

A Profile of an Exercise Addict: The Relationship between Exercise Addiction and Personality

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Abstract : It is a well-known fact that exercise has favorable effects on people's physical health, as well as mental well-being. However, as for as excessive exercise, it may likely elevate negative consequences (e.g., physical injuries, negligence of everyday responsibilities such as work, family life). Lately, there is a growing interest in exercise addiction, sometimes referred to as exercise dependence, which is defined as a craving for physical activity that results in extreme work-out sessions and generates negative physiological and psychological symptoms (e.g., withdrawal symptoms, tolerance, social conflict). Exercise addiction is considered a behavioral addiction, yet it was not included in the latest editions of the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-IV), due to lack of significant research. Specifically, there is scarce research on the relationship between exercise addiction and personality dimensions. The purpose of the current research was to examine the relationship between primary exercise addiction symptoms and the big five dimensions, perfectionism (high performance expectations and self-critical performance evaluations) and subjective affect. participants were 152 trainees on a variety of aerobic sports activities (running, cycling, swimming) that were recruited through sports groups and trainers. 88% of participants trained for at least 5 hours per week, 24% of the participants trained above 10 hours per week. To test the predictive ability of the IVs a hierarchical linear regression with forced block entry was performed. It was found that Neuroticism significantly predicted exercise addiction symptoms (20% of the variance, $p < 0.001$), while consciousness was negatively correlated with exercise addiction symptoms (14% of variance $p < 0.05$); both had a unique contribution. Other dimensions of the big five (agreeableness, openness and extraversion) did not have any contribution to the dependent. Moreover, maladaptive perfectionism (self-critical performance evaluations) significantly predicted exercise addiction symptoms as well (10% of the variance $P < 0.05$). The overall regression model explained 54% of variance.

Keywords : big five, consciousness, excessive exercise, exercise addiction, neuroticism, perfectionism, personality

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