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Women's Dieting Goals (Weight Loss, Weight Maintenance or Not Dieting) Predict Exercise Motivation, Goals and Engagement in Undergraduate Women: A Self-determination Theory Framework

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Attempts at weight control are common in university students. Two of the most commonly cited methods of weight control are dieting and exercise. The purpose of this study was to assess if different dieting identities/motives predicted exercise goals, motivations, and frequency/intensity of exercise in undergraduate women. Participants were 117 women from a large university in the United States. Participants completed a set of empirically supported questionnaires inquiring about dieting identity (weight loss, weight maintenance, or non-dieting), exercise frequency and intensity, exercise goals (e.g. health vs. weight loss), and exercise motivations. Women were also asked to self-identify as dieting to lose weight, dieting to maintain weight, or not dieting. Non-dieters and women dieting for weight loss were more likely to engage in exercise for extrinsic and aesthetic reasons. Women dieting for weight maintenance were more likely to report intrinsic goals and motivation for exercise. Consistent with previous work, weight loss as a goal was associated with unhealthy dieting and exercise participation. Individuals dieting for weight loss are at increased risk for discontinuing exercise. Health benefits, and not weight loss, should be emphasised for exercise interventions for undergraduates.

Journal:

http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rijs20/current
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