## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# The effects of weight class athletes' nutrient consumptions and eating habits on their depression-anxiety-stress levels

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Summary. Diet is important in sports in terms of having an influence on bodily and mental health besides sportive performance. The objective of this study is to find out the effects of dietary habits and eating attitudes on moods of weight class athletes. The study was conducted with a total of 60 athletes -33 wrestlers who participated in Turkey Men's Greco-Roman Wrestling National Team Preparation Camp, 18 wrestlers who participated in Turkey Men's Freestyle National Team Preparation Camp and 9 judokas who participated in Turkey Men's Judo National Team Preparation Camp during the years 2013 and 2014. Athletes' demographic characteristics and information about their three-day eating habits were found, eating attitudes test (EAT) and Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-42) were applied and some of their anthropometric measurements were found. Student-t, Mann Whitney U, Anova and Kruskal tests were used for the statistical analysis of data. Statistically significant difference was found between the EAT scores of Greco-roman wrestlers and freestyle wrestlers and EAT scores of Greco-roman wrestlers were found to be higher (p<0,05). Average carbohydrate intake and stress scores of athletes whose stress scores were higher than normal were found to be significantly higher when compared with the group with normal stress scores (p<0,05). Unhealthy diets which athletes follow to keep body weight under control both damage the athletes' diet and negatively affect their moods.

**Key words:** diet, wrestling, judo, sport

## Introduction

Sports nutrition has recently become an excessively researched and increasingly interesting area of science. It has become an area in which sport scientists and also trainers, athletes and athlete families should have sufficient and correct information and this nutritional information should be received from expert dieticians (1).

Appropriate and balanced diet is essential for young athletes not only in terms of sportive achievement but also for their growth, development and general health conditions (2). An appropriate diet is important especially for developing performance,

maintaining condition and protecting from post-exercise recovery and injuries (3). Mostly, individuals cannot allocate time for eating due to various reasons and thus, they cannot be nourished properly (4). It is certainly a truth to say that it is impossible to expect high performance from an athlete whose diet is not proper and whose health is deteriorated (5).

Psychological factors such as perfectionism, anxiety, mood, mood disorders, disrupted bodily image and self-respect have a role in the multi-factor etiology of eating disorders (6,7). According to American Psychiatry Association (APA)'s DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-V, 2014), eating disorders (ED) include anorexia nervosa (AN), bu-

limia nervosa (BN) and other eating disorders (APA, 2014). Significant associations have been found between eating habits and anxieties about body shape, social anxiety, depression and body mass index (8).

In addition, it is also stated that eating habits and behaviors can be damaged as a result of exercise and also eating habits and behaviors can cause mood disorders and consequently depression (9-12).

In all sports branches based on weight class, athletes limit their daily energy consumption and thus by decreasing their weight, they get advantage when compared with other contestants (13).

Diet is important in sports in terms of having an influence on bodily and mental health besides sportive performance. The objective of this study is to find out the effects of dietary habits and eating attitudes on moods of weight class athletes.

#### Material and Method

The universe of the study consists of athletes who participated in TM wrestling (Greco-roman and Freestyle) and judo NTPC as part of 2013-2014 activity program. A total of 60 voluntary national team athletes - 33 athletes who participated in İstanbul Mersinli Ahmet Wrestling Camp Training Center Men's Greco-roman NTPC, 18 athletes who participated in Ankara Elmadağ Wrestling Camp Training Center Men's Freestyle NTPC and 9 judokas who participated in Samsun Atatürk Sports Hall Turkey Olympics Preparation Center Men's Judo NTPC- were included in the study. Of the national team athletes who were included in the study from wrestling, 17 had medals in European Championship, 27 had medals in World Championship and 7 had medals in Olympic Games. The athletes were informed about the questionnaires and measurements. Athletes who had injuries or health problems were not included in the study. Elite weight class athletes who are in camp train for an average of 5 days a week and 4 hours a day. In this study, the athletes' demographic features and information about their three-day food consumption were collected through questionnaire form and EAT and DASS-42 were applied and some anthropometric measurements were taken.

# Demographic Information Form

A form which included 12 questions to get information about the athletes' demographic features was prepared.

#### Nutritional Status

Nutritional status was found by recording the dietary consumption of athletes in three consequent days. The amount of nutrients in individuals' one course were calculated by using the amounts determined by the individuals and by using Kutluay's book entitled "Standard Recipes for Catering of Institutions" (14). Energy and macro nutrient analyses of these consumptions were calculated by using diet information systems (BEBIS 6) package program and their averages were taken.

# Anthropometric Measurements

All the participants' weights and body compositions (body fat mass and percentage, lean tissue mass, total bodily fluid) were measured. Tanita make BC 418 model BİA device was used to find out body components. The subjects were measured with shorts on and bare feet.

## Body mass index

BMI is an easily calculated (Weight [kg]/Height<sup>2</sup> [m]) criterion which is accepted as a good indicator of total body fat (15).

# Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scales (DASS-42)

The validity and reliability of this scale developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) was conducted by Akın and Bayram (2007) (16,17). Each item in the scale has 4 Likert type grading of "0": did not apply to me at all, "1": applied to me to some degree or for some of the time, "2": applied to me to a considerable degree or for a good part of time and "3": applied to me very much or most of the time. The adaptation validity scores of DASS were .87 and .84, respectively. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient was .89, while item total correlations were found to be between .51 and .75. The test retest and split-half reliability scores of the scale were found as .99 and .96. These results show that DASS has high level of reliability and validity. The participants are asked to choose

the item that applies most to them. The questions in the Depression and Anxiety category are grouped in three different groups and assessed according to the total scores of the individual from each group. According to these, a score of 0-9 taken from the depression category, a score of 0-7 taken from the anxiety category and a score of 0-14 taken from the stress category are interpreted as "normal" values. Higher values of these scores in each category show the increase in depression, anxiety and stress levels. Since we did not have too many participants, we did not grade them as normal, mild, fair and advanced level according to depression, stress and anxiety average scores, instead grouped in two as those within normal range and those over normal range.

The Eating Attitude Test- EAT: It is a self-assessment scale developed by Garner and Garfinkel (1979) to assess the disorders in eating attitudes and behaviors. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Savaşır and Erol (1989) (18,19). The cut-off score of EAT scale was found as 30. Savaşır and Erol (1989) found the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale as 70. Individuals are asked to choose the choice that fits them best by thinking about their eating habits (20). In terms of pathology, 3 points are given for each end response and 2 and 1 points are given for the other choices. Total score is obtained by adding up the grading (21).

Statistical Analysis: Statistical analysis of all the data obtained within the context of the research was assessed through SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows) 17.0 statistic program. Student-t, Mann Whitney U tests were used for the statistical assessment of the data. In the comparison of more than two independent groups, the groups which were normally distributed were compared with Anova test. Tukey multiple comparison test was used for paired comparisons. The groups which were not normally distributed were compared with Kruskal Wallis test.

## Results

In Table 1, no statistically significant difference was found between the groups which participated in the study p(>0.05).

In Table 2, as a result of the calculation of energy and nutrient elements of daily average food consumption of the athletes who participated in our study, carbohydrate intake percentage of the wrestlers was found as 37,98±12,42, while their protein intake percentage was found as 18,58±6,42 and their fat intake percentage was found as 42,46±16,48. Carbohydrate intake percentage of free-style wrestlers was found as 44,50±16,74, their protein percentage was found as 18,13±5,68 and their fat percentage was found as 36,31±12,98. As a result of judo energy and nutrient element calculations, judokas' carbohydrate intake percentage was found as 38,33±1,56, their protein intake percentage was found as 19,97±4,24 and their fat intake percentage was found as 40,89±9,39.

In Table 3, the athletes' depression score average was found as  $6.72 \pm 5.69$ , their stress score average was found as  $11.78 \pm 6.20$ , and their anxiety score average was found as  $7.33 \pm 5.56$ .

In Table 4, depression anxiety, stress and eating attitudes of the athletes in the study were examined as normal and above normal. Depression score was found as above normal in 21 (35%) participants and as normal in 39 (65%) participants. Stress score was found as above normal in 23 (38.3%) participants and as normal in 37 (61.7%) participants. Anxiety score was found as above normal in 24 (40%) participants and as normal in 36 (60%) participants. When eating attitude scores were examined, 10% of the athletes were found to have eating disorder.

In Table 5, statistically significant difference was found between eating attitude test score averages of Greco-Roman wrestlers and free style wrestlers (p<0.05). No statistically significant difference was found between groups when depression anxiety, stress score averages were examined (p>0.05).

When the athletes' EAT scores were compared between groups in terms of their eating attitude, anxiety, stress and depression scores, a statistically significant difference was found between EAT scores of Greco-Roman and Freestyle wrestlers (p<0.05).

In Table 6, average carbohydrate intake of athletes who had above normal stress scores was found to be higher. This difference was found to be statistically significant (p<0.05). No statistically significant difference was found between other nutrient elements and stress levels (p>0.05).

Parameter	Group	N	Ave ±Sd	Min.	Max.	p	
	Greco Roman	33	24,39 ±3,45	17	31		
A ( )	Freestyle	18	26,06 ±2,96	21	31		
Age (years)	Judo	9	23,22 ± 3,90	18	31	,096	
	General	60	24,71 ±3,46	17	31	•	
	Greco Roman	33	176,03±7,10	164	190		
II • 1 . / . )	Freestyle	18	172,50±8,08	155	192		
Height (cm)	Judo	9	170,67±5,59	165	183	,080	
	General	60	174,17±7,42	155	192		
	Greco Roman	33	85,91±18,38	62,1	123,8	- ,117	
557 • 1 . /1 · )	Freestyle	18	79,68±16,78	63	118,6		
Weight (kg)	Judo	9	73,43±8,16	63,5	89,2		
	General	60	82,17±17,17	60	123,8	-	
	Greco Roman	33	27,41±4,11	22,3	37	_	
BMI (kg/m²)	Freestyle	18	26,53±3,23	21,3	32,2		
	Judo	9	25,38±1,71	22,5	27,7	648 -	
	General	60	26,84±3,62	21,3	37		
T. (01)	Greco Roman	33	11,05±4,85	4,4	23,6	_	
	Freestyle	18	11,28±4,88	2,7	20,1		
Fat (%)	Judo	9	8,38±3,83	3,3	14,2	0,277	
	General	60	10,72±4,76	2,7	23,6	_	

**Table 2.** Comparison of the athletes' average carbohydrate, protein and fat intake in percentages according to groups

Group	Carbohydrate intake	Protein intake	Fat intake	
	Ave ±Sd	Ave ±Sd	Ave ±Sd	
Greco Roman(%)	37,98±12,42	18,58±6,42	42,46±16,48	
Freestyle(%)	44,50±16,74	18,13±5,68	36,31±12,98	
Judo(%)	38,33±1,56	19,97±4,24	40,89± 9,39	
Total (%)	39,85 ±13,39	18,66±6,02	40,52±15,35	

 Table 3. Depression, Stress and Anxiety Average Scores of the Athletes

Variable	N	Ave. ± S.d.	Min.	Max.
Depression score	60	6,72 ±5,69	0	19
Stress score	60	11,78± 6,20	0	23
Anxiety score	60	7,33 ±5,56	0	21

**Table 4.** Depression, Stress, Anxiety and Eating Attitudes of the Athletes

Variable	Group	N	%
	Higher than normal	21	35
Depression Score	Normal	39	65
	Total	60	100
	Higher than normal	23	38.3
Stress Score	Normal	37	61.7
	Total	60	
	Higher than normal	24	40
Anxiety Score	Normal	36	60
	Total	mal 36 6	100
	30>	6	10
Eating Attitude (EAT) Score	30<	54	90
Ceore	Total	60	100

Variable	Group	$\mathbf{N}$	Ave. $\pm$ S.D.	Min.	Max.	p
Eating Attitude (EAT)	Greco-Roman	33	13,84 ± 8,289 <sup>b</sup>	4	48	
_	Freestyle	18	26,67 ±2,43°	4	81	0.02.4
_	Judo	9	15,33 ±10,75 <sup>ab</sup>	6	40	- 0,034
_	Total	60	17,92 ±15,21	4	81	-
Anxiety Score	Greco-Roman	33	7,51 ± 5,79	0	19	
-	Freestyle	18	7,83 ± 5,52	1	21	- 0.618
_	Judo	9	5,67 ± 5,05	0	15	
	Total	60	$7,33 \pm 5,56$	0	21	
Stress Score	Greco-Roman	33	11,72 ± 6,20	0	23	
	Freestyle	18	11,78 ± 5,49	2	20	
-	Judo	9	12,00 ±8,08	0	20	- 0.993
_	Total	60	11,78 ±8,08	0	20	-
Depression Score	Greco-Roman	33	7,30 ±5,79	0	19	
_	Freestyle	18	7,11 ±5,84	0	19	0.245
-	Judo	9	3,78 ±4,52	0	12	0.245
-	Total	60	6,72±5,69	0	19	_

Mood	Nutrients	Level	N	Ave. ± S.d	Min	Max	p	
	Carbohydrate	Normal	24	237,05 ± 82,94	121,7	410,5		
		Higher than normal	36	227,15 ± 70,27	30,5	385,2	- 0,633	
_	Protein	Normal	24	105,61 ± 34,27	21	174	- 0,638	
Anxiety		Higher than normal	36	109,98 ± 35,67	30	186,9		
_	Π.	Normal	24	104,38 ± 42,21	25,9	182,1	- 0,991	
	Fat	Higher than normal	36	104,50 ± 38,35	34,4	212,9		
	Carbohydrate	Normal	39	233,03 ± 88,24	30,5	410	0.760	
		Higher than normal	21	227,56 ± 54,53	121,7	334	- 0,768	
D .	Protein	Normal	39	108,36 ± 34,82	30	186,9	0.060	
Depression		Higher than normal	21	107,99 ± 35,88	21	168,3	- 0,968	
_	Fat	Normal	39	396,84 ± 180,46	34,4	163,6	0.075	
		Higher than normal	21	386,79 ± 201,93	25,9	212,9	- 0,975	
Stress	Carbohydrate	Normal	21	257,28 ± 70,25	158,7	410,5	0.020*	
		Higher than normal	39	214,85 ± 78,47	30,5	379,5	- 0,038°	
	Protein	Normal	21	111,97 ± 29,08	52,7	174	0.517	
		Higher than normal	39	105,90 ± 38,260	21	186,9	- 0,517	
_	E-4	Normal	21	107,73 ± 34,82	41,9	182,1	0.64=	
	Fat	Higher than normal	39	102,41 ± 42,62	25,9	212,9	- 0,617	

Anxiety scores of the athletes who participated in our study were normal and the groups which had higher than normal anxiety scores were compared in terms of some nutrients. Average carbohydrate intakes of athletes who had higher than normal stress scores were found to be higher. This difference was found to be statistically significant (p<0,05).

#### Discussion

The objective of our study was to compare the effects of eating habits and eating attitudes of weight athletes on their mood. The total body fat percentage average of the athletes who participated in our study was found as 10,72±4,76%. Groups' body fat percentages were found to be 11,05±4,85 % for Greco-roman wrestlers, 11,28±4,88% for freestyle wrestlers and 8,38±30% for judokas (p>0.05). Various studies have shown average body fat values of wrestlers to be between 6% and 15% (22). In Roemmich and Sinning's (1996) study, BMI of adolescent wrestlers was found to be 7,8%, while in Zorba's (2006) study, BMI of elite Turkish wrestlers was found to be 10,92±5,3% and this result was in parallel with the results of our study (23,24).

As a result of energy and nutrient calculations of athletes' daily average food consumption, carbohydrate percentage was found as 39,85 ±13,39, protein percentage was found as 18,66±6,02% and fat percentage was found as 40,52±15,35. While it is sufficient for healthy adults to take 55-60% of their daily energy from carbohydrates, 12-15% from proteins and 25-30% from fats for a sufficient and balanced diet, for athletes, the contribution of nutrients to daily energy is different in terms of the athletes' branches. It has been reported that in sports branches such as boxing, wrestling, judo, karate, taekwondo, it is sufficient for 50% of the energy to come from carbohydrates, 20% from proteins and 30% from fats (25,26,27,28). It was found that the weight class athletes in our study had low intake of daily carbohydrate and protein, while they had higher values of fat intake than the levels recommended. When it is taken into consideration that the measurements in our study were conducted 3 days before competition and weigh-in, it can be seen that as a method of adjusting weight, athletes tend to get away from nutrients that have carbohydrate and protein and specific weight that can influence weight-in. This has shown a state that can be assessed negatively in general eating habits.

In our study, depression (6,72±5,69) and stress (11,78±6,20) scores of elite athletes were found to be within normal values and it was though that this could occur as a result of sport's positive effect on depression and stress. A great number of studies have examined the association between depression and anxiety and shown that a regular sport is useful for such disorders (29). In their study they compared the depression levels of elite wrestlers and taekwondo athletes, Kumartaşlı et al (2015) found that depression levels of elite wrestlers and taekwondo athletes were in intermediate levels (30).

Anxiety scores of our athletes were found to be above normal (7,33±5,56). In their study conducted with 131 male judokas and wrestlers participating in Universities Turkey Championship competitions, Civan et al. (2010) reported that athletes had average level of anxiety (31). When the sportive careers of the athletes in the study are taken into consideration, the size and significance of the competitions they participate in are understood better. The fact that they are participating in the biggest and most important competitions of the world and the national pressure they feel can cause increase in the anxiety levels of athletes.

Carbohydrate intake of the group with normal stress scores was found to be higher than the group with stress scores higher than the normal (p<0.05). This result related with stress is also present for depression scores, though not statistically significant. High amounts of carbohydrate or alcohol intake stimulates dopamine use in the brain (32). High amounts of food intake artificially triggers the reward center in the brain, provides dopaminergic activation and creates a kind of therapeutical effect (33). A diet in favor of carbohydrates at the same time eases tryptophan's transition to the brain and transformation into serotonin (34, 35). It is known that the serotonin level in the brain is effective on mood and the decreases in serotonin level are known to contribute to the etiology of depression in some individuals. The decreases in tryptophan levels which are necessary for serotonin synthesis also influence the decreases in serotonin

level. This situation results in a decrease in the moods of some individuals, though not in all (36).

It was found that the 10% of the athletes in our study got scores of 30 cut-off point and higher from EAT, while 90% got scores of lower than 30 cut-off point. In their study they conducted to examine the eating disorders of 446 high school students with an average age of 16,07, Tanrıverdi et al. (2011) found that 17.3% of the students got scores of 30 cut-off point and higher from EAT (37). In their study they conducted on 372 university students between the ages of 17–30, Toker (2008) found that 4,83% got scores of 30 cut-off point and higher from EAT (38). While some of the results of our study were in parallel with other studies, it was found that unlike some studies, the percentage of those who got scores of EAT cut-off point and higher were higher than the percentage of other groups.

When the EAT scores of the athletes who participated in our study were examined, a statistically significant difference was found between the EAT scores of Greco-roman wrestlers and freestyle wrestlers, with EAT scores of freestyle wrestlers being higher (p<0,05). There is an insignificant but noticeable difference between anxiety levels of groups. The average anxiety levels of Freestyle wrestlers were found to be higher than the other groups. Eating behavior is considerably influenced by mood. Various studies have found that the frequency of courses, the amount eaten and what is eaten are associated with psychological needs and it has been accepted that there is a strong association between these. In a study which examined the association between food intake amount and different kinds of emotion, while excessive food intake was found to be associated with distress, depression and fatigue, small quantities of food intake was associated with fear, tension and pain (39).

It can be interpreted that high levels of anxiety leads these athletes to have less balanced and consistent behaviors of eating.

Athletes may follow unhealthy diets from time to as weight control is a significant factor for weight class athletes, and as a result some essential nutrients which are not taken sufficiently can contribute to the development of depression and anxiety.

For the optimal performance of elite athletes, an experienced nutritionist who plans and follows the dietary habits and food consumptions of athletes not only during camp periods but also before and after camp periods and also a psychological advisor and regular training programs can make information more permanent and cause it to become a life style. We are of the opinion that increasing the number of athletes who participate in such studies can lead to healthier scientific information about the subject.

In weight athletes, body weight has significant effects on performance. Inappropriate diets to control body weight on the one hand disrupt the athlete's nutrition and on the other hand have a negative effect on their mood. It can be said that insufficient and unbalanced nutrition and negative mood will have a negative effect on the general health of athletes and also on their sportive success.

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