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Socio-cultural impact on female university students participation on physical exercise: the case of Bahir Dar University female students

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Abstract

This study is conducted with ultimate objective of exploring the socio-cultural factors that affect the participation of female students in physical activity in Bahir Dar University. Thus, the subjects in the study were 107 female students who are out of sport science departments. In this study descriptive survey method was employed. Questionnaire was dominantly used as data collection instrument; unstructured interview and observation were also used in the process. The data gathered through questionnaires were analyzed by using frequency counts and their percentages; whereas the data gathered through interview and observation were analyzed through descriptive statements. The major findings include that lack of practical skill and knowledge, lack of facilities and equipments for training, and socio-cultural factors affect the participation and practice of female students in regular physical activity. Hence, it could be concluded that the participation and active involvement of female university students regularly in sports and different physical activities affected by the socio-cultural factorsth.

Keywords: Socio-cultural impact, female university students, physical exercise

Introduction

There is an international consensus that participation in physical activities can offer a great deal to individuals, communities and nations. Evidence suggests that from an early age, differences in gender-based attitudes towards and opportunities for sports and physical activities can have a significant influence on children's participation. This may, in turn, affect later involvement in physically active lifestyles, and the social and health benefits that may result for them. Research increasingly supports the fact that lack of physical activity can adversely affect one's health. Individuals who lead a sedentary, that is, physically inactive, life, have increased risk of morbidity and mortality from a number of chronic diseases (Bailey, Wellard, & Dismore, 2005) [1].

Physical activity may influence the physical health of girls in two ways. First, it can affect the causes of disease during childhood and youth. Evidence suggests a positive relationship between physical activity and a host of factors affecting girls' physical health, including diabetes, blood pressure and the ability to use fat for energy. Second, physical activity could reduce the risk of chronic diseases in later life. A number of 'adult' conditions, such as cancer, diabetes and coronary heart disease, have their origins in childhood, and can be aided, in part, by regular physical activity in the early years. Also, regular activity beginning in childhood helps to improve bone health, thus preventing osteoporosis, which predominantly affects females (Bailey *et al.*, 2005) [1].

Research suggests two ways in which physical activities can contribute to mental health in girls. Firstly, there is fairly consistent evidence that regular activity can have a positive effect upon girls' psychological well-being; indeed, some studies indicate that girls may respond more strongly than boys in terms of short-term benefits. Secondly, research has indicated that physical activity can contribute to the reduction of problematic levels of anxiety and depression. Evidence is beginning to be gathered for exercise as a treatment for clinical depression, with studies finding that physical activity is as effective a treatment as anti-depressants, and psychotherapy. Similarly, a variety of non-clinical studies have found that higher levels of activity were related to lower rates of depression.

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Review of related literature

Physical activity

Human kind is an autonomous being capable of making choices with regard to his/her destiny. The choice to lead active life style and benefit from physical activity, needs knowledge and know how about physical activity. In order to make a right choice knowledge and skill about physical activity is crucial which is gained through either formal or informal education. Physical activity is an activity which is performed through the contraction of skeletal muscles. The contraction and relaxation of skeletal muscles produce movement and considerably increase energy expenditure (Brynteson & Huber, 2001; Wuest & Bucher, 1995) ^[2, 10].

Physical activity is important to control body weight by increasing energy expenditure. As a result, it helps to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, type-II diabetes, metabolic syndrome and some site specific cancers which can be happened during the premature childhood. In addition, it reduces depression and anxiety (especially in shy children), enhances mood, self-esteem and quality of life (Woods, Tannehill, Quinlan, Moyna, & Walsh, 2010) ^[8]. The beneficial effects of regular participation in sport and physical activity have been widely supported by scientific evidence. However now a days on college and university campuses, the situation is even worse, with 28.8% of female college students and 39.4% of male college students being classified as overweight or obese (American College Health Association, [ACHA], 2009 (Yan & Cardinal, 2013) ^[11].

Gender and Physical Activity

Gender is a social construct that outlines the roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a particular society believes are appropriate for men and women. The assignment of these roles and adoption of these traits can create gender inequities or differences between men and women that systematically favor one group to the detriment of the other.

Many socio-cultural, psychological, and contextual factors affect female students' participation in physical activity. Factors affecting female students in physical activity have been shown to relate to social constructions of gender and gender stereotypes (Murphy, Dionigi, & Litchfield, 2014) ^[7].

Physical Activity Among Female Students

Attitude is a state of readiness leading the individual to perceive things and people around him/her in certain ways; that is to be more ready with certain categories and interpretations than with others. In their everyday lives people are often 'ready' to deal with objects and people as they meet them without having to 'stop and think' about every encounter. Furthermore, attitudes are an outlook of individuals which can be learned from the family, society, culture even friends. Scholars asserted that attitudes are not innate-they are learned, they develop and organized through experience. These states of readiness are relatively enduring but they are modifiable and subject to change (Legesse, Demissie, & Kelelaw, 2013) ^[5].

Social Impact On Physical Activity

Active participation in sports is socially stratified and therefore is correlated with social and cultural characteristics. Sports participation remains to a great extent predictable by means of social characteristics (Moens & Scheerder, 2004) ^[6]. The barriers to student learning and participation may in part be explained by social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), which highlights the relationship between cognitive,

behavioral and environmental factors that influence an individual's choices, including those relating to physical activity behavior. These three factors are not independent, but are mutually dependent and all influence learning and activity choices within a host of contexts. Due to the large amount of time dedicated to schooling, students are influenced greatly within the school environment by many elements, including their teachers, their peers, the programs provided, their participation in class and their engagement in curriculum and extra or co-curricular activities. The interaction and influence of all three factors on preferred behavior is certainly most evident at the secondary school level, where adolescents begin to cement their own attitudes and beliefs regarding physical activity (Jenkinson & Benson, 2010) ^[3].

Research design and methodology

Research design

The main objective of this study was to examine the socio-cultural impact on female university student's participation on physical activity. To this effect, descriptive survey method was employed. This method is selected because it is helpful to identify present conditions and point to present needs, immediate status of a phenomenon and facts findings (Singh, 2006) ^[8]. Moreover, it is economical and rapid turnaround in data collection and identifying attribute of a large population from a small group of individuals (Kothari, 2004) ^[4]. Therefore, the first approach of the data study was gather data, to examine the socio-cultural impact on female university student's participation in physical activity.

Research Method

In order to attain objectives of the study, valuable information was gathered from different sources. Besides, triangulation of various data gathering tools was used to obtain relevant information. Intensive reviews of related literatures were made to support the study with empirical knowledge in the area.

Sample And Sampling Techniques

The sample size of each target population was determined by what (Kothari, 2004) ^[4] suggests, the ideal sample size of a target population was large to serve as an adequate representative and small enough to be selected economically in terms of both time and complexity of analysis. Under Bahir Dar University there were around six campuses (Main campus, Pole, Yibab, COBE, Zenzelema, and Medical). From these 150 female students (excluding sport science students) were selected from the main campus using simple random sampling technique. This sampling technique is selected because it gives equal independent chance for all female students in the defined population of being selected as a sample.

Data Collection Instruments

In order to collect the data necessary for analysis, the researcher used observation, questionnaire and unstructured interview. Triangulation, a multi-method approach was implemented to maintain the validity of the study and to acquire information from different sources. The use of different tools helped to see the situation in-depth. The detail of each data collection instruments is discussed as follows:

Observation

In order to obtain information about availability of facilities and equipments for female students to practice physical

activity, observation has been used by the researcher. However, few female students practice and trained World Taekwondo with male students in the university basketball and handball courts.

Questionnaire

Questionnaires were also used to collect relevant information from players and coaches. Open and close-ended questions were distributed and collected from the respondents. Out of the total 150 questionnaires distributed to the target population, 107 (71.3%) were returned. Since the majority of the female students returned the questionnaire then the analysis was made using the responses of 107 Bahir Dar university female students.

Interview

Interview guide has been prepared and conducted in order to gain information about availability of facilities and equipments for female students to practice physical activity. Information related with facilities for female students also obtained from administrative officials.

Procedures of Data Collection

After designing the research instruments (observation checklist, questionnaire and interview) the research sites and sample size of participants were identified. Secondly, date and times of contact were determined and questionnaires were distributed to selected female students. The interview session

followed with administrative officials. After completing the data collection, processing the raw data or analysis follow suit.

Methods of Data Analysis

The results of data collected through questionnaire, interview and observation were interpreted using frequency, percentage, and descriptive statements. The data from questionnaire was coded and recoded based on the nature of the statement.

Pilot Study

Before the actual study was carried out, a pilot study was conducted with 10 respondents who were not part of the sample group. The purpose of the pilot study was to assess the relevance of the questionnaires designed to collect data for the study.

The objective was also to check the clarity of the questionnaire items. Accordingly, 10 questionnaires were distributed to 10 players. On the bases of the feedback of the pilot study and expert's comments some modification was made on the questionnaire.

Presentation and analysis of data

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Female students were asked to indicate information about their region, age, and years of study in the university through questionnaire. The responses about these questions are summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Number	Percent
The Region where respondents came		
Addiss Ababa	14	13.1
Tigray	12	11.2
Amhara	62	57.9
Oromiya	6	5.6
SNNP	10	9.3
Somalia	3	2.8
Age		
15-19	43	40.2
20-24	64	59.8
Year of Study		
First	39	36.4
Second	35	32.7
Third	33	30.8

Table 1 presents that from the total of 107 (100%) students, 14 (13.1%) from Addis Ababa, 12 (11.2%) from Tigray, 62 (57.9%) from Amhara, 6 (5.6%) from Oromiya, 10 (9.3%) from SNNP, and 3 (2.8%) of them are also from Somali regions. Concerning the age of the students, table 1 reveals that 43 (40.2%) and 64 (59.8%) of the students are found between the age of 15-19 and 20-24 years of age respectively. Regarding their years of study in the university as indicated in above table 1, 39 (36.4%) are first year students, 35 (32.7%) second year students, and 33 (30.8%) of the students are third year university students. From this one can conclude that the majority of students 62 (57.9%) are from Amhara region and

all students 107 (100%) are found between the young ages. With regard to their year of the study in the university, 39 (36.4%) first year, 35 (32.7%) second year, and 33 (30.8%) are also third year students. This indicates that the majority of students are senior students. The data available in table 2 shows the response on the score of items on background knowledge of students about physical activity. Accordingly, the maximum score is 24 and the minimum score indicates 8. Regarding the mean score and standard deviation, it indicates 16.88 and 3.36 respectively. From this one can understand respondents have now how about benefits of physical activity.

Socio-Cultural Factors Towards Females Physical Activity

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of the ten Items that measure Impacts of the socio-cultural factors towards female's physical activity among Respondents of Bahir Dar University

Items that measure Impacts of the socio-cultural factors towards females physical activity	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My colleagues motivates me to do physical activity	12(11.2%)	17(15.9%)	17(15.9%)	25(23.4%)	36(33.6%)
Doing physical activity is forbidden for females in my society.	14(13.1%)	18(16.8%)	30(28%)	16(15%)	29(27.1%)
I have no idea about the attitude of the society towards females participation in physical activity.	12(11.2%)	32(29.9%)	18(16.8%)	17(15.9%)	28(26.2%)
There are a lot of females who practice in sport and physical activity in my woreda.	20(18.7%)	35(32.7%)	18(16.8%)	25(23.4%)	9(8.4%)
There are a lot of females who participate in sport and physical activity in my zone.	26(24.3%)	13(12.1%)	14(13.1%)	14(13.1%)	40(37.4%)
My society does not encourage females to participate in sport and physical activity.	18(16.8%)	9(8.4%)	33(30.8%)	29(27.1%)	18(16.8%)
The facilities and equipments of the university are dominated by male students.	7(6.5%)	11(10.3%)	29(27.1%)	27(25.2%)	33(30.8%)
Male students discourage me when I do physical activity in the university.	6(5.6%)	16(15%)	33(30.8%)	21(19.6%)	31(29%)
I am practice physical activity together with male students.	23(21.5%)	22(20.6%)	20(18.7%)	23(21.5%)	19(17.8%)
Due to the socio-cultural impact of the society towards female physical activity, I am regularly practice an activity.	16(15%)	29(27.1%)	25(23.4%)	28(26.2%)	9(8.4%)
Total	70(65.3%)	55(51.3%)	107(100%)	209(195.3%)	94(87.9%)

The above table 2 indicates that 45 (42.1%) of female students shows their culture and social attitude influence them from practice physical activity regularly, whereas, 37 (34.6%) of them also responded that they have no socio-cultural impact to participate in physical activity. This indicates that socio-cultural factors affect female university student's active participation in physical activity.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusion

The existence of unfavorable conditions as well as shortage of facilities contributed to low or poor participation of female students in regular physical activity.

The study has indicated that low exposure and experiences of the students contributed to poor or low participation of female students in regular physical activity.

The study also indicates that the culture and the society of the students do not encourage female's active involvement in different physical activities or exercise.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions derived from the findings of the data analyzed, the following recommendations were made as possible ways of curbing the problems observed.

- As findings indicated there is lack of exposure and experience of participating in sports and different physical activities. Therefore, it recommended that, firstly the university sport science professionals create awareness on female students about the benefits of regularly participation in physical activity. Secondly, give some practical training for female students how to do and practice physical activity.
- Findings revealed that there are socio-cultural impacts in female student's participation in physical activity. Therefore, in order to motivate and minimize the socio-cultural impacts on the female students' involvement in regular activity, top administrative officials or management groups should give emphases to their female students and try to prepare the reserved facilities and equipments to be used only by female students.
- Top administrative officials or management groups

should give emphases to the female students in order to practice physical activity at any time.

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