Relational, Physical, and Mental Health: How Relationship Satisfaction Influences Exercise Self-Efficacy

Dylan Hillock B.S., Lindsey Robinson B.S., & Josh Novak PhD.

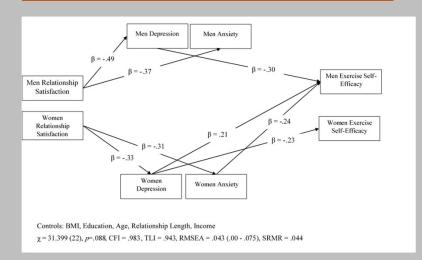


ABSTRACT

Can being satisfied in a relationship create the confidence to exercise? Utilizing dyadic data from 234 heterosexual couples, the purpose of the current study was to determine the association between relationship satisfaction and exercise self-efficacy mediated through mental health. Actor results revealed that for both men and women, higher relationship satisfaction was associated with greater exercise self-efficacy through lower depressive symptoms. Interestingly, higher women's relationship satisfaction was associated with higher men's exercise self-efficacy through the wives' lower anxiety symptoms. Men's relationship satisfaction was not associated with his partners exercise self-efficacy but was associated with his own self-efficacy through depression.

SAMPLE

- 234 heterosexual, married couples who lived together and had been married at least 3 years; 87% of men and 82% of women were Caucasian
- Relationship Length ranged from 3.17-60.92 years, M = 20.66 years (S.D. = 15.29 years)
- Age range for men was 20-84 years, Mode = 32 years (S.D. = 15.37 years); Age range for women was 20-77 years, Mode = 39 years (S.D. = 15)
- Combined average income between \$60K and \$80K
- Majority had a bachelor's degree and health insurance and were mostly satisfied with their health



MEASURES

Relationship Satisfaction –Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI), assesses overall happiness, comfort, security, and satisfaction in the relationship Mental Health (Depression and Anxiety) –Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4), evaluates frequency of depressive and anxious symptoms Exercise Self-Efficacy – 5 items assessing confidence in exercising in certain situations

DISCUSSION

Women and men with higher relationship satisfaction had lower depressive symptoms and higher exercise self-efficacy. Women with higher relationship satisfaction had lower anxious symptoms and were associated with higher exercise self-efficacy in their male partner. Men's relationship satisfaction was associated with his own self-efficacy through depression, but did not influence the exercise self-efficacy of the female partner. These results suggest important associations exist between relationship satisfaction and exercise self-efficacy but exist differently for men and women Given the current results, a focus on improving the relationship can have beneficial effects on improved mental health (Whisman, Uebelacker, & Weinstock, 2004), which ultimately could improve the confidence to exercise (Bandura, 1997).