

# Features of eating behavior of students-athletes with different levels of will development

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## Abstract

**Objective of the study** was to determine the specifics of the eating behavior of student-athletes with different levels of will development.

**Methods and structure of the study.** 60 student-athletes aged 20 to 23 took part in the pedagogical experiment. To collect empirical material, we used: a block of methods for diagnosing willpower (test for determining willpower by R.S. Nemov; self-assessment test of willpower by N.N. Obozova) and a block of methods for diagnosing eating behavior (questionnaire "Eating behavior" by I.A. Savenkov (QEB); Eating Behavior questionnaire (EBQ); Dutch Eating Behavior questionnaire (GEBQ); Eating Attitude Test (EAT)).

**Results and conclusions.** The study found that student-athletes with a higher indicator of will development are characterized by harmonious eating behavior, accompanied by the ability to control themselves, their actions and the external manifestation of emotions, the ability to control their eating behavior in a social environment, and even in the most severe stressful situations. Student-athletes with a lower indicator of will development are characterized by the presence of disorders in eating behavior, accompanied by an increased reaction to external stimuli (external eating behavior), overeating in order to get rid of negative emotions (emotional eating behavior), as well as excessive food self-restriction and unsystematic strict diets (restrictive eating behavior).

**Keywords:** *will, restrictive eating behavior, eating behavior, external eating behavior, emotional eating behavior.*

**Introduction.** Eating behavior is individual for each person and socially conditioned (because a person does not always eat when he wants to, sometimes for company). Eating behavior is associated not only with food intake, but also with the attitude to food [1, 2].

Willpower plays a huge role in eating behavior, influencing eating habits. Eating habits of a person and their transformation, self-control before food directly depend on volitional efforts [4, 6].

**Objective of the study** was to determine the relationship between the characteristics of eating behavior and the level of development of the will of student athletes.

**Methods and structure of the study.** The experiment involved 60 student-athletes aged 20 to 23 years. To collect empirical material, we used: a block of methods for diagnosing willpower (test for deter-

mining willpower by R.S. Nemov; self-assessment test of willpower by N.N. Obozova) and a block of methods for diagnosing eating behavior (questionnaire "Eating behavior" by I.A. Savenkov (QEB); Eating Behavior questionnaire (EBQ); Dutch Eating Behavior questionnaire (GEBQ); Eating Attitude Test (EAT)).

**Results of the study and their discussion.** Using these research methods, mathematical calculations of correlations were carried out using the Spearman rank correlation coefficient. The results of the relationship between indicators of eating behavior and willpower are presented in the table.

The results obtained indicate that:

1) there is an inverse relationship between emotional eating behavior and the level of willpower. That is, for people with a low level of will, it is typical to process emotions by resorting to food, "eating stress", they often have a desire to eat in response to negative



The relationship between the characteristics of eating behavior and indicators of willpower in student-athletes

Abbreviations of methods for diagnosing eating behavior and scales of corresponding methods		Methodology «Self-Assessment of Willpower»	Methodology «Determination of willpower»
QEB	Binge eating	- 0,028*	0,259
	Night eating syndrome	0,332	-0,035*
	Cleansing Behavior	0,583	0,588
	Obesity	- 0,028*	-0,007**
	Emotional behavior	0,233	0,171
	Concerns about nutrition and weight loss	0,059	0,043*
	Family eating behavior	0,249	0,166
EBQ	Extrinsic conditioned food intake	0,318	-0,007**
	Restriction in food	0,448	0,491
	Emotional behavior	0,212	-0,026*
GEBQ	Emotional eating behavior	-0,016*	-0,14
	External eating behavior	-0,029*	-0,044*
	Restrictive eating behavior	0,279	0,016*
EAT	Diet Scale	0,496	0,093
	Bulimia and Food Anxiety Scale	0,274	0,207
	Oral Control Scale	0,062	0,15

\* – p<0,05; \*\* – p<0,01.

Note: QEB - questionnaire "Eating behavior" I.A. Savenkov; EBQ - eating behavior questionnaire; GEBQ - Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire; EAT - eating attitude test.

emotional states, depression, stress, various experiences, fear;

2) external eating behavior is inversely correlated with willpower. Willful athletes act according to individual characteristics and are not subject to environmental influences on eating behavior - they are less likely to overeat in social situations or when food is available. Athletes with lower willpower scores are more consistent in eating behavior. It is difficult for them to resist the sight of food, they eat more in the company than alone, often they are characterized by food breakdowns, sharp fluctuations in weight, the desire to eat is stimulated not by hunger, but by external factors (the type of food, its smell, people eating);

3) restrictive eating behavior is interconnected with willpower. The tendency to restrict food, following new diets is more typical for athletes with high willpower;

4) an inverse relationship was found between overeating and the level of will, which means that people with a lower level of will are more susceptible to uncontrolled eating under the influence of emotions and external circumstances;

5) there is an inverse relationship between night overeating and willpower;

6) an inverse relationship between obesity and willpower has been proven. People with less volitional control are less likely to control food intake (leading to weight gain) and expend less energy;

7) concern about nutrition in general and weight loss in particular is more typical for people with a high level of will.

Human eating behavior is a complex biological, physiological and psychological process [3]. Nutrition in modern research is often considered as one of the ways to maintain physical health [5]. From a psychological point of view, food can be a means of obtaining pleasure (food as an opportunity to pamper yourself); discharge during stress; satisfaction of the need for aesthetics (then it is not so much food that is important for a person, but how it is served, beautiful serving); self-assertion when food should correspond to the status; maintaining certain religious, national or family traditions; communication, when food is associated with the environment in which the person is located; compensation for unmet needs (for example, the need for pleasure, care, communication, etc.).

**Conclusions.** Will and eating behavior are interconnected. In eating behavior, willpower is manifested



in determination, endurance and self-control. Thus, harmonious eating behavior is more characteristic of athletes with a high willpower index. For student-athletes with a higher indicator of will development, harmonious eating behavior is characteristic, accompanied by the ability to control oneself, one's actions and external manifestations of emotions, the ability to control one's eating behavior in a social environment, and even in the most severe stressful situations. Student-athletes with a lower indicator of will development are characterized by the presence of disorders in eating behavior of one of three types: dependent on external stimuli (external), designed to get rid of negative emotions (emotional) or characterized by food self-restriction and strict uncontrolled diets (restrictive).

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