



DOCTORATE IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

An Investigation into the Effects of Different Types of Exercise on the Maintenance of Approach Motivation Levels Using a Population Analogous to Individuals with Bipolar Disorder.

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EXERCISE AND APPROACH MOTIVATION

Abstract

Background

Research into the benefits of exercise for individuals with Bipolar Disorder (BD) is limited and no current guidelines exist around recommending exercise during a hypomanic/manic state. The Behavioural Activation System (BAS) dysregulation theory is a popular model that attempts to explain the link between approach motivation (AM) and the difficulties that individuals with BD experience. It may offer an explanation for the 'upward spiral' reported by individuals with a diagnosis of BD in response to certain types and intensities of exercise. This study looked to investigate the impact of different intensities of exercise on the maintenance of AM levels. The presence of hypomanic traits and how these interacted between AM and exercise was also of interest.

Method

Participants filled out an online pre-screening questionnaire identifying hypomanic traits. 61 then completed a computer task designed to induce higher levels of AM before taking part in one of three 15 minute activities (sedentary, moderate exercise or vigorous exercise). Various measures linked to hypomanic symptoms were taken during testing.

Results

The main findings indicated that vigorous exercise significantly increased individuals AM levels in comparison to moderate or no exercise. This relationship was not however found to be moderated by the presence of hypomanic traits.

Conclusions

Vigorous exercise seems to have a greater impact on AM levels regardless of an individual's levels of hypomanic traits. This has implications in terms of the type of

EXERCISE AND APPROACH MOTIVATION

exercise should engage in when experiencing hypomania. Any recommendations however within this study should be taken in light of the limitations identified. Further research replicating these results with a larger sample or using a BD population are recommended.

Keywords: Bipolar Disorder, behavioural activation system, behavioural approach system, approach motivation, exercise.

EXERCISE AND APPROACH MOTIVATION

Contents	Page
Abstract	34
Background	36
Aims, Research Questions and Hypotheses	40
Aim of the research.	40
Research question.	40
Hypotheses.	40
Method	41
Recruitment Methods	41
Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria	41
Sample	42
Materials	43
Procedure.	47
Statistical Analysis	48
Results	49
Hypothesis 1	49
Hypothesis 2	55
Hypothesis 3	57
Hypothesis 4	58
Discussion	58
Exercise and Approach Motivation	58
Exercise, Valence and Arousal	61
Exercise and Additional Hypomanic Symptoms	62
The Impact of Hypomanic Traits	63
Limitations	66
Future Research	67
Conclusions/Implications	68
References	70
Extended Appendices	78