ABSTRACT
ANTECEDENTS OF REGULAR EXERCISE AMONG WOMEN WITH OBESITY WHO DO AND DO NOT ACHIEVE WEIGHT LOSS OVER SIX MONTHS

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In the United States, 35.5% of adult women are classified as obese, defined as a body mass index (BMI) of ≥ 30 kg/m². Health risks associated with obesity can be mitigated by losing as little as 5-10% of baseline body weight. Evidence shows that reductions in caloric intake alone, without increases in caloric expenditure, leads to a decline in resting metabolic rate, thereby impeding attainment or maintenance of weight loss.

The purpose of this cross-sectional, mixed-methods study was to explore antecedents of regular exercise among women with obesity that were and were not able to achieve weight loss over six months. Specific antecedents studied (behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, control beliefs, attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions) were based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Azjen, 2006).

Forty-two women were recruited from a clinic that focuses on mitigating cardiometabolic risk. Twenty-six women were unable to achieve at least a 5% weight loss over six months, while 16 women were successful. Quantitatively, antecedents were measured using the Physical Activity Survey for Adults at Risk for Diabetes (Blue, 2004). Additionally, a subgroup of women participated in one of two focus groups, based on weight loss success, to identify antecedents of intention to exercise. No statistically significant findings were noted to discriminate TPB antecedents between the two groups when bivariate comparisons were conducted. However, four themes emerged from analysis of the focus group data using the qualitative descriptive approach: exercise is good for me, but I don’t like it; friends make it happen; more time does not equal more exercise; and control is key. Overall, focus group data provided insights into differences between the two groups with respect to antecedents of attitude and perceived behavioral control. Similarly, multiple regression analysis revealed that attitude and perceived behavioral control were the only independent predictors of intention to exercise ($F(2,39) = 33.426, p < .0005$), explaining 63.2% of the variance of intention to exercise. Results from this study suggest that targeted interventions to increase women’s perception of behavioral control and attitudes toward exercise may facilitate intention to exercise, and possibly actual exercise behavior.