

The Impact of Exercise on Mental Health and Well Being: A Sociological Study

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ABSTRACT

Many researchers suggest that Exercise (physical activity) has important health benefits, yet many people are disengaged with various forms of exercise. The goal of this research is to not only promote mental and physical health, but also to comprehend these relationships from a societal standpoint. Numerous hypotheses attempt to explain the connection between physical fitness and mental wellness. Physical fitness and exercise help people to develop important skills such as conflict resolution, cooperation with peers and social skills such as leadership and fine-tuning motor skills. Not only does exercising create an easy way to strike up a conversation with others, exercise like gym is a recommended setting for healthy social interactions, too. Seeing people achieve their goals can enable you to connect with them on an entirely different level. Sociology of physical activity focuses on the shared beliefs and social practices that constitute specific forms of physical activity. Regular physical activity improves the functioning of the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis. Depression and anxiety appear to be influenced by physical exercise. Physical activity was shown to help with sleep and improve various psychiatric disorders. Exercise in general is associated with a better mood and improved quality of life. The World Health Organization describes quality of life as a 'broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and their relationship to salient features of the environment. The dearth of literature in this field is another hint that further research is needed to evaluate and implement physical activity treatments created especially for the Indian context.

Keywords: Exercise (Physical Activity), Mental Health, Depression, Anxiety, Quality Life

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the impact of exercise on mental health and well-being. I have seen many people especially the youth jogging, running or walking alone or with a friend. This made me ask myself how exercise had helped them in their daily routine and if there was relation to healthy eating. Physical activity is one of the most basic human functions and needs which has benefits across the lifespan and according to Gordon-Larsen et al (2004) there is strong evidence that children and adolescents benefit from physical activity through improved: cardio respiratory and muscular fitness, bone health, cardiovascular and metabolic health biomarkers; and there is a growing body of evidence that inactive children are more likely to become inactive adults. Hence, the importance of introducing physical activity at an early age. (Janssen & Leblanc, 2010). Play and recreation are essential in learning motor and social skills and in the development of creativity (Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012)

Physical activity is defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that result in energy expenditure beyond resting expenditure. Exercise is a subset of physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive, and purposeful in the sense that improvement or maintenance of physical fitness is the objective (Exercise and physical fitness, 2009; Exercise for children, 2009; WHO, 2010). Exercising is the physical exertion of the body making it to physical activity which results in a healthy or healthier level of physical fitness both mental and physical health.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Teixeira, Carraça, & Markland, 2012) Motivation is one of the most important factors to encourage exercise, which in turn is associated with important health outcomes. Normally, motivation shows consistent support for a positive relation between motivation and exercise. Motivation is associated with motives or goals such as improving appearance or receiving a reward or recognition from peers. Sometimes it is also due to medical reasons where the doctor or physiotherapist, to improve the medical condition of the patients, prescribes it. It is always said; physical exercise when done regularly is beneficial for physical and mental health. Despite of the knowing this, some of them do not like to engage themselves due

to some main reasons as follow: a) Lack of interest in exercise, as commonly heard “This does not interest me.” b) Time constraints for which they say “I would rather do other things in my leisure.” They need to spend time looking after their career, family and education. c) Some people have health limitations that become a barrier to activity. These obligations might affect the motivation to exercise, which in turn affects their level of physical activity.

(Matiba, 2015) This paper has examined the impact of exercising and a healthy lifestyle among the youth. The youth of today is seen jogging, running or walking alone or with a friend, which raised the question, ‘how does it affect the psychological, mental and social well-being of the youth of the day?’ The aim is to provide information to the youth to empower them and enlighten them with the solutions to good health. The theory used focuses on the process through which a person acquires motivation for initiating new health related behaviours and maintaining them overtime. It was noticed that male youths were more likely to participate in physical activity and were less likely to feel depressed, thus trying to prove the standard perception that physical activity or exercise aids in the well-being and supports the good health. Further, dieting is often used in combination with physical exercise to lose weight, commonly for those who are overweight or obese or with a high BMI. Healthy eating and physical activity both are very important for fitness and good health.

(Tabussum, Asif, & Ahmed, 2017) The research paper titled: “Scientific benefits and attitude towards physical activity and physical education” aimed at identifying the scientific benefits of physical activity and general perception of students regarding physical activity. A cross-sectional study was conducted on a sample size of 350 students scattered across various colleges and universities of Karachi. For this, the researchers adopted the questionnaire from Dunley A. (2008). The questionnaire consisted of twenty questions segmented into three categories namely perception towards physical activity, attitude of students regarding the current physical education curriculum and scientific benefits of physical activity. The first category revealed that most of the participants showed a positive attitude towards physical activity and stated that it is an important component of their life. The second category presented that participants strongly agreed that physical education is as important as academic classes and should be taught on various levels of education. The third category indicated that participants were aware of the health benefits associated with physical activity and agreed that it improved body functioning. Overall, 86.3% participants had a positive attitude towards physical activity and were aware of the health benefits associated with it.

(Eichorn, Bruner, Short, & Abraham, 2018) This study was driven towards determining the factors that affect the exercise habit of college students. The data was collected through survey method from 127 participants with majority of them being college students (97%). A bunch of questions were asked to know the factors that would lead to the crux that leads all the college students to exercise. These questions further included a mix of physical factors, psychological factors and other factors. On receiving the results of these questions, a mean and standard deviation (SD) for all the factors was found and was arranged in the manner of arranging these factors with the highest mean to the lowest and the results were inferred. Through the survey it was seen that they exercise because they want to remain healthy, followed by the good feeling they get after they exercise. All in all, it was found that of the top 5 reasons of why the students would exercise, three of them were psychological factors even though the highest one is the one with a physical factor of remaining healthy. The study thus indicates us in a direction that there’s not just a physical motive of being healthy but there’s even a psychological motive, rather many psychological motives that encourage a student to exercise.

(Baceviciene, Jankauskiene, & Emeljanovas, 2019) The paper titled Self-perception of physical activity and fitness is related to lower psychosomatic health symptoms in adolescents with unhealthy lifestyles, studied how physical activity, participation in sports and beliefs about personal physical activity and fitness are associated to their psychosomatic health complaints in relation to their lifestyles.

The study was conducted on a sample of 3284 students (11-19 years old). A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out where the sample was given self-administered questionnaires with questions regarding their physical activity, physical fitness perception, lifestyle, sports participation, etc. A nested random sampling was used, where 20 schools were selected across the country. Self-perceived physical fitness (SPSF) was assessed by a single question: students were asked to score their own fitness as ‘very fit’, ‘fit enough’, ‘average fitness’, ‘a little unfit’ or ‘very unfit’ when compared with others. Tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption was also analysed. Moreover, the authors also calculated the body mass index of the sample and divided them into categories of under-weight, normal-weight, over-weight and obese. The study also assessed the screen-time behaviours of the sample on school days.

Purpose, Aim and Problems

The purpose of this thesis is to find out the positive aspects of physical activity.

The research problem is what is the impact of exercise on mental health and well-being. The research question to be answered in this thesis is: How physical exercise affect the mental health.

Research Objectives

1. To study the level of physical activity among people.
2. To find out general attitude towards physical fitness and health.
3. To study the perceived impact of physical activity on mental health.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research was done to understand the physical health and its impact on mental health. This study used a survey methodology to collect insightful data. Purposive sampling is employed to gather the primary data. Using a carefully constructed questionnaire, primary data is gathered. Secondary data for the study was acquired from articles in journals, magazines, newspapers, and other publications as well as material on websites. This study is carried out in a **workout Centre (Athleto Fitness)** at kankarkhera in Meerut Uttar Pradesh. The survey was distributed to **42 individuals** in total. The confidentiality, informed consent, and use of no deception ethical principles for social research were followed when conducting this study. There is a small sample size for this study. People from other parts of city can act differently. People’s views are mutable and subject to change over time as a result of modifications in laws, rules, and other causes

FINDINGS

Part -1: Personal Profile of a Respondent

Table 1 Age of the Respondents

Particulars	Age of Respondent’s in percentage
Below 25	59.5%
25-35	26.2%
35-45	14.3%
45-55	-----
Above 55	-----
Total	100%

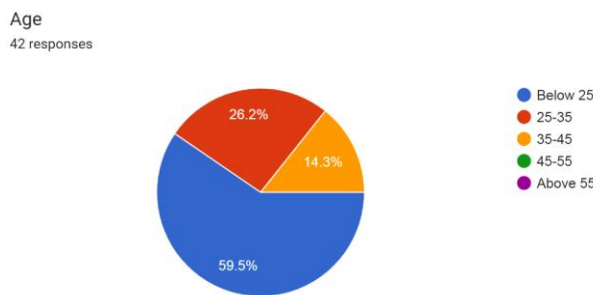


Table 2 Gender of the Respondents

Particulars	Gender of Respondent’s in percentage
Male	78.6%
Female	21.4%
Total	100%

Gender
42 responses

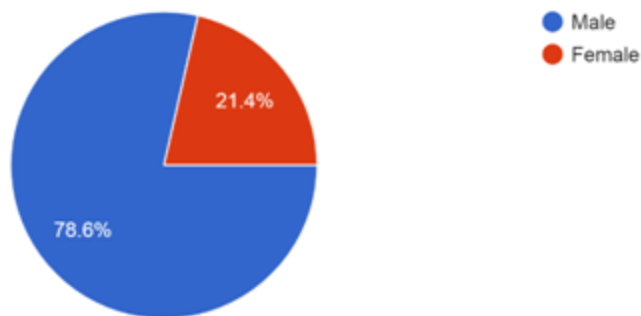


Table 3 Occupation of the Respondents

Particulars	Occupation of the Respondents in percentage
Student	26.2%
Government Sector	----
Private Sector	45.2%
Self-Employment	14.3%
Any Other	14.3%
Total	100%

Occupation
42 responses

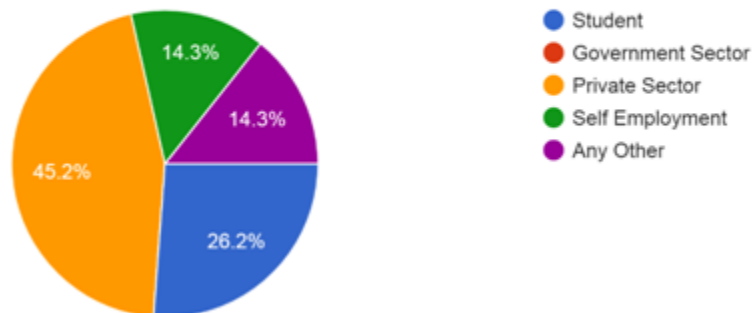
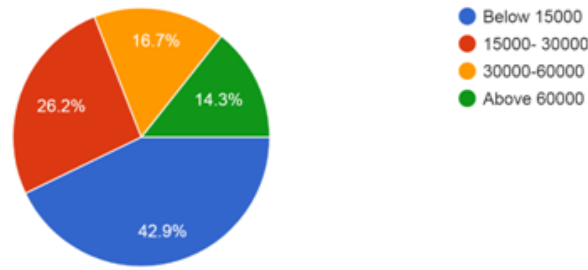


Table 4 Monthly income of the Respondents

Particulars	Monthly income of the Respondents in percentage
Below 15000	42.9%
15000-30000	26.2%
30000-60000	16.7%
Above 60000	14.3%
Total	100%

Monthly Income of Respondents
 42 responses



Part-2: Figure related to Objectives

How Satisfied are you with your life in General?
 42 responses

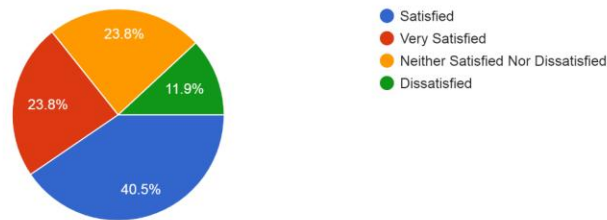
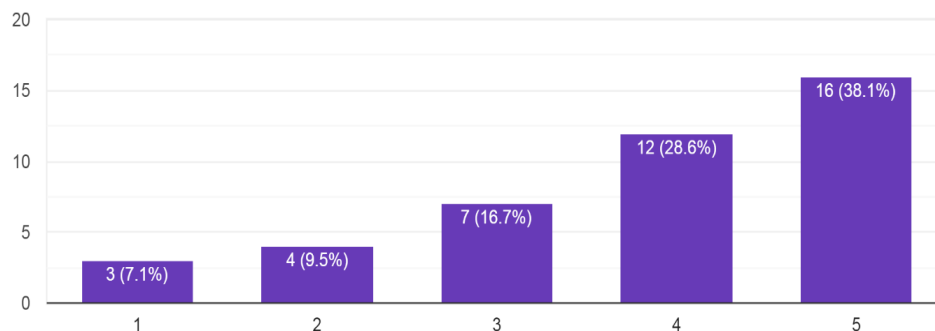


Figure 1

Figure 1 graph illustrates the respondents' level of life satisfaction, which shows that 40.5% of them expressed satisfaction with their lot in life. Very satisfied were 23.8% of respondents. The remaining 23.8% of responders are neither happy nor unhappy. Only 11.9% of people were found to be unhappy with their lives. In addition, it is noted that the majority of respondents are content with their lives.

How Do you rate your mental health at the present time?
 42 responses



Part-2: Figure related to Objectives

As can be observed in **Figure 2**, the majority of respondents, 16 (38.1%) rated their mental health on a 5-point rating scale, 12 (28.6%) chose the 4-point rating scale, 7 (16.7%) chose 3-point rating scale. while 4 (9.5%) used the scale 2. Only 3 respondents (7.1%) used the rating scale 1

How does mental health affect daily life?
 42 responses

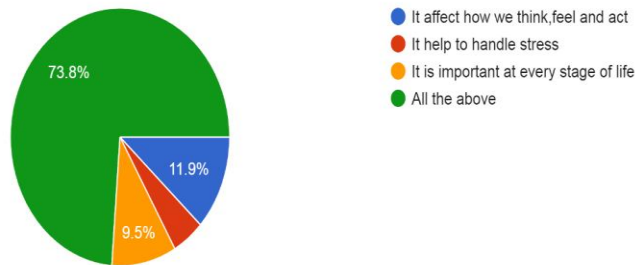


Figure 3

Figure 3 illustrates how mental health impacts day-to-day living. The majority of respondents (73.8%) agreed option 4. Mental health has an impact on our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, according to 11.9% of respondents. According to 9.5% of respondents, mental health is crucial at all stages of life. Remaining 4.8% claimed that mental health aids in stress management.

How to improve mental health?
 42 responses

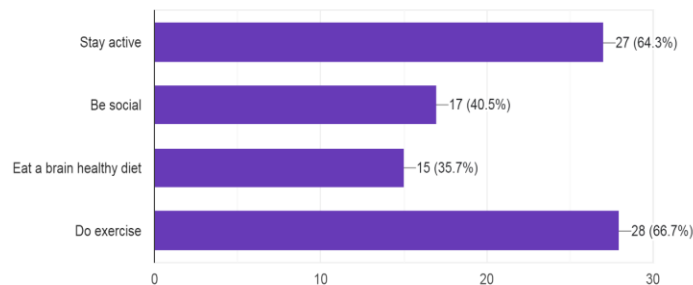


Figure 4

Figure 4 illustrates how to enhance mental health. 28 respondents, or the majority, said they exercise. 27 people (64.3%) indicated they continued their activity. However, 17 respondents, or 40.5%, stated that social interaction is important for mental wellness. The remaining 15 (35.7%) claimed to eat a diet good for the brain. It is seen that exercising is not just affected by physical wellbeing but is also practiced for mental wellbeing.

How much time do you spend in workout?
 42 responses

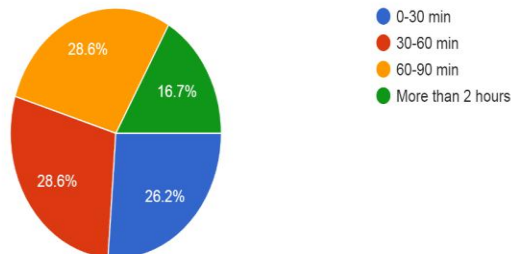


Figure 5

Figure 5, which displays the amount of time spend in workout, reveals that 28.6% of respondent’s workout 60–90 minutes. Remaining 28.6% said that they spend 30-60 min in workout. 26.2% respondents spend 30 min in workout and only 16.7% respondents spend more than 2 hours in workout.

What benefits did you get from exercise?

42 responses

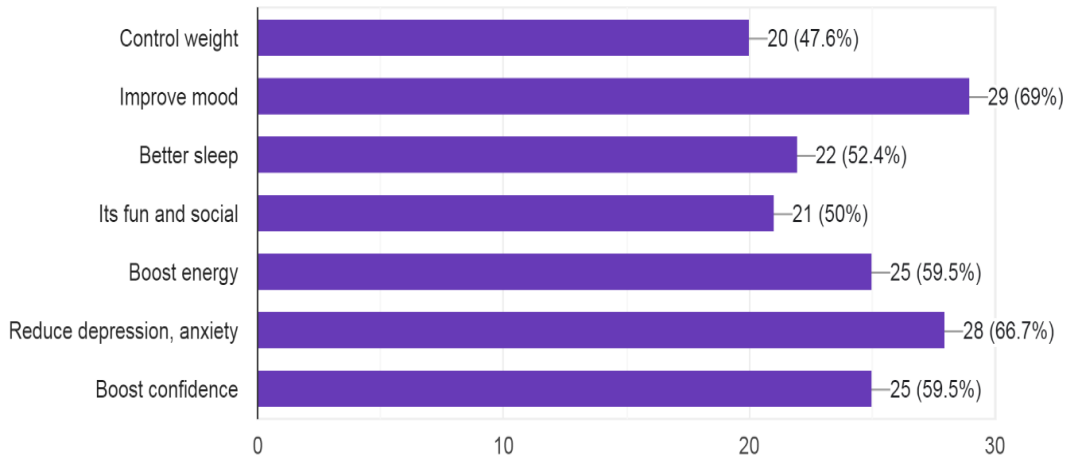


Figure 6

In figure 6, As expressed by all the respondents covered under the study, a great majority that is 29(69%) of them stated that exercising is beneficial for improving mood.28 (66.7%) agreed that it reduce depression and anxiety. 25 (52.4%) said that exercise promotes better sleep. 21 (50%) claim that it’s fun and social. 20 (47.6%) consider that exercise help to control weight.

How much of the time, during the past month have you felt calm and peaceful?

42 responses

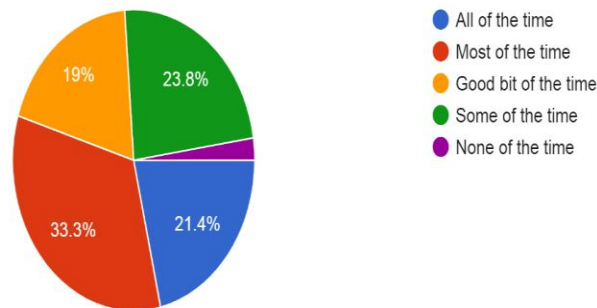


Figure 7

Figure 7,Shows that, among all the respondents 33.3% reported feeling calm and peaceful most of the time over the previous month. 23.8% of respondents stated that they occasionally felt calm and peaceful. 21.4% of respondents said they are always felt calm and peaceful.19% of people experienced some calm and tranquilly. A mere 2.5% selected "none of the time."

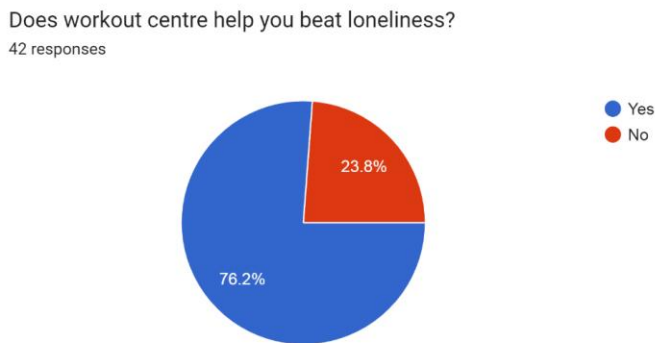


Figure 8

Figure8. Among all the respondents, majority 76.2% stated that workout Centre help people overcome loneliness and increase feelings of social connectedness.

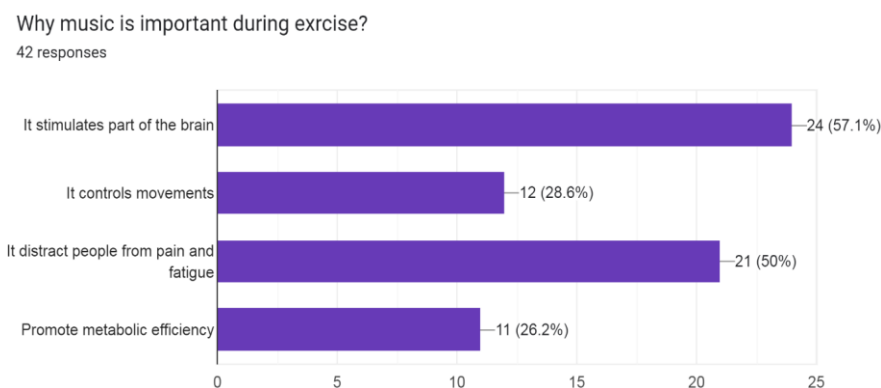


Figure 9

Figure 9. Importance of music during exercise, 57.1% respondents said that music activates certain brain regions.50 % respondents stated that it helps people avoid feeling pain and fatigue.28.6%claim that movements are controlled by music. And remaining 26.2% said that it enhances metabolic efficacy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Most people stated that exercising is important to them, they work out sufficient hours per week. People are aware and have the right attitude towards working out. When it came to the reasons why people exercise, the most common ones were to get fitter or stronger or achieving a positive feeling. Based on the findings it can be said that exercise is a crucial part of our life. there is need to create some serious awareness of the importance of physical activity in one’s daily life and its benefits.

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