

THE IMPACT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ON WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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Abstract

Physical activity is an essential element of a healthy lifestyle and has an important role in promoting women's health and quality of life throughout the lifespan. Regular engagement in exercise and other forms of physical activity can improve physical fitness, psychological well-being, emotional balance, and social health. It is associated with better cardiovascular functioning, maintenance of healthy bones and muscles, improved body composition, and a lower likelihood of developing several non-communicable diseases, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis, and certain cancers. In addition, an active lifestyle can support mental well-being by helping to alleviate stress and anxiety, enhancing self-confidence, and contributing to improved cognitive functioning and overall life satisfaction.

However, women's participation in physical activity is often influenced by several personal, social, cultural, and environmental factors. Household responsibilities, limited time, concerns about safety, inadequate sports and recreational facilities, financial limitations, and prevailing social attitudes may restrict opportunities for women to remain physically active. Therefore, creating safe and inclusive environments, improving access to facilities, strengthening health education, and developing community-oriented programs are important steps toward encouraging sustained participation.

Keywords

Physical Activity, Women's Health, Well-Being, Exercise, Mental Health, Physical Fitness, Quality of Life, Women's Empowerment, Chronic Disease Prevention, Healthy Lifestyle.

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Introduction

Physical activity is an integral part of a healthy and balanced life. It refers to bodily movements generated by the muscles that involve the expenditure of energy and includes exercise, sports, recreational pursuits, domestic activities, walking, cycling, and other forms of active movement. Consistent participation in physical activity helps maintain physical fitness, supports disease prevention, promotes psychological health, and contributes to a better quality of life. For women, its importance extends across the entire life course, as regular movement can support healthy development, physical functioning, emotional health, and the prevention of several health problems.

Women's health is influenced by a combination of biological, social, economic, environmental, and cultural circumstances. These influences may vary considerably during adolescence, adulthood, pregnancy, the reproductive period, menopause, and later life. Physical activity can provide valuable support during these different stages by improving cardiovascular capacity, maintaining muscular strength and bone health, supporting healthy body composition, and lowering the likelihood of various chronic conditions. An active lifestyle is associated with a reduced risk of problems such as hypertension, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and some forms of cancer.

The contribution of physical activity is not limited to physical health. Regular movement can positively influence psychological and emotional well-being by helping individuals manage everyday stress and improve mood. Women who remain physically active may experience improvements in sleep, confidence, cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, and perceived quality of life. In addition, participation in sports, fitness activities, and recreational programs can create opportunities for social interaction and cooperation. Such participation may strengthen communication, teamwork, leadership, confidence, and a sense of social inclusion.

Despite the recognized advantages of physical activity, women's participation remains affected by a range of obstacles. Household duties, caregiving responsibilities, employment demands, limited leisure time, financial difficulties, inadequate facilities, cultural expectations, and concerns about safety can restrict opportunities for regular exercise. In some communities, social attitudes and limited access to appropriate recreational spaces further discourage women and girls from participating in sports and physical activities. These circumstances demonstrate that increasing women's physical activity requires attention not only to individual motivation but also to the social and environmental conditions in which women live.

Public health recommendations recognize regular physical activity as an important means of maintaining health and reducing the risk of chronic disease. Moderate- and vigorous-intensity activities, when undertaken appropriately, can contribute substantially to physical fitness and disease prevention. Consequently, governments, educational institutions, healthcare professionals, workplaces, and community organizations have an important role in creating conditions that make physical activity accessible and acceptable to women. Awareness programs, community-based exercise initiatives, safe recreational spaces, workplace activities, and inclusive sports opportunities can help reduce participation barriers.

Research increasingly views women's health in a holistic manner, recognizing the interaction between physical, psychological, emotional, and social well-being. Regular physical activity can contribute to this broader concept of health by supporting functional fitness, emotional balance, social participation, and independence. At the community level, healthier and more active women may also contribute positively to family well-being and community development. Thus, encouraging women's participation in physical activity represents an important component of broader health-promotion and development efforts.

The present study, **"The Impact of Physical Activity on Women's Health and Well-Being,"** examines the relationship between regular physical activity and different dimensions of women's health. It focuses on the physical, psychological, emotional, and social benefits associated with an active lifestyle, while also considering the major factors that restrict women's participation. The study further considers approaches that may encourage greater and sustained involvement in physical activity. A clearer understanding of these relationships and barriers can assist in developing inclusive health-promotion initiatives and creating supportive environments in which women can participate in physical activity throughout their lives.

Aims and Objectives

Aim

The main aim of this study is to investigate how participation in physical activity influences the overall health and well-being of women. The study considers the physical, psychological, emotional, and social dimensions of health, while also examining the factors that restrict women's involvement in regular physical activity. It further seeks to identify practical approaches that can encourage women from different age groups to adopt and sustain physically active lifestyles.

Objectives

1. To explain the meaning, significance, and role of physical activity in maintaining and improving women's overall health and well-being.

2. To examine the effects of regular physical activity on major aspects of physical health, including cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, bone health, healthy body composition, and prevention of disease.
3. To assess the psychological and emotional advantages associated with physical activity, particularly its contribution to stress management, reduction of anxiety and depressive symptoms, self-confidence, cognitive functioning, and emotional well-being.
4. To examine the contribution of an active lifestyle to women's quality of life, including functional independence, daily performance, productivity, and satisfaction with life.
5. To identify the principal social, cultural, economic, environmental, and individual factors that may limit women's regular participation in physical activity.
6. To examine the significance of physical activity at different stages of the female life course, including adolescence, adulthood, pregnancy, the menopausal period, and later life.
7. To investigate the role of regular physical activity in reducing the risk of and supporting the management of chronic health conditions, including obesity, diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis, and cardiovascular disorders.
8. To explore the social dimensions of women's participation in sports and physical activities, particularly empowerment, leadership development, social interaction, inclusion, and community participation.
9. To examine relevant scholarly literature and previous research concerning the relationship between physical activity and women's health and well-being.
10. To identify suitable measures and policy approaches for increasing women's participation in physical activity through health education, awareness initiatives, community-based programs, accessible facilities, and supportive environments.

Review of Literature

The existing body of research provides an important conceptual and empirical basis for examining the relationship between physical activity and women's health and well-being. Researchers from the fields of public health, medicine, psychology, sports science, and social sciences have investigated the effects of regular physical activity on physical fitness, psychological health, chronic disease prevention, quality of life, and social participation. The major findings relevant to the present study are summarized below.

1. World Health Organization (2020)

The World Health Organization identified physical activity as an important component of disease prevention and health promotion. Its global recommendations indicate that adults should undertake an appropriate amount of moderate- and vigorous-intensity physical activity each week. The guidelines associate regular physical activity with improved cardiovascular and muscular health, better psychological well-being, and a lower risk of several non-communicable diseases. These recommendations provide an important public-health framework for encouraging women to maintain active lifestyles.

2. Paffenbarger Jr. et al. (1993)

Paffenbarger and his colleagues examined the relationship between physical activity and long-term health outcomes. Their work provided evidence that people who maintain an active lifestyle tend to experience lower risks of serious cardiovascular conditions and premature mortality than those with very low levels of activity. Their findings helped establish regular physical movement as an important factor in the prevention of chronic health problems and the promotion of longevity.

3. Warburton, Nicol, and Bredin (2006)

Warburton, Nicol, and Bredin reviewed evidence concerning the health consequences of regular physical activity. Their findings indicated that appropriate exercise can contribute to cardiovascular health, healthy body composition, metabolic functioning, bone health, and the prevention of several chronic conditions. The review also drew attention to benefits related to psychological functioning and quality of life, demonstrating that the influence of physical activity extends beyond physical fitness alone.

4. Biddle and Asare (2011)

Biddle and Asare examined evidence concerning physical activity and mental health. Their review suggested that participation in physical activity is associated with better psychological functioning and may help reduce symptoms related to stress, anxiety, and depression. The authors also discussed positive associations with self-perception and emotional well-being. Their work is particularly relevant to understanding physical activity as a component of a broader approach to mental health promotion.

5. American College of Sports Medicine (2018)

The American College of Sports Medicine has emphasized the importance of appropriately planned physical activity for maintaining fitness and functional capacity. Its recommendations indicate that regular exercise can improve endurance, muscular performance, flexibility, and physical functioning. For women, continued

participation in suitable physical activities may also support healthy aging and help preserve independence and functional ability as age-related changes occur.

6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified physical activity as an important protective factor against several major health conditions. Regular activity is associated with reduced risks of cardiovascular disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and certain cancers. The organization also recognizes connections between physical activity and improved sleep, psychological health, and general well-being. These findings reinforce the importance of incorporating movement into everyday life.

7. Dishman, Heath, and Lee (2015)

Dishman, Heath, and Lee examined physical inactivity from a public-health perspective and highlighted its relationship with the growing burden of non-communicable diseases. Their work emphasized that insufficient physical activity is not simply an individual behavioral issue but also a broader population-health concern. Increasing participation among women could therefore contribute to better health outcomes while potentially reducing the social and economic burden associated with preventable chronic conditions.

8. Bauman et al. (2012)

Bauman and colleagues investigated patterns of physical activity across different populations and identified important differences in participation between men and women. Their research drew attention to the influence of social and environmental circumstances on activity levels. Factors such as limited leisure time, domestic responsibilities, concerns about safety, cultural expectations, and insufficient access to suitable facilities can create significant difficulties for women seeking to participate regularly in physical activity.

9. United Nations (2015)

The United Nations recognized sport and physical activity as potential instruments for advancing social development and gender equality. Participation in sport can provide women and girls with opportunities to develop confidence, communication skills, leadership abilities, and social networks. From this perspective, encouraging female participation in physical activity has implications not only for health but also for empowerment, inclusion, and participation in community life.

10. International Olympic Committee (2021)

The International Olympic Committee has highlighted the importance of creating equal and inclusive opportunities for women and girls in sport. Its work

emphasizes the role of appropriate sporting environments, institutional support, and equitable opportunities in increasing female participation. Greater involvement in sport and physical activity can contribute to health, confidence, social participation, and broader opportunities for women.

An important theme emerging from previous studies is that simply providing information about the benefits of exercise may not be sufficient to increase participation. Women also require safe environments, accessible facilities, adequate time, supportive social conditions, and opportunities that are compatible with their everyday responsibilities. Community programs, educational initiatives, inclusive sports policies, and supportive infrastructure can therefore play an important role in reducing participation barriers.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present investigation follows a **descriptive and analytical research design** and is based exclusively on secondary information. Its purpose is to examine the relationship between physical activity and women's health and well-being through a critical examination of published research, institutional reports, policy documents, and established health recommendations. The descriptive component presents the major dimensions of this relationship, whereas the analytical component compares available evidence and identifies recurring patterns, significant findings, and areas requiring further attention.

Nature of the Study

The study is **qualitative in nature** and depends primarily on the systematic examination of secondary literature. Information obtained from academic publications, books, institutional documents, policy materials, and health-related reports is brought together and interpreted to develop a broader understanding of the advantages of physical activity and the circumstances that may restrict women's involvement in active lifestyles.

Sources of Data

The study uses secondary information obtained from reliable and academically recognized sources, including:

- Peer-reviewed research papers and scholarly journals.
- Books and reference works concerning physical education, exercise science, public health, and women's health.
- Publications and reports issued by organizations such as the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, **United Nations (UN)**, and **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**.

- Government reports, health policies, and official policy documents.
- Conference proceedings, dissertations, theses, and institutional publications.
- Established academic databases and reliable digital research repositories.

Data Collection Method

Relevant literature was identified through a structured search and review of publications addressing physical activity and women's health. Information corresponding to the objectives of the study was extracted, categorized, and organized into relevant subject areas. Particular attention was given to evidence concerning the physical, psychological, emotional, and social consequences of regular physical activity among women.

Selection Criteria

Sources were considered for inclusion when they met the following broad requirements:

- They addressed issues directly connected with physical activity and women's health.
- They were published in recognized scholarly journals or issued by credible institutions and organizations.
- They presented information supported by research or established evidence.
- Recent studies were given appropriate consideration, while influential earlier publications were also included where they provided important theoretical or foundational evidence.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected material was examined through **descriptive and thematic analysis**. Findings from different sources were compared, grouped, and interpreted according to major themes relevant to the objectives of the study. These themes included:

- Effects of physical activity on physical health.
- Psychological and emotional well-being.
- Prevention and management of chronic health conditions.
- Social and broader economic implications.
- Factors restricting women's participation in physical activity.
- Approaches for encouraging and sustaining active lifestyles.

The analysis sought to identify areas of agreement and variation among previous studies, recognize important patterns in the available evidence, and consider their implications for women's health promotion.

Scope of the Study

The study considers the influence of physical activity on women's health and well-being throughout different phases of life. It covers physical, psychological, emotional, and social aspects of health and considers the contribution of regular activity to disease prevention, functional fitness, health promotion, and quality of life. The study also examines the circumstances that may discourage women from participating in physical activity and considers possible approaches for reducing these barriers.

Limitations of the Study

The study is subject to several limitations:

- The investigation uses secondary sources and therefore does not generate original data through surveys, interviews, experiments, or other forms of primary research.
- The interpretation of findings is dependent on the quality, scope, and methodological soundness of the sources reviewed.
- Differences in cultural practices, geographic settings, socioeconomic conditions, and health systems may affect how particular findings can be applied to other populations.
- Because the study provides a broad overview, it does not investigate one particular age category, geographic region, or specific medical condition in depth.
- Differences in research methods and participant characteristics across previous studies may make direct comparison between some findings difficult.

Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to basic principles of academic integrity and responsible research practice. Information has been obtained from legitimate scholarly and institutional sources and is presented through appropriate interpretation rather than deliberate alteration. The contributions of original researchers and organizations are acknowledged through suitable citations and references. Care has also been taken to represent the reviewed evidence fairly and avoid misinterpretation of the findings.

Methodological Summary

The methodology provides a structured basis for examining the relationship between physical activity and women's health and well-being. By drawing upon credible secondary literature and applying descriptive and thematic approaches to analysis, the study brings together evidence concerning the physical, psychological,

emotional, and social benefits of physical activity. It also considers participation barriers and potential strategies for creating conditions that encourage women to adopt and maintain healthier, more active lifestyles.

Results

The analysis of secondary literature indicates that regular participation in physical activity is associated with broad improvements in women's health and overall well-being. The evidence reviewed suggests benefits across physical, psychological, emotional, and social dimensions. The principal findings are presented below.

1. Improved Physical Fitness

The reviewed evidence indicates that women who participate consistently in physical activity tend to develop better cardiovascular capacity, muscular strength, flexibility, and endurance. Regular movement also supports healthy body composition and physical functioning, helping women remain active in their daily lives.

2. Lower Risk of Chronic Health Conditions

The literature suggests that an active lifestyle is associated with a reduced likelihood of several non-communicable diseases. These include hypertension, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, osteoporosis, and certain cancers. Regular activity may also support healthy aging and help maintain physical functioning over time.

3. Positive Effects on Mental Health

Physical activity appears to have an important role in psychological well-being. The reviewed studies associate regular exercise with lower levels of perceived stress and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Participation in physical activity may also support confidence, emotional regulation, and a more positive sense of psychological well-being.

4. Support for Healthy Body Composition

Regular physical activity contributes to energy expenditure and can form an important part of maintaining a healthy body composition. When combined with balanced nutritional practices and other healthy behaviors, consistent activity can support sustainable weight management and reduce health risks associated with physical inactivity.

5. Stronger Bones and Muscles

Activities involving resistance and appropriate weight-bearing movement can contribute to the maintenance of bone density and muscular strength. These benefits are particularly relevant as women grow older, when maintaining strength, balance, coordination, and functional mobility becomes increasingly important. Regular activity may consequently help reduce the risk of falls and loss of physical independence.

6. Contribution to Reproductive and Life-Stage Health

The literature indicates that appropriately planned physical activity can support women's health during different stages of the life course. Regular movement may contribute to general reproductive health, physical fitness during pregnancy when medically appropriate, postpartum recovery, and management of some symptoms associated with the menstrual and menopausal periods. The type and intensity of activity, however, should be appropriate to an individual's health status and life stage.

7. Enhanced Quality of Life

Women who maintain physically active lifestyles may experience improvements in functional capacity, daily performance, independence, and general satisfaction with life. Physical activity can help women remain capable of performing everyday tasks and may support healthier aging and continued participation in family and community life.

8. Greater Social Participation and Empowerment

Participation in sports, group exercise, and recreational activities can create opportunities for interaction and community engagement. Such activities may encourage cooperation, communication, teamwork, and leadership development. In supportive environments, participation can also contribute to women's confidence, social inclusion, and sense of empowerment.

9. Major Barriers to Participation

The review identified several factors that can prevent or discourage women from engaging regularly in physical activity. Important barriers include:

- Limited time because of employment, household, and caregiving responsibilities.
- Social and cultural expectations that restrict participation.
- Concerns regarding safety in public or recreational spaces.
- Insufficient availability of affordable and accessible sports facilities.
- Financial limitations.
- Inadequate awareness of the long-term benefits of physical activity.
- Lack of supportive opportunities within workplaces and communities.

10. Role of Supportive Policies and Awareness

The findings indicate that individual motivation alone cannot fully address the differences in physical activity participation. Government agencies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, workplaces, and community organizations can contribute by creating accessible opportunities for women. Awareness programs,

safe recreational spaces, affordable community activities, appropriate sports facilities, and inclusive policies may help reduce barriers and encourage sustained participation.

The findings therefore suggest that promoting physical activity among women should involve a combination of health education, supportive environments, accessible recreational opportunities, and inclusive policies. Addressing the barriers that women encounter can help create more sustainable opportunities for participation and may contribute to healthier individuals, families, and communities.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that physical activity is an important contributor to women's health and well-being across the life course. Regular participation in appropriate physical activities can support cardiovascular fitness, muscular performance, bone strength, flexibility, functional capacity, and healthy body composition. It is also associated with a lower risk of several chronic health conditions, including hypertension, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and obesity. These benefits can help women maintain greater physical independence and contribute to a healthier and more active life.

The influence of physical activity extends beyond physical health. The evidence reviewed in the study indicates that regular movement can contribute positively to psychological and emotional well-being. Physical activity may assist in managing everyday stress, reducing symptoms associated with anxiety and depression, improving sleep, and supporting self-confidence and emotional balance. Continued participation may also contribute to cognitive functioning, daily productivity, and satisfaction with life. Physical activity also has an important social dimension. Participation in sports, group exercise, and recreational activities creates opportunities for interaction, cooperation, communication, and community involvement. In appropriate and supportive settings, these experiences can strengthen confidence, leadership abilities, and social inclusion. Greater access to physical activity can therefore contribute not only to individual well-being but also to broader efforts toward women's empowerment and equal participation in society.

A coordinated approach is therefore necessary to create sustainable opportunities for women to remain physically active. Government agencies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, workplaces, families, and community organizations can contribute by developing affordable programs, improving access to safe recreational facilities, providing health education, and implementing inclusive policies. Initiatives should also take account of differences in women's age, responsibilities, abilities, and social circumstances so that physical activity opportunities are accessible to diverse groups.

Physical activity should be viewed as an important component of a comprehensive approach to women's health rather than simply as a means of improving physical fitness. Sustained participation can contribute to physical health, psychological well-being, emotional balance, functional independence, social engagement, and quality of life. Creating supportive conditions that enable women to participate throughout different stages of life can therefore produce benefits for individuals as well as families and communities. Promoting accessible and sustainable physical activity opportunities for women should consequently remain an important objective of health promotion and social development.

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