

Exercise enjoyment, relapse prevention efficacy, and perceived health for youth within a drug and alcohol treatment service.

Bonnie Furzer¹, Amanda Rebar², Ben Jackson¹, James Dimmock¹, Ashleigh Thornton¹, Kemi Wright¹, Allan Colthart³

¹ School of Human Sciences, University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia; ² Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Australia; ³ Next Step Drug and Alcohol Service, Mental Health Commission, Perth, Australia

Evidence for exercise as an adjunct therapy in youth substance use disorder (SUD) treatment is scarce, despite support for its efficacy among adult populations. In this study, youth undergoing residential treatment for SUDs were provided with twice-weekly exercise sessions, with the aim of examining the associations between exercise participation and self-reported relapse outcomes.

Methods

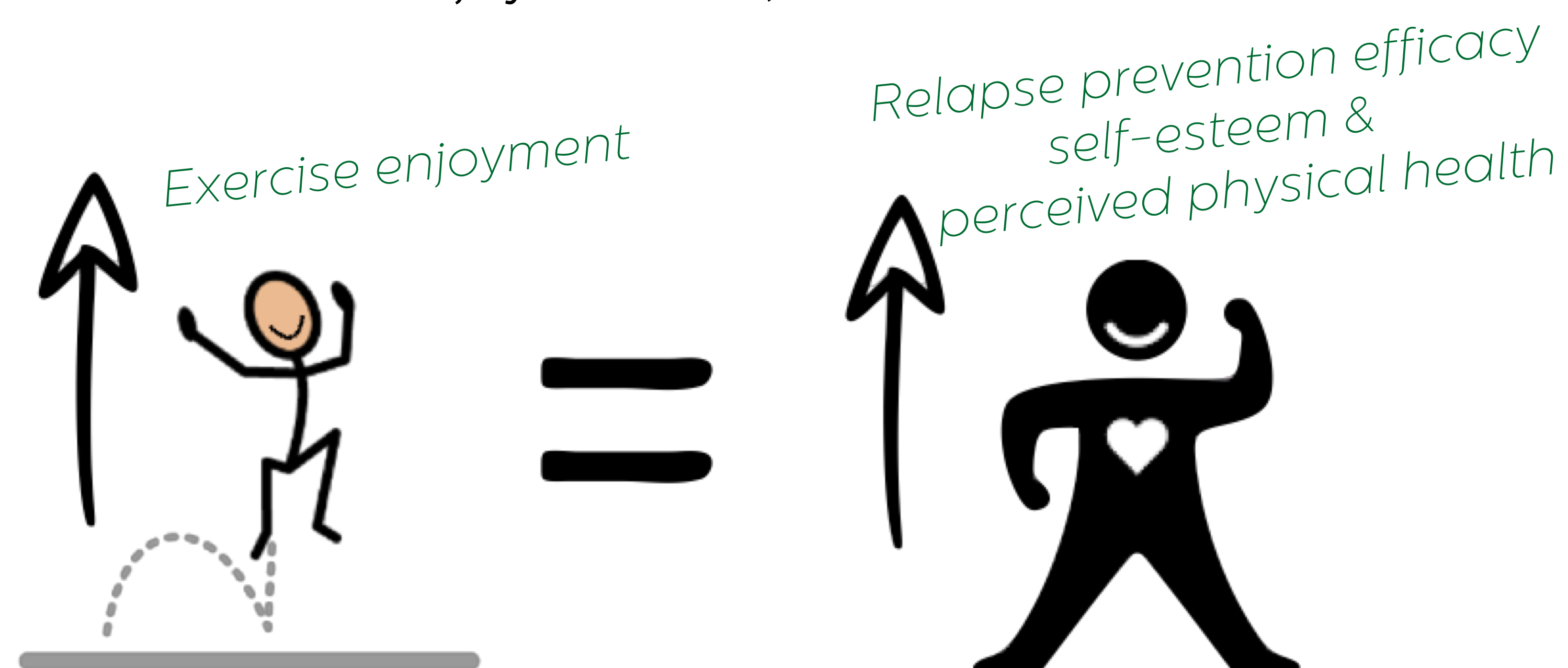
Young people participants attending a twice-weekly structured exercise program as part of their SUD residential treatment were asked to report feelings related to exercise and recovery.

Using ecological momentary assessment, associations between exercise enjoyment and relapse prevention efficacy, self-esteem, and perceived physical health were assessed at both between- and within-person levels.

There were 97 participants (age: $M = 17.5$, $SD = 1.57$, range = 14 to 21; 37 female, 60 male), with 50% of participants ($n = 40$) completing 3 or more assessments, 25% of people ($n = 20$) completing 7 or more, and 40% ($n = 32$) completing 5 or more.

Results

Relapse prevention efficacy, self-esteem, and perceived physical health increased over time in the program. Young people who enjoyed exercise more overall and within a given session, had higher relapse prevention efficacy, self-esteem, and perceived physical health than those who enjoyed it less,



Participation in, and importantly, enjoyment of exercise was linked to key outcomes for young people during treatment for SUDs including relapse prevention efficacy, self-esteem and perceived physical health.

Structured exercise may provide a novel and important adjunct component of successful SUD treatment for young people.

References:

More, A., Jackson, B., Dimmock, J.A., Thornton, A.L., Colthart, A., Furzer, B.J., 2017. Exercise in the Treatment of Youth Substance Use Disorders: Review and Recommendations. *Front. Psychol.* 8, 1839.