Working Out Measurement Overlap in the Assessment of Maladaptive Exercise

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Objective: Although exercise is generally considered healthy, many individuals engage in maladaptive exercise (e.g., compulsive in nature). Several definitions of maladaptive exercise exist, leading to multiple, varied assessment tools; assuming homogeneity across these assessments contributes to low consensus in etiological models.

Method: We used a Jaccard Index to quantify content overlap among 15 commonly-used self-report instruments measuring maladaptive exercise, with 31 features identified across 224 items.

Results: The most common features were exercise to control weight/shape and to avoid negative affect (both included in 9/15 instruments), or compensate for calories consumed (8/15 instruments). Overlap among instruments was low (.206) and no features were common across all instruments.

Conclusions: Findings generally support theoretical models of exercise in eating pathology. However, instruments most commonly used to assess maladaptive exercise measure heterogenous content. Careful consideration should be taken when comparing findings derived from differing instruments, when synthesizing literature on maladaptive exercise, and when selecting instruments to measure specific maladaptive exercise features.

Public significance: Many, varied, tools exist for the assessment of maladaptive exercise (e.g., compulsive or compensatory) in the context of eating disorders. Assuming homogeneity across tools contributes to low consensus in the field. We used a Jaccard Index to quantify content overlap among 15 self-report instruments measuring maladaptive exercise. The most commonly used instruments measure heterogenous content. Careful consideration should be taken when synthesizing literature and selecting instruments to use in research.

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Topics

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