

THE ROLE OF IMPULSIVITY AND TRIGGERS IN EXERCISE DEPENDENCE

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Exercise dependence is denoted by incessant desire to exercise, even when detrimental to one's health. Research on this topic is sparse, and we have yet to understand the onset, maintenance, and risk factors of the disorder. The study sought to determine if impulsivity, a personality facet often present in addictive behaviors, plays a role in exercise dependence. Negative urgency, an impulsivity facet exemplified by the tendency to act rashly under negative affect, was hypothesized to predict exercise dependence. Additionally, the study sought to determine triggers for exercise dependence. We developed the Exercise Dependence Trigger Questionnaire (EDTQ), with items in six different categories: body image, mood, compensatory reactions, exercise restriction, exercise cues, and cognitive factors. We expected that mood, body image, and compensatory reactions would predict exercise dependence. Data were collected from 203 diverse participants via online surveys, including the Impulsive Behavior Scale (UPPS-P) (Cyders & Smith, 2008), EDTQ, and the Exercise Dependence Scale (EDS-21) (Hausenblas & Downs, 2002). The proposed relationship between negative urgency and exercise dependence was not supported; however, results maintained that body image, mood, and compensatory reactions have significant positive relationships with exercise dependence. Exploratory factor analyses of the EDTQ revealed seven factors; the original factors were maintained; however, mood was divided into two unique factors: positive and negative mood. The findings have implications for approaches to treatment and prevention of exercise dependence. Avenues for future research include examination of triggers in laboratory settings, attentional biases to exercise stimuli, and personality risk factors for exercise dependence.

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