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Importance of Coaches' Communication: A Pathway to Understanding the Effect on High School Female Athletes and Body Image

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Importance of Coaches' Communication: A Pathway to Understanding the Effect on

High School Female Athletes and Body Image

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of the Department of Leadership Education

College of Education of Winona State University

by

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Abstract

This paper explores the importance of communication on body image issues between coaches and high school female athletes. The purpose of this study is to better understand how coaches' communication on body image issues effect high school female athletes. This research focused on two high schools in southwest Wisconsin. The research design was a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collected through a survey. The data from the study focused on the high school female athletes' responses to the "Fat Talk Questionnaire" and their perspective on four multiple choice questions. The four multiple choice questions included a demographic question about sports played, how coaches promote healthy lifestyles, factors to open communication between coach and player about body image, and the influence coaches had on players feelings about their body image. The study examined and identified if there were correlations between the data and previous literature. The results displayed correlation with previous works in media's impact on body image issues in young women, high participation in fat talk, coaches' perspective, and coaches' communication on body comparisons. There was little correlation with past literature of coaches' influence on the student-athletes body image. This research concluded that coaches' communication and relationship with female athletes had an impact on their experiences in high school athletics.

Table of Contents

Introduction	6
Problem Statement	7
Background of the Problem	8
Body Image and Collegiate Athletes Perceptions.....	8
Fat Talk	8
Body Image from Coaches Perspective	9
Research Question	10
Limitation of the Study	10
Delimitation of the Study	10
Definition of Terms.....	11
Purpose of the Study	11
Research Method	11
Setting	12
Summary	12
Literature Review	13
Historical Overview of the Problem	13
<i>Collegiate Athletes and Coaches Experiences</i>	15
<i>Fat Talk</i>	18
Theoretical Framework.....	20
Summary	22
Research Methodology	24
Introduction.....	24

Research Design.....	24
Research Questions.....	25
Sample.....	25
Setting	26
Instruments.....	26
Data Collection Procedure	26
Data Analysis	27
Summary	27
Results	28
Introduction.....	28
Description of the Sample.....	28
Data Analysis	28
Summary	41
Discussions and Conclusions.....	42
Discussions	42
Media	43
Fat Talk.....	44
Coaches Perspective.....	45
Communication.....	46
Influence	47
Leadership Implications.....	48
Recommendations for Future Research	50
Summary	51

References	52
Appendix A	56

Introduction

High school athletics provide student-athletes with an opportunity to compete, to build relationships with teammates and coaches, and to represent their schools. Student-athletes in high school are constantly developing physically, mentally, and emotionally. These changes can have an impact on their high school athletic experiences. The physical changes that student-athletes go through, specifically females, can have both positive and negative impacts on body image and body dissatisfaction. The growth of body dissatisfaction from the age of thirteen to seventeen increases from fifty-three percent to an overwhelming seventy-eight percent in females (Gallivan, 2014). This age range falls directly into the age range of high school female athletes. This is one aspect that makes being a high school female athlete or a high school coach difficult. Coaches must teach the sports being played while also trying to understand and communicate with student-athletes about body image concerns. Coaches can have a profound impact on student's perception of body image. Sabiston et. al., (2020) acknowledged the importance of the coaches understanding their role as being a potential positive agent on body image for student-athletes (2020).

High school female student-athletes have another barrier regarding body image issues, mainstream media. Heather Gallivan (2014), a psychologist who specializes in treating patients with weight and eating problems shares that on average Americans from the ages of eight-eighteen see or have interactions with media for 7.5 hours on a typical day. That much interaction with mainstream media leads to young adults and adolescents feeling the pressure to look a certain way. Once again, the age range presented is inclusive of high school female student-athletes.

Fat talk, defined by Vanderkruik et. al., (2020) and Royal et. al, (2013), are negative comments in conversation about one's body regarding weight or shape in front of peers, typically girls and young women. Gillivan, Vanderkruik et. al., (2020) and Royal et. al., (2013) all identify body image issues starting at young ages for girls due to social media and peer pressure. Student-athletes spend a lot of time together in season and this leads to opportunities for peer pressure and participation in "Fat talk" conversations. The information presented by Sabiston et. al. (2020), Gillivan, Vanderkruik et. al., (2020), and Royal et. al, (2013) provides adequate proof of the need to understand how coaches' communication on body image effects high school female student-athletes.

Problem Statement

Research continues to show that coaches' communication on body image can influence student-athletes (Quatromoni, 2017). When coaches provide options for weight tracking, lifting programs, and nutritional guidance the influence can be positive. The use of negative comments from coaches like comparing one athlete to another or threatening playing time if weight is not lost, it can lead athletes down an extreme diet path (Coppola et. al., 2013). The research shows the effects and perceptions of collegiate female athletes but does not show the impacts or perceptions of high school female athletes. Therefore, little is known about the topic of coaches' communication on body image and how it affects high school female athletes and yet multiple sources have stated it needs to be researched.

Background of the Problem

Body Image and Collegiate Athletes Perceptions

Research has shown that collegiate female athletes' perception of their body image can be influenced by coaches (Quatromoni, 2017). The way in which coaches communicate to their student-athletes can influence athletes to take extreme dieting measures. Understanding the student-athletes perception of coaches' communication on body image is critical. Coppola et. al., (2014) provided phenomenological interviews with collegiate athletes and their experiences with coaches' communication. The study shows there are both positive and negative ways the athletes express coach communications. The negative ways coaches communicate to the student-athletes, they believed, could push themselves or teammates into unhealthy diets (2014). These studies also provide information that there may be a connection to body image issues and unhealthy dieting that starts in high school and becomes more prevalent in college (Quatromoni, 2017).

Fat Talk

Fat talk according to Royal et. al., (2013) refers to negative body related conversations with young girls or women. This type of conversation is typically seen at middle and high school ages. The body image concern is higher at this age range because the bodies of these young girls are changing and developing every day. There is generally more peer pressure from classmates and mainstream media at this age to conform to certain body image ideals. Some young girls believe it is easier to identify imperfections before their peers do in hopes of promoting cohesion with friends (Royal et. al., 2013). Young driven athletes also participate in fat talk to help fit in better with teammates (Lydecker et. al., 2021). The occurrence of this type of conversation encouraged researchers to work to develop and validate a "Fat Talk Questionnaire." The questionnaire works through body image and social desirability issues of this targeted population

(Royal et. al., 2013). Due to the established reliability and validity of this questionnaire, it will be an asset in research involving body image among high school female athletes.

Body Image from the Coaches Perspective

Before discussing body image from the coach's perspective, it is important to understand the different roles that coaches play for student-athletes. For some, coaches are like parents, for others like teachers, and for some, coaches are like psychologists. Coaches may have a strong influence on student-athletes (Sabiston et. al., 2020).

Body image is important to understand as well when dealing with female student-athletes and maximizing experiences (Sabiston et. al., 2020). The recent study by Sabiston et. al. (2020), provides insight into how coaches identify student-athletes comfort with body image. Some coaches noticed the student-athletes wearing baggy clothes. This told the coaches, that those student-athlete were uncomfortable with their physical appearance. For other coaches, it was observing parent interactions with players and body image, leaving the coaches to feel bad for the players (Sabiston et. al., 2020). All coaches acknowledged the pressure of mainstream media and the ideal body image. The coaches in this study found successful ways to help identify student-athletes comfort with body image.

It is important to note that the participating coaches believe in the importance of education on body image issues (Sabiston et. al., 2020). Male coaches, especially, expressed the need for training programs on how to identify the female athletes being uncomfortable discussing body image with them. The hope of the coaches was that at some institutional level changes would be made with programs like the National Coaching Certificate Program to include specialized training to address body image issues. This type of training would provide

coaches with the skills and confidence necessary to help female athletes with body image issues (Sabiston et. al., 2020).

Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

How do coaches' communication of body image effect high school female athletes?

Limitation of the Study

Limitations for this study included the truthfulness and honesty in the participants responses. The second part of the survey asks the participants to answer multiple choice questions with a section for comments regarding how their coaches communicate body image issues. The participants may not be willing to disclose personal experiences accurately in fear of acknowledging body image issues. The participants may be concerned about backlash from coaches although the researcher continually provides assurance of complete anonymity and confidentiality.

Delimitation of the Study

This study was limited to two high schools in southwest Wisconsin. The participants selected for this study were female high school athletes from the respective schools. Due to the researcher using a vulnerable population there is a delimitation in methodology. To protect the participants phenomenological interviews were not conducted, instead a voluntary comment section for personal experiences was offered at the end of the survey.

Definition of Terms

Body image: How you think and feel about your body. It is a component of self-esteem (Gallivan, 2014).

Body dissatisfaction: This is the negative thoughts and feelings about one's body. Body dissatisfaction has been found to be a predictor for the development of an eating disorder and occurs in individuals with different mental disorders, such as binge eating disorder or social anxiety disorder, as well as in healthy person (Quitkat et. al., 2019).

Fat talk: Refers to negative body-related conversations between girls or young women (e.g. I have flabby arms). (Royal et. al., 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of high school female athletes regarding effects of body image communication with coaches. The information provided by the athletes may provide rich data for coaches to be trained to more effectively communicate and identify body image issues in the future.

Research Method

The study's approach will be mixed methods, but qualitative in nature. The goal of the research is to gain an understanding of the female athlete perceptions with body image and high school coaches. The participants will be asked to complete a fourteen-question body image (fat talk) survey. After the completion of the first part of the survey, the participants will be asked to answer four multiple choice questions. Each of these questions will have a comment section for the participants to share details of their experiences if desired.

Setting

The research will be conducted at two high schools in southwest Wisconsin. The schools each include grades nine through twelve. Student populations are approximately 830 and 427. The population being used for the research will be high school female athletes. From that population the researcher will gather a convenience sample.

Summary

This mixed-methods study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one offers the foundation of the study, including an introduction and identifying and providing background on the problem, the purpose of the study, and research questions. Chapter two examines past literature on the problem and examines previous studies related to the one being completed. Chapter two provides insight on some gaps in the knowledge base and look at how older research connects to the study that is being conducted. The third chapter contains the research methodology for the study. This will contain the design of the research setting, the participants selected, and other steps taken to ensure procedures conducted successfully. The fourth chapter will highlight the outcomes of the study and help answer research questions. The fifth and final chapter will analyze the results of the study. It will help point researchers in the direction of future studies that will benefit high school female student-athletes as well as coaches in body image issues.

Literature Review

This chapter provides a literature review of prevailing concerns of body image issues in sports. In this section, providing a historical overview of eating disorders in adolescents and social media, experiences of collegiate athletes and coaches, background on fat talk, and the theoretical framework and understanding of methodology are reviewed. While not all these topics directly relate to sports, they do provide support to the overall theme of body image concerns. This literature review was the basis to guide the research question in the study. When these topics were combined, they become an integral part in understanding body image issues in female high school athletes.

Historical Overview of the Problem

Eating disorders can affect all youth regardless of genders, sizes, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses. Over the past ten years diagnosed cases of eating disorders in young girls have more than doubled from 3.5% to 7.8% (Lantzouni & Grady, 2021). The dramatic increase over the last ten years in eating disorders can be attributed to both genetic and environmental factors which happened at critical points of time in adolescents' lives. The key areas to look for when suspecting an adolescent or person is suffering from an eating disorder includes when a patient's weight falls below the body mass index and growth curve, amenorrhea, unexplained growth, or pubertal delay, restrictive or abnormal eating behaviors, overexercising, or recurrent vomiting (Lantzouni & Grady, 2021). Additionally, pediatric gynecologists frequently encounter youth athletes who do not directly suffer from extreme weight loss but show signs of amenorrhea and energy deficiency (Lantzouni & Grady, 2021). These eating disorder symptoms are often related to what medical professionals refer to as the "female triad" (Quatromoni 2017). The female triad refers to a clinical identification of unhealthy dieting. It is

made up of three components, low energy availability, menstrual dysfunction, and poor bone health. Each component exists on a continuum of severity that ranges from mild to moderate subclinical concerns to severe which include eating disorders, amenorrhea, and osteoporosis (De Souza et. al., 2019). Due to the severity of eating disorders, it is essential to identify signs and symptoms as early as possible in adolescents and young women.

When discussing eating disorders in adolescents and young women, it is crucial to look at the age in which eating disorders typically occur. The age range for eating disorders can vary, but it typically occurs in young adolescents between fifteen and nineteen years old 40% of the time (Lantzoui & Grady, 2021). According to Rubin et. al., (2020), eating disorders have been identified in children as young as eight. This shows the importance of early identification. The age range that falls victim to eating disorders is the same age range that falls victim to weight-based teasing (Rubin et. al., 2020). The weight-based teasing that occurs is one of the most used forms of peer victimization amongst children and adolescents. Sadly, 60%-78% of youth that identify with high weight report weight-based teasing. (Rubin et. al., 2020). Due to weight-based teasing, adolescents are at higher risk of developing body image concerns or some form of eating disorders. In the research conducted by Rubin et. al., (2020) the results showed that children and adolescents who suffered from weight-based teasing were more likely to report a loss of control regarding eating and or unhealthy dieting.

Eating disorders, unhealthy weight control, and weight-based teasing are the pressures that can lead young girls and women to attain the idealized body shape through environmental factors (Simone et. al., 2020). One of the main environmental factors that correlate to pressure on adolescents into achieving the ideal body shape is social media. A study on American elementary school girls who read magazines reported that the pictures they saw influenced the opinions they

had on the ideal body shape (Gallivan, 2014). Some women's magazines, like *Seventeen*, devote a large portion of their content to appearance. Some of those magazines include about ten times the content relating to dieting and weight that men's magazines include (Gallivan, 2014). The women's magazines push for dieting and weight control. Although this focus can be perceived as helpful, it can also send the wrong message to vulnerable adolescents. According to Sandoz et. al., (2013, p. 40) article on body image flexibility and acceptance, "body image dissatisfaction has become a normative discontent." The environmental factors of social media have also reinforced the idea of body image dissatisfaction if the ideal body is not met. One of the main influences on body dissatisfaction and body image concerns in young girls is how focused their peers are with this. If those peers are like the typical American children ages 8-18, they engage in some form of media 7.5 hours a day (Gallivan, 2014). Therefore, it places pressure on adolescents to keep up with those media enforced ideals.

Collegiate Athletes and Coaches Experiences

According to Paula Quatromoni (2016, p.21), "athletes are at a higher risk than the general population for eating disorders." Certain sports, like track and field, hold even higher risk than others in the likelihood of eating disorders because they are generally more "thin build" sports as defined by Quatromoni, (2016). Due to this, studies have been completed to understand how collegiate athletes are influenced by body image issues. Past research has examined different factors that cause female athletes to have body image issues. One reason that Lauer et. al., (2018), could be connected to uniforms. It is believed that there is correlation between body objectification at a young age due to uniforms that continues to develop as female athletes get older (Lauer et. al., 2018). This study broke down the level of comfort with uniforms into four different stages, prepubescent perceptions regarding uniforms, transition to puberty perceptions

regarding uniform, college perceptions regarding uniform, advice based on experience (Lauer et. al., 2018). The overall results were that many athletes did not identify prepubescent discomfort with uniforms because they were fairly gender neutral. Then uniforms started to change at a critical point in time when the female bodies physically developed causing discomfort (Lauer et. al., 2018). Lastly the athletes discussed a process with the uniforms starting at discomfort, then normalization and finally acceptance of their sport uniform (Lauer et. al., 2018). This shows that originally female athletes do spend some time worried or uncomfortable in their sport's uniform but learn to accept it because it is the norm. This can lead to anxiety in the female athletes if they do not become comfortable (Lauer et. al., 2018).

Another reason that female collegiate athletes are at higher risk of developing eating disorders is based on how their coaches communicate with them about body image. In the Lauer et. al., (2018) study, athletes that were interviewed recall their coaches making comments about players needing to run more to look better in the uniforms. According to McGannon and McMahan (2019), female athletes in sport cultures are at risk because of the social influences of coaches' comments and mandatory weigh-ins. For some athletes, depending on sports, the mandatory weigh-ins were public. The two female athletes interviewed in the McGannon and McMahan (2019) study recall their public weigh-ins leaving them to feel "self-conscious and miserable." This type of comment by a coach and public weigh-ins can negatively affect the athletes. Additionally, Coppola et. al., (2014) states that female athletes in this study expressed that coaches who compare athletes' bodies to one another leave athletes susceptible for unhealthy dieting. In more extreme cases, coaches threatened some players about playing time decreasing if they did not meet a certain weight (Coppola et. al., 2014). Again, this resulted in the female athletes being more susceptible to extreme dieting methods. In the Coppola et. al.,

(2014) study, athletes who had coaches who did not comment on weight, make comparisons, or make weigh-ins mandatory were less likely to suffer from body image issues.

A third reason that female collegiate athletes are at higher risk for eating disorders is the pressure from the media. In McGannon & McMahon (2019), two former student-athletes recall not only the pressure they received from coaches but also from the media. The coaches who worked with these athletes continuously promoted a “slim to win” motto that was constantly publicized making the female athletes even more aware of their bodies (McGannon & McMahon, 2019). In the study, the participants recall social media critiquing their older bodies as to reasons they lost and comparing it to their adolescent years when they were not the same body type being a reason for their success (McGannon & McMahon, 2019). The way social media portrayed these female athletes did not help in their body image issues. It only led them further down a path towards an eating disorder (McGannon & McMahon, 2019).

After understanding the historical background on collegiate female athlete’s body image issues, it is important to understand the coaches’ perspective on body image issues. As mentioned earlier, coaches’ have a massive impact and influence on the lives of their student-athletes. The comments or ways in which coaches communicate can either help or harm the female athletes. In Sabiston et. al., (2020), the coaches interviewed discuss body image concerns from their perspective. The coaches in this study provided insight into how they identify female athletes' concerns about body image. The coaches pick up on both non-verbal and verbal cues from the athletes and sometimes the parents (Sabiston et. al., 2020). For instance, coaches could tell athletes wearing baggier clothing meant they were more uncomfortable in their bodies. Some coaches overheard parents criticizing their kids for not only performance but appearance (Sabiston et. al., 2020). Besides being able to pick up on different cues, coaches expressed

uncertainty in how to address body image issues. Male coaches more so than female coaches who took part in the survey expressed this concern. From the female coaches' perspective, they felt they were able to relate better to the female athletes (Sabsiton et. al., 2020). The goal overall for the coaches in this study was to one day be able to be trained in dealing with body image issues to help create a more comfortable atmosphere for the athletes. Lunde & Gattario (2017) and Sabiston et. al., (2020) both speak to the importance of sports as a benefit to physical and mental health. Soulliard et. al., (2018) encourages coaches to provide a positive message to their female athletes about the "appreciation for their athletes' bodies with a particular focus on how their bodies allow them to perform successfully in their sport."

Fat Talk

Fat talk refers to negative body-related comments and conversations between girls and young women (Royal et. al., 2013). Fat talk may also be referred to as weight talk. In the study by Simone et. al., (2020), shows that weight talk if done in a positive form can be helpful to the girls and young women who participate in it. If done in a negative form, it can be harmful to those participating in it. There are multiple social domains that have a part in fat talk. The most critical social domains that influence girls and young women are peers and parents and or families (Simone et. al., 2020). The literature in this study also provided that the girls and young women who were exposed to fat talk by parents and or family had a higher likelihood of developing psychological health and behavior problems (Simone et. al., 2020). In another article, there is the acknowledgement that fat talk in athletics and by families can have an impact on body image issues (Lydecker et. al., 2021). The use of fat talk by parents in front of girls or young women showed it affected 76% of them. There was even more correlation between

mother's using fat talk and their daughter's then choosing to fat talk as well (Vanderkruik et. al., 2020).

Peer exposure had a similar impact on girls and young women in psychological health and behavior problems. An interesting analysis that came from this study was the young adult women who were only exposed to peer fat talk and not parental or family fat talk were able to internalize fat talk to a lesser extent due to the perceived normalization (Simone et. al., 2020). It is said in this literature and others that peer fat talk happens more so out of social normalization than serious concerns of body image issues (Simone et. al., 2020).

According to Shannon and Mills (2018), fat talk is an individual behavior that can be changed. In the research by Shannon and Mills (2018), it was hypothesized that thinking about overeating could increase the risk of anticipated fat talk behaviors. The results of the study showed that individuals who participated in fat talk were primed to think about overeating (Shannon & Mills, 2018). This proposes the idea that fat talk is more likely to happen in certain situations compared to others. It also suggested that although fat talk according to previous research is a socially normative behavior, it also more than that. The anticipated thought of overeating occurs more commonly in girls or young women who are chronic dieters (Shannon & Mills, 2018). Overall, fat talk in this study like others, is a manifestation of thoughts and attitudes about weight, body shape and its importance (Shannon & Mills, 2018).

Fat talk and body dissatisfaction happens in more than just females. Although it may not be as high, males also participate in fat talk and suffer from body dissatisfaction. In addition to males, transgender individuals also participate in fat talk and have body dissatisfaction concerns. According to Lin et. al., (2020), a recent national survey found that 55% of women and 42% of men reported being dissatisfied with some aspect of their bodies. Furthermore, 93% of young

women, 31% of women, and 11% of men have engaged in fat talk (Mills & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2018). When individuals try to internalize and accept the desire to be thin, they are more likely to compare themselves to others and feel ashamed of their bodies (Mills & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2018).

The identification and addressing fat talk at an early age is helpful in girls and young women. Recent research by Vanderkruik et. al., (2020), studied fat talk and the implementation of the “Body Project,” in high school women. The Body Project is an “evidence-based eating disorder prevention program that aims to prevent the onset of eating disorders by challenging the thin-ideal and promoting body acceptance through dissonance-based activities,” (Vanderkruik et. al., 2020, p. 196). This aims to help decrease the amount of fat talk and self-deprecating communication. The goal is to help young women gain a better feeling towards their body satisfaction. To help this project along it helped to identify the key areas that are associated with body image dissatisfaction. Fat talk, weight concern, and family fat talk are each a critical topic to address to improve body satisfaction and body image (Vanderkruik et. al., 2020). This study examined 112 female students ages ranging from 15-18 years old. The implementation of the Body project helped decrease the self-reported fat talk frequency, family fat talk frequency, and weight concerns (Vanderkruik et. al., 2020). It is important to continue to understand different projects or programs that can help eliminate fat talk due to the harm that it causes not just among girls and young women, but all people.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework throughout the contents of body image concerns including fat talk and athletic perception is viewed largely based on the Objectification Theory, which provides an understanding of the “experiences of being female in a culture that sexually

objectifies the female body” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 173). Often in Objectification Theory, girls and women are acculturated to understand an observer’s perspective as the main view of their physical appearances (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The Objectification Theory can lead young girls and women down a path of constantly being concerned about their body image. Another part of the Objectification Theory that is important to note is that the sexual objectification that occurs is typically through visual media or viewing images of the female body (Harper & Tiggemann 2008). The Objectification Theory is often used in qualitative studies as it looks to understand how people are perceived as specific objects and how it makes them feel.

A different theoretical framework that can be included when discussing this content is the Self Determination Theory. According to Ryan and Deci (2000, p. 69), Self Determination Theory is the “approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods.” This theoretical framework highlights the importance of, “humans’ evolved inner resources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). It is a beneficial framework to use when researching body image issues like fat talk and body dissatisfaction. The Self Determination Theory include multiple motivations to understand which are extrinsically, intrinsically, and unmotivated (Ntoumani & Ntoumanis, 2007). It is essential to realize these motivations because it is likely what drives girls and young women in their body image issues. According to Ntoumani & Ntoumanis (2007), full self-determination and intrinsic motivation are achieved when an individual performs a behavior purely for the enjoyment of the process. As an athlete, it is important to be participating in sport because it is something the athlete purely enjoys. Realistically, athletes who compete do not always participate for themselves. Parents, families, coaches, and peers can influence individual

athlete's choices. This leads to athletes being susceptible to influence or pressure on how to perform and how to look. Both the Objectification Theory and the Self Determination Theory are frameworks that are prevalent in this topic. Like Objectification Theory, the Self Determination Theory predominantly studies their experiences qualitatively. It helps to better understand young girls and women as it relates to body image, fat talk, and athletics.

In the literature that has been reviewed, qualitative and mixed methods research approaches have been used. The qualitative approach has been used frequently due to the nature of the research wanting to understand the experiences or phenomena revolving around body image issues and girls and women. In addition to qualitative research, there is literature that has used mixed methods research. These works use some form of a Likert scale survey while following up with interviews with the participants. A mixed methods approach allows researchers to analyze the numbers of the participants' perceived notion of oneself or situations. It then allows the participants to share in their experiences in these areas. A mixed methods approach allows for richer insight and allows the data to complement each other (Caruth, 2013). More specifically, in mixed methods research, there are opportunities for triangulation to be used to converge and corroborate the data from more purely quantitative methods (Schoonenboom & Burke Johnson, 2017). This will help bring together the different methods of data collection to provide an in-depth look at the impact of body image issues on girls and young women.

Summary

Overall, there was an abundance of information in literature that work towards answering and understanding important questions and topics. The goal of this section was to compile a thorough list of information regarding the different factors involved with body image issues. The

historical perspective of eating disorders and how these disorders affect girls and young women is an on-going concern in mental and medical health. It was essential to understand that this historical perspective lays groundwork for the body image issues in fat talk and collegiate and high school female athletics. It is the goal of this research to gain a better understanding of how body image issues in sports are connected to communication. It will look to examine how coaches' communication on body image can impact female athletes at the high school level. Research on body image issues in collegiate athletics are more readily available than high school athletics. That is why more research needs to be done to determine how body image issues are addressed and identified in the high school years. The goal of this study was to help further research recommendations on body image issues in high school female athletes and the role of coaches. The literature has provided eating disorders, collegiate and coaches perspective, and fat talk as facets that have an impact on girls and young women and body image concerns.

Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how coaches' communication of body image affects high school female athletes. The topic of body image and athletics have been studied frequently at the collegiate level. The research gathered provided beneficial insight into improving how coaches approach, communicate and discuss body image with their athletes. Further recommendations on body image and athletics are to conduct studies using high school female athletes or male athletes to gain another perspective (Coppola et. al., 2013). There is an understanding that the body image issues that occur in collegiate athletics have high probability that they started in high school. That is what this research aims to understand: coaches' communication on body image and its effects on high school female athletes.

Chapter three discusses the specifics on the research design and methodology. The chapter also provides a detailed explanation on how the body image assessment and questions were determined. In addition, a general background on the participants is given with details on how they were chosen.

Research Design

This study's approach will be mixed-method. The survey will include two parts. The body image questionnaire is looking to gather information on the experiences of current high school female athletes. This would lead the design to be more phenomenological research at its core. The first part was quantitative in nature, it was fourteen questions from the "Fat Talk

Questionnaire,” that was established and validated through Royal et. al., “Development and validation of the Fat Talk Questionnaire” (2013). The researcher will gain an understanding of how each female athlete perceives body image in their day-to-day conversations. This questionnaire uses a Likert Scale with an allotted point system. The second part was qualitative in nature as the survey will be four multiple choice questions with room to provide comments. These questions will help the researcher gauge what sports the athletes play and how coaches’ communication of body image affects each athlete.

Research Questions

The research being conducted will be driven by the multiple-choice following questions:

RQ1: How do your coaches promote a healthy lifestyle and eating habits?

RQ2: What factors would open communication between you and your coaches to talk about body image?

RQ3: How have your coaches positively or negatively influenced your feelings about body image?

Sample

The population included a range of 20-100 high school female athletes in southwest Wisconsin. The volunteers were solicited in two different ways. One way involved an in-person introduction at the spring sports meetings at their respective schools. If the spring sports meeting was done virtually due to Covid-19, the researcher scheduled times with the respective coaches to come into practice to introduce the study. The second way the athletes were contacted was via email to those interested that participated in fall and/or winter sports. The setting took place at the individual school’s computer lab or in the comfort of their own home utilizing an online body

image survey. The use of the school's computer lab or the safety of their own home provided the athletes with a sense of comfort due to familiarity with it.

Setting

The research was conducted at two high schools in southwest Wisconsin. The schools each include nine through twelve. Student populations are 830 and 427, respectively. Each of the schools have small minority student populations. The population being used for the research are high school female athletes. From that population the researcher will gather the sample.

Instrumentation Review

First, the researcher used a psychologist specialist in obesity, weight and eating research and a psychiatrist to approve the body image survey. Then, the researcher provided this form to parents for their approval. Following this the participants completed the informed consent form. After the collection of signed informed consent forms, the sample selected participants completed an anonymous online body image survey.

Data Collection Procedure

Following review from a specialist in psychology, the Winona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the school districts participating, and participants parent consent form the researcher had first contact in person. The first contact took place at the spring sports meeting or a scheduled practice of the respective high schools in southwest Wisconsin. The researcher used a first contact via email for those who competed in a fall and/or winter sport and not a spring sport. The researcher provided both parents and athletes with a specific time to discuss and decide on whether or not to participate. The researcher provided a follow up email with possible participants who did not respond. The data was collected from an online

anonymous survey kept confidentially. The participants' names, participating schools and any other form of identification were kept confidential.

Data Analysis

The first part of the data analysis was completed using the assessment survey scale. The body image assessment survey scale used has a specific point distribution for each of the questions answered (Royal et. al., 2013). The survey being used was approved by a specialist in psychology to ensure relevance of questions. The researcher followed the strict protocol to ensure accuracy. During the second part of the data analysis the researcher analyzed the open-ended questions to find themes and triangulation.

Summary

The research methodology of this study was done by gathering data from female high school athletes in southwest Wisconsin using a two-part survey. The first part of the survey used a well-known "Fat talk" assessment to gather critical information on day-to-day conversations that female athletes use. The second part of the survey used gathers perceptive information on how coaches provide positive, negative or no influence on healthy lifestyle habits. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the surveys completed were done by the female athletes at their homes to limit in person contact and exposure. The data collected provides insightful information on how to communicate body image issues, better the coach and athlete relationship, and the experiences of females in high school athletics.

Results

Introduction

To gain a better understanding on how coaches' communication on body image affected high school female athletes, the researcher conducted an online survey and distributed it to the female athletes at southwest Wisconsin high schools. The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the data. The quantitative section of the survey used descriptive statistics to calculate the "Fat Talk" assessment, while the qualitative portion was reviewed for themes and triangulation.

The results of this study are presented in this chapter. This chapter was structured to provide a clear understanding of the sample. This consisted of a description of the sample, data analysis, and summary of the chapter. The findings of the study will be further reflected and discussed in chapter five.

Description of the Sample

The participants of the study included high school female athletes in southwest Wisconsin. There were an estimated 170 female athletes who had the opportunity to participate in this research study. Of the 170 possible female athlete participants, 20 filled out the survey after completing an informed consent form. The high school female athletes who contributed to the study participated in high school athletics during the 2020-2021 school year.

Data Analysis

When reviewing the research questions asked in Chapter One, we can now analyze the data that is reflective of the questions. The responses of the Fat Talk Questionnaire are the first parts to analyze. This will provide a look at how each question was answered by the female

athlete participants. Additionally, it will provide an overall score to show the frequency of Fat Talk participation in the twenty female athletes surveyed. The first table illustrates how often the female athlete participants complain about their arms being too flabby around one or several close female friend(s).

Table 1

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that my arms are too flabby.

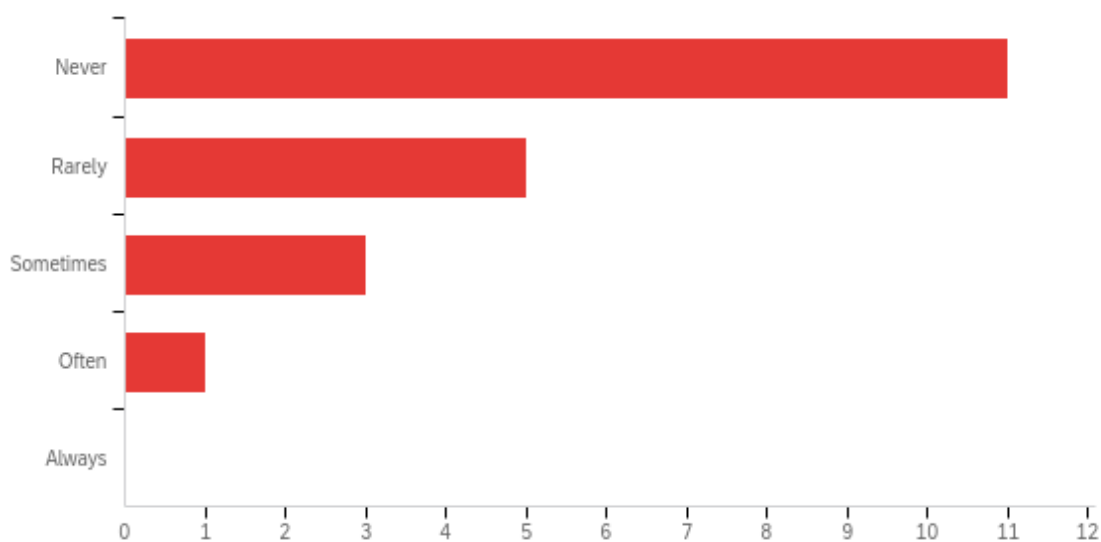


Table 2 and Table 3 show an increase in Fat Talk frequency. Over fifty percent of female athlete participants used Fat Talk when with one or several close friend(s) about stomach fat and comparison to models in magazines:

Table 2

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain my stomach is fat.

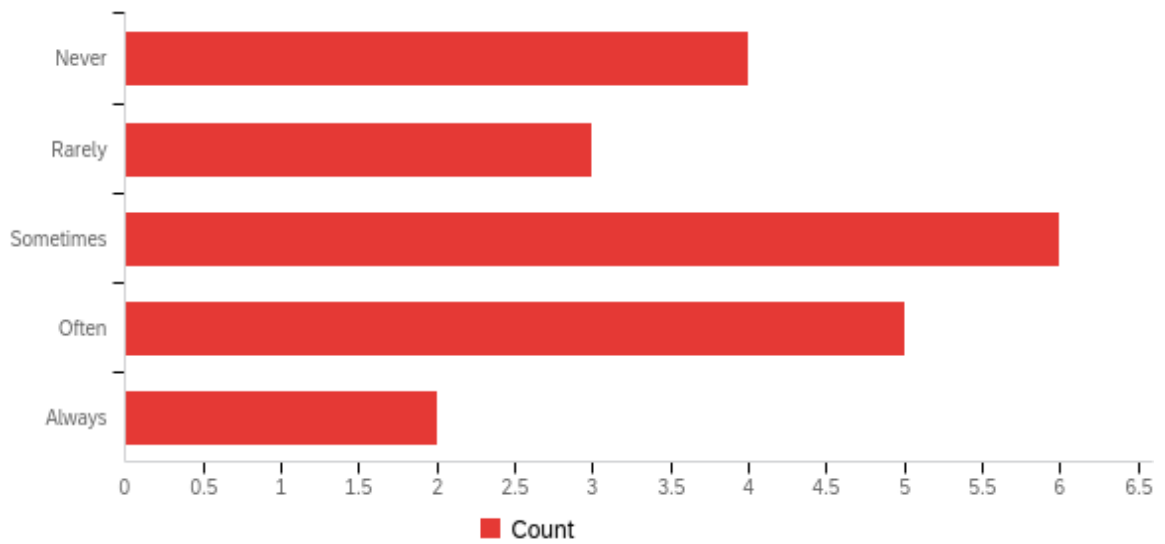
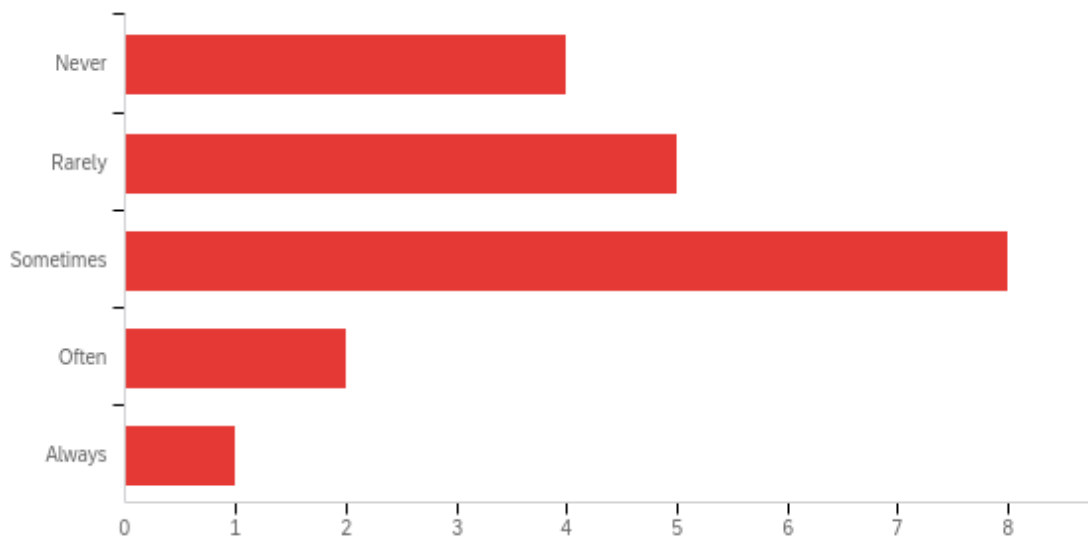


Table 3

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I criticize my body compared to thin models in magazines.



Looking closely at questions four, five, and six in the Fat Talk questionnaire, over fifty percent of the female athlete participants never or rarely complained about body proportion and

whole-body issues. A smaller portion of twenty to twenty-five percent often participated in Fat Talk conversation. Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6 illustrate the responses:

Table 4

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that my body is out of proportion.

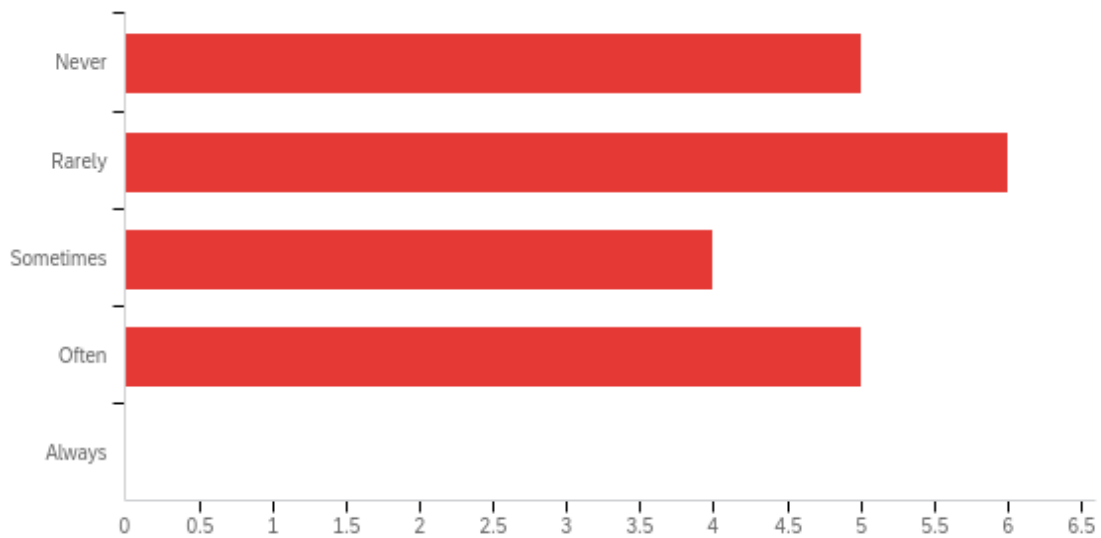


Table 5

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I hate my whole body.

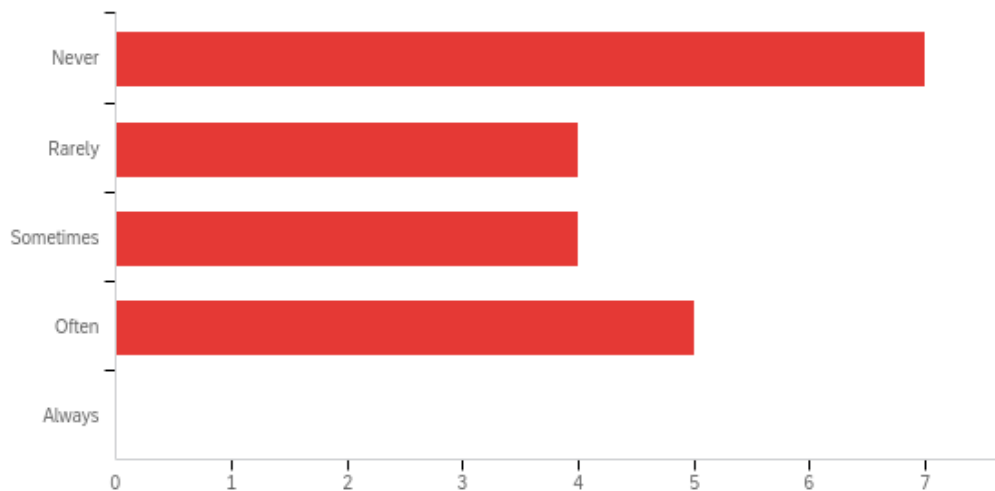
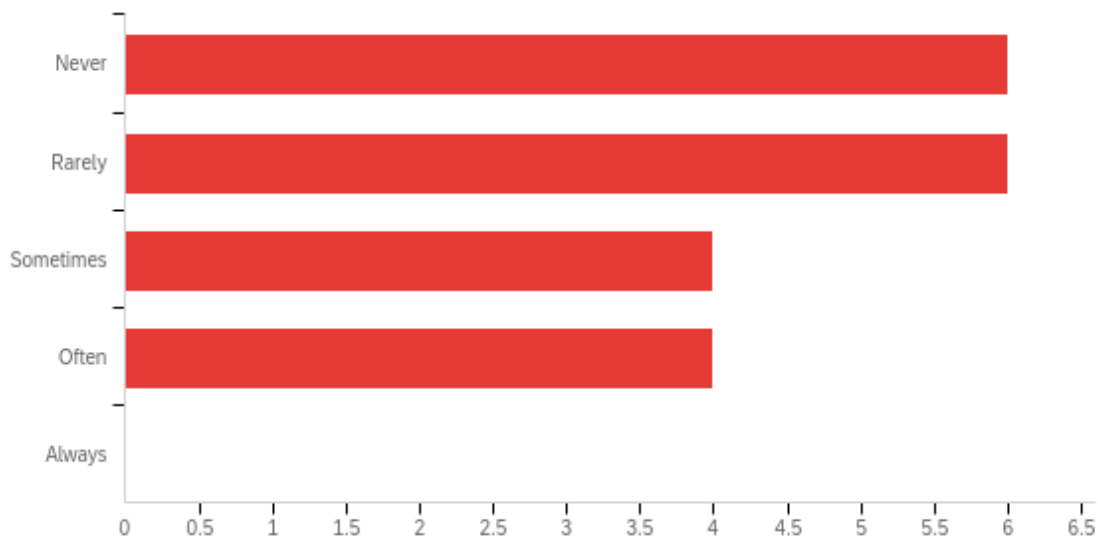


Table 6

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I am fat.



The seventh question of the Fat Talk Questionnaire revolves around fattening food. Sixty percent of the female athlete participants sometimes, often, and always partake in conversations with close female friends when complaining about fattening food intake. The results of this question are demonstrated in Table 7:

Table 7

When I'm with one or several close friend(s), I complain that I should not be eating fattening foods.

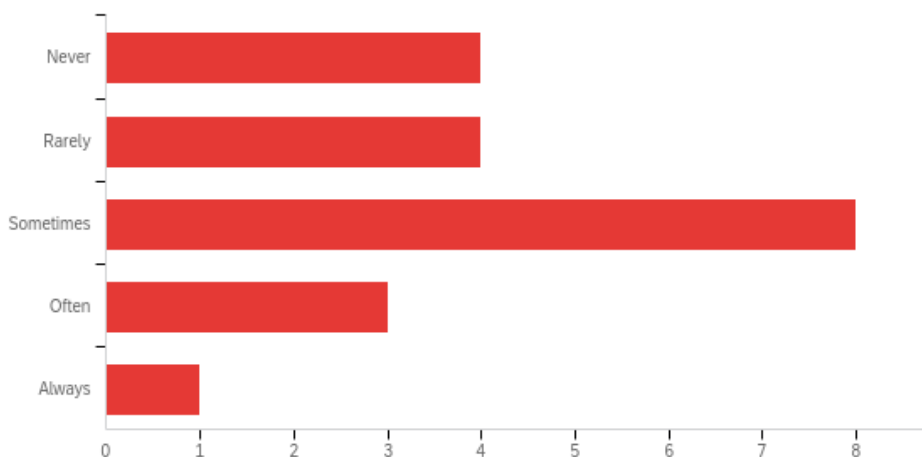


Table 8 and Table 9 display low frequency of Fat Talk participation by the female athletes. Table 8 illustrates that seventy percent of the female athletes never or rarely complain about weight gain. Table 9 demonstrates ninety percent of the female athletes never or rarely complain about clothes being too tight.

Table 8

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I've gained weight.

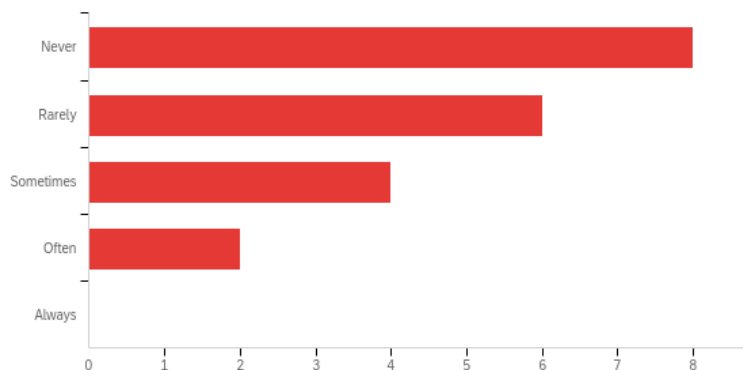
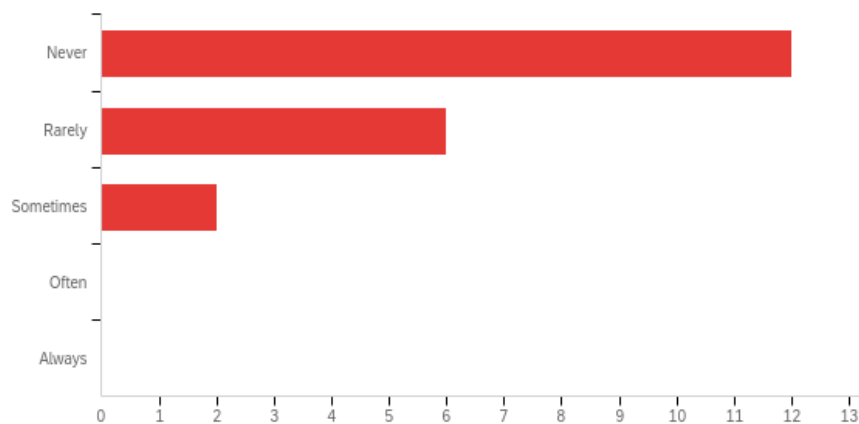


Table 9

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that my clothes are too tight.



The next two questions of the Fat Talk Questionnaire involve eating too much and comparison of body to friends. This is another area of the Fat Talk Questionnaire that has results that are higher in frequency compared to others. Questions ten and eleven display that fifty to fifty-five percent of the female athlete participants sometimes, often, and always participate in these conversations. Table 10 and Table 11 display a closer look at the breakdown of the questions:

Table 10

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I need to stop eating so much.

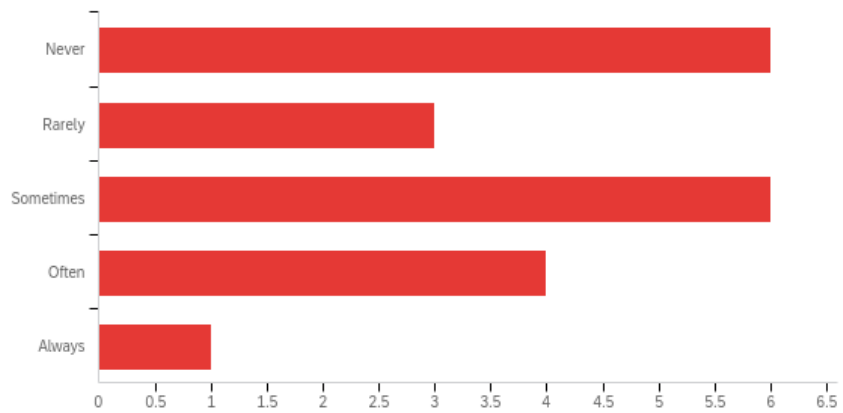
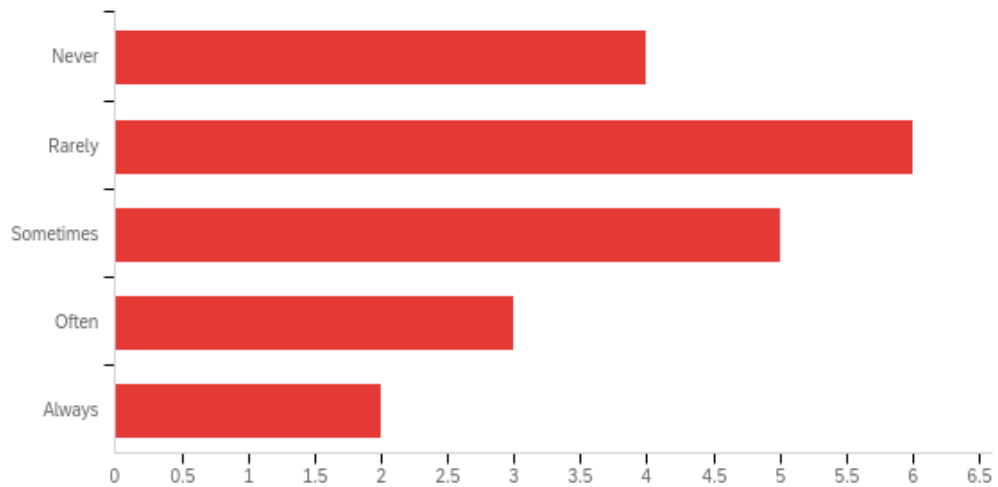


Table 11

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I criticize my body compared to my friends' bodies.



A closer look into questions twelve and thirteen display that many of the female athlete participants never or rarely partake in Fat Talk conversations involving pressures to be thin and finding their bodies disgusting. Table 12 and Table 13 illustrate a lower frequency by the female athlete participants in Fat Talk conversations:

Table 12

When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I feel pressure to be thin.

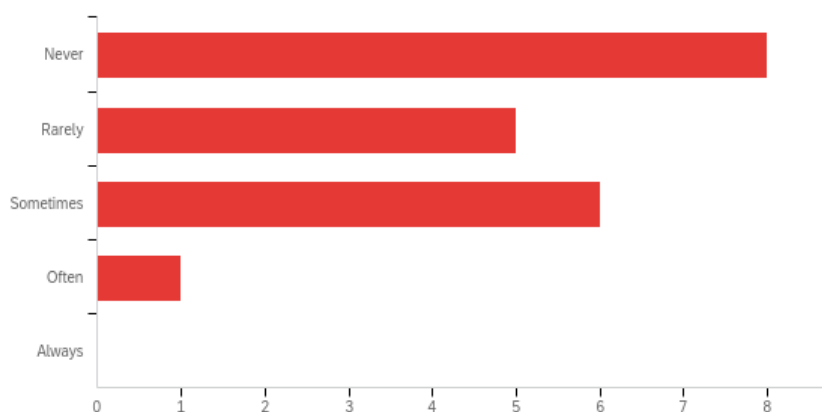
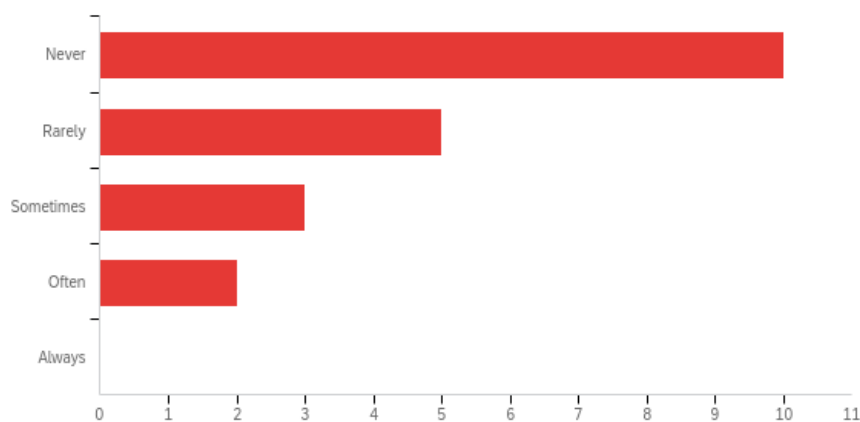


Table 13

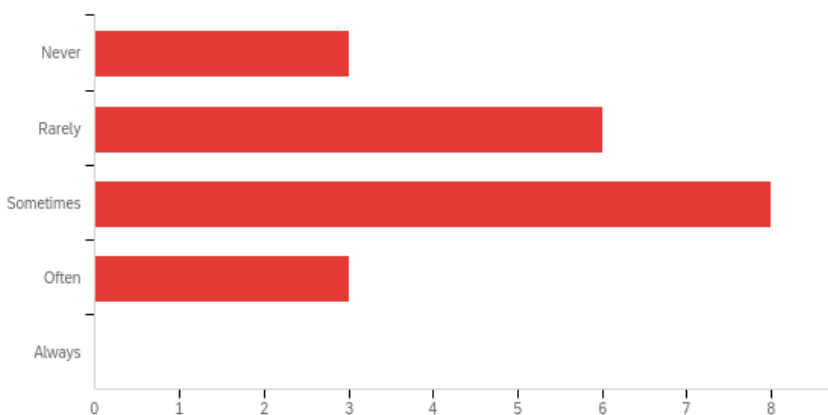
When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that my body is disgusting.



The final question of the Fat Talk Questionnaire is about individuals who complain about being out of shape. The participants in this study are high school athletes, it is not a surprise that just over fifty percent of the athletes participate in Fat Talk on this topic. Table 14 displays the results of the last question:

Table 14

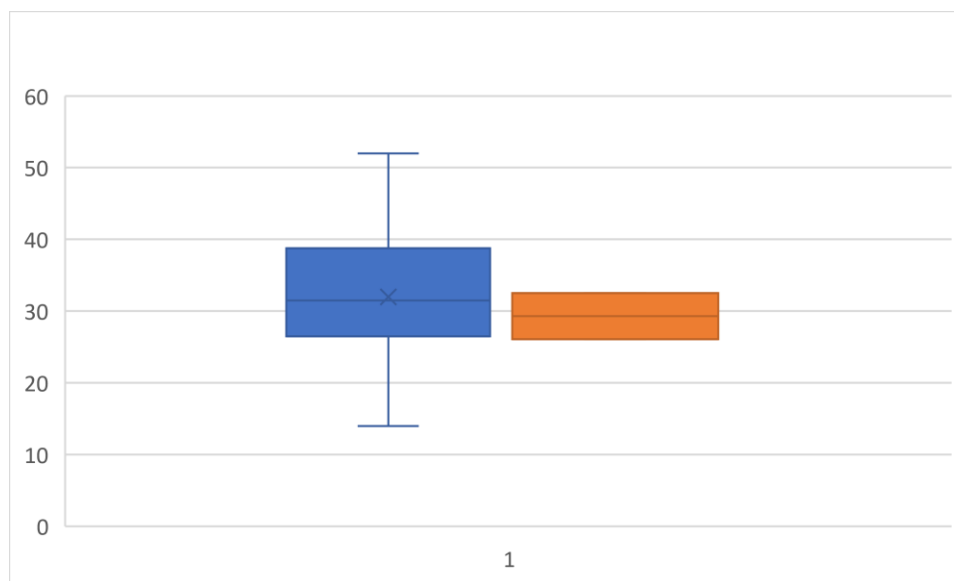
When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I'm not in shape.



The final part of the Fat Talk Questionnaire is to look closer at the female athlete participation scores. Each question was given an allotted point (1-never, 2-rarely, 3-sometimes, 4-often, 5-always). The minimum score of 14 for the Fat Talk Questionnaire would suggest low frequency in Fat Talk conversations. The maximum score of 70 for the Fat Talk Questionnaire would suggest high frequency in Fat Talk conversations. In previous research, Vanderkruik et. al., found the mean Fat Talk scores of high school females to be 26.08 (2020). A different study completed by Royal et. al., found the mean Fat Talk scores of undergraduate females to be 32.51 (2013). The results of the questionnaire illustrate that the minimum score from the participants was 14 (twice) while the maximum score was 52. The mean score of Fat Talk frequency was 32

which is noticeably higher than the previous research of high school females and equal to the undergraduate females. The Table 15 displays the results of the Fat Talk Questionnaire:

Table 15

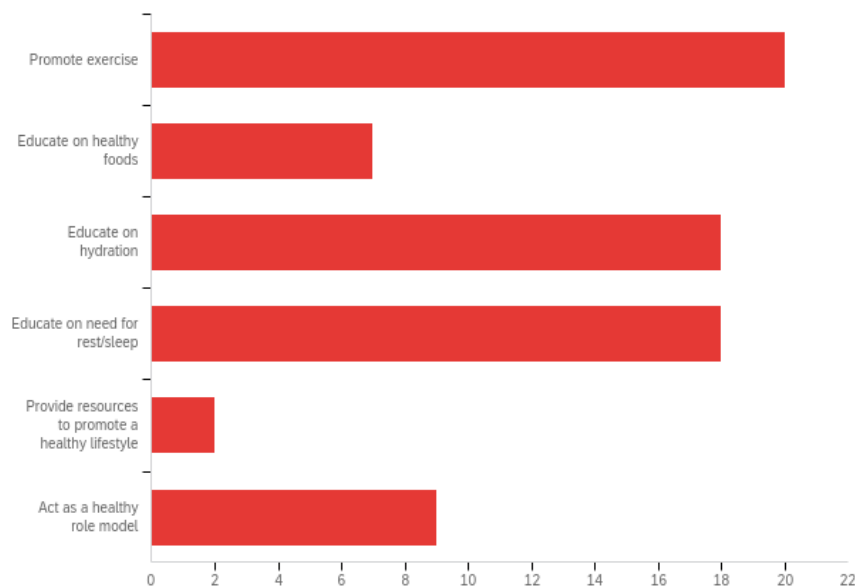


The second part of the data analysis are the four multiple choice questions that help to answer the research question in Chapter One: How do coaches' communication of body image affect high school female athletes? By asking the female athlete participants to answer these questions it provides insight into positive and negative ways in which coaches can affect high school female athletes. The first multiple choice question gathered all sports that the female athlete participants competed in during the 2020-2021 school year. The female athlete participants mainly competed in the sports of volleyball, basketball, softball, and soccer. Tennis, swimming, track and field, gymnastics, and equestrian each had one female athlete participant.

Examining the second multiple choice question provides insight into how female athlete participants believe their coaches promote a healthy lifestyle. Promotion of exercise (27%), education on hydration (24.32%) and education on the need for rest and sleep (24.32%) were

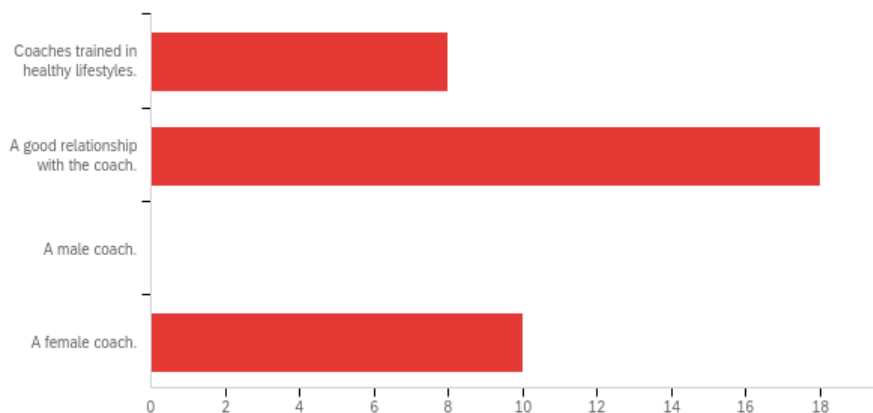
among the highest ways coaches promoted lifestyles to the female athletes. One participant in the study acknowledged in their experience that some coaches promote a healthy lifestyle more than others. Table 16 illustrates the complete analysis of the responses:

Table 16



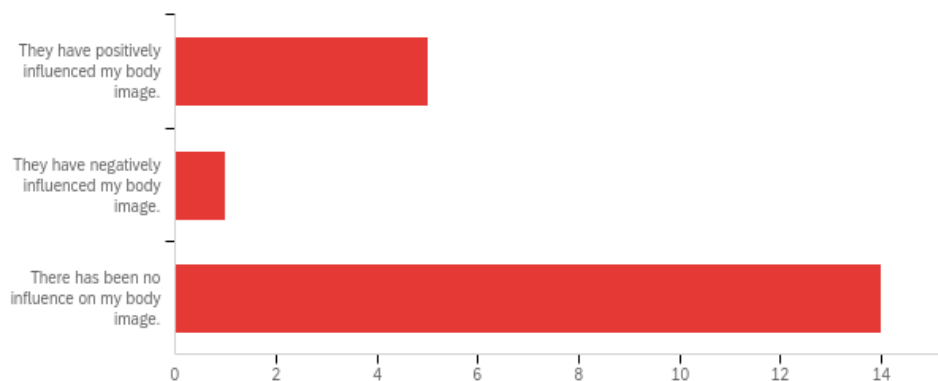
The third question of the multiple-choice section looks closely at what would open communication between female athletes and their coaches to talk about body image. This question provides the opportunity to understand how to improve the experience and communication with female athletes. Fifty percent of the participants acknowledged the importance of a good relationship with the coach. Zero of the participants chose a male coach as being a way to open communication on body image; however, one participant noted that gender of the coaches does not matter if they are a good role model. Table 17 illustrates the complete analysis of the question:

Table 17



The last question of the survey and multiple-choice section examines how the female athlete participants feel their coaches have influenced their feelings about body image. The question helps to guide the purpose for the research. How do coaches communication on body image effect high school female athletes? A majority (seventy percent) of the female athlete participants stated their coaches had no influence on their body image while one participant stated their coaches had a negative influence on their body image. Table 18 displays the results of the question:

Table 18



This question compared to the others drove the female athlete participants to reflect on their experiences.

Respondent 2: During basketball I was rarely played, and my coach told me he “wishes I was taller” so he could play me more.

Respondent 11: Coaches comment on the way I look comparatively to my teammates are the most impacting. Saying they are more fit than me or that I need to work out more outside of the team trainings to keep in shape more.

Respondent 18: There have been some coaches that I loved how they treated working out and eating right but having an athlete’s body often does not look like the models we see.

Respondent 19: Somewhat positive, somewhat negative. Referring to the influence of their coach on body image.

Summary

In summary, the information provided in this chapter represented the results of the study. The Fat Talk Questionnaire and the multiple-choice questions were strategically used to gain a better understanding of how coaches communication on body image can affect high school female athletes. The data represents twenty high school female athletes from two high schools in southwest Wisconsin. Chapter Five explores the discussion and conclusions of the data as well as provides recommendations for future research.

Discussions and Conclusions

The purpose of this cross-sectional research design was gaining insight into how coaches' communication on body image effects high school female athletes. The study was designed to first understand how often high school female athletes participate in "Fat Talk." Then it was designed to examine the female athletes' perspective on four questions as it relates to coaches' communication on body image and promotion of healthy lifestyles. Together, the two components allow for beneficial insight into the high school female athlete perspective. This allows for future coaches to provide a safe, healthy, and positive environment for all female athletes. This final chapter will be organized by looking at the research question in comparison to the data collected. It will include the discussion and conclusions provided by the research as well as how it aligns with other findings outlined in Chapter Two. Finally, it will discuss leadership implications and recommendations for future research that are based up from the findings of the research.

Discussions

The research of this paper was aimed to answer one big question: how do coaches' communication on body image effect high school female athletes? The research question was designed to examine high school female athletes because of the increase in body image issues in girls and young women. Past research acknowledges that girls and young women are often influenced by mainstream media and struggling to figure out how one should look. In other studies involving body image issues, a term that is often studied is "Fat Talk." This refers to negative body-related comments and conversations between girls and young women (Royal et al., 2013). The "Fat Talk" term and questionnaire is an integral part of this research design to help better understand high school female athletes and body image issues. Additionally, previous

literature studied coaches' perspective and communication on body image when working with female athletes. Each of these areas were identified as key components of the data collected for the current study.

Media

According to Gallivan (2014), some women's magazines, like *Seventeen*, devote a large portion of their content to appearance. In the data collected by the researcher, medias' influence to look a certain way were identified as a main influence for high school female athletes. In question three of the study, "When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I criticize my body compared to thin models in magazines," 65% of the participants sometimes, often, and always partook in the "Fat Talk" conversation. The influence on body image that comes from media is troublesome. The study on American elementary school girls who read magazines reported the pictures they saw influenced the opinions they had on the ideal body shape (Gallivan, 2014). This, in addition to the current study, reiterates the potentially harmful influence that media has over girls and young women. In the second portion of the survey Respondent 18 provided perspective on the models they see.

Respondent 18 expressed:

There [have] been some coaches that I loved how they treated working out and eating right but having an athlete's body often does not look like the models we see.

For as much as media platforms like magazines push for dieting and weight control to be helpful, it can also send the wrong message. This is evident with how the female athlete participants responded in the study.

Fat Talk

The first section of the research design involved a “Fat Talk Questionnaire” to help provide an understanding of where the high school female athletes were with body image issues. According to previous study by Mills & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz (2018), 93% of young women participate in “Fat Talk.” The current study when compared to Mills & Fuller-Tyszkiewicz are almost identical, 90% of the female athlete participants partook in “Fat Talk” conversations. This provides critical information for not only coaches who deal with high school female athletes but for any schoolteacher or administrator, “Fat Talk” is real and young women are very susceptible to it. Shannon & Mills (2018), provide additional information about “Fat Talk” that compares to the findings in the current study. According to Shannon & Mills (2018), young women in the study were primed to think about overeating. As a result the individuals partook in fat talk. In the “Fat Talk Questionnaire” questions seven and ten relate to the study and evidence found by Shannon & Mills (2018). Question seven asks the female participants how often they complain about eating fattening foods when with one or several close female friend(s). The breakdown of the responses to this question were 60% of the female athletes sometimes, often, and always participated in this fat talk conversation. Question ten asks how often the female participants complain that they need to stop eating so much when with one or several close female friend(s). Again, the results showed more than 50% of the female athletes participated in this fat talk conversation. The information gathered in the current study directly correlates to the findings in previous literature. Fat talk across multiple studies is a manifestation of thoughts and attitudes about weight, body shape and its importance. It is critical to continue to learn more about fat talk and its effects on female athletes.

Coaches Perspective

In Sabiston et. al., (2020), there was uncertainty amongst coaches on how to address female body image issues. Male coaches more than female coaches expressed concern on how to handle such a sensitive topic. The current study gained insight into what would open communication on body image issues between athletes and coaches. Half of the female athletes surveyed selected that a good relationship with the coach would help to open communication on body image issues. Additionally, 27.78% selected that having a female coach would open communication on body image issues as well. The only option that was not selected by any of the female athlete participants as a factor that would open communication on body image issues between coaches and players was male coaches. However, Respondent 4 noted that the gender of the coach does not matter to her as long as they are a good role model. The schools who participated in the study each have five male coaches on staff in female athletics. This provides interesting insight into the female athlete perspective. A good relationship with the coach was the biggest asset to open communication between coach and player, but when players have a choice, a female coach would provide additional comfort. When the current study and the Sabiston et. al., (2020), are examined for similarities, it shows that the uncertainty that the male coaches experience is warranted as proof of the current study. Another area of the current study that 22.22% of the female participants selected to open communication was coaches trained in healthy lifestyles. This when examined with the Sabiston et. al., (2020), provides similarities of the desires of coaches to be trained in not only healthy lifestyles but body image issues. The goal is to provide a positive and safe atmosphere for all female athletes to communicate with their coaches.

Communication

The last area of the current study that draws similar themes to previous studies is the communication coaches use with female athletes and the influence on them. Lauer et. al., (2018), McGannon & McMahon (2019), and Coppola et. al., (2014), all provide research that describes collegiate female athlete's perspective on how coaches' communication on body image, weight, comparison to teammates affected them. Coaches who compared players bodies to teammates or friends had a negative impact on body image with the student-athletes. The student-athletes interviewed recalled comparison comments and weight conversations to be difficult to hear. Those types of comments and conversations sometimes led the female athletes down extreme dieting methods. The "Fat Talk Questionnaire" presents body comparison in a similar way, but it asks for the female athletes' perspective on how often they compare their bodies to friends bodies. Question eleven asked how often the female athletes criticize their bodies in comparison to their friends when they are with one or several close female friend(s). 50% of the female athlete participants sometimes, often, and always partake in criticizing their own bodies in comparison to friends. Although these two situations are not identical it provides insight into how vulnerable body comparisons are to females. If more coaches understood that female athletes criticize and compare their own bodies to others it may deter them from making comments that leave them even more susceptible to body image issues and possibility of extreme dieting methods. Respondent 11 from the current study provided a perspective that supports how body comparison and comments can negatively affect high school female athletes as well.

Coaches comments on the way I look comparatively to my teammates are the most impacting. Saying they're more fit than me or that I need to work out more outside of team trainings to keep

in shape more. Most recently a coach guessing my weight and being proud that they were within five pounds, it made me think how I might look fat and thousands of thoughts simultaneously ran through my mind. Words just hurt more in a social setting or comparing me to my friends.

Coaches communication on body image issues have a chance to leave an impact both positive and negative on female athletes of all ages. It is critical to understand and prevent all coaches from using body comparisons of female athletes. It is especially critical for high school coaches to understand their impact if they choose to make hurtful comments. As Lantzoui & Grady (2021), found in their study the age range of eating disorders can vary, but it typically occurs 40% of the time in young adolescents between fifteen and nineteen years of age. Hurtful body image comments leave female athletes in a susceptible position and can onset issues down the road and possibly into collegiate athletics. Soulliard et. al., (2018, p. 99), provides a valuable insight on how coaches should provide positive messages to their female athletes about the “appreciation for their athletes’ bodies with a particular focus on how their bodies allow them to perform successfully in their sport.”

Influence

The last question the study asked was for insight on the female athlete participants perspective on how coaches have influenced their feelings about body image. Previous literature provides information that coaches can have both a positive and negative influence on body image. Of the twenty female athlete participants in the study 14 of them (70%) selected that their coaches have no influence on their body image. Five of the female athlete participants or 25% of them stated their coaches had a positive influence on their body image while 5% stated their coaches had a negative influence on their body image. Respondent 19 stated that their experience with coaches and influence on body image was, “somewhat positive and somewhat negative.”

This information does not coincide with previous works. There were more female athletes that stated no influence by coaches rather than positive and negative. This could be a result of the two participating schools being small in student population and fewer sports offered. Larger schools often have a bigger budget, larger student population, an increase of influence from parents, and ability to offer more sports. When this happens, there can be conflict and pressure around athletic performance and high standards for coaches. Another reason for the contrasting results could be that previous research studied collegiate athletes. Collegiate athletics are different from high school athletics. Typically, coaches at the collegiate level only coach while high school coaches hold another job in addition to being a coach. The collegiate level can be full of stressful situations for coaches because winning is a top priority. Collegiate coaches push their student-athletes to compete at the highest level and that requires their bodies to be in shape through exercise and eating. Coaches at the high school level may not feel the need to push their student-athletes through rigorous workouts and eating regiments. As a result, it may lead to no influence on body image issues from their coaches. Overall, it is alarming to see such a high number of no influence when body image issues are of such high concern in young women today.

Leadership Implications

The leadership implications for this research help support the importance of building relationships and strong communication with student-athletes as a coach. When a coach can provide student-athletes with a positive experience in athletics through relationships with teammates, coaching staff, and the game, it leaves a lasting impression. One way a coach can build relationships with student-athletes is by being what the student-athletes need them to be. In different situations student-athletes need coaches to be like a parent, a psychologist, a teacher, a role model, or a mentor. The ability of the coach to be each of these for the student-athlete is

essential to developing a positive coach to student-athlete relationship. When a relationship between a coach and student-athlete is strong, it leads to success not only on the field but off it as well. As one of the survey questions asked, what factors would open communication with coaches on body image issues, an overwhelming amount stated that a good relationship with the coach would be a key factor. Looking at the feedback to that question on a larger scale it only reiterates the importance of a good coach to student-athlete relationship. It provides coaches with insightful information on how they can lead and provide best for their student-athletes.

In addition to building good relationships between coaches and student-athletes, communication is another critical component in leadership. An atmosphere where student-athletes are comfortable confiding in their coach, especially at the high school level, is crucial. High schoolers are at a vulnerable age because of the changes they go through physically, emotionally, and mentally. Student-athletes in high school have to balance all of those changes along with participating and competing in sports. It is a difficult task. For example, some female athletes have to deal with body image issues. In the case of this study, media impacts female athletes and their body image. The impact of media can lead young women to be concerned with their bodies and lead them to participate in fat talk conversations among teammates, friends, and peers. A coach who has created a safe place for female athletes to communicate will be able to provide insight, guidance, and resources on how to handle body image concerns. This would lead to safer ways of coping with body image issues, healthy lifestyle choices, additional resources, and success on and off the field. When female athletes and athletes in general feel confident in their relationships with coaches and teammates it is almost always followed with better performance. The current study, along with previous literature, provides additional information on how detrimental poor communication with female athletes can be. Coaches who do not

understand how to communicate with their athletes can negatively affect their performance, experience, and confidence. Building good relationships and strong communication are vital components in leadership and coaching.

Recommendations for Future Research

Body image issues are prevalent in today's society across all ages. The research design was limited in numbers due to multiple factors including COVID-19. Further research on high school female athletes across the state of Wisconsin and other areas of the country would provide a larger sample size and more concrete data. Additionally, it would be beneficial to research how coaches' communication on body image can affect high school male athletes. Females may be more likely to suffer from eating disorders, but males can still fall victim to them. The comparison of the female and male data would provide beneficial insight for all high school coaches and how to handle body image issues and concerns for all athletes in the future.

Another recommendation for future research is the implementation of the "Body Project" with high school and collegiate female athletes. The Body Project is an "evidence-based eating disorder prevention program that aims to prevent the onset of eating disorders by challenging the thin-ideal and promoting body acceptance through dissonance-based activities" (Vanderkruik et. al., 2020, p. 196). The research could use the "Fat Talk Questionnaire" as a baseline at the beginning of a school year for athletes. After the completion of the questionnaire the rest of the school year would work through the Body Project and see how much of the fat talk and self-deprecating communication decreases over the course of the year. The "Fat Talk Questionnaire" could be redistributed to see how the Body Project helped, hurt or was indifferent in promoting body acceptance.

A last recommendation for future research is a deeper look into what works well in collegiate athletic institutions for nutritional education and resources and how can it be implemented in high school athletics. In general, collegiate athletics have the means to provide nutritional education and resources to its athletes to help benefit their well-being. The recommendation is to study what works well for those institutions and find cost effective ways to implement it in the high school setting. This would help to enhance the experience and well-being of all high school student-athletes. It would provide more opportunities for communication between student-athletes and coaches on body image issues and healthy lifestyle habits. It could provide coaches the opportunity to have more of a positive influence on body image issues with their student-athletes. The onset of eating disorders and body image issues typically start from the ages of 15-19. Research that can provide preventative measures through nutritional education and resources in high school to decrease the likelihood of future eating disorders is essential to body image issues across all students.

Summary

The goal of this study was to better understand the impact of coaches' communication on body image with high school female athletes. The findings indicated that a majority of coaches had no influence on the female athlete participants body image. There were multiple similarities in the data that correlate with previous works such as the influence of media, the frequency in which fat talk occurs in young females, and coaches' communication on body comparison of athletes. Although the study did not find coaches' communication to have an influence on the high school female athletes body image, beneficial data was gathered to help direct coaches on how to best provide for their student-athletes.

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Appendix A

Body Image Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Hello, my name is Michelle Kraemer, and I am conducting research for my graduate program at Winona State University in Leadership Education and Sports Management. The survey that I am conducting is to determine how coaches' communication of body image affects high school female athletes. The completion of the survey implies that parental and participant consent has been given to participate in the study.

As a participant, you will complete a completely anonymous online survey that should take you roughly 10-15 minutes. The goal of this research is gaining a better understanding of how female athletes perceive their body image and how communication from coaches may play a role in it. The survey will ask questions regarding day-to-day conversations between female athletes about body image. The survey will use a Likert Scale which provides the option to answer, "never, rarely, sometimes, often and always." Additionally, at the end of the survey, there will be four multiple choice questions with room for personal comments. These questions will involve what sports the participants play and interaction with coaches on body image. I am conducting the survey in hopes of finding ways coaches can provide a positive experience and support to student-athletes.

It is important to acknowledge that participation in the study is strictly voluntary. If you choose to not participate or want to stop mid-survey, you can do so without any consequences. Confidentiality is critical! I, as the researcher, will not know the identity of who gave what

responses, or even who stopped the survey partway. So, although the results of the survey may be published, there will be no identifying information given to any outside part. The data collected will be downloaded onto a password protected device with access only to the researcher and advisor. The data will be deleted once the study is complete.

Potential risks are the acknowledgement of body image issues. The survey will ask questions in regard to how participants see themselves and their participation in “fat talk” in addition to their personal experiences in high school athletics. The information collected will be disclosed to only the researcher. No identifiable information will be collected or shared in the results.

Resources

National Eating Disorders Association - Contact the Helpline | National Eating Disorders Association 800-931-2237

Women’s Health - Eating disorders | womenshealth.gov

Edelweiss Behavioral Health, Madison WI – 608-205-4450

High School Guidance Counselors

*You can also contact your own doctor or mental health professionals if you have concerns about your own eating or body image.

Contact information: if you have any questions in regard to the study, please feel free to contact me at jv4534he@go.minnstate.edu or mamueller1212@gmail.com. You can also contact my faculty advisor Steven Baule at steven.baule@winona.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, contact the Human Protections Administrator Brett Ayers at 507-457-5519 or bayers@winona.edu. This project has

been reviewed by the Winona State University Institutional Review Board for the protection of human rights.

Page

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Q1 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that my arms are too flabby.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q2 When I'm with one or several close friend(s), I complain that my stomach is fat.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q3 When I'm with one or several close friend(s), I criticize my body compared to thin models in magazines.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q4 When I'm with one or several close friend(s), I complain that my body is out of proportion.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q5 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I hate my whole body.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q6 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I am fat.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q7 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I should not be eating fattening foods.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q8 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I've gained weight.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q9 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that my clothes are too tight.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q10 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I need to stop eating so much.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q11 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I criticize my body compared to my friends' bodies.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q12 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I feel pressure to be thin.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q13 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that my body is disgusting.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

Q14 When I'm with one or several close female friend(s), I complain that I'm not in shape.

- Never (1)
 - Rarely (2)
 - Sometimes (3)
 - Often (4)
 - Always (5)
-

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Q17 Which sport(s) do you play?

- Volleyball (1)
- Tennis (2)
- Cross Country (3)
- Basketball (4)
- Swimming (5)
- Soccer (6)
- Softball (7)
- Track and Field (8)
- Gymnastics (9)
- Other (10)

Q27 Comments:

Q21 How do your coaches promote a healthy lifestyle?

Check ALL that apply

- Promote exercise (1)
- Educate on healthy foods (2)
- Educate on hydration (3)
- Educate on need for rest/sleep (4)
- Provide resources to promote a healthy lifestyle (5)
- Act as a healthy role model (6)
- None of the above (7)

Q22 Comments:

Q23

What factors would open communication between you and your coaches to talk about body image?

Check ALL that apply

- Coaches trained in healthy lifestyles. (1)
 - A good relationship with the coach. (2)
 - A male coach. (3)
 - A female coach. (4)
-

Q24 Comments:

Q25 How have your coaches influenced your feelings about body image? Check ALL that apply

- They have positively influenced my body image. (1)
 - They have negatively influenced my body image. (2)
 - There has been no influence on my body image. (3)
-

Q26 Comments:

End of Block: Default Question Block
