

# Participant Motivation of Physical Activity in Leisure Time for Women

## 女性休閒身體活動參與動機之探討

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to explore the participant motivation of physical activity in leisure time for women. From the review of literatures on physical activity for women, it was ascertained that increased physical activity was highly associated with improved physical health and mental health. However, some researchers concluded some facts about women's participation in physical activity; (1) most adult women either don't do the recommended amount of physical activity or are completely inactive; (2) women are more inactive than men. Furthermore, recognizing and referring to the female participants' motivation of physical activity in leisure time, physical activity intervention programs would be designed more effectively and implemented more successfully.

### 摘要

本文主要的目的是探討女性於閒暇時參與身體活動之動機。從相關文獻研究指出其主要身體活動參與動機因素如下：(1)人與人之間的轉向和調節 (2)個人能力 (3)逃離日常生活規範 (4)人與人之間正向發展 (5)轉移注意力 (6)人與人之間能力 (7)尋找異性朋友 (8)追求快樂感 (9)追求刺激 (10)追求冒險 (11)健康及幸福安寧感 (12)入迷 (13)社會互動 (14)創造力 (15)自我實現。

### Introduction

Following the increase of pressure in society, physical activity plays an important role in leisure time and balances the crisis of the disease of civilization. Physical activity has recently been identified as a primary deterrent to many chronic diseases associated with aging (Blair et al, 1989). The American College of Sports Medicine (1993), and the American Heart Association (1992) have all issued statements regarding the importance of exercise in the prevention of coronary heart disease, cancer, diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia.

Despite the effectiveness of exercise in disease prevention, exercise adherence has become the primary obstacle for most Americans (Dishman, 1988). The literature indicated that the importance of physical activity is increasingly acknowledged in both research and in the writings about women (Center

for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, 1997; Henderson & Winn, 1996; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 1996; Wells, 1996).

A USDHHS (1996) study investigated the facts about women's participation in physical activity. The facts about U.S. women's participation in physical activity included: More than 60 percent of adult women do not do the recommended amount of physical activity (30 minutes of moderate activity daily); more than 25 percent of all women are completely inactive; women are more inactive than men; social support from family and friends is positively related to regular physical activity.

Therefore, it is very important to examine the factors of participant motivation that influence women to be physically active. After reviewing previous studies of participant motivation

in leisure activity, the study found that the motives of seeking fun/ pleasure, escaping reality, seeking adventure, seeking excitement, and deep involvement were significantly related to psychological androgyny (Hirschman, 1984). Clough, Shepherd, and Maughan (1989) investigated the motives for participation in recreational running. The result indicated six factors that were extracted from a final factor analysis of the data and were termed: (a) challenge, (b) health/fitness, (c) well being, (d) addiction, (e) status, and (f) social. Another study investigated outdoor recreation participation motivations based on the Maslow's (Maslow, 1970) theory of hierarchy of needs. The result showed that most downhill skiers with an activated need for self-actualization also had an activated need for self-esteem (Mills, 1985).

This article attempts, through the related-literatures, to understand the benefits of physical activity for women, and to explore the participant motivation of physical activity in leisure time for women, then to improve women to participate physical activity positively.

## Health Benefits of Physical Activity for Women

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) (1993) estimated that, in the sedentary (approximately 58% of the population), a significant decrease in coronary heart disease could be achieved by increasing physical activity. Similarly, rates of hypertension, obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, and even depression and anxiety can be diminished through improved physical activity. Many studies have contributed to the conclusion that exercise is beneficial for the prevention of diabetes among women. In one particular study, Mayer-Davis et al. (1998) interviewed 1,467 subjects about their participation in physical activity. Insulin sensitivity was measured by a frequently sampled intravenous glucose tolerance test (FSIGT). The authors concluded that insulin sensitivity was higher in participants with higher levels of physical activity. This was consistent for both vigorous and non-vigorous activities. In a review article of 125 references, Ivy (1997) concluded that individuals who maintain a physically active lifestyle are much less likely to develop impaired glucose tolerance and non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus.

In addition to all of the physical benefits of regular physical activity, there is strong evidence that physical activity also enhances women's psychological health. Physical activity helps improve the mental health of both clinical and non-clinical populations (USDHHS, 1996). USDHHS indicated the significant benefits of participating in physical activity for

women. The key benefits of physical activity for women included: (a) Reduced risk of death from coronary heart disease, and less development of high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes; (b) Maintenance of healthy bones, muscle, and joints; (c) Control of weight, increased lean muscle, and reduced body fat; (d) Reduced joint swelling and pain arthritis; (e) Enhanced estrogen replacement therapy in reducing bone loss after menopause; (f) Reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression and improvements in mood and feelings of well-being; (g) Reduced blood pressure in some women with hypertension.

These physical health gains should not overshadow the mental health benefits that result from engaging in physical activity. Among these benefits are improved self-esteem and confidence, which are a product of increased strength, endurance, and flexibility (Bialeschki, 1999; Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, 1997; Lirgg, 1992; Women's Sports Foundation, 1997). Other mental health benefits include the lessened adverse effects of emotional stress, improved mood after physical activity, increased mental energy, and feelings of empowerment and autonomy (Coakley & White, 1992; Henderson & Winn, 1996; Women's Sports Foundation, 1997).

Recent guidelines developed by the American College of Sports Medicine and the CDCP are easily adopted by the elderly as they do not require set periods of vigorous exercise, an unachievable goal for many. Specifically, they recommended that "every adult should accumulate 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week" (Pate et al., 1995). Individuals can then be counseled to evaluate their daily activities and develop a plan that will include a total of 30 minutes of moderate activity such as walking and gardening.

## Participant Motivation in Leisure-Time Physical Activity

Motivation is the process that accounts for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal (Robbins, 2000, p.156). It is a fundamental force that causes an individual to behave in a particular manner. Human needs may be homeostatically motivated and/or psychologically motivated (Iso-Ahola, 1980). Psychological Motivation may be intrinsic or extrinsic. Extrinsic motivation occurs when a goal or reward is sought that is the result of participation in an activity. Intrinsic motivation is present when participation in an activity is done just for the purpose of participation. There are no external goals or reward when participation is intrinsic (Iso-Ahola, 1980).

Therefore, different activities can meet different needs for different people at different time. Also, different activities can be pursued for different reasons by the same people at different times (Hsieh, 1998). It is important to understand the motivational factors associated with different leisure activity.

Iso-Ahola and Allen (1982) extended the work of London, Crandall, and Fitzgibbons (1977) and Tinsley, Barrett, and Kass (1977, 1978) in a study to determine the extent to which leisure needs vary as a function of leisure experience. Subjects were 438 players from 60 teams in the intramural basketball program. Statistical analysis produced seven need factors as follows: (a) interpersonal diversion and control, (b) personal competence, (c) escape from daily routine, (d) positive interpersonal development, (e) diversionary relation, (f) interpersonal competence, and (g) meeting someone of the opposite sex. This result indicated that leisure needs were not stable but were more appropriately thought of as dynamic indicators of leisure motivation.

Hirschman (1984) investigated 440 adults about the relationship between sex role and nine motives (fun/ pleasure, escaping reality, seeking adventure, seeking excitement, deep involvement, perfecting performance, physical stamina, alertness, and competitiveness) for participating in leisure activity. This result showed that the motives of seeking fun/ pleasure, escaping reality, seeking adventure, seeking excitement, and deep involvement were significantly related to psychological androgyny. Psychologically masculine individuals were found to be significantly inclined toward perfection, alertness, and competitiveness during leisure activities. One's sex role was found to consistently explain more variance in leisure activity motives, than was biological gender.

Mills (1985) investigated outdoor recreation participation motivations based on the Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs. A random sample of 708 visitors were interviewed at several downhill ski resorts in California and Nevada. Subjects were asked to rate the importance as described by 23 items for having a successful skiing day. The results showed that most downhill skiers with an activated need for self-actualization also had an activated need for self-esteem.

Lounsbury and Hoopes (1988) examined the five year stability of leisure participation and motivations factors among 139 community residents in Knoxville, Tennessee, measured by a list of 113 leisure activities based on the Leisure Activities Blank (Mukechnie, 1975). Five participation factors were comprised of: (a) sports/recreation, (b) easy living, (c) domestic,

(d) organizational, and (e) intellectual activities. These factors showed five-year stability coefficients ranging from .44 to .71. Six factors measuring motivations for engaging in a favorite leisure activity were: (a) achievement, (b) supervising others, (c) social interaction, (d) creativity, (e) physical activity, and (f) mental activity. These motivation factors showed stability coefficients ranging from .24 to .50. This result of a variance components analysis revealed relatively large proportions of variability between-subject differences and subject-by-time interaction.

Clough, Shepherd, and Maughan (1989) investigated the motives for participation in recreational running. They developed an instrument with 105 items based on a review of previous research (e.g. Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983; Ragheb & Beard, 1983). A pilot test was mailed to 250 randomly selected subjects after reducing the test to 81 items based on analysis of data from 25 recreation runners. Then, a revised list of 70 reasons, representing six factors for running, was developed using factor analysis. The final instrument was mailed to 521 runners. Six factors were extracted from a final factor analysis of the data and were termed: (a) challenge, (b) health/fitness, (c) well being, (d) addiction, (e) status, and (f) social.

According to the above-mentioned literatures, we found the motivational factors associated with physical activity in leisure time included: (a) interpersonal diversion and control, (b) personal competence, (c) escape from daily routine, (d) positive interpersonal development, (e) diversionary relation, (f) interpersonal competence, (g) meeting someone of the opposite sex, (i) seeking fun/ pleasure (j) seeking adventure, (k) seeking excitement, (l) addiction, (m) health/fitness, (n) well being, (o) social interaction, (p) creativity, and (q) self-actualization.

## Conclusion

From related-literatures the benefits of physical activity for women who understand regular engage in physical activity as a lifestyle behavior is associated with a reduction in mortality and morbidity for cardiovascular diseases, colon cancer, complications of overweight and obesity, and improvements in emotional well being (USDHHS, 1996). Despite these well-documented benefits, women tend to report low participation in regular activity with little or no engagement in vigorous activity, and frequently report barriers related to lack of time, energy, family concerns as reasons for their low activity patterns (Jaffee, Lutter, Rex, Hawkes, & Bucaccio, 1999). National surveillance data shows a high prevalence of irregular and

sedentary physically activity behaviors among women, exceeding levels observed in men by 15~20% (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996).

The Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport (1997) mentioned the barriers in the research have been to increase the amount of social support from family and friends. Another important recommendation is to have adequate female role models in various physical activities and leadership roles. Seeley (1997) indicated the emphasis to get people more physically active has led to a research "bonanza" in recent years. International consensus regarding the best and most promising scientifically evaluated approaches only now exists for motivating individuals and changing social and physical environments in communities. Over and over again, the researchers point to success when people can enjoy being active (alone or in groups) in safe, attractive, enjoyable, and convenient environments.

The issue of physical activity for women is a critical concern for our society. We know the economic costs associated with unhealthy lifestyles. We know the personal costs of women who suffer poor physical and mental health due to a lack of physical activity. We understand the constraints encountered by women. The challenge is to explore a new role that recreation professionals in community settings can adopt to bring visibility to these issues and provide direct action to address concerns for physical activity. The question remains whether we continue in our traditional approaches with assumptions that people will "get" the message, or whether we take a more direct approach with targeted efforts that reach all the women in our communities. Women must encourage to face the change of physiology, psychology, family, society, traditional concept, and to learn how to self-management and to own a positive, healthy, happy and active lives.

### Recommendations for Future Search

Further research studies should focused on exploring the motivation of physical activity for different aged women. In addition, it is also recommended that qualitative research be conducted using techniques such as in-depth interviews and focus group conversations. Qualitative studies would allow greater understanding of details any significant differences observed among variables.

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