overview

Regular physical activity (PA) has many health benefits, but regular PA is not the norm in American society. Approximately 90% of college students who engaged in PA in high school (HS), were still active ten years later, and 81.3% of those who were active in HS continued to be active in college. The most commonly reported activities in college were exercise-based.

Exercise benefits have been reported to contribute to overall health and well-being, but regular PA is not the norm in American society. The most commonly reported activities in college were exercise-based.

The table above displays the most frequently reported PAs in HS and college. 84% of participants reported two PAs in HS, and 71% of participants reported two PAs in college. The most commonly reported PAs in HS were sport based whereas the most commonly reported activities in college were exercise based.

Hypotheses

- Extraversion and conscientiousness will be positively associated, and neuroticism negatively associated, with PA adherence.
- Competitiveness will be positively associated with PA adherence, particularly for men.
- Motivational factors for participation will differ from HS to college.
- Individuals who perceive more PA motives for activity as important will have higher levels of PA adherence.

Method

- Participants were 176 female and 104 male undergraduates (M = 20.13 years, SD = 2.23 years) from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.
- Participants provided information on up to two high school PAs and up to two college PAs and completed the revised version of the Mini-Health Motivations Inventory-2 (MHMI-2) (Markland & Sallis, 1992) for each activity. The MHMI consists of 64 motives (5-point response), to which we added four (fun, high skill level, habit, and pressure from peers; Markland & Gable, 2001).
- Participants also completed the 11-item Revised Competencies Index (DeLateur et al., 2002), items were on a 5-point scale with response ranges from “Not at all” to “Very much.”
- Participants completed the Mini-Markers (Lovato, 1994), a 40 adjective measure of the Big 5 personality traits (A=Agreeableness, C=Conscientiousness, E=Extraversion, N=Neuroticism, P=Psychoticism).

Results

Most Commonly Reported PAs

Women scored significantly higher than men in the following categories: 
- verstension
- conscientiousness
- neuroticism
- enjoyed PA more in HS, but less in college
- Participated in more minutes per week in college
- Men:<strong>550.66 (265.85)</strong>, Women:Monte Carlo <strong>.001</strong>

As shown in the table of means (and standard deviations) above, participants experienced a reduction of nearly one-half of their minutes per week active from HS to college, but essentially no drop in number of minutes active per year from HS to college. Men’s and women’s changes in activity from HS to college were similar. However, men participated in more minutes per week in HS (271 = 3.13, p < .01) and months per year (214.59) = 3.44, p < .001 than did women. Men also participated in more minutes per week in college than did women, (234.59) = 3.44, p < .001. However, men and women reported similar number of months of active college in (237.84) = 1.45, ns.

Men’s Competitiveness is Not Associated with Adherence to PA

The figures to the right show that, contrary to expectation, men’s competitiveness scores were not associated with adherence to PA. Correlational analyses revealed a negative correlation between women’s competitiveness scores and PA adherence.

Women’s Competitiveness is Negatively Associated with Adherence to PA

The table to the left displays the significant differences in motivations from HS to college:
- HS:High school motive is significantly greater
- College motive is significantly greater

Men are more likely to be motivated by social status, whereas women are more likely to be motivated by health pressures. Motives in HS were more strongly correlated with adherence than motives in HS. These findings suggest that interventions should focus on motives in college rather than earlier in life.

References


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