

Healthy behaviors
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Healthy Behaviors and the Motivation to Exercise with the Influence of Social Norms and Gender Identity in College Students

Abstract

The proposed study examined whether there was a correlation between motivational factors in a person's willingness to engage in healthy behaviors (i. e. exercise and diet) based on their gender identity, self-esteem (how they perceive themselves), and their personality. We predicted that there will be a correlation between motivation, self-esteem, gender identity, and personality on a college students' willingness to engage in healthy behaviors (diet and exercise). The study used 40 college students who filled out a survey. The results suggests no significance between our variables. Future research should look at personality and a revised motivation scale with a larger sample.

Keywords: healthy behaviors, motivation, self-esteem, gender identity, personality
Motivation to Exercise with the Influence of Social Norms and Gender Identity in College Students

Despite the positive effects and research of having a healthy life-style, unhealthy behaviors and obesity still tend to be a common theme among college students (Pauline, 2013). Physical activity is also acknowledged for its role in treating and preventing diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, back pain, strokes, and heart conditions. Each study presented, argues for physical activity and its role in preventable diseases/disorders. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, " For most healthy adults, they recommend these exercise guidelines: Aerobic activity. Get at least 150 <https://assignbuster.com/healthy-behaviors-and-the-motivation-to-exercise-with-the-influence-of-social-norms-and-gender-identity/>

minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity a week, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity” (Pauline, 2013). In the presented study, the purpose was to gain baseline information about college student’s activity level, motivation level, and exercise self-efficacy levels. In this study they had a large sample size, consisting of Eight hundred and seventy-one undergraduate students, who completed a range of questionnaires and inventories. These included, the Godin Leisure- Time Exercise Questionnaire, Exercise Motivation Inventory-2, and an exercise self-efficacy questionnaire to assess physical activity behavior, motivation, and self-efficacy. The results of the study showed, males are more likely to engage in vigorous (high levels/high intensity) physical activity compared to females and 18% of the participants did not engage in physical activity. The study also showed that women were more motivated by appearance, weight gain, positive health, and stress management, while men were more motivated by muscle appearance, ego, and health. This was determined through the exercise motivation scale. The authors noted that females report significantly lower levels of coping and lower levels of self-efficacy for physical activity compared to males. From this data, one can conclude the importance for the continued research regarding physical activity and with respects to gender, it is important to consider that when researching college students.

This previous study was more focused on motivation and self-efficacy when discussing physical activity/exercise in college students, while the next study was more interested in the relationship between social norms and dietary factors in adults. The purpose of this study was to examine dietary factors in

adults as well as the social norms for what is perceived as a healthy behavior. With the examination from t-test and linear regression, this study found there to be a significant relation between how participants perceived their family and friends to feel about healthy behaviors compared to their own feelings on dietary behaviors. The results were not surprising based on their hypothesis, the researchers found that if the participants perceived that their family and friends ate fast food, they were more likely to do so as well. The results suggest that participants may justify their actions based on what others are doing. The researchers also found, “ sugar-sweetened beverage consumption was associated with perceived consumption by family and friends. Fruit and vegetable consumption and dinner preparation were associated with perceived behavior of friends only” (Pelletier, 2014). The conclusions from this study propose that participants tend to make their ideas of what they perceive to be the social norm. also how their close friends perceived food was a contributing factor to how they perceived foods.

The main purpose of the next study presented was to examine motivational factors that influence children to engage in physical activities by testing different factors, such as perceptions of parents, self- perception, self-motivation, and purpose to engage in healthy behaviors and physical activity. “ Results reinforce the influence of parents’ views on their children’s physicalactivitycompetenceperception, and its consequences on the adolescents’physicalactivity” (Fernandez-Rio, 2018).

One gap in current research (Pauline, 2013) regarding motivation and physical activity is how physical activity is measured and the use of college students can be limiting and create a bias. Influences from motivation, social

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norms, and gender identity may influence healthy behaviors in college students. So the purpose of this study is to examine whether there is a correlation between motivational factors in a person's willingness to engage in healthy behaviors (i. e. exercise and diet) based on their gender identity, self-esteem (how they perceive themselves), and their personality.

Method

Participants

Forty college students were participants in our study and all data was collected on the California State University, Sacramento campus. The participants were from the psychology department and signed up to participate in our study through SONA. The ages ranged from 18-30 years old. Along with their age, each person in our study was also asked to provide their gender identity, ethnicity, and how many hours they typically get of sleep each night at the beginning of our survey.

Materials

Materials used during the study was a survey compiled of research scales. The scales included were, Healthy Eating and Exercise Scale (Christensen, 2014) (See Appendix A), self-esteem scale (Altmann, 2018) (See Appendix B), and personality scale (Konstabel, 2017) (See Appendix C). The scales used were published, reliable scales. We abided by ethical guidelines when gaining consent as well as debriefing the participants. For example, each participant was given a consent form, prior to seeing the survey and upon completing the survey was given a debriefing.

Scales

The Healthy Eating and Exercise Scale consisted of fourteen questions and the participants were asked to rate 1 (which was strongly agree) to 5 strongly disagree for the first twelve. Two were on a rating scale of 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much so) and the last two questions were hours of exercise. The Self-Esteem Scale consisted of three questions, where the participants rated 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The final scale was the Personality Scale consisted of thirty questions, where the participants rated - 3 (completely wrong) to 3 (completely right). The validity/reliability scores of these scales are noted in the results section.

Procedure

The study was conducted in Amador Hall on the California State University, Sacramento's campus in room 116. Three participants were in the room at one time with the researcher. The total time of the participant signing the consent form, completing the survey, and being handed the debriefing was eight to fifteen minutes.

Results

The current study used a correlation and regression analyses, to determine what predicts healthy behaviors and if there was a correlation between the variables. Our predictors (independent variables) include gender identity, motivational factors, self-esteem score, and personality score, while our dependent variable is healthy behavior. The forty participants were scored on three different inventories which were, Extra Short Five Personality

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Inventory, Self-Esteem stability scale, and Lifestyle Variables for Healthy Eating and Exercise Scale. Reliability coefficients were reported as follows, Extra Short Fiver Personality Inventory - was developed from data collected from 6 (Estonia, Finland, UK, Germany, Spain, and China)- reported slightly different internal consistencies, $\alpha = .78, .71, .61, .50,$ and $.69$ (Konstabel, Lönnqvist, Leikas, Velázquez, Qin, Verkasalo, & Walkowitz, 2017); The Self-Esteem Stability Scale kept the same internal consistency as its modeled predecessor, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, $\alpha = .88$ (Altmann & Roth, 2018); The Lifestyle Variables for Healthy Eating and Exercise Scale had a Cronbach's alpha items in three domains: healthy eating efficacy, health conscious eating, and cooking interest, and ranged in its internal reliability, $\alpha = .68$ to $.76$ (Christensen & Carpiano, 2014).

Descriptive statistics were summarized in Table 1. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated between hours of sleep, personality, self-esteem stability, and lifestyle for healthy eating and exercise. Results indicated that no significant correlations were found between any of the variables (see Table 2).

A series of hierarchical multiple regression analysis were conducted to assess the relationship between healthy eating efficacy, health conscious eating, and cooking interest, and three predictor variables, including hours of sleep, personality, self-esteem stability, and ethnicity. The first regression model which predicted eating efficacy was not significant, $F(6, 34) = 1.23$, $p = .20$, $R^2 = .18$. Similarly, the following two regression models predicting health conscious eating, and cooking interest also yielded no significance, F

(6, 34) = . 54, $p = . 77$, $R^2 = . 09$; $F(3, 34) = . 05$, $p = 1. 0$, $R^2 = . 01$, respectively.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there was a correlation between motivational factors in a person's willingness to engage in healthy behaviors (i. e. exercise and diet) based on their gender identity, self-esteem (how they perceive themselves), and their personality. We predicted that influences from motivation, social norms, and gender identity may influence healthy behaviors in college students. Past research was more focused on motivation and self-efficacy when discussing physical activity/exercise in college students and the relationship between social norms and dietary factors in adults. In our study we addressed, how willing participants are to engage in healthy activities, gender identity, self-esteem, and personality. From our results, we can conclude that there was no significance between any of our independent variables (gender identity, motivational factors, self-esteem score, and personality score) on our dependent variable (healthy behavior). This research aimed to address a gap in healthy behaviors research (Pauline, 2013), such as measuring motivation on a scale, an independent variable not yet measured in research. Because our study found no significance using the motivation scale, we suggest future research to either make a more reliable motivation scale or research one that has already been used in other research. Another gap in research was using college students as the main population. Past research suggested to use other populations besides college students to address any bias. However, we

could not address using a different population other than college students, which was a limiting factor in our research. So future research may want to increase the sample size, while using different populations of participants.

While our research was more concerned about the motivation to exercise among college students, other research has been focused on personality traits of people have an increase effort in physical activity (Giacobbi, & Colleagues, 2006). The results of this study “ revealed that exercise behavior was associated with increased positive and decreased negative affect even when associations between daily events and affect were statistically controlled. Finally, aspects of personality, especially Neuroticism” (Giacobbi, & Colleagues, 2006), significantly moderated the exercise/affect relationship for both positive and negative affect.

Future research may also want to conduct experimental research, including having a group exercise and take a personality/ motivation survey after and another group engage in no exercise behaviors and take a personality/ motivation survey. This may be useful because “ currently there is strong evidence that personality is related to physical activity, as well as to physical inactivity and sedentary behavior” (Wilson, 2019). The evidence found in this line of research “ supports significant direct as well as indirect associations between physical activity level and personality” (Wilson, 2019). Most studies presented aimed to research the behaviors of individuals, future research may be interested to research why people engage in healthy behaviors and what motivates them to do so (what establishing operations are in place when individuals engage in physical activity and healthy

behaviors) from a behavior analytic standpoint (Zerger, Normand, Boga, & Patel, 2016).

In summary, while our study provided no significance to support our hypothesis that influences from motivation, social norms, and gender identity may influence healthy behaviors in college students. Research in personality and motivation for future research may produce significant results. This study targeted a gap in research such as using a motivation scale, however was not able to use different populations.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics (N = 40)

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Variable	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	17	27	20.05	2.38
Hours of Sleep	5.00	8.00	6.38	1.01
Personality	-.37	1.37	.50	.52
Self-Esteem	2.00	4.00	2.97	.65
Lifestyle	1.57	4.00	2.61	.59

Table 2

Correlations Between the Variables (N = 40)

Variable	Hours of Sleep	Personality	Self-Esteem	Lifestyle
Hours of Sleep	-			
Personality	.014	-		
Self-Esteem	-.227	.107	-	
Lifestyle	-.190	.318	.126	-

