Depressive Symptoms Related to Domain-Specific Physical Activity

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ABSTRACT

Physical activity is positively associated with mental health. Exercise interventions have been shown to be effective for reducing depression. However, less is known about the role of domain-specific physical activity in mental health. PURPOSE: The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the relationship between physical activity across domains (domestic/household, transportation-related, occupational, leisure-time) and depressive symptoms. METHODS: After obtaining ethical approval, 111 adults (75 men, 35 women, 1 non-binary person; mean age: 36 ± 10 years) completed an online survey. Physical activity in each domain was assessed with the International Physical Activity Questionnaire. Depressive symptoms were assessed with the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D). RESULTS: Depressive symptoms in the sample were fairly low, with 50% of participants scoring less than 14 on the CES-D. Analyses revealed no associations between depressive symptoms and physical activity in any domain (ps > .05). CONCLUSION: These findings contrast with more recent findings demonstrating that physical activity across domains is associated with fewer depressive symptoms. Possible explanations for the conflicting results include different methods and a less diverse and representative sample in the current exploratory study.