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Adults' knowledge in exercise, attitudes and behaviors: A case study in the Kandy city of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Every morning and evening on weekdays and weekends Lewella-Pollgolla riverside road (Dutagamunu Mawatha) is a lively place. Groups of youths run up and down along the Mahawali riverside while elderly people jog and walk. The objectives of this research are to identify the knowledge in exercises, attitudes and behaviors of the adults and the possible changes to the riverside road that would encourage more people to use this place more effectively. A mixed methodology was adopted in the study containing participant observation, informal discussions and questionnaire for the data collection.

The research sample consists of 74 (N=74) adults having 48 men 26 women aged between 23-78 years who were regular users of this road as walkers or joggers. The research findings showed that 65% accepted exercise was "the best thing" for good health to maintain a good health. 71% placed highest importance on moderate exercise while (92%) who believed that a person of their age should exercise at least twice weekly, take necessary steps to maintain good health such as having their blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked (93%), discussed health issues with a doctor (72%), attempting to control weight loss/gain (78%), and trying to manage stress (77%). Most of them had exercised "fairly regularly" (54%) or "occasionally" (46%) during the course of their lives. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the sample was in "very good" health had exercised "regularly" or "fairly regularly" denoting a clear link between regular exercise and health. Further, this research reveals that the sample had done exercise in many forms while walking (88%) and moderate physical activity (53%) being the most popular. According to the participant observation and informal discussions riverside road is should be developed for the betterment of the users. They suggested that the Kandy Municipal Council should establish a standard walking path like in Colombo city providing safety and recreational facilities to motivate people to use this environment effectively. Finally, this research brings forward a model structure for the walking path for this place upon the responses made by the exercisers of Dutagamunu Mawatha. This would lead towards the concept of "Better City-Better Life".

Keywords: exercise, healthy life, walking path, walking and jogging

1. Introduction

The prevalence of overweight, obesity and central obesity among Sri Lankan adults were 25.2%, 9.2% and 26.2%, respectively in 2005–2006, as defined by Asian Body Mass Index (BMI) cutoffs and there is a clear upward trend. The age-adjusted prevalence of Metabolic Syndrome among Sri Lankan adults was 24.3% (95% CI: 23.0–25.60). The prevalence of obesity related metabolic problems such as diabetes and hypertension among Sri Lankan adults were 13–14% and 18–19% respectively (National Institute of Health Sciences, 2013)^[4]. Leisure and wellness have immersed as important social construct of the 21st Century. Both are often thought to be synonymous with human happiness, the good life or living life to its fullest (Edington, 2008)^[1]. As many countries Sri Lankan adults face health related problems due to their unhealthy lifestyles.

Every morning and evening on weekdays and weekends Lewella-Pollgolla riverside road (Dutagamunu Mawatha) is a lively place. This riverside is undoubtedly one of the most attractive natural settings in Kandy. At a time when the Government of Sri Lanka intends to provide more and more public recreational facilities in urban areas for improvement of people's quality of life, Dutagamunu mawatha riverside road provides and enormous opportunity to fulfill that goal. Groups of youths run up and down along the Mahawali riverside while elderly people jog and walk.

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They mostly enjoy the breeze comes from Mahawali River. These types of public places are so important to our lives where people need places they can rest, relax and enjoy themselves. They needed a place where they can do exercise that required for physical health, enjoyment for mental health and for social wellbeing. The objectives of this research were to identify the exercising knowledge, attitudes and behaviors of the adult people of this place and to identify the changes that could be made to the riverside road that would encourage more people to use this place more effectively. The two researchers are regular members those who use this place for exercise which motivated and tendered them to conduct this study.

2. Materials and Methods

This is a Case study. A mixed methodology was adopted in this study. Data were collected through participant observation; informal discussions with walkers and joggers and a user survey questionnaire which was administered among the adult sample. The research sample consists of 74 (N=74) adults those who are regular users of this riverside road as walkers or joggers aged 23-78 years (48 men and 26 women) as the case. Data were analyzed using both simple descriptive statistical method and qualitative methods.

3. Results

The research findings showed that the adult people were well aware that exercise is critical to maintaining good health. 5% of the sample said that it is the “best thing” they could do for their health. They placed highest importance on moderate exercise (71% said it is “very important”). Most of them (92%) believed that a person of their age should exercise at least twice a week, preferably for 20-30 minutes each time. Majority of the sample thought that they need 45 minutes or more than that length of exercise session needed to maintain their health. Three in four (77%) said that their health, relative to others their age, is “very good” (39%) or “good” (37%) health. Most of them were taking necessary steps to maintain good health. Having their blood pressure checked (93%), participated in the health-related activity that they were most likely to had done during the past twelve months. Discussed health issues with a doctor (62%), attempting to control weight loss/gain (48%), having their cholesterol level checked (56%) and trying to manage stress (75%) were also common activities. However, only 66% were having awareness about their Body Mass Index (BMI). Definition of overweight (BMI $\geq 23 \text{ kg.m}^{-2}$), obesity (BMI $\geq 25 \text{ kg.m}^{-2}$) and abdominal obesity (Men: WC $\geq 90 \text{ cm}$; Women: WC $\geq 80 \text{ cm}$) were categorized according to Asia-pacific anthropometric cut-offs. It was revealed that 14% of men and 36% of women were obsessed. Meanwhile 9% of the men showed abdominal obesity while 15% of the women showed abdominal obesity.

Most of them had recognized a variety of steps that are needed to stay healthy such as maintaining a good food habits (71%), maintaining a healthy weight (68%), getting enough exercise (67%), reducing stress (75%) and getting regular health screenings (67%).

Meanwhile, Most of them had exercised “fairly regularly” (54%) or “occasionally” (46%) during the course of their lives. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of those in “very good” health had exercised “regularly” or “fairly regularly” throughout their lives. Further, this research revealed that exercise takes many forms. Walking (88%) and moderate physical activity (63%) were the most popular forms of exercise among adults. Sizeable numbers also participated in vigorous activities

(21%) and did things to increase muscle tone or strength (22%). Moderate and vigorous activities were very wide. Substantial percentages walk, do garden work, clean house, or play sports to get in their exercise.

Health and happiness have long been known to be intertwined, and it is further confirmed in our survey. The overwhelming majority (70%) of persons in “very good” health say they are “very satisfied” with their lives. Men are most likely to be “very satisfied” with their lives (78% versus 69% of women). This research revealed major reasons exercise and they have given various reasons such as health Benefits (89%), reducing stress (75%) and fighting aging (45%). Again, women were even more likely than men were to cite these as major factors. In many ways a health benefit in itself, controlling weight was a major reason for exercise, cited 70% of the sample. This benefit was equally important to both men and women and across age groups. Nearly half (58%) also said that “looking good” was a major reason why they exercise. This reason was mentioned more frequently by women (64%) than by men (52%). 31% of the sample said that “feeling good about themselves” was a major reason why they exercise. About four in ten (42%) said that they benefited of an improved sex life was one of the major reasons they continue to exercise. Many adults of the sample listed chances to have fun and to socialize as major reasons for exercising. About 73% said that “having fun” was a major reason, and quarter of them (24%) said that socializing with others was an important reason why they were exercise.

The participant observation and informal discussions revealed that the riverside road is much needed to develop for the betterment of the users. We received many comments about the condition of the riverside. Most frequent comments were that riverside environment was dirty and not well-maintained. Respondents also commented that this area was unsafe due to lack of lights in the nights, security to protect especially young ladies, sometimes Alcohol related problems. Other problem that mentioned was included obstructions made by motor vehicles because of no separate walking path.

Further, they suggested that the Kandy Municipal Council should be established walking path like in Colombo city and this will affect safety and maintain a standard walking path and other recreational facilities which would be helped to motivate people to use this effective environment more and more. This walking path with the recreational complex can be feed a people of highly residential area like Lewella, Aruppola, Watapuluwa, Mawilmada, Sirimalwatta, and Pollgolla in Sri Lanka. Finally, this research brings forward a model structure for the walking path for this place upon the responses made by the walkers and joggers of Dutugamunu Mawatha.

4. Discussion

According to responses made by the adult people in this place, their exercise knowledge and attitudes towards health related physical fitness was positive. However, exercise behaviors to maintaining standard health activities need to be developed scientifically. According to participant observation and informal discussion the Kandy Municipality Authorities as Local Government Agency should take necessary action to maintain this National heritage place with the support of the local community as soon as possible. While Urban Development Authority (UDA) of Sri Lanka regeneration Kandy City “the most attractive city in South Asia”

5. Conclusions

Joggers and walker of adult aged in this urban area in Kandy had positive exercising knowledge and attitudes towards their healthy lives. However, their exercise behaviors and standard of health activities need to be developed scientifically. This reports sets out some standard measuring the quality of public places like Dutugamunu Mawatha to promote wellbeing and quality of healthy life in the Hill Capital with the aim of “Better City-Better Life”.

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