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## Excessive Exercise and its Relationship to Social Appearance Anxiety and Difficulties in Emotional Regulation

Ciaran D. Brown  
*University of Louisville*, [ciaran.brown@louisville.edu](mailto:ciaran.brown@louisville.edu)

Hannah Fitterman-Harris Dr  
*University of Louisville*, [hannah.fitterman-harris@louisville.edu](mailto:hannah.fitterman-harris@louisville.edu)

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### Cover Page Footnote

Hannah, thank you so much for your help, guidance, and patience. This project could not have happened without you.

# Excessive Exercise and its Relationship to Social Appearance Anxiety and Difficulties in Emotional Regulation

Ciaran D. Brown<sup>1</sup> and Hannah Fitterman-Harris Dr<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Excessive exercise is characterized as an eating pathology symptom, often described as an addiction, with typical symptoms of addiction observed such as increased tolerance (i.e., more exercise needed for the same effects), continuation despite acknowledged negative effects, social withdrawal, and withdrawal symptoms when the behavior is discontinued. Our research sought to further understand this phenomenon by exploring its relationship with other characteristics common to eating disorder patients. One such characteristic chosen for this project was Social Appearance anxiety, which is described as a fear or excessive worry about the way you appear to other people, including fears of positive and negative evaluation. The second characteristic was difficulties in emotion regulation, which is an inability to regulate one's emotions effectively. **Methods:** Prior to analysis, the data was cleaned, and run through tests to check that assumptions were met for a multiple regression. We then performed a multiple regression to investigate the relationships between variables. All of these processes were carried out in SPSS. **Results:** Our investigation within a clinical eating disorder population (N= 105) revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and excessive exercise ( $p < .05$ ), but not between social appearance anxiety and excessive exercise ( $p > .05$ ). However the overall regression did not exhibit a significant relationship,  $F(2, 99) = 2.84$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $R^2 = .054$ . **Discussion:** This relationship between excessive exercise and difficulties in emotion regulation could point to an attempt to manage one's emotions with exercise, which, though not inherently dangerous, could quickly become an unhealthy coping mechanism if done excessively. To further investigate this relationship, I would proceed with more robust measures for excessive exercise, such as the Compulsive Exercise Test (CET), and I would compare their results to scores on tests that measure for Generalized Anxiety Disorder, or Major Depressive Disorder.

**KEYWORDS:** Eating Disorder, Anxiety, Difficulties in Emotion Regulation