

Performance Anxiety, GI Symptoms and Fear of Food Among Collegiate Student-Athletes

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BACKGROUND

- Stress is common in collegiate athletes
- Collegiate athletes often suffer from elevated GI symptoms, sport performance anxiety and restrictive eating

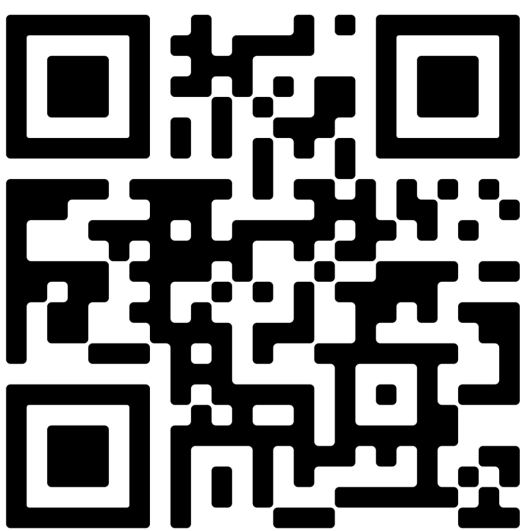
METHOD: STUDY 1

What is the relationship between anxiety about performance in high-intensity athletic training/competition contexts, GI symptoms, and avoidant and restrictive food habits?

- Study Design:
- Cross-sectional study
 - n = 147 student-athletes
 - 83.7% female
 - Mean age = 19.9 years
 - 84 undergraduate institutions
 - 20 different sports

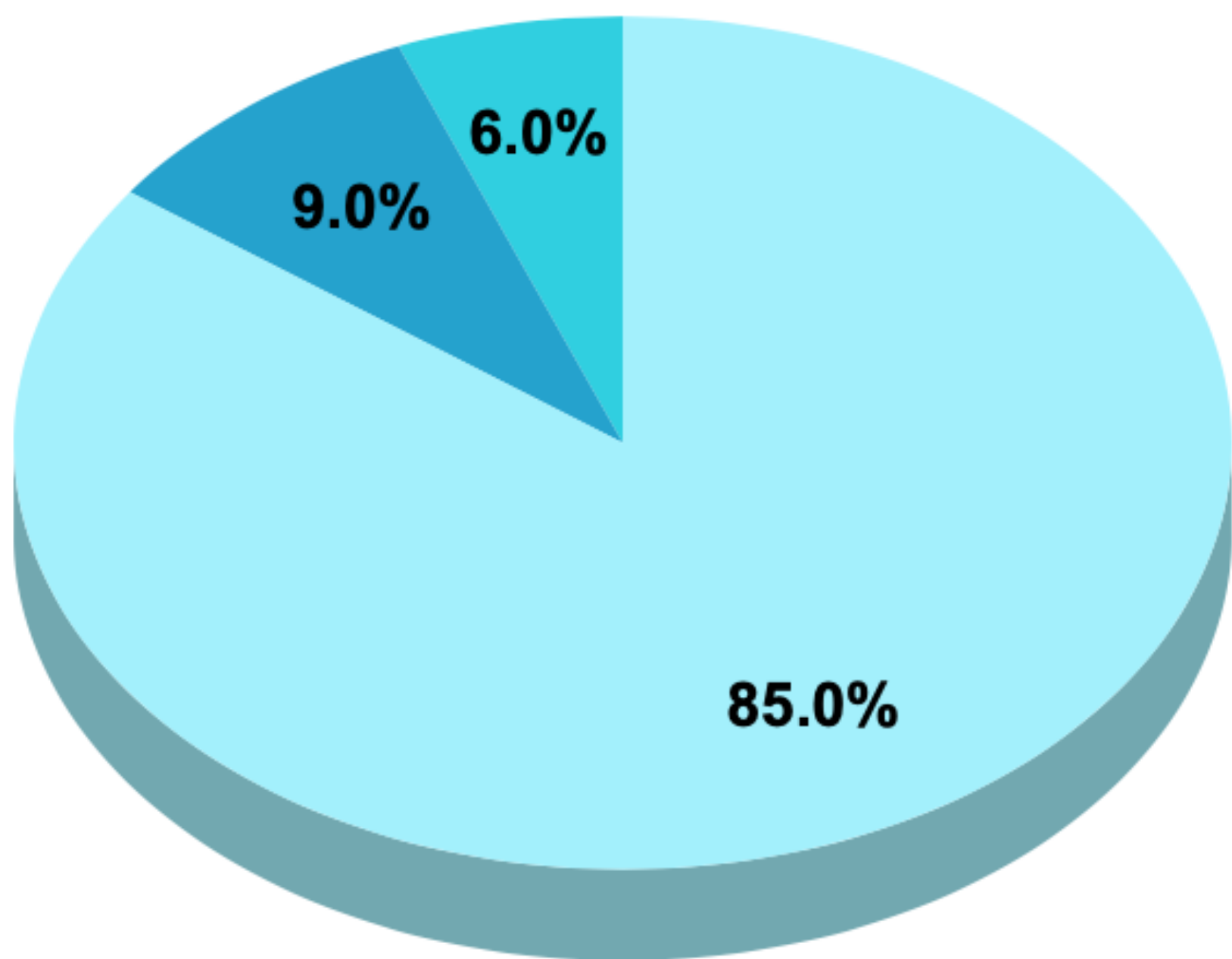
Participants completed a survey about their sports performance anxiety, GI symptoms, and avoidant/restrictive food behaviors.

CONTACT

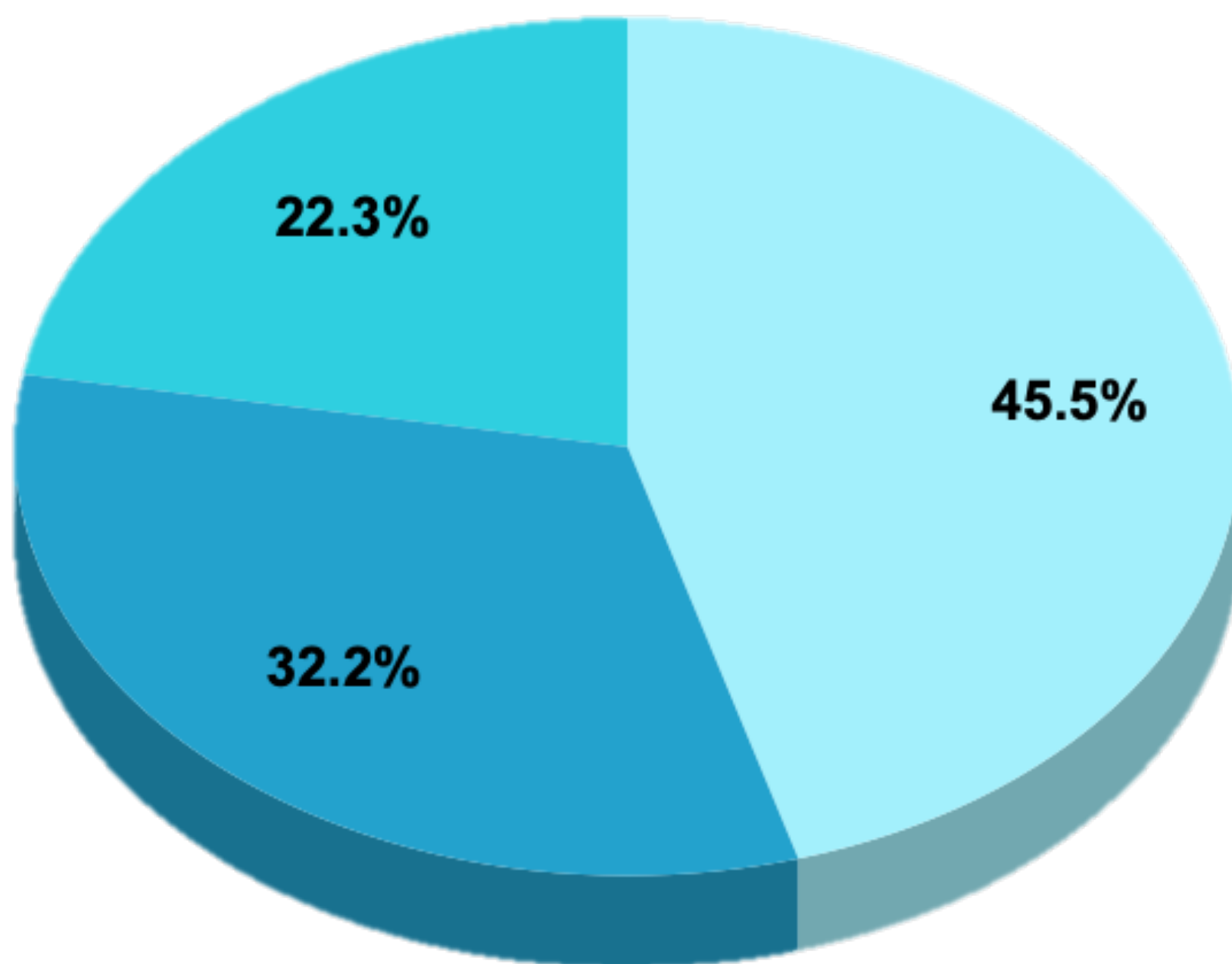


Collegiate athletes show significantly high levels of gastrointestinal issues associated with avoidant/restrictive food behaviors and sport performance anxiety

Population Prevalence of IBS

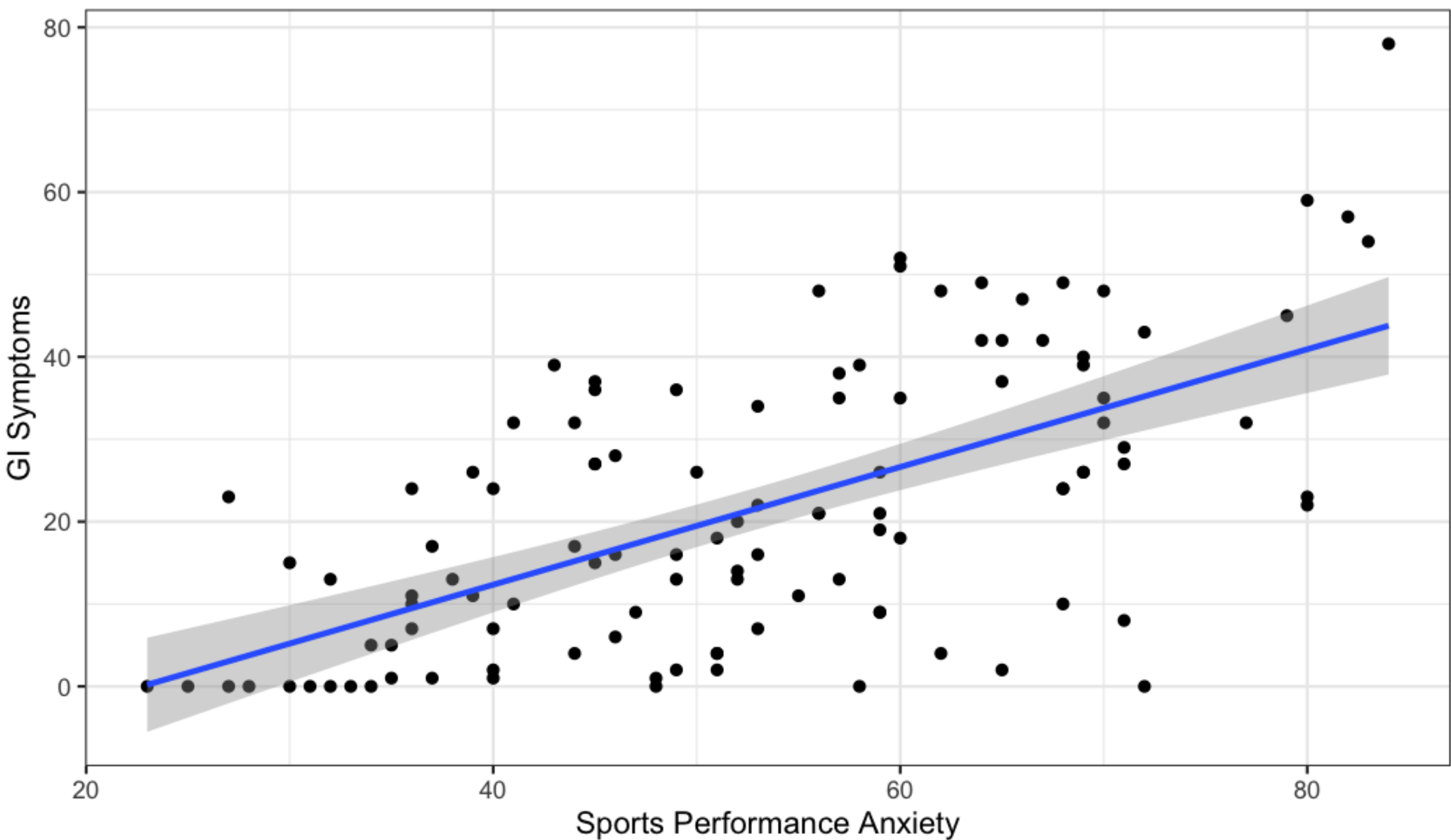


Prevalence of IBS in Athletes

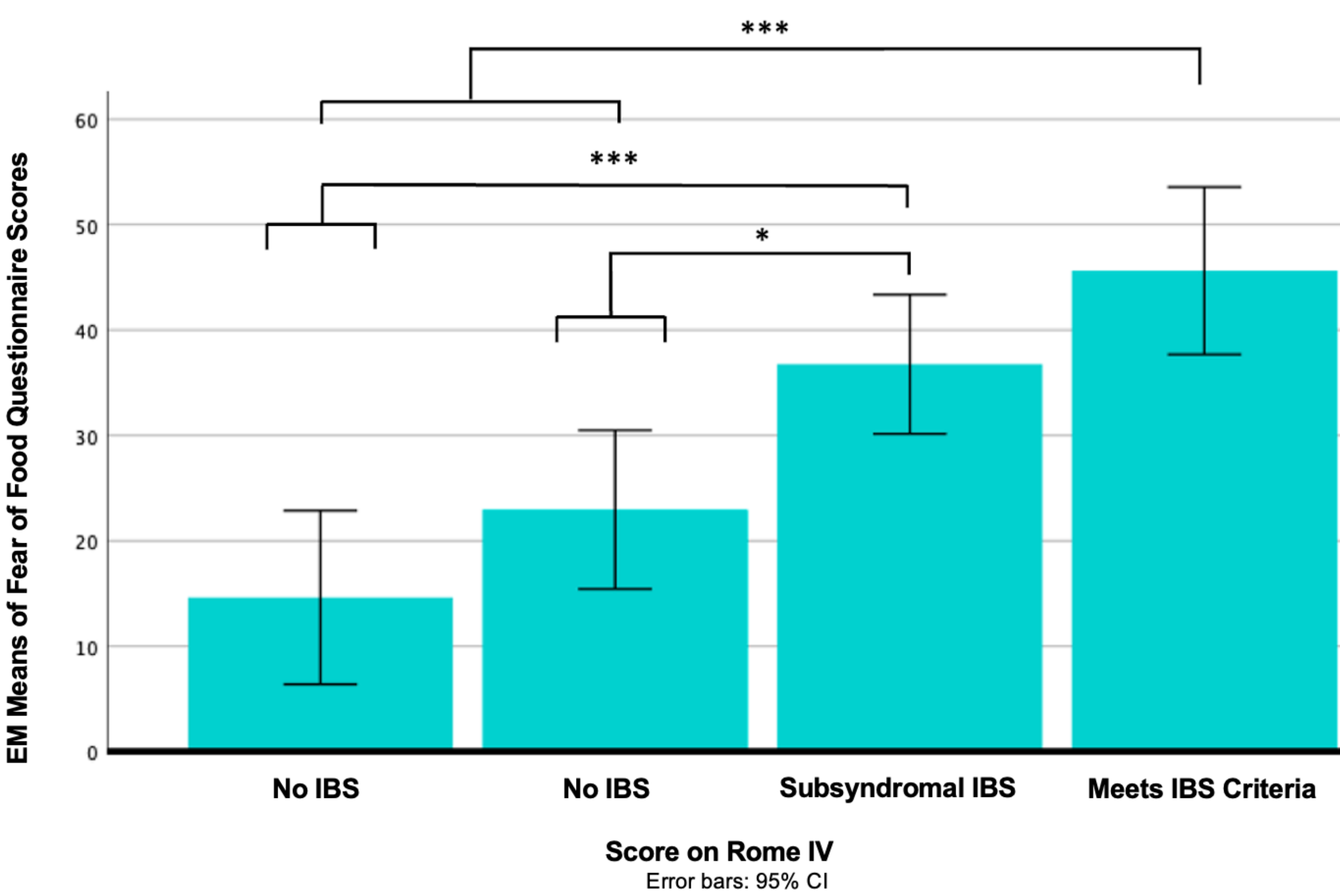


- No IBS (Score = 0,1)
- Subsyndromal IBS (Score = 2)
- IBS (Score = 3)

Sports Performance Anxiety Predicts GI Symptoms



Mean Score on Fear of Food Questionnaire by IBS Score

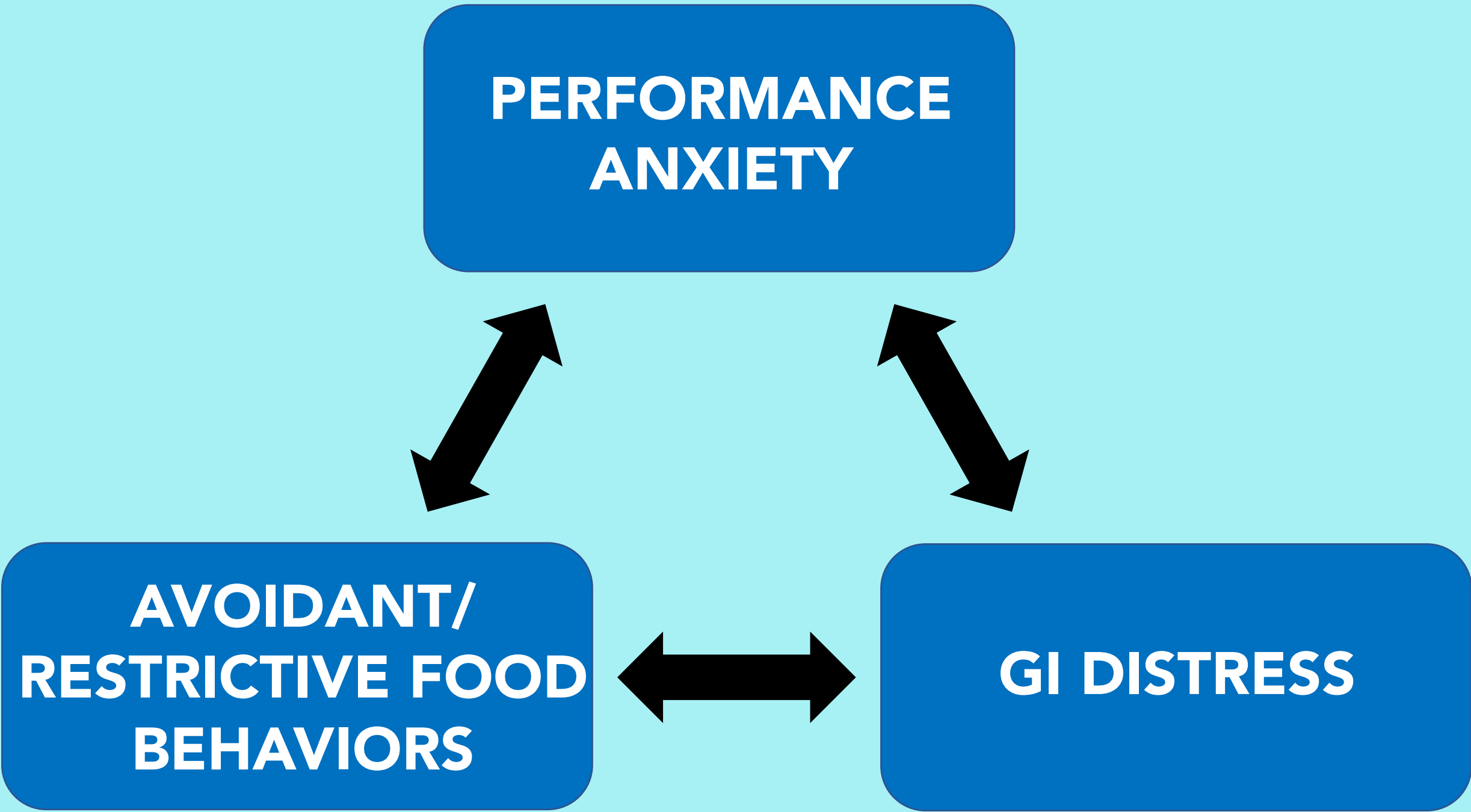
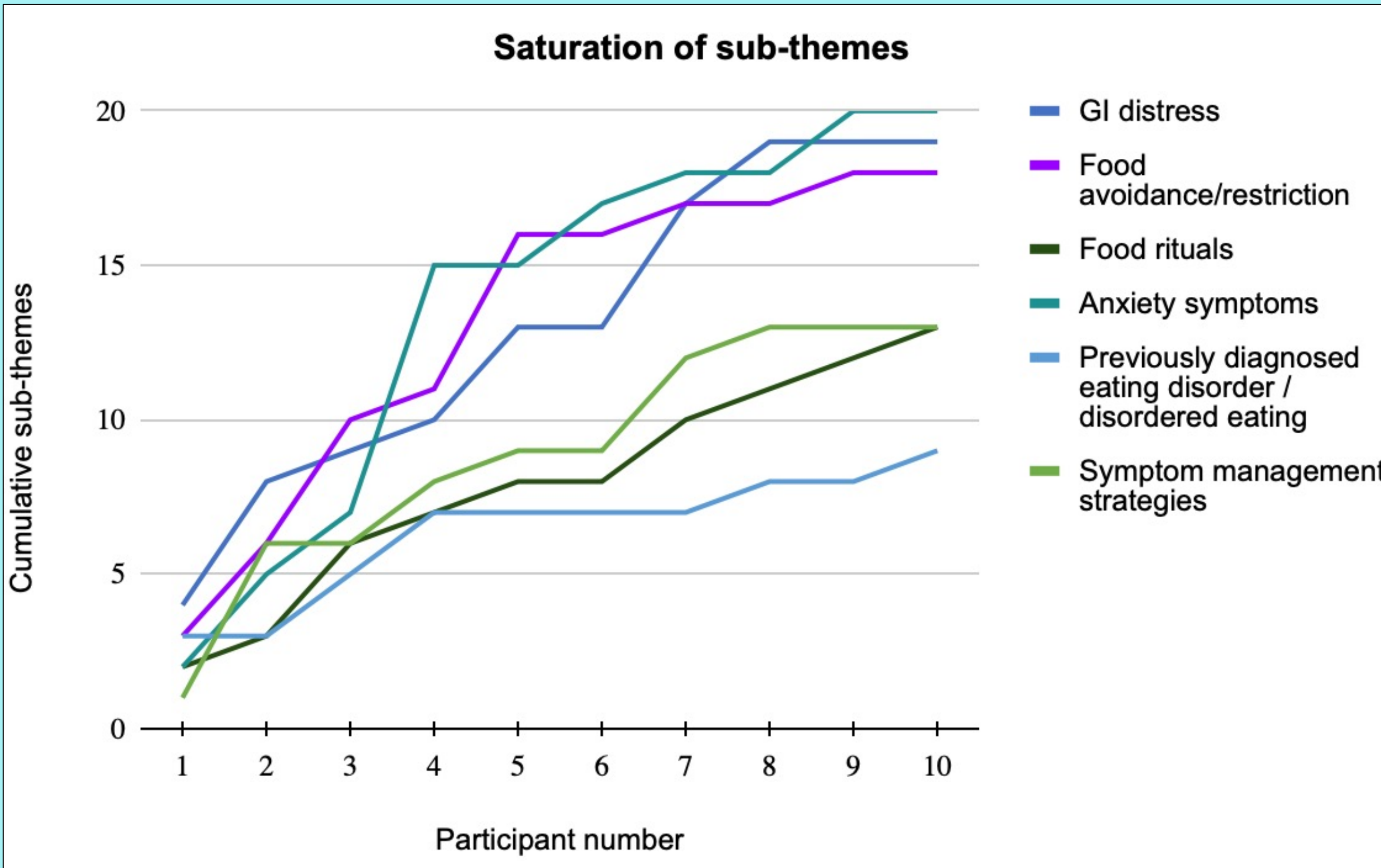


*** denotes significance at the p < .001 level
* denotes significance at the p < .05 level

METHOD: STUDY 2

We conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with n = 10 student-athletes to identify recurrent themes at the idiographic level in college athletes who experience performance anxiety, GI symptoms, and avoidant/restrictive food behaviors.

RESULTS: STUDY 2



GI Distress	Nausea/Vomiting, Bloating/Gas, Diarrhea, Constipation, Cramping, etc.	"It just kind of takes over my whole mind. I'm not even thinking about how I'm gonna swim in the race. I'm thinking about how am I not going to poop myself in front of hundreds of people?"
Performance Anxiety	Sweating, Jitteriness/ shaking, increased heart rate, negative self-talk, GI distress, etc.	"The days leading up to like swim meets, I would be using the bathroom like 6 times a day... my stomach would hurt so bad from all the nerves."

"I don't know anyone on the team who doesn't experience this. So I guess... we all just think this is normal."

All variables significantly correlated at the p < .001 level (GI symptom severity, fear of food, fear-based ARFID, visceral sensitivity, sport performance anxiety)

Evidence that sport performance anxiety predicts GI symptoms, and GI distress predicts fear of food