

## Psychological Needs Mediate the Relationship between Physical Exertion Barriers and Body Fat percent in College-Aged Mexican-American Women

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### ABSTRACT

In the last several decades, there has been a wave of interest in the overweight/obese population in the United States. However, little research has focused on the association between exercise barriers and psychological needs in college-aged Mexican-American females. **PURPOSE:** To investigate the relationships between exercise barriers, psychological needs for exercise, and obesity among college-aged Mexican-American females. **METHODS:** Body fat measures were recorded on 91 female students ( $M = 22.8 \pm 5.1$ ). The Exercise Benefits and Barriers Scale (EBBS) was used to determine perceived barriers. The EBBS examined Exercise Milieu (EM), Time Expenditure (TEB), Physical Exertion (PEB), and Family Discouragement (FDB) for perceived barriers to exercise. The Psychological Need Satisfaction in Exercise Scale (PNSE) was used to examine the degrees of perceived Competence (PCo), Autonomy (PAu), and Relatedness (PR) as they pertain to an individual's motivation to exercise. **RESULTS:** The mean body fat score indicated 28.6 % ( $n=26$ ) of the sample were overweight, and 50.6 % ( $n=46$ ) were obese. There were significant correlations observed between PCo ( $r=-.35$ ,  $p=.00$ ) and PAu ( $r=-.25$ ,  $p=.02$ ) with reduced BF %. PCo ( $r=-.22$ ,  $p=.04$ ) and PAu ( $r=-.23$ ,  $p=.01$ ) negatively associated with PEB. PEB ( $r=.24$ ,  $p=.02$ ) significantly correlated with increased BF %. Mediation analysis indicated that PCo and PAu influenced the relationship between PEB and BF % in college-aged Mexican-American females. **CONCLUSION:** The findings indicate that women who continue to perceive exercise as being strenuous lack intrinsic motivation which may lead to physical inactivity; thus unhealthy accumulation of BF is likely. In order to overcome such perceptions, practitioners should target the enhancement of psychological needs to reduce perceived barriers. Therefore, successful intervention programs need to focus on increasing competency and autonomy for exercise with the actual exercise program in Mexican-American women.

