Physical Activity Behaviour and Motives in Dog Agility Competitors

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**BACKGROUND**

- Dog ownership may be a source of physical activity motivation [1].
- Dog agility is an increasingly popular activity that demands a high level of physical fitness and a strong bond between dogs and their owners.
- It is unknown if competitors in dog agility are more physically active than other dog owners and if motives for physical activity differ between agility competitors and non-agility competitors.

**PURPOSE**

- Compare physical activity levels of agility competitors to dog owners who are non-agility competitors, and to examine motives for physical activity using Self-Determination Theory (SDT) [2].

**METHODS**

- **Participants.** Dog owners (N=280) completed an online survey.
- **Measures.** Demographic characteristics and agility participation were determined using closed- and open-ended items.
- **Physical Activity with a Dog** (e.g., walking, running, or biking with a dog) was determined using a modified version of the Godin Leisure Time Exercise Questionnaire that measures walking and other activity with dogs [3]. Weekly moderate-to-vigorous minutes of physical activity (MVPA) with a dog was calculated and used as the main physical activity outcome measure.
- **Motives for Physical Activity** was assessed using the Motives for Physical Activity Measure-Revised (MPAM-R) [4]. The MPAM-R taps into five motives for physical activity: Fitness, Appearance, Competence, Social, and Enjoyment, range 1-7.
- **Behavioural Regulation** was measured using the Dog Walking Behavioural Regulation in Exercise Questionnaire (DW-BREQ) [5]. The DW-BREQ measures the continuum of behavioural regulation in dog walking through five subscales: Amotivation, External Regulation, Intrinsic Regulation, Identified Regulation, and Intrinsic Regulation, range 1-5.
- **Dog Obligation** was determined using three items designed to assess the obligation dog owners have for walking their dog [3].

**RESULTS**

- Agility competitors indicated significantly more weekly MVPA with their dog (M=272.1, SD=227.1) compared to non-agility competitors (M=179.2, SD=201.4; p<0.01).
- Agility competitors compared to non-agility competitors indicated higher means on the MPAM-R constructs of Enjoyment (p<0.05), Competence (p<0.01), and Social (p<0.05; Figure 1).
- Agility competitors indicated significantly lower means on the DW-BREQ constructs of External Regulation (p<0.05) and Intrinsic Regulation (p<0.01) compared to non-agility competitors (Figure 2).

**DISCUSSION**

- Participation in dog agility may have a positive effect on self-determined motives for physical activity and physical activity levels in dog owners.
- More intrinsic motives and forms of motivation were found to be associated with MVPA with a dog in both dog agility competitors and non-agility competitors.
- The further availability and promotion of dog agility programs to the public may serve as a means of getting dog owners more physically active with their dogs.

**REFERENCES**


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