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The Effects of Gender, Age, and Duration on Motivations to Exercise

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There are a variety of factors that motivate people to engage in physical exercise. The Self-Determination Theory identifies and categorizes the main reasons that people usually give when asked to explain why they exercise (Markland et al., 2014). Some of these factors are experienced as autonomous, meaning that people are independently driven to exercise. Other factors are controlled forms of motivation, causing people to exercise with the means of attaining some sort of outcome other than internal satisfaction (Markland et al., 2014). In order to measure and compare the extent to which individuals are motivated to exercise, this study required participants to fill out the EMI-2. The study included a sample of approximately 60 adults who exercise regularly. Participants were recruited from classes at a private institution in northern California, as well as adults contacted via Facebook. I hypothesized that participants will vary in their degree of autonomous and controlled motivation to exercise, depending on the factors of age, gender, and duration of time that they have been exercising.

I expect that the results of this study will highlight some significant differences in motivations to exercise between older adults and younger adults. Older adults should tend to use more autonomous forms of regulation as reasons to exercise, such as benefits to enjoyment, revitalization, and positive health. I predict that younger adults will be more likely to be motivated by controlled forms of regulation, mainly appearance and social recognition. Furthermore, in comparison to males, females will be more motivated to exercise on the basis of controlled forms of regulation. Finally, participants who have been exercising over a longer period of time will be more autonomously motivated in comparison to individuals who have been working out for a shorter period of time. This research is important because it helps us better understand which factors increase our chances of continuing to exercise and maintain an active lifestyle. Since remaining physically active is essential to our health, we should know which form of exercise is the best fit for each of us as we evolve through life.