



TEACHING FITNESS IN AN AUTONOMY SUPPORTIVE STYLE TO COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Introduction

Although 67% of high school students report adequate physical activity, that number decreases to 50% in college (Grunbaum et al., 2004). Many students elect to take health courses as part of a university core curriculum, knowledge alone does not necessarily yield action. One missing factor for college students might be a lack of motivation to partake in physical activity.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to teach a college-level health course in an autonomy-supportive style to increase perceived competence and motivation to partake in physical activity.

Method

Demographic and baseline were measured at least one week prior to the intervention. The fitness section of the entry-level health education course was taught in a motivational style in which content was given based upon the current knowledge of the subject. Post-intervention measures were collected immediately following the intervention.

Measures

- Perceived Competence for Exercise
 - 4-item Likert scale measuring competence to partake in exercise
- Treatment-Self Regulation Questionnaire for Exercise
 - 15-item Likert scale measuring three types of motivation: autonomous, controlled, and amotivation
- Health Care Climate Questionnaire for Exercise
 - 6-item Likert scale measuring perception of a supportive environment
- Demographic Instrument

Table 1. Demographic information.

Academic Year	Total (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)
Freshman	77 (56.6%)	34 (25.0%)	43 (31.6%)
Sophomore	32 (23.5%)	10 (7.4%)	22 (16.2%)
Junior	19 (14.0%)	12 (8.8%)	7 (5.1%)
Senior	8 (5.9%)	6 (4.4%)	2 (1.5%)
Age	19.0 ± 1.18	19.27 ± 1.43	18.73 ± .87

Table 2. Competence & Motivation Results.

Construct	df	t	p
Competence	135	-2.38	0.019*
Autonomous Motivation	135	-2.66	0.009*
Controlled Motivation	135	-2.20	0.029*
Amotivation	135	-.259	0.796
Note: p < .05			

Results

A total of 136 undergraduate students completed both pre- and post-test. See Table 1 for demographic information. Overall, participants perceived the teaching style to be autonomy supportive (M = 5.93, SD = 1.21). Additionally, students noted an increase in competence, autonomous motivation, and controlled motivation from pre- to post-test, but there was no difference in students' amotivation scores. Table 2 displays the inferential findings from the study.

Conclusion

Findings suggested that teaching in an autonomy supportive style may elicit an increase in motivation and competence to partake in exercise. Teachers may impact students' perceptions of a given topic based upon delivery of the message. Further research should utilize experimental designs to compare the effect of autonomy supportive teaching methods with traditional modes of classroom delivery to increase students' competency to exercise.

Reference

Grunbaum, J.A., Kann, L., Kinchen, S., et al. (2004). Youth risk behavior surveillance-United States. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 53(2), 1-96.