

Eating Attitudes and Behaviours in Professional Jockeys



Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the physical and mental demands of making weight for New Zealand jockeys. This includes the dangers of overtraining, fatigue, and dehydration⁽¹⁾. The use of drugs and smoking may also be a factor. This study aims to do this by focusing on the eating and drinking behaviors of jockeys and apprentices.

An Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26) was used (2). New Zealand thoroughbred racing approached the New Zealand jockeys, and gathered information regarding the questionnaire.

Methods

The EAT-26 questionnaire⁽²⁾ consisted of 31 questions related to participants' dietary habits. Specifically, questions were categorised into three themes: dieting, bulimic behaviours, and oral control; questions pertaining to the psychological aspects of food intake were also asked.

The survey was distributed electronically to 120 jockeys via the Qualtrics Survey software system, every 3 weeks over a 10 week period. This study targeted both females and male jockeys; of whom 14 began the questionnaire, with 3 completions. Data analysis features within the Qualtrics software were used to analyse the frequencies of responses to the questions. Any athlete considered at risk of an eating disorder was referred to a dietitian.

This study investigated eating Attitudes and associated Behaviours in professional jockeys in New Zealand.

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Conclusions

This study highlights a potential lack of support from NZTA in regard to providing nutritional education and tools for jockeys, although only a small percentage of potential respondents participated in the present study. From the limited responses it can be concluded that there is a need for support in regards to nutritional and behavioral attitudes towards food, amongst jockeys.

With limited studies available regarding professional jockeys eating attitudes and behaviours, we recommend that more nutritional education and fitness are included in the schooling of apprentice jockeys. This will equip young jockeys with tools to achieve their desired performance goals, whilst facilitating physical and mental health.

Maintaining good eating habits and behaviors, as well as an exercise regime outside of work may complement a jockey's professional career. Support from professional avenues such as a dietitian or nutritionist is also recommended, especially for at risk individuals, as well as informal support from family, friends and peers.

References

1. Wilson, G., Drust, B., Morton, J. P., & Close, G. L. (2014). Weight-making strategies in professional jockeys: implications for physical and mental health and well-being. *Sports Medicine*, 44(6), 785-796. 10.1007/s40279-014-0169-7.
2. Orbitello, B., Ciano, R., Corsaro, M., Rocco, P. L., Taboga, C., . . . & Balestrieri, M. (2006). The EAT-26 as screening instrument for clinical nutrition unit attenders. *International Journal of Obesity*, 30(6), 977.

Overall Findings

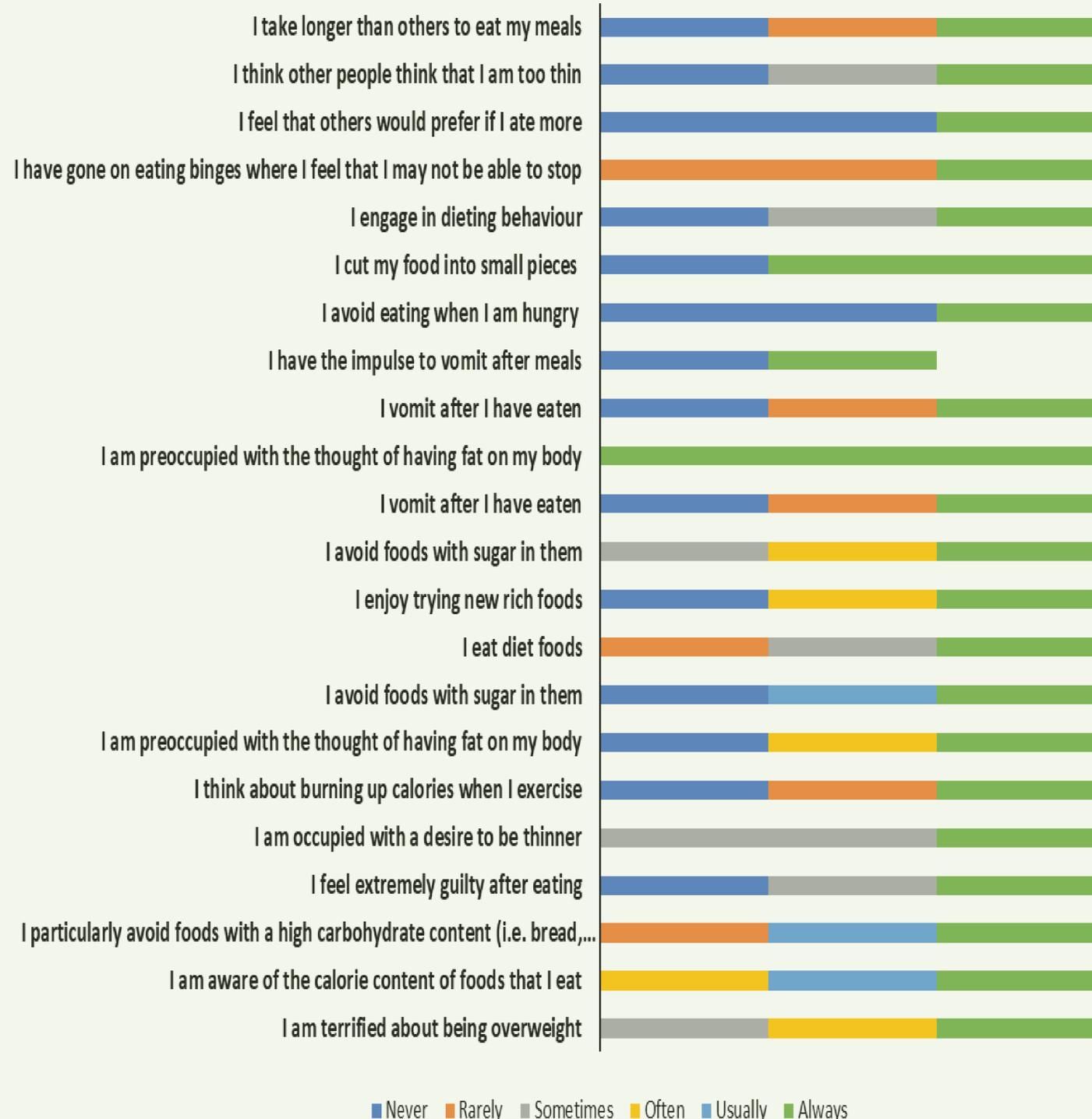


Fig. 1. Controlling factors from the results of the EAT-26 questionnaire