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Relationship Between Body Satisfaction and Exercise Behavior: A Cross Cultural Comparison

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Body satisfaction among women has become an important subject worldwide. **PURPOSE:** This study investigated the correlation between physical activity and perception of body satisfaction, and weight status (BMI) among female college students in the United States and South Korea. This study also investigated the relationship between preferred physical activity and body satisfaction, and BMI. **METHODS:** Subjects were recruited from a university in the Midwest United States ($n = 192$, $Mage = 20.3$ yrs), and a university in South Korea ($n = 198$, $Mage = 21.8$ yrs). Participants responded to a self-reported questionnaire that included demographic information, Body Dissatisfaction Scale-Eating Disorders Inventory (BDS-EDI), International Physical Activity Questionnaire Short Form (IAPQ-SF), and Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBS). **RESULTS:** The results indicated that subjects' physical activity levels were unrelated to body satisfaction and BMI. However, South Korean students reported higher body dissatisfaction and body shame scores than American students (body dissatisfaction scores: South Korean $31.86 >$ American 28.21 ; body shame scores: South Korean $26.54 >$ American 22.40). American students reported higher physical activity levels than South Korean students (total recreation METs: South Korean $99.60 <$ American 1987.07). Preference of exercise types were not related to BMI among either population. BMI was related to body dissatisfaction in American and South Korean students ($p < .001$). Chi-square analysis resulted in a p -value of $.271$ among American students and $.471$ among South Korean students. **CONCLUSION:** Current subjects, across both cultures and independent from the activity levels reported dissatisfaction with their bodies. Body dissatisfaction is a cause of morbid exercise behavior. Achieving higher levels of body satisfaction can help psychological well-being and healthy exercise behavior.