

Eating and Exercise Behaviors, and Motivational Differences Between Kinesiology Majors and Non-Majors

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ABSTRACT

Eating and exercise behaviors have garnered a substantial amount of research attention. Several health risks are known to be lower in individuals who exercise, yet only 35% of college students exercise on a regular basis (Silliman, Rodas-Fortier, & Neyman, 2004). Despite the evidence suggesting healthy eating and exercise habits to reduce chronic disease, college students typically do not meet their own stated goals for exercise and nutrition, or goals set forth by national guidelines (Walace, et al., 2000). Therefore, a college campus is a challenging yet necessary setting for people to overcome barriers and obstacles in their lives that may hinder their exercise or eating behaviors. These behaviors not only affect physical aspects, but also psychosocial aspects. Individuals who exercise on a regular basis report having higher self-esteem as compared to those who do not (Edwards et al., 2005), and an individual's motivation to establish healthy eating and exercise habits can impact their resulting behavior. Kinesiology is a major that is primarily health and fitness based where healthy nutrition and exercise habits are generally valued by students. As such, it seems that kinesiology majors should be more motivated to exercise and eat a balanced diet when compared to non-kinesiology majors. The purpose of this study was to examine motivational components for eating and exercise behaviors, as well as individuals' differences in these behaviors between kinesiology and non-kinesiology majors. Participants ($N = 330$; 58% kinesiology majors) completed psychometrically sound measures designed to assess eating and exercise behaviors and motivation toward these behaviors in the college environment. Participants' BMI was also calculated. ANOVA was utilized to compare kinesiology majors and non-majors on the study variables. Kinesiology majors reported healthier exercise behaviors and greater motivation to exercise than non-majors ($p < .001$), however no differences were found between the groups with regard to eating behaviors or eating motivation. Additionally, there were no significant differences found between the groups on BMI. Differences among kinesiology majors on differing degree tracks (i.e., exercise science, physical education, and recreation/sport business) was examined using ANOVA. There were no differences found with regard to eating behaviors, exercise behaviors, eating motivation, or exercise motivation. There was a significant difference between the degree tracks with regard to BMI ($p < .01$) where exercise science majors had healthier BMIs than physical education or recreation/sport business majors. This study extends previous research by identifying differences between kinesiology majors and non-majors' eating and exercise behaviors, motivation for such behaviors, and body mass index.