

# A Survey on Females' Constraints in Physical Recreation Participation

## 調查阻礙女性參與康體活動的因素

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### Abstract

Female of all age groups and socio-economic status do face a number of constraints in pursuing physical recreation activity. The present paper aimed to study the constraints of female's physical recreation participation, and the relationship of perceived constraints and the level of participation between different occupation status, education level, and marital status. Two hundred and eight females aged 18 to 60 were invited to fill in the Physical Recreation Participation Questionnaire (PRPQ) to identify their perceived constraints and level of physical recreation participation. Results indicated that there were certain constraints factors, such as psychological constraints, accessibility constraints and time constraints, more related to the constriction in female physical recreation participation. When analyzing the constraint dimensions with different status towards participation frequency, the result was not necessary negatively related. Only housewives and middle education level women with lower perceived constraints demonstrated higher physical recreation participation than their counterparts.

### 摘要

在參與康樂性質的體能活動時，無論年紀多大或有何種社會地位，女性均會面對不同的參與阻礙，本研究旨在了解其中的參與阻礙與女性的職業、教育水平及婚姻狀況的關係。208位女士被邀請填寫「參與體育康樂活動問卷」(PAPQ)。結果顯示心理因素、場地因素及時間因素為主要的參與阻礙；但是，參與阻礙與參與頻率並沒有呈反相關。另外，經常參與活動的家庭主婦及中等程度學歷的女士均面對較低的參與阻礙。

### Introduction

Henderson, Uhler, & Greer (1990) defined physical recreation as "freely chosen, enjoyable activity, which involves movement of the body and includes active sport, exercise, fitness, dance, and outdoor activities". When considering constraints in physical activity participation, there were many definitions on leisure constraints, nevertheless, they all shared the similar ideas: Constraints have been defined as those factors that make physical activity participation unattractive and impede consistent participation (Burton & Raedeke, 1997). In spite of the different grouping of leisure constraints, it has been widely presumed in the early researches that there was a negative relationship between constraints and leisure participation, while constraints

inhibited people's participation in physical activity. Researchers had identified common physical activity constraints, including perceived lack of time, lack of motivation, inconvenience, and lack of social support (Boothby, Tungatt, & Townsend, 1981; Godin, Shephard, & Colantonio, 1986). These studies had indicated that exercisers perceived lower constraints than individuals who discontinued exercising.

However, in Kay and Jackson (1991) study, it pointed out controversial idea that activity participation might disclose individual to constraints they did not forecast. Moreover, participants might have learned to overcome constraints or how to change their activity participation to face those constraints. Therefore, it was believed that the relationship between constraints

and activity participation is more complex than a simple negative relationship. Concurrently, Alexandris and Carroll (1997a) reported that there was not a strong relationship between constraints and physical participation. Shaw, Bonen, & McCabe (1991) even reported a positive relationship in their study. Therefore, it was worthy to reconsider the relationship of constraints and physical activity participation.

Regarding the constraints faced by female in leisure participation, it is proposed that although female have leisure, they faced more constraints than men did. Substantial researches had linked constraints on female's leisure with their position within a patriarchal society (Shaw, 1994). Furthermore, among those constraints thought to be significantly more prevalent within female leisure participation, gender-role conformity, family and time commitment and the ethic of care had probably received the most attention in the literature. As the role of female was changing dramatically and the trend of today's families structure and traditional female "homemaker" role has changed, it is consistent in Henderson (1994) description that "the study about female's leisure not only helps understand female's lives but broadens our understanding of leisure for all people".

## Method

### Subjects

208 females aged 18-60 were invited to fill in the PAPQ. Level of physical activity participation was categorized according to their self-reported physical recreation participation in the past year. The sample comprised of 30.3% frequent participant (at least once a week), 13.9% moderate participant (at least once a month), 34.6% infrequent participant (less than once a month) and 21.2% non-participant (didn't participate at all).

### Instrument

**Physical Activity Participation Questionnaire.** The adopted questionnaire was originated from Alexandris and Carroll's (1997b) study with high internal consistency reliability ( $r=.85$ ). The instrument collected information on female's physical recreation patterns and constraints so as demographic details and the level of participation. Moreover, respondents were asked to evaluate their ideas of each of 26 statements, which derived from seven types of constraint factors by using a 5-point Likert scale ranking from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

## Data Analysis

All data were analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Science for Window 9.0 version. Mean and standard deviations were calculated between different participant groups (infrequent, moderate, and frequent participants) in the seven constraint factors. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the differences among different social-demographic groups. Two-way Anova was further adopted to analysis the interaction effect for the demographic differences (occupation status, education level and marital status) respectively in total constraints toward physical recreation participation frequency.

## Results

Regarding the constraint dimension, mean scores and standard deviation were reported on Table 1 with "Time Factors" ranked first in the constraint dimensions. In terms of the mean differences of particular constraint dimensions, One-way ANOVA analysis was shown on Table 2. Statistically significant differences ( $p<.05$ ) were found in the awareness factors ( $F=4.70$ ,  $p<.05$ ), accessibility factors ( $F=2.81$ ,  $p<.05$ ), and time factor ( $F=3.41$ ,  $p<.05$ ) among different physical recreation participation frequency groups.

Furthermore, there was significant interaction relationship between total constraints and education level on physical recreation participation ( $F=2.91$ ,  $p<.05$ ). There was significant mean difference in the main effect for total constraints ( $F=6.64$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Multiple comparison tests results were shown on Table 3 and Table 4 respectively. The result indicated that under the occupation status, housewives ( $M=2.11$ ) scored significantly lower total constraint scores than the full-time ( $M=2.79$ ) and part-time ( $M=3.08$ ) respondents. Furthermore, there was significant difference in the main effects for the total constraints ( $F=7.01$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Furthermore, in terms of the education level, respondents with secondary 5 education level ( $M=2.04$ ) scored significantly lower total constraints scores than those have primary ( $M=2.71$ ), secondary 3 ( $M=3.11$ ), post secondary ( $M=2.47$ ) and college ( $M=3.13$ ) education level.

**Table 1. Ranking of 7 Constraint Dimensions towards Physical Recreation Participation (N=7) (in descending order).**

Rank	Constraint Dimensions	M	SD
1	Time factors	2.98	.99
2	Lack of Partners	2.77	.006
3	Facility Factors	2.56	.006
4	Accessibility factors	2.54	.006
5	Awareness factors	2.08	.005
6	Un-enjoyable past experiences	2.12	.005
7	Psychological factors	1.96	.004
	Total Constraint factors	2.37	.004

**Table 2. One-way ANOVA for the Perception of Constraint Factors by Participation Groups.**

	Group				df	F	sig.
	non-participant	infrequent participant	moderate participant	frequent participant			
Individual Factors	2.16	1.88	1.99	1.88	3	2.28	.080
Awareness Factors	2.40	1.84	1.97	2.20	3	4.70	.003
Facility Factors	2.85	2.55	2.46	2.40	3	2.52	.059
Accessibility Factors	2.61	2.67	2.68	2.27	3	2.81	.041
Past experience	2.38	2.03	2.03	2.07	3	1.94	.125
Partner factors	2.92	2.92	2.57	2.60	3	2.08	.104
Time Factors	3.15	3.15	3.00	2.67	3	3.41	.019
Total Constraints	2.59	2.36	2.35	2.25	3	2.85	.039

**Table 3. Interaction between Constraint Factors and Occupation Status for Physical Recreation Participation (Two-Way ANOVA) (N=208).**

Source of Variation		Sum of Square	Mean Square	df	F	Sig.
2-way interaction	total constraints* occupation status	24.24	3.46	7	3.68	.001
Main Effects	total constraints	20.00	6.67	3	7.01	.000
	occupation status	.324	.108	3	.115	.951

**Table 4. Interaction between Total Constraint and Education Level on Physical Recreation Participation (Two-Way ANOVA) (N=208).**

Source of Variation		Sum of Square	Mean Square	df	F	Sig.
2-way interaction	total constraints* occupation status	24.48	3.72	9	2.91	.003
Main Effects	total constraints	18.63	6.21	3	6.64	.000
	occupation status	1.20	1.20	4	.32	.864

## Discussion

'Lack of time' is a common constraint factor obtained in physical activity research, which also shown in the present study. Female perceived their infrequent physical activity participation was caused by the lack of time. We can easily understand that it was the nature of household work made housewives has trouble in making a regular commitment in recreation activity participation. However, it is not necessarily true that their participations will increase if they have more time. Although lack of time can be described as "real" barrier inhibiting participation, Burton and Raedeke (1997) suggested that lack of time might not be an absolute constraint, but rather, a reflection on a person's attitudes toward physical activity. It could imply that physical activity was assigned a low priority relative to other activities (Coalter, 1993).

In response to time constraints for recreation activity participation, female were more constrained when compared to men, with regard to household obligations and family commitments (Searle & Jackson, 1985; Witt & Goodale, 1981). By the ideology of familism, which reifies female's central caregiving roles, was another way in which the ethic of care could be seen to act as a leisure constraint (Hunter & Whitson, 1992; Shaw, 1994).

From another point of view, ethic of care was one of the unique constraints faced by female on their physical recreation participation. In Henderson & Allen, (1991) study, it was proposed that, because of the ethic of care, female often provided for the needs of others first, thus neglecting their own leisure needs. Moreover, many female still did not feel entitled to leisure participation (Henderson et al., 1989). At the same time, female were sometimes reluctant to plan to participate in physical activities because they believed they did not deserve the time for themselves (Henderson, 1995). In another word, the time constraints faced by female can be viewed as their identification on their role in the family, which made them find no time for participation.

Regarding the occupation status, present study showed that for the frequent participation group, housewives perceived lower constraints than female with full-time job. It was different from Harrington and Dawson (1995) findings, which suggested that housewives feel more constrained than other women by lack of skills and opportunity, poor self-image and fear. On the other hand, those who are employed full-time are most likely to report responsibilities, fatigue, insufficient time and scheduling problems as constraints. Part-time workers appear

to "have it best" in their leisure. From another point of view, the above information inspires us to consider the motivation for physical recreation participation behind female with different occupation. We presume that the reasons for female's physical activity participation (eg. Weight control, feeling better, social gathering) are very alike. However, the motivation for participation is different. When considering doing exercise, housewives emphasize on family interest and the presence of companion. They will commit to take part in physical activity only if the above conditions are satisfied. On the contrary, employees are concerned about the adequacy of leisure time. Therefore, they will start their exercise if it provides them will good and rewarding leisure experience.

It is presumed that those highly educated people should understand the benefit of physical recreation and because of the social background, they should encounter fewer constraints in participation. However, the findings indicated that among all the participation groups, the higher educated respondents did not experience lesser constraints. Henderson (1996) suggested that women in non-dominant groups might experience higher constraint level in leisure pursuit. In Allison and Duncan (1987) study, it was reported both blue-collar and professional female felt the frustrations of not having enough quality time available for their children. They were engaged in their family or work and became leisure-lack, and subsequent nonparticipation in physical recreation.

Although constraints were confronted by female in their physical recreation participation, new proposition suggested that people could confront and negotiate constraints. Recent researches suggested that people were able to have leisure despite the presence of leisure constraints (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993; Jackson & Rucks, 1995). In Kay and Jackson (1991) study, it was even rejected the negative relationship between perception of constraints and participation. Moreover, it was found that both frequent participants and non-participants reported high levels of constraints.

The studies of leisure constraints provided an effective framework for understanding reasons for non-participation. Likewise, the concept of constraint negotiation might be a helpful model by which to understand efforts that might eventually lead to participation for people who originally felt constrained. Constraint negotiation emerged as a re-consideration on the negative relationship between perceived constraints and activity participation.

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