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Viewpoints, Knowledge and Practice in Exercise: A Survey in the University Students

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Abstract: This study assessed the level of exercise among college students and their reasons for not engaging in exercise. In this descriptive cross-sectional study, a self-administered questionnaire consisting demographic data and 20 scale-questions about exercise and reasons of physical inactivity, was designed based on Likert scale and ranking scale. The total number of 160 students who were studying in SSUMS were selected through cluster sampling. About 34% of the male students did not engage in exercise and 83% of the questions regarding the students' knowledge on exercise were answered. The most important reasons for this inactivity has been mentioned as study preoccupation and lack of time (197 Points). These findings on the students' attitudes about exercise suggest that a recommendation on planning public health interventions may be useful to increase exercise among the male students.

Key words: Exercise, knowledge, students

INTRODUCTION

Physical inactivity and poor exercise are considered important risk factors for cardiovascular diseases, some cancers and all-cause mortality, while lack of exercise has a role in other chronic conditions such as adult-onset diabetes, hypertension and depression^[1-3]. Identification of view-points associated with modifiable risk factor health behavior is a necessary prerequisite for designing effective interventions to target the behavior of subpopulations at risk^[4].

Although early health promotion programs emphasized episodic exercise, recent attention has been devoted to overall physical activity, physical activity has been defined by the National Institutes of Health Consensus Development Panel^[5,6]. Regarding the WHO slogan termed as "move for health" and also considering the modeling role of the students in medical universities, we decided to study the standing and rank of exercise for these students. Moreover, we wanted to be informed of the barriers to exercise from their viewpoints and offer appropriate suggestions for intervention.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The relevant required information was gathered through the questionnaire which matched the research goals and its questions. The self designed questionnaire included 20 questions, 12 of which were viewpoint-types

and 8 others assessed information. The validity of the questionnaire was also ensured by the specialists.

In order to assess the students' information, each "correct" answer was multiplied by 5, each "no-idea" answer multiplied by 1.00 and the "wrong" one by zero, the total of scores if stood between 37 to 40 was regarded as "good general knowledge", if between 31 to 36 was considered as "medium" and also "poor" if it ranked lower than 30.

After the selection of the subjects in each college, they were informed of the importance of and the need for research and then the questionnaires were handed out. The students were then explained about how to fill in the questionnaire before answering the questions. The data were collected from October to November 2004.

Later the questionnaires were collected, the information was coded and analyzed through the X² test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study revealed that 42% of the students in the medical college did not exercise at all, whereas this for the para-medical students stood 25.7%. Those who did not exercise in the dentistry and health schools ranked 31.4 and 35%, respectively. Generally, 34.3% of the students had not exercised during the week at all.

Regarding the lack of including regular' physical activities in daily programs, the reasons were classified

Table 1: Ranking scale of the reasons for the absence of exercise among the male students in UMCHS-Yazd

Rank-scale	Reasons	Points
1.	Study Preoccupation/Lack of time	197
2.	Impatience and Disinterestedness	113
3.	Absence of Facilities in the Area	110
4.	Financial Problems/Lack of Personal Facilities	33
5.	Physical Disablement	24

Table 2: The results of the students' rate of general knowledge on exercise based on their level of study

Level	Knowledge			Total
	Poor	Medium	Good	
Associate's	16 (34)	22 (46.8)	9 (19.2)	47
Bachelor's	7 (25)	14 (50)	7 (25)	28
Ph.D	25 (29.4)	20 (23.5)	40 (47.1)	85

p ≤ 0.005

through rank-scale technique. As is shown in Table 1, the first reason for this inactivity has been “study preoccupation and lack of time (197 points) and the second one as impatience and disinterestedness” (113 points).

The results of the study also revealed that 47.1% of the Ph.D students had good general knowledge considering exercise benefits while this for the students who were on their associate's level stood only 19.2%. (Table 2). X² test also indicated that there is a relationship between the general knowledge of the students on exercise and their academic level of studies which is statistically significant. (P=0.005)

(Table 3) shows that regarding the exercises which are of interest to the male subjects, the results revealed that football was mostly interested in by our students (254 points), while swimming and physical training ranked second and third, respectively (113 and 90 points).

As the result of this study reveals, 34.3% of the students do not exercise at all. In another similar study 35% of the male students had no concern with exercise thus confirming the results^[2].

Also in a sample of undergraduate students at a private university in Rhode Island, 40% of the students who participated in the survey were only irregularly active^[3].

In another study with the heading of “a survey to determine the health condition of the teachers” the results revealed that 56.3% of the subjects do not exercise^[7]. In a similar study to determine doing exercise by female students, absence of exercise came up to 32%^[8].

Considering the fact that the behavior of the students of medical sciences can stand as a model for other students and also regarding that during the college-life period there is a possibility of programming on students' exercise, it necessitates the inclusion of the benefits of exercise as well as the urgency of doing exercise in these students' curriculum.

The most outstanding reasons for the absence of exercise, as mentioned by the students, were study preoccupation and lack of time as well as the absence of facilities from among other factors. Although some similar studies also revealed the same results i.e. work preoccupation and time shortage as the causes of physical inactivity but this evidently can be multifactorial and the real reasons seem to be something else. Therefore with an appropriate intervention and by giving information to the students as well as consulting them through their guide professors it is possible to set the grounds for exercise.

Regarding the lack or insufficiency of sport facilities as a cause of the absence of exercise, Green refers to enabling-factors as one of the effective factors determining the people's healthy behavior^[9]. It is, therefore suggested that the sport facilities of the universities be checked by the experts to match them with the required level of standards.

Following football, the two other exercises which have been of most interest to our subjects were swimming and physical training. So another suggestion with regard

Table 3: Ranking scale of the exercises of interest to male students in UMCHS-Yazd

Rank-scale	Medicine	Dentistry	Para-medicine	Health	Total	
	Type of exercise	Point	Type of exercise	Point	Type of exercise	Point
1	Football	86	Football	52	Football	254
2	Tennis	36	swimming	34	swimming	113
3	swimming	25	Brisk walking	22	Body building	90
4	Cycling	24	Mountain climbing	20	Mountain climbing	76
5	Body building	23	Volleyball	18	Volleyball	75
6	Volleyball	21	Tennis	16	Running	72
7	Basketball	20	Body building	15	Tennis	60
8	Brisk walking	16	Cycling	11	Brisk walking	45
9	Running	10	Basketball	7	Cycling	44
10	Mountain climbing	10	Running	6	Basketball	34

to the warm weather of Yazd can be devoting more budget to rent pools for swimming and saloons for body building.

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