

FACULTY FORUM COMMUNITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

DIFFERENCES IN EATING BEHAVIOR, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND HEALTH-RELATED LIFESTYLE CHOICES BETWEEN USERS AND NONUSERS OF MOBILE HEALTH APPS

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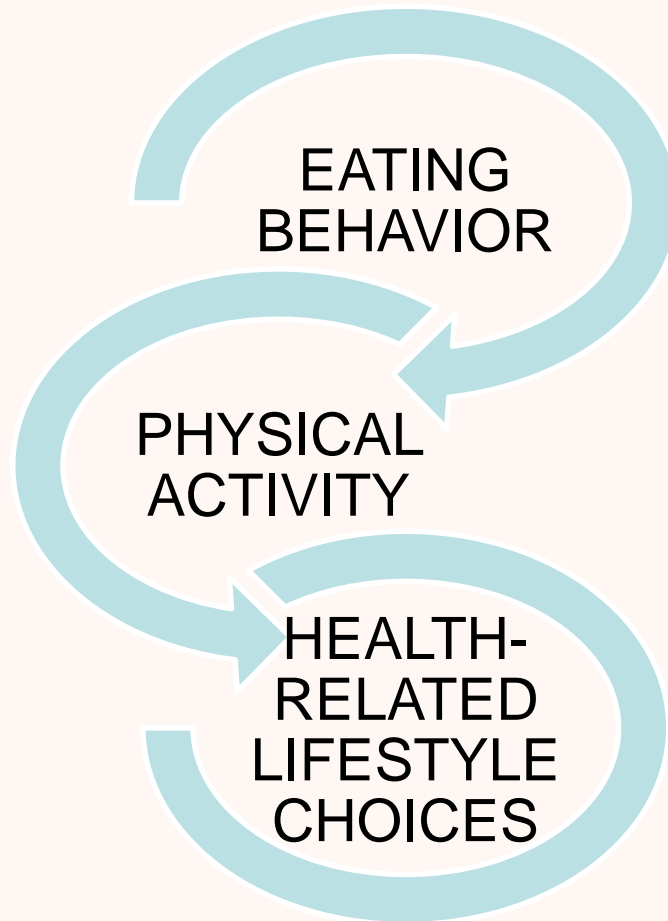
The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between usages of mobile health applications (apps) designed to track diet and physical activity and health-related behaviors of college students.

PURPOSE

BACKGROUND

- Weight gain and lifestyle behaviors during college may contribute to future health problems.
- This population may not have sufficient self-monitoring skills to maintain healthy lifestyle behaviors.

ASSESSMENT USING SURVEYS



OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

- Within the past 12 months, have you used a mobile-based health or fitness app?” If the response was “yes,” the following questions were asked:
 - “What application(s) do you use?” (more than one response acceptable)
 - “How do you feel about using your mobile-based health or fitness app?”

RESULTS (n = 401)

- MyFitness Pal and Fitbit – most commonly used apps – no differences in type of app
- Mobile health app users:
 - Significantly higher scores for eating behavior than nonusers
 - Using more than one type of mobile health app significantly improved eating behavior
- There was no significance noted for lifestyle and physical activity scores between app users and non-app users

Respondents' feelings about mobile health app (4:1 positive to negative)

POSITIVE

- It helps me keep track of my exercise and food intake
- It helps me manage my weight better
- It makes me feel healthier
- It motivates me to eat healthier and increase my physical activity

NEGATIVE

- It makes me feel obsessive about my exercise and food intake
- It creates anxiety/guilt if I do not reach my exercise or food intake goals
- It interferes with my daily activities and/or social life
- It makes me neurotic about my body image

Evaluation of study method

Strengths

- Large sample size
- Range of diversity of subjects from urban and suburban college campuses.

Limitations

- Included a wide variety of mobile health apps utilized by participants
- Use of a survey versus actual measurement of health-related outcomes

Future Research

- Research evaluating types of mobile apps associated with health outcomes.
- Studies analyzing app usage adherence and app preference among target populations are necessary for effective health education and promotion programming.
- Future research on specific behavioral responses about using a health tracking device.