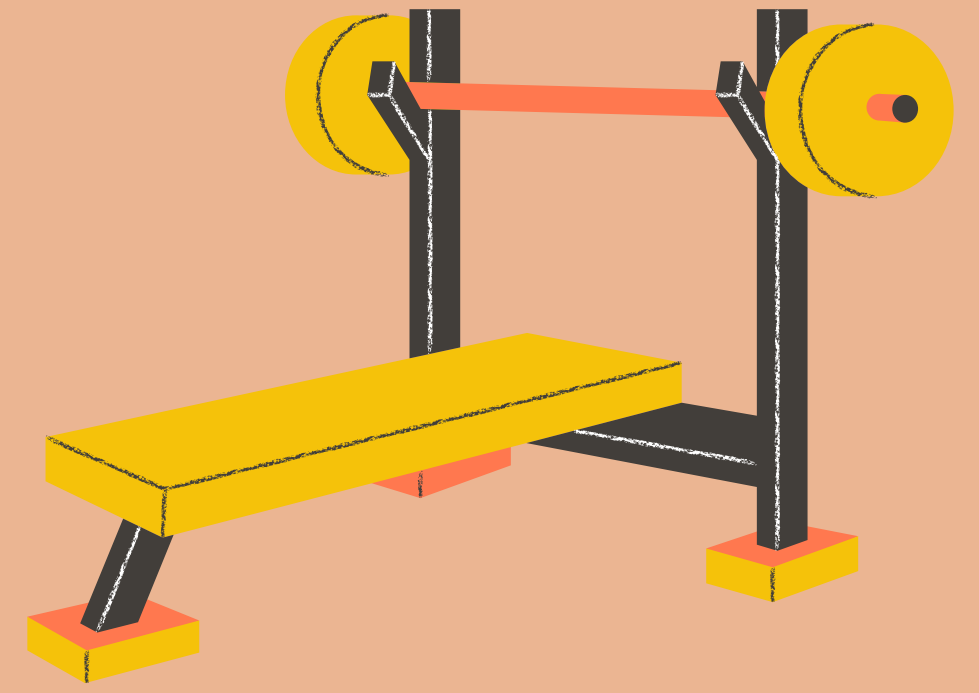


DEFINING "FITNESS CULTURE"

"Normative fitness culture" is a novel construct within the disordered eating literature that comprises the endorsement of sociocultural fitness norms (e.g., "no pain, no gain" rhetoric).



AUTHORS

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INTRODUCTION

Endorsement of normative fitness culture is hypothesized to contribute to maladaptive body, eating, and exercise attitudes and behaviours, though it has never been formally operationalized and examined in the psychological literature. Qualitative explorations of how women endorse (and reject) normative fitness culture may inform how these norms are promoted and maintained, and their impact on individual psychosocial experiences.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the current study was to explore and characterize the endorsement and rejection of normative fitness culture in a sample of women who self-reported rejecting these norms

METHODOLOGY

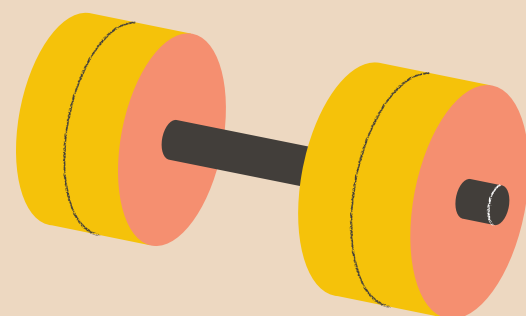
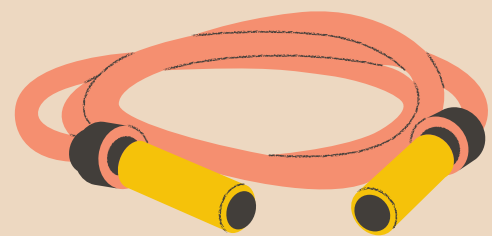
Eleven self-identified women aged 19-36 (Mean age= 26.72) were guided through a one-on-one semi-structured interview about their relationship to normative fitness culture that lasted approximately 1-2 hours.

RESULTS

Using reflexive thematic analysis, four themes were identified: (i) fitness spaces as sites of self-punishment and regimented behaviours, (ii) outcome-oriented fitness norms in response to evolving body ideals, (iii) the moral virtue of conforming to normative fitness culture, and (iv) unlearning and ongoing resistance to normative fitness culture.

CONCLUSION

Participants' accounts illustrated the pervasiveness of "toxic" fitness culture rhetoric, noted the difficulty in resisting it, and expressed concerns about the underlying motives promoted within normative fitness culture under the guise of health and well-being. Based on these preliminary accounts, endorsement of normative fitness culture may be an important – yet understudied – phenomenon in understanding how sociocultural norms impact women's psychological experiences with exercise.



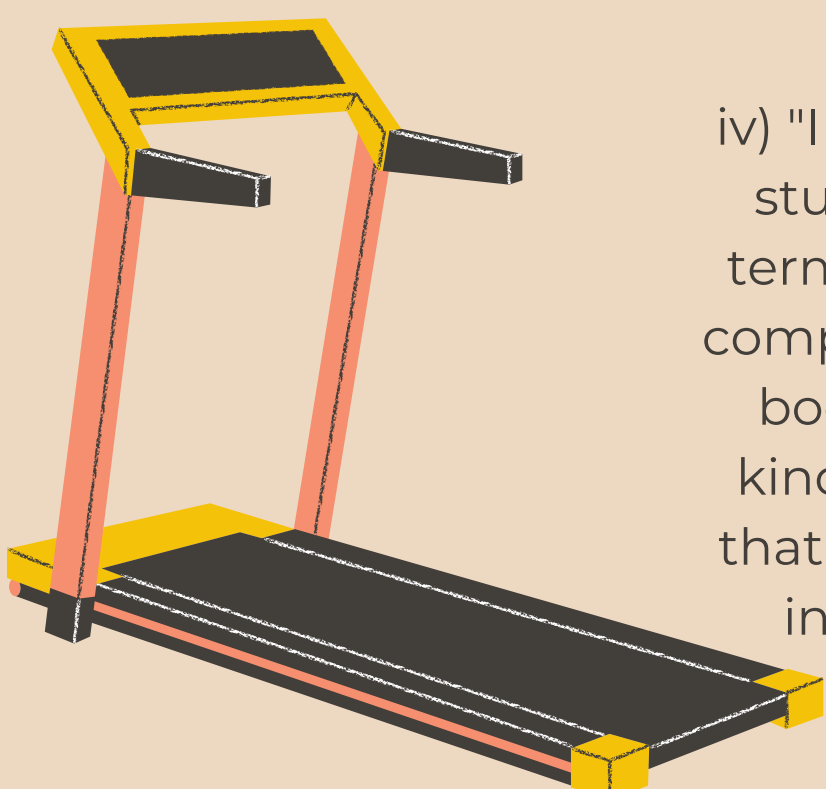
EXAMPLES OF EACH THEME:

ii) "I feel like the traditional fitness culture is ... to work out for the sake of losing weight, to look good"

i) "I just don't find it a very nice environment to be in ... cause you have a lot of intimidating machinery and I feel like you always push yourself too hard if you go to the gym"

iii) "fitness is somehow tied to your worth as a person or like your ability to like work out for longer or lift heavier means you're like better at athletics or better as an exerciser"

iv) "I try not to go on social media. I deleted it from my phone and stuff like that and I found that made a difference for me just in terms of what I was seeing, and even when I do go on like on my computer or something I follow people intentionally who promote body diversity and who promote intuitive movement, which is kind of- which is how I found out about your study and stuff like that, and unfollow or you know block people that are really heavy into diet culture and when I see it kind of- it bothers me, so I choose to, like, remove as much of that as I can."



FUTURE WORK

The next step in our research is to capture the perspectives of individuals who endorse normative fitness culture. We plan on conducting a second part to this preliminary work over the next few months in preparation for the Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology (SCAPPS) conference in October.