EFFECT OF SENSE OF SELF ON EXERCISE PARTICIPATION AMONG THE YOUTHS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Health promotion entails the process of engaging in an act that improves overall health and well-being and avoids health-compromising behaviour. Physical activities have been identified as a remarkable health promotion strategy that contributes significantly to good health and reduced ill-health. However, the motivation to engage in exercise has generated concerns over the years. A sedentary lifestyle, especially among young people, has attracted research attention in the past few decades. Thus, we report the result of a study to explore a sense of self as a possible correlate of exercise participation among the youths in Enugu state. One hundred and six participants within the ages of 25-40 drawn from public tertiary institutions in Enugu state completed a self-report measure of sense of self and physical activity participation. The result of simple linear regression revealed a statistically significant relationship between the variables. We concluded that a sense of self is an essential predictor of exercise engagement among the youth.

Keywords: Sense of Self, Exercise Participation, Youth

Introduction

Health promotion entails the process of engaging in an act that improves overall health and well-being and avoids health-compromising behaviour. Health is wealth is a famous remark that reflects the importance of health(Lone, 2020). The concept of good health comprises those psychological qualities, including attitudes, knowledge, perception, and behaviour that

prompt a person to stay happy and contribute to the welfare of others. Health education and promotion remain an integral part of public health(Tapera et al., 2018). However, there have been concerns about the decline of health promotion as a practice(Truman et al., 2020; Woodall et al., 2018). Effective self-care is vital to good health and is entirely dependent on people themselves, both individually and collectively(Plianbangchang, 2018). Health maintenance practices are essential to preventing illness, promoting well-being, and maximizing health(Tariman et al., 2016).

Numerous studies have associated physical activity with improved health and stress reliever(Camacho & Nakazato, 2018; Campos et al., 2019; Childs & de Wit, 2014; Huebschmann et al., 2013; Kongart et al., 2019; Rebelo-Marques et al., 2018; Tanaka et al., 2009; Trigiani & Hamel, 2017; Tripathi & Bano, 2014; Wu et al., 2019). Physical exercise includes any form of movement in which the contraction of skeletal muscles increases energy consumption (Miko et al., 2020). Physical activity is paramount to good health, increased work capacity, and extended longevity (Andrieieva et al., 2019). A well-balanced exercise program includes daily aerobic, strength, balance, and flexibility components. The outcome of exercises depends on participants' level of exercise participation (Adhikari et al., 2021).The health benefit of regular exercise cannot be over-emphasized(Ling & Rönn, 2014).Exercise and physical activity are recommended treatments for a wide range of chronic pain conditions (Vaegter & Jones, 2020). For instance, it has been proven that regular exercise delays the onset of chronic diseases and disabilities and facilitates their control. Research suggests that moderate to high regular exercise improves asthma control (Jaakkola et al., 2020). Engaging in physical activity helps to improve physical and mental functions and reverses a variety of chronic diseases among the older population (McPhee et al., 2016). Perhaps, exercise in later life has been reported to decrease morbidity and mortality associated

with a sedentary lifestyle. Given the relevance of exercise to well-being, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends moderate-intensity activity lasting at least 30 minutes a day for at least five days a week or 150 minutes a week for the adults to be physically active(World Health Organization, 2017). Researches found that exercise can improve resistance to many microbial infections(Zheng et al., 2015).Regular exercise is considered effective in preventing and reducing obesity and lifestyle-related diseases(Ota et al., 2005).Aerobic exercise might decrease the risk of hyper homocysteine (hHcy) in hypertensive patients(Wang et al., 2020). Physical activity reduces the symptoms of shortness of breath. Barbosa et al. (2020), Lazarušić (2019), and Watson et al. (2017)had reported a possible link between regular exercise and academic achievement. The health benefits of exercise participation are extensive in literature (Boysen & Krarup, 2009; Chimen et al., 2012; Di Liegro et al., 2019; Kumar, 2017; Malm et al., 2019; Mudd et al., 2013; Torres et al., 2020; Vert et al., 2019; Warburton & Bredin, 2019; Warden et al., 2014). However, regardless of the benefits of regular physical activity, it is observed that most people within the youthful stage do not regularly engage in physical exercise, thereby leading to a much-reported decline in health and wellness.

Physical inactivity is a pivotal contributor to the global burden of disease and disproportionately impacts the well-being of people (Rosenbaum et al., 2020). However, the physical activity levels of adults across the globe are decreasing and linked to increased chronic disease risk(Gal et al., 2018). Widespread, persistent inactivity makes continued physical activity promotion a continuous challenge (Füzéki & Banzer, 2018). Overwhelming evidence suggests that poor engagement in physical activities increases the risk of ill health, chronic diseases, gait, balance problems, falls, and loss of functional independence in the elderly(R et al., 2006). Adegoke and Oyeyemi (2011) reported that adolescent's sedentary behaviour and chronic illness are

increasing. Physical inactivity and sedentary lifestyles are predisposed to overweight and obesity (Senbanjo & Oshikoya, 2010), contributing to the global burden of noncommunicable diseases(Oluwasanu & Oladepo, 2017). the incidence of low engagement in physical activities among adolescents is well documented (Barker et al., 2019; Barufaldi et al., 2012; Lippo et al., 2010; Mikaelsson et al., 2020; Odunaiya et al., 2010; Tanaka et al., 2015; Yuksel et al., 2020). For instance, observation of young people in Enugu state showed that while most youths are engaged in regular physical activities such as soccer, road walk, jogging, and other forms of exercise, several others live a sedentary lifestyle. Thus, we aim to investigate the variation in exercise engagement among this population based on their sense of self.

Sense of self is defined as the general perception of the self, including characteristics, personality, emotion, motivation, and physical makeup. Thus, the sense of self can be either positive or negative. The positive or negative perception of any part of the self, such as the body physique, predicts an individual's motivation and behaviour. Specific exercise motives include improving or maintaining a desired physical appearance. The link between sense of self and exercise participation is reflected in weight management, appearance, body dissatisfaction, and the motivation to workout. Thus, insinuation suggests that people concerned about their self-image are keener to engage in a workout. This contention reflects a sense of self as a potential determinant of exercise participation.

The Present Study

Several factors have been reported in the literature to explain the variation in exercise participation among the youth(Cho & Kim, 2019; Feehan et al., 2012; Hu et al., 2021; Humbert et al., 2006; Park &Kim, 2008; Zervou et al., 2017). For instance, findings of the study conducted by Silver et al. (2019)indicated that

being male, with educated parents, including religious affiliation, positively predicts regular exercising. Other variables such as motive (Ingledew & Markland, 2008), personality (Huang et al., 2007), virtual training (Kwok et al., 2020), peers (Lee & Lee, 2020), Body image, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Ouyang et al., 2020), and social identity (Stevens et al., 2019) have been found to contribute to exercise participation. However, a research looking at the role of sense of self on exercise participation is scarce, hence, the present study. The present study's primary purpose is to explore a sense of self as a psychological construct that could affect youths' participation in physical exercise. Precisely, we are interested in getting an answer to the following question. Would the sense of self determine exercise participation among the youth in Enugu State? Thus, a specific hypothesis was formulated regarding this question. First, given that sense of self is an essential component of motivation, we hypothesized that sense of self would significantly account for the variance in youth's participation in regular exercise.

Method

Young people aged25-40 (M = 45.04, SD = 2.37) were enrolled for the study. The male and female participants were mainly recruited from the public tertiary institutions in Enugu State between May and July 2021. A cross-sectional design was adopted. With the aid of contact persons in the respective institutions, students were approached, and the aim of the study was explained to them. After that, those who consented to partake in the study were given the study instrument. A total of 122 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and were filled and retrieved on the spot. However, following the assessment of the returned questionnaires, some (16) were improperly filled and were discarded. Hence, only the adequately filled questionnaires (106) were used for the study

Measure

Exercise participation was measured using a developed Attitude towards Physical Activity Scale. The 10-item scale was developed to ascertain the attitudes of young persons toward regular exercise. The Likert-type scale was validated following a pilot study, and Cronbach alpha .78 reliability coefficient was obtained.

Sense of self was ascertained with a modified version of the Sense of Self Scale (SOSS) initially developed by (Flury & Ickes, 2007). The instrument is aimed to measure a weak and healthy individual's view of their selves. The scale recorded a Cronbach's alpha 0.70 coefficient following a pilot study.

Result Table 1:

Table showing the linear regression result on the effect of sense of self on exercise participation.

		95% CI for B					
B	LL	UL	SEB	βΔR	t	Sig	
		.543					
Constant		1.56	1.43	1.69	.066		23.43
	.000						
SOS		-.174	-.365	.018	.097	-.174	-1.79
	.000						

Note. SOS= Sense of Self; B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = Confident Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination, ΔR = *Adjusted* R^2. *P>.0.05

A linear regression analysis was performed to examine the youths' participation in exercise based on their sense of self. The outcome of the linear regression analysis indicated that sense of self statistically predicted exercise participation, F (1, 104) = 3.231, p > 0.05. The adjusted R^2 suggests that sense of contributed 5.43% of the variance in exercise participation among the participants.

Discussion

The current study investigated the predictive role of sense of self on exercise participation among the youth in Enugu State. Specifically, the study intended to provide insight into how self-view may influence youth's exercise behaviours. To guide this study, we hypothesized that sense of self would significantly account for the variance in youths' exercise participation. A

simple linear regression analysis was conducted on the data, and the result revealed a statistically significant impact of sense of self on exercise participation. Thus, as expected, it appears that the sense of self as a psychological construct correlates with young people's motivation to engage in exercise. The probable explanation for this outcome could be attributed to the relevance of self-perception on attitudes and behaviour. Perhaps, self-perception has been linked to physical activity (Alert et al., 2019; Batsiou et al., 2020; Ensrud-Skraastad & Haga, 2020; Labbrozzi et al., 2013; Raustorp et al., 2005; Sales et al., 2017). It appears that if a sense of self influences exercise behaviour, it could be through interaction with overall self-perception, including self-esteem, self-image, self-concept, and self-satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Although a sense of self is a crucial determinant of behaviour, the result of this study suggests that sense of self as a variable could decrease the motivation to engage in regular exercise. However, when it positively influence exercise decision, it could be based on a more robust level

Limitation, strength and future direction

Caution is advised in generalizing the outcome of this study because the data collection was solely self-reported, which could raise the issue of common variance. Also, the study samples may not reflect a reliable criterion for generalization. However, the present study contributed to the physical and health literature by revealing a sense of self as an essential determinant factor in exercise participation among youths in Enugu State. The study recommends that future researchers adopt a more comprehensive approach to examine other moderating variables linking the sense of self and exercise engagement.

Conclusion

We conducted this study to investigate the motivation to engage in exercise based on a sense of self. The analysis performed on the data established a

positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables, as shown in Table 1 above. Thus, we conclude that the psychological construct of a sense of self is an essential correlate of exercise behaviour among young people. To our knowledge, research looking at this association is scarce in the Nigerian context. Nevertheless, the result provided valuable data to physical and health practitioners and the general public on the relevance of self perception on exercise participation.

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