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Comparisons of Body Consciousness and Expected Barriers and Outcomes for Women Performing Two Exercise Regimens

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PURPOSE: Young females report feeling pressure to obtain a certain physical appearance and experience barriers (both psychological and environmental) to exercise unique to this population. The purpose of this study was to compare body consciousness and expected outcomes and barriers to exercise between young, active females engaging in two different exercise regimens; high intensity interval training (CrossFit) versus traditional fitness facility workouts (Gym).

METHODS: Active (exercise at least 3 times/week) females between 18-35 years old were recruited to complete an online survey that measured body consciousness [Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBC)] and expected outcomes and barriers for exercise. Responses were compared between CrossFit and Gym using independent samples t-tests. Results were considered significant at $p < 0.05$. **RESULTS:** Participants ($n = 53$; CrossFit $n=28$, Gym $n=25$) were 24.8 ± 5.2 years and 92.5% white. CrossFit scored significantly ($p=0.019$) lower on the body shame scale (3.4 ± 1.1 vs. 4.2 ± 1.3) and significantly higher ($p=0.012$) on the control scale (5.5 ± 1.0 vs. 4.8 ± 0.9) of the OBC. CrossFit also scored significantly ($p < 0.001$) higher on overall expected outcomes from exercise (56.0 ± 4.5 vs. 50.9 ± 5.2), and particularly expected psychological outcomes ($p < 0.001$; 23.4 ± 2.4 vs. 19.5 ± 3.5). Additionally, CrossFit scored significantly lower on overall barriers to exercise ($p < 0.001$; 25.3 ± 8.2 vs. 33.6 ± 7.2), specifically related to time ($p=0.021$; 12.0 ± 4.6 vs. 14.8 ± 3.9) and effort ($p < 0.001$; 12.1 ± 4.5 vs. 16.8 ± 3.5) compared to Gym. **CONCLUSION:** Results showed that there are differences in how young females feel about their bodies as well as what they expect to achieve from exercise and the barriers that prohibit them from exercising. Females engaging in CrossFit report more positive feelings about their bodies and more control over what their bodies look like. They also expect to achieve more benefits from exercise and report fewer barriers to performing exercise. Overall, participating in CrossFit is associated with some positive outcomes for young active females.