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Social Physique Anxiety and Exercise Motivation

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Social Physique Anxiety and Exercise Motivation

The benefits of exercise are clear; they include better overall health, better mood, and less stress (Schultchen et. al., 2019). However, exercise motivations vary (Pate, 1995). Some of these motivations include: health and fitness benefits, social/emotional benefits, weight management, stress management, enjoyment, and appearance (Dacey, 2008). When exercising, many are exposed to an environment of comparison, which has been shown to foster social physique anxiety (Chen, Ku, & Wang, 2012), defined as the “feeling of distress associated with the perceived evaluation of one's physical self” (Frederick & Morrison, 1996). Exercise behavior has been found to change in people with higher levels of social physique anxiety, which may indicate that it affects exercise motivation (Lantz & Hardy. 1997). This study sought to analyze the correlation between social physique anxiety and exercise motivation, measured by the Amended Exercise Motivation Inventory-2 and the Social Physique Anxiety Scale. It was hypothesized that social physique anxiety would be negatively correlated with the exercise motivations of enjoyment, health and fitness, social/emotional benefits, and stress management; and positively correlated with the exercise motivations of appearance and weight management. It is anticipated that results will show that those with lower social physique anxiety will have intrinsic exercise motivation and will exercise more frequently, and those with higher levels of social physique anxiety will have extrinsic exercise motivations and exercise less frequently. The results of this study have key implications for public health and exercise, and the prevention of social physique anxiety by integrating healthy exercise motivations.

Keywords: motivation, health, fitness, exercise, social physique anxiety, body image, college students