant Selection	91
3.2.6 Procedure	92
3.2.7 Rationale and Content for Inclusion in the Education Program	94
3.2.8 Data Collection	100
3.2.9 Data Analysis	101
3.3 RATIONALE FOR METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH OF THE STUDY	103
3.3.1 Rationale for this Study	103
3.3.2 Rationale for Using Psychometric Measures - the EDI	104
3.3.3 Rationale for Selection of Scaled Interview Questions	105
3.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	108
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	110
4.1 GENERAL RESULTS	110
4.2 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS	112
4.2.1 Body Mass Index	112
4.2.2 Internal Consistency of the EDI	114
4.2.3 Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for the EDI, Control Group	114
4.2.4 Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Assigned Rank test for EDI questions T1 to T3 All Groups	116
4.2.5 Regression Analysis	116
4.2.6 Regression Analysis for Within Subjects	117
4.3 QUANTITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	118
4.3.1 Internal Consistency of Interview Questions	118
4.3.2 Within Subjects T-Test for Scaled Interview Questions T1 and T2	118
4.3.3 Within Subjects T-Test for Scaled Interview Questions T1 and T3, Both Groups	121
4.4 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF SCALED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	122
4.4.1 How important is it for you or other female middle/distance runners to have a certain body type in order to perform well?	122
4.4.2 How important is it for you personally, to achieve this body type?	124
4.4.3 How important is it for you or other female middle/distance runners to be flexible.	127
4.4.4 How important is it for you or other female middle/distance runners to be physically strong?	129
4.4.5 How important is it for you or other female middle/distance runners to be aerobically fit, to have endurance?	131
4.4.6 How important is it for you or other athletes to be involved in other activities outside of sport?	132
4.4.7 How important is it for athletes to have a good understanding of nutrition to race well?	134
4.4.8 How important is it for you to diet for weight control?	136
4.4.9 How important is it for you, or other female athletes to maintain a regular menstrual cycle?	138
4.4.10 How important is athlete education on the physical changes that occur to the female body during adolescence and the impact these changes have on your sporting involvement?	140

4.5 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF NON SCALED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	142
4.5.1 Do you know what an eating disorder is?	143
4.5.2 Why does an athlete develop an eating disorder?	144
4.5.3 What is the most healthy way for a female athlete to obtain her ideal body shape?	145
4.5.4 What is the most valuable information that you learned by being involved in the seminars?	146
4.5.5 Have you changed any attitudes?	149
4.6 Triangulation, Elaboration of Statistically Significant Data	151
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	155
5.1 DISCUSSION ON PREDICTED OUTCOMES	155
5.2 CONCLUSIONS	167
5.3 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	169
REFERENCES	173

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1	Physical Features that may indicate an Eating Disorder	26
Table 2	Psychological Behavioural Symptoms that may indicate an Eating Disorder	26
Table 3	Common Symptoms and Signs of an Eating Disorder	57
Table 3.2.2	Treatment and Data Collection x Time for Control and Experimental Groups	83
Table 4.2.1	Body Mass Index and Menstrual Functioning	113
Table 4.2.2	Internal Consistency of the EDI	114
Table 4.2.3	Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for the EDI, Control Group	115
Table 4.2.4	Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Assigned Rank Test for EDI Questions, T1 to T3 All Groups	116
Table 4.3.1	Internal Consistency of Interview Questions	118
Table 4.3.2	Within Subject T-Test Results for the Means of Scaled Interview Questions T1 and T3	119
Table 4.3.3	Within Subject T-Test Results for the Means of Scaled Interview Questions T1 and T3, Both Groups	121
Table 4.4.1	Themes for Ratings of Importance on Body Type in Order to Perform Well	122
Table 4.4.2	Themes for Ratings of Importance on Achieving a certain Body Type	124
Table 4.4.3	Themes for Ratings of Importance on Being Flexible	127
Table 4.4.4	Themes for Ratings of Importance of Physical Strength	129
Table 4.4.5	Themes for Ratings of Importance of Aerobic Endurance	131
Table 4.4.6	Themes for Ratings of Importance of Activities Outside of Sport	132
Table 4.4.7	Themes for Ratings of Importance of Understanding Nutrition in Order to Race Well	134
Table 4.4.8	Themes for Ratings of Importance of Dieting for Weight Control	136
Table 4.4.9	Themes for Ratings of Importance of Maintaining a Regular Menstrual Cycle	138
Table 4.4.10	Themes for Ratings of Importance of Education on Physical Changes During Adolescence	140
Table 4.5.1	Themes for Athlete's Perception of What an Eating Disorder Is	143
Table 4.5.2	Themes for Athlete's Perception as to Why an Athlete Develops an Eating Disorder	144
Table 4.5.3	Themes for Athlete's Perception on What is the Most Healthy Way to Obtain Her Ideal Body Shape	145
Table 4.5.4	Themes for Athlete's Perception on What was the Most Valuable Information Learned from the Seminars	146
Table 4.5.5	Themes for Have You Changed Any Attitudes	149
Figure 1.	EDI 1 and Menstrual Newmen Means.	117