

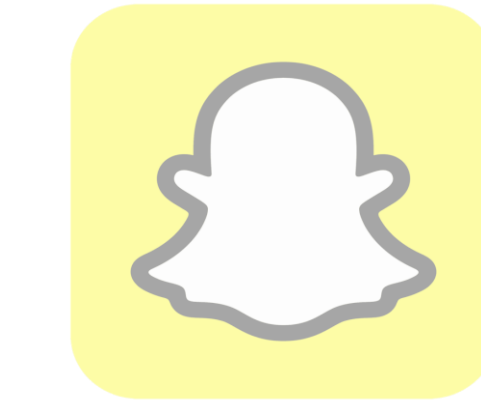


THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
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Scrolling to Sweat? The Influence of Social Media Content on Physical Activity

Morgan Rios & Angela Liegey-Dougall, PhD

University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas



Introduction

With conflicting literature surrounding social media use and physical activity's relationship, the present study aimed to investigate the potential impact of health and fitness content on physical activity outcomes while considering relevant psychosocial variables.

Physical Activity.

- Physical inactivity is a risk factor for noncommunicable diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer¹
- By 2030, 499.2 million new cases of preventable major noncommunicable diseases would occur, costing approximately \$47.6 billion per year²

Physical Activity of College Students.

- 34.3% of college students around the globe reported that they never exercised, 32.5% reported participation in physical activity less than three times per week, and 15.8% exercise once per week³

Social Media Use.

- Since 2015, excessive use of social media has become a public health concern⁴
- Some studies have suggested a negative correlation between physical activity due to the sedentary nature of social media engagement^{5,6}
- Some studies have suggested a positively correlation between physical activity by providing support and motivation^{7,8}

Methods

Data for this study were collected as part of a larger investigation titled "Beyond Filters: Exploring Social Media Effects on Social Physique Anxiety and Physical Activity" which is currently being prepared for the author's thesis (Morgan Rios)

Sample.

After filtering out failed attention checks, the study had a total of 837 participants

- Predominantly female ($n = 640$)
- Predominantly first-year college students ($n = 594$)
- Predominantly Hispanic ($n = 383$)

Self-Report Measures.

- Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale⁹
- Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System® (PROMIS) v.1.2 - Global Health scale¹⁰
- Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire-3¹¹
- Social Physique Anxiety Scale¹²
- Godin Leisure-Time Exercise Questionnaire¹³
- 7 unique items developed for health and fitness content
- Environment Preference:
 - "How likely are you to choose working out in public?"
 - "How likely are you to choose working out in private?"

Main Hypothesis

H1: ↑ Engagement of health and fitness related content will be significantly associated with ↑ positive attitudes towards physical activity, ↓ lower endorsements of social norms surrounding physical appearance, ↑ positive perceived health status, and ↓ lower levels of social physique anxiety. Ultimately, these positive psychological outcomes will predict ↑ positive physical activity outcomes

Covariates.

- Sex; College Classification; BMI; Socioeconomic Status; Anxiety

Analyses.

- Three total hierarchical linear regression models
 - Model 1 included covariates
 - Model 2 included health and fitness content
 - Model 3 included psychosocial variables

Results

Figure 1.

Hierarchical Regression Results Showing Health and Fitness Content Predicted Over and Above Psychosocial Variables for Total Physical Activity

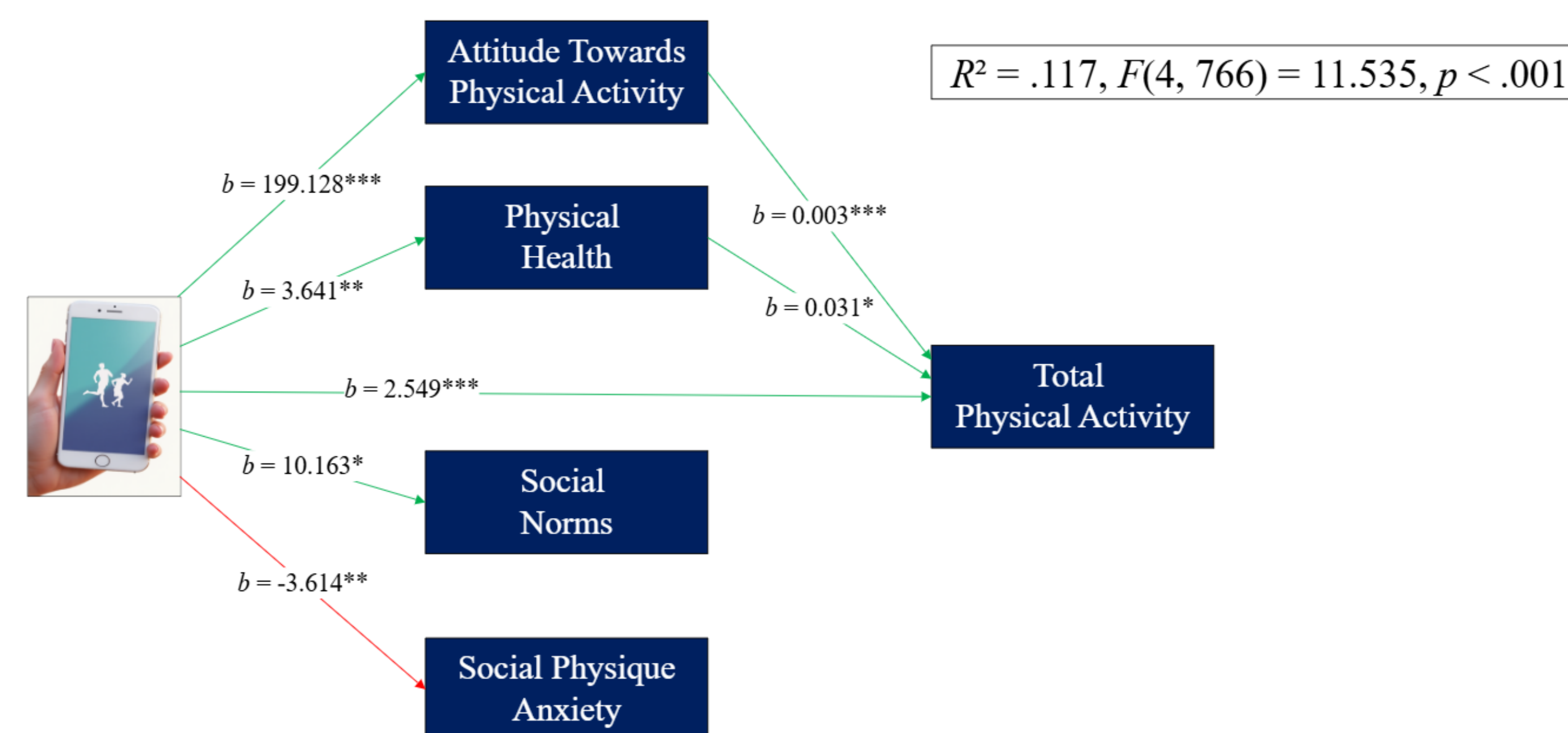


Figure 2.

Hierarchical Regression Results Showing Health and Fitness Content Predicted Over and Above Psychosocial Variables for Public Environment Preference

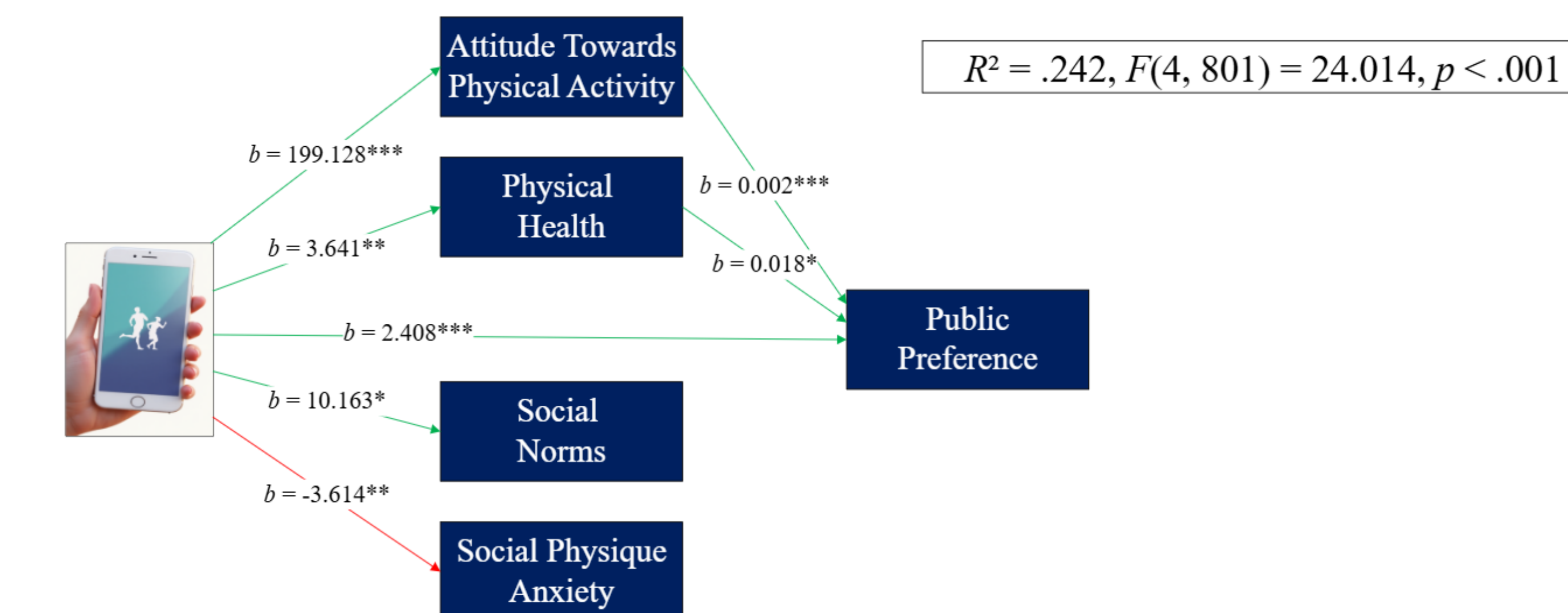
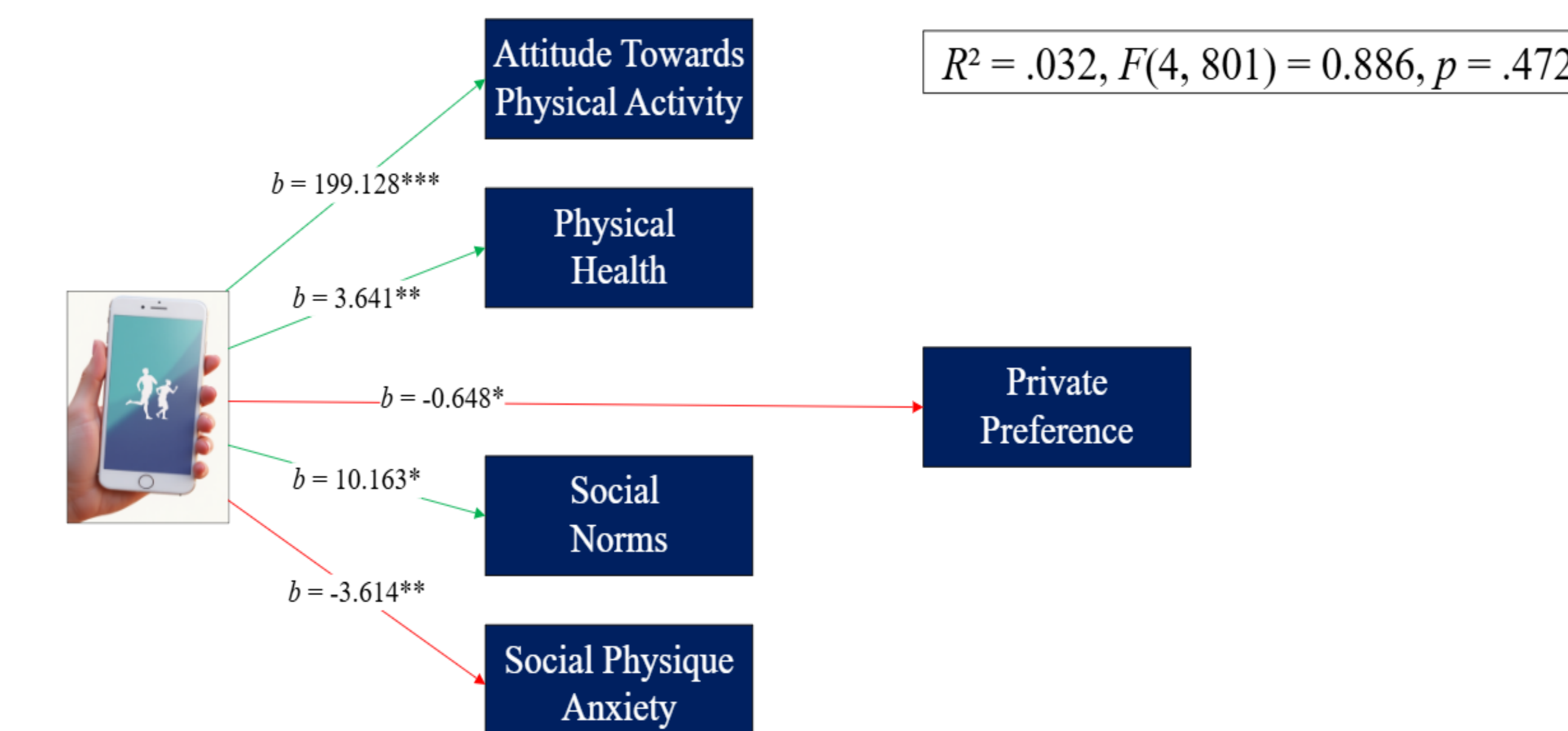


Figure 3.

Hierarchical Regression Results Showing Health and Fitness Content Predicted Over and Above Psychosocial Variables for Private Environment Preference



Discussion

Overall, the main hypothesis was partially supported

- Health and fitness content positively predicted attitude towards physical activity, perceived physical health, and social norms, adding to the literature that social media can serve as a motivational tool for exercise.¹⁴
- Health and fitness content negatively predicted social physique anxiety and a private environment preference, suggesting this type of content may capture more informative or functionally focused imagery rather than aesthetic pictures or selfies, in turn reducing an individual's preoccupation with their appearance by increasing intrinsic motivation.¹⁵
- Interestingly, health and fitness content predicted physical activity outcomes over and above psychosocial variables, suggesting other potential mediators may be at play like intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation.¹⁵

Main Take-Away

Although these results indicate engagement with health and fitness social media content may enhance attitudes toward exercise, perceived health, social norm internalization, and reduce social physique anxiety, the content still uniquely predicted overall physical activity behavior and environment preferences, suggesting other variables may serve as critical mechanisms driving these outcomes.

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