The Effect of Motivation on Achievement and Behavior Modification in a Health and Wellness Course

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Abstract

Many colleges and universities offer courses related to personal health and wellbeing. Recently, there has been more of an effort to examine the efficacy of these courses in regards to impacting wellness levels and behavior change. **Purpose:** The purpose of this investigation was to evaluate the impact of motivation on achievement and behavior modification in an introductory health and wellness course. **Methods:** Students from two sections of a large health and wellness course volunteered for this study. The experimental group (n=360) were asked on the first day of class to identify one area of their life/health to focus on improving throughout the course of the semester. A variety of motivational strategies were utilized with the control group (n=295). **Results:** Following the course 91% of students in each group reported that they had committed to improving an area of their health. However, the additional motivational strategies utilized with the control group did not result in any added benefits in behavior. However, the additional motivational strategies utilized with the control group did not result in any added benefits in behavior.**Conclusion:** These data suggest that an introductory health and wellness course can be effective at motivating students to positively change a self-selected behavior. However, it is not clear whether the additional motivational strategies utilized with the treatment group did not result in any added benefits in regards to achievement or behavior modification.

Purpose

The purpose of this investigation was to evaluate the impact of motivation on achievement and behavior modification in an introductory collegiate general education health and wellness course.

Methods

**Participants:** Six hundred and fifty-five students volunteered to participate in this investigation. Students were recruited from two sections of an introductory level (general education) health and wellness course. Once section served as the treatment group (n=360) while one section served as the control group (n=295).

**Procedures:** The treatment group (n=360) were asked on the first day of class to identify one area of their life/health to focus on improving throughout the course of the semester. A variety of motivational strategies (i.e., class discussions, regular e-mails from the professor, online discussion forums, group achievement activity) were utilized during the semester to keep students focused on the area they identified. The control group (n=295) were also asked to identify one area of their life/health to focus on improving during the class. The control group was asked to write down the area of focus and why it was important to them. No additional motivational strategies were utilized with the control group throughout the semester.

**Analysis:** Statistical analysis included frequency tables, chi-square and t-tests with significance levels of 0.05.

Results

Following the course 91% of students in each group reported that they had committed to improving an area of their life/health. When asked if they made progress in that area a higher percentage of the treatment group said yes (93%) vs. the control group (89%), however, this was not significantly different (p=.146). When asked to quantify the number of weeks students felt they made progress in their focus area the treatment group’s mean was 8.7 ± 3.5 and the control groups mean was 7.3 ± 3.8. This was significantly different at the p<.0005 level. When asked if the course influenced progress in their area of focus significantly more (p=.03) students in the control group said yes (80%) than the treatment group (73%). There were no differences in academic achievement (i.e., test scores, lab grades) between the groups.

Conclusion

These data suggest that an introductory health and wellness course can be effective at motivating students to positively change a self-selected behavior. However, it is not clear whether the additional motivational strategies utilized with the treatment group in this study resulted in any added benefits in regards to achievement or behavior modification.