College Students' Opinions on Using Technology to Improve Health-related Fitness

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Technology has been identified to be effective in influencing student motivation and participation in physical activity, and thus, affecting their fitness levels. Therefore, this study aims to qualitatively examine college students' perceptions on using technology to improve their health-related fitness. A total of 102 freshmen and sophomores with 52% of female students enrolled in a fitness for life course participated in the study. Using a phenomenological approach, students were asked to answer an open-ended question on course discussion board, describing their opinions on the use of technology to improve their health-related fitness. Their discussion notes were coded by two researchers, and constant content analysis strategies were used to generate themes. Observation notes, informal conversation notes, written reflections on technology and fitness were used to triangulate the data. Peer debriefing was conducted to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Overall, all students believed that technology (e.g., fitness wearables) is an inevitable and useful tool to improve their health-related fitness. The following themes emerged: (a) The use of technology enables students to track their progress and provide them with more accurate data regarding their physical activity and fitness levels. (b) Technology can motivate students to stay active to achieve their fitness goals in an interesting way through different functions such as workout buddy, reminders and notifications, and reward system. And (c) technology provides an easier way for students to access, measure, and evaluate their fitness data so that they can be aware of their fitness status. However, some students were concerned about the price of technology which might affect their use of it. Technology can be used as an important tool to help college students maintain a physically active and fit lifestyle. Instructors should incorporate technology in their teaching so that students can have a deeper insight into possibly using technology to achieve fitness goals.