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Experimental effects of variety support on exercise-related well-being

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Recently, researchers have found that the experience of variety in exercise predicts variance in indices of exercise-related well-being over time (Sylvester et al., 2014). The purpose of this study was to experimentally examine the extent to which variety support in a resistance exercise program influences exercise-related well-being among inactive adults. In addition, we also sought to examine whether the experience of variety explained (mediated) these potential effects. A sample of 121 inactive university students were randomly assigned and participated in either a high or low variety support, 6-week exercise program. Measures of exercise-related perceived variety, positive affect, negative affect, and subjective vitality were completed at baseline, after 3 weeks, and after 6 weeks (i.e., post-test). Through use of structural equation modeling, the results showed that for those who completed measures at post-test (i.e., $n = 55$), and for all participants who received variety support (i.e., a modified intention-to-treat analysis; $N = 121$), exercise-related variety support indirectly explained higher levels of exercise-related positive affect ($R^2 = .41$ and $.17$ respectively), and subjective vitality ($R^2 = .37$ and $.24$ respectively), and lower levels of negative affect ($R^2 = .45$ and $.18$ respectively), through the mediating role of perceived variety. Overall, the provision of variety support in a resistance exercise program influenced exercise-related well-being through perceptions of variety. Providing variety support may be an efficacious method to promote exercise-related well-being in people who are physically inactive.—SSHRC, UBC Four-Year Fellowship, Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research