

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



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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).

