

Too much of a good thing? Examining the relationship between passion for exercise and exercise dependence

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: To examine the relationship between passion (i.e., love for an activity that is valued for which and a great deal of time is invested) for exercise and exercise dependence symptoms.

Design: A cross-sectional correlational survey design was utilised.

Method: A total of 480 participants ($n = 275$ females, $n = 205$ males; $M_{age} = 18.58$, $SD = 1.66$) completed the Leisure Time Exercise Questionnaire (Godin, Jobin, & Bouillon, 1986), the Passion Scale (Vallerand et al., 2003), and the Exercise Dependence Scale-Revised (Hausenblas, Symons-Downs, & Nigg, 2004). Path analysis using structural equation modelling was used to assess the relationships between passion and exercise dependence.

Results: Path analysis using structural equation modelling via AMOS 20.0 (Arbuckle, 2011) revealed that harmonious passion (i.e., being in control of the activity and deciding when and when not to engage in it) was positively related to the exercise dependence dimensions of *time* and *tolerance*. On the other hand, obsessive passion (i.e., an internal compulsion to engage in the activity even when not appropriate to do so) was positively related to all seven exercise dependence dimensions: *time*, *tolerance*, *withdrawal*, *continuance*, *intention effects*, *lack of control*, and *reduction in other activities* ($CFI = .91$, $RMSEA = .05$, $SRMR = .06$).

Conclusion: An empirical relationship has been established to support the proposed theoretical link between passion (harmonious and obsessive) for exercise and exercise dependence dimensions.

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Introduction

The positive outcomes of exercise and physical activity engagement have been well documented through extensive empirical research (e.g., Atienza, 2001; Burke, Carron, Eys, Ntoumanis, & Estabrooks, 2006; Dishman & Buckworth, 1996). The reasons individuals engage in physical activity have also been well represented and include self-determined motives (see Ntoumanis, 2012), health motives (e.g., Courneya & Hellsten, 1998) and appearance motives (e.g., Ingledew, Markland, & Medley, 1998). Another driving force for individual engagement in various forms of physical activity may be an underlying passion to pursue such activities. Passion is defined as a strong inclination towards a self-defining activity that people like (or even love), that they find important (or highly value), and in which they invest time and energy (Vallerand, 2012; Vallerand et al., 2003). Vallerand (2012) purports that passion differs from intrinsic

motivation in that motivation towards an activity is not usually internalized in a person's identity like a passion, and does not address the potential of both adaptive and maladaptive outcomes. Passion for any given activity manifests itself in a variety of different ways. Traditionally, passion for any activity has been assumed to underlie the selection, direction, and intensity of behaviour. The concept of passion has been a major focus of interest for centuries in various disciplines, especially in philosophy (Rony, 1990). Recently, Vallerand et al. have empirically examined passion extensively in psychology and physical activity (e.g., Vallerand, 2008; Vallerand et al., 2003). Fig. 1

Vallerand (2012) suggested that a passion formulates or develops from the selection of an activity, the valuation of the activity, and the internalization of that activity into a person's identity. As such, Vallerand et al. have utilised Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) as a framework for the construct of passion. Self-Determination Theory suggests that individuals are motivated to engage in behaviours which facilitate basic psychological needs, pursue in behaviours which are more autonomous (self-determined and internalized versus controlled), and more consistently continue in behaviours which reflect internal values and align with personal

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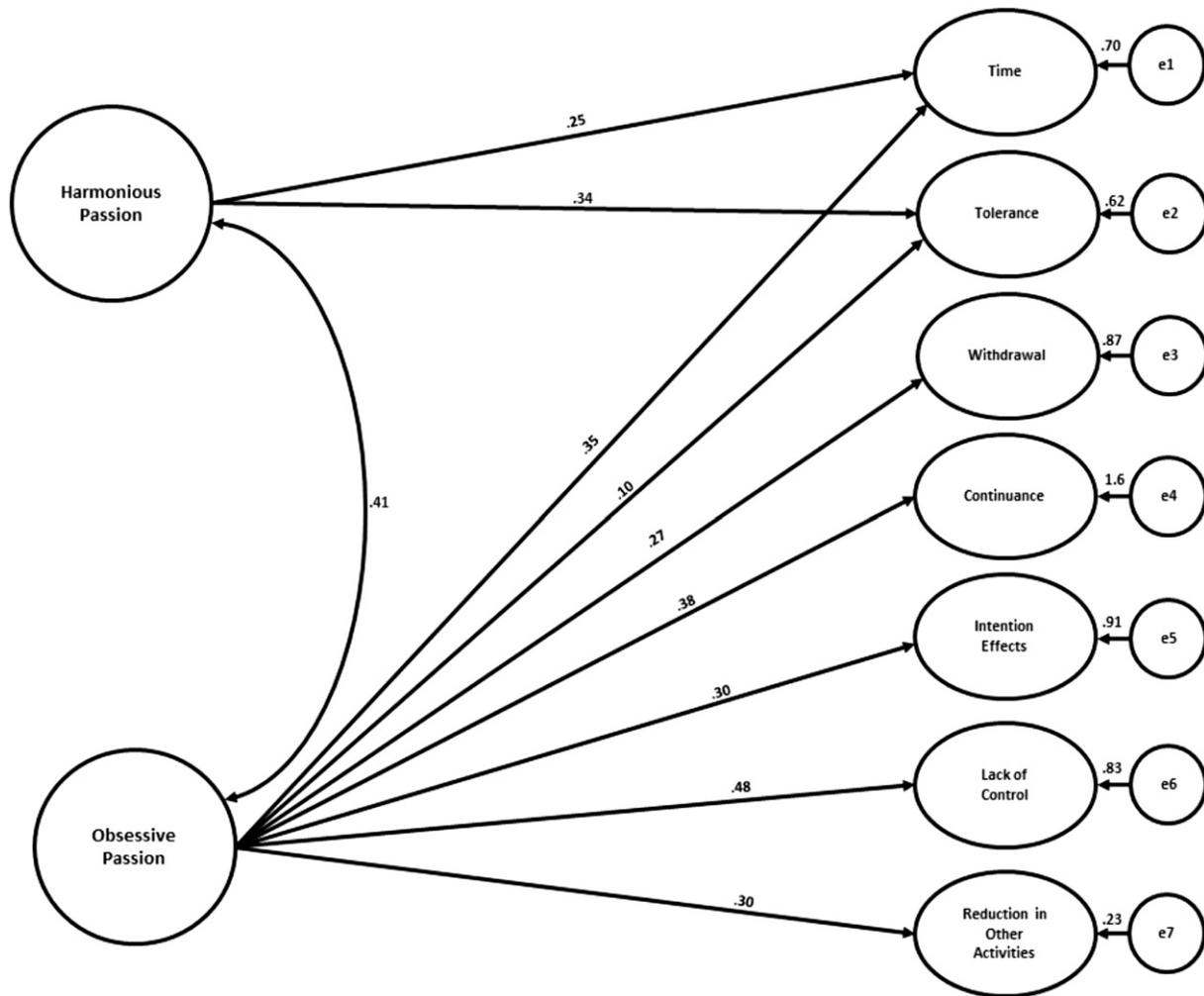


Fig. 1. Model depicting significant paths in the passion-exercise dependence relationship. Note. CFI = .91, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06; all standardized parameter estimates shown reflect significant relationships ($p = .00$). Non-significant paths from harmonious passion include: *withdrawal* (SPE = $-.12$, $p = .053$); *continuance* (SPE = $-.09$, $p = .125$); *intention effects* (SPE = $.02$, $p = .673$); *lack of control* (SPE = $-.03$, $p = .635$); *reduction in other activities* (SPE = $-.01$, $p = .898$).

goals (Deci & Ryan, 1985). An autonomous internalization occurs when individuals have accepted the activity as important without any contingencies (Vallerand, 2012). A controlled internalization occurs when certain contingencies are attached to the activity such as social acceptance, self-esteem, or the sense of arousal experienced from the activity is uncontrollable (Vallerand, 2012). In line with this belief, passion was proposed as a dualistic model, comprised of harmonious and obsessive dimensions (Vallerand et al., 2003). Harmonious passion “results from an autonomous internalization of the activity into the person’s identity” (Vallerand et al., 2003, p. 757). Obsessive passion on the other hand “results from a controlled internalization of the activity into one’s identity” (Vallerand et al., 2003, p. 757). It is suggested that those demonstrating harmonious passion are in control of the activity, implying that they can decide when and when not to engage in it, using their own volition. In other words, the respective activity is in “harmony” with other aspects of their lives. On the other hand, those demonstrating obsessive passion experience an internal compulsion to engage in the activity even when not appropriate to do so, as it goes beyond the person’s self-control. This results in participation in an activity, subsequently causing conflict with other aspects of one’s life (e.g., work, family). Based on this conceptualization, Vallerand et al. have developed a psychometrically sound questionnaire – the Passion Scale (Vallerand et al., 2003) – that assesses harmonious and obsessive passion in individuals.

An extensive body of research has been conducted examining the relationships between harmonious and obsessive passion with various adaptive and maladaptive outcomes (e.g., cognitive/behavioural/affective) using the Passion Scale. For example, harmonious passion has been found to have positive relationships with well-being (Mageau, Vallerand, Rousseau, Ratelle, & Provencher, 2005; Phillippe, Vallerand, & Lavigne, 2009; Rousseau & Vallerand, 2008), and positive affective experiences (Mageau & Vallerand, 2007; Vallerand, Rousseau, Grouzet, Dumais, & Grenier, 2006; Vallerand et al., 2008, 2007). Conversely, obsessive passion was found to be associated with negative affective experiences (Vallerand et al., 2008), conflicts in other life domains and an impediment of daily functioning (Vallerand et al., 2003). Furthermore, obsessive passion was linked to rigid persistence and inflexibility with scheduling at the risk of injury (Rip, Fortin, & Vallerand, 2006) and increased negative emotions (Phillippe, Vallerand, Houliort, Lavigne, & Donahue, 2010). These findings demonstrate the potential for both positive and negative outcomes to be derived from passion.

Additionally, Vallerand et al. investigated the nature of various relationship processes with regard to a number of instrumental groups. For example, harmonious passion was found to be associated with better quality coach–athlete relationships in sport groups (Lafrenière, Jowett, Vallerand, Donahue, & Lorimer, 2008), as well as better quality interpersonal relationships, and greater

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