
The Impact of Recreational Physical Activity on the Psychological Well-being of Women Educators: A Descriptive-Analytical Study

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore the significance of engaging in recreational sports activities and their impact on the mental health (anxiety, stress) of working women. The research sample consisted of 90 working women, 45 of whom engage in recreational sports and 45 who do not. A descriptive approach was adopted in this study. The results indicated that recreational sports have a positive impact on both the psychological and social aspects, as reflected in the woman's relationships with family and colleagues at work.

Keywords: Recreational sports activities, mental health, working women.

1-Introduction and problematic of the study:

Recreation is a fundamental human activity pursued during leisure time. It is characterized by the pursuit of happiness and has become an integral part of social systems. Consequently, there has been a growing interest in recreation and its various forms to address the increasing amount of leisure time in contemporary society. Recreational sports, being one of the most widespread forms of recreation, are considered a significant aspect of positive active leisure. They contribute to improving an individual's physical and mental health, providing joy and pleasure, alleviating fatigue and boredom, and enhancing work productivity (Khattab, 1988, p. 21).

Due to scientific and technological advancements, there have been significant changes in social values, leading to numerous psychological, social, and health problems across various segments of the population. Therefore, there is a need to promote recreational sports as an effective means of addressing these issues. Working women, constituting a significant segment of society, deserve special

attention due to their crucial role in raising the next generation. By engaging in recreational sports, women can cultivate positive moral qualities that they can instill in their children. Additionally, these activities can help break the monotony of modern women's lives, rejuvenate their energy, and enhance their productivity. Through recreational sports, women can develop various thoughts and psychological traits that significantly influence their intellectual orientations. Cohen noted that psychologists and sociologists have shown interest in recreation due to the assumption that psychological attitudes have a clear impact on an individual's and group's social behavior. A study by Ijlal Mohamed Ibrahim (1984) titled "The Impact of Exercise on Increasing Productivity and Some Personality Traits of Factory Workers" found that recreational sports promote a balance between traditional and modern values. The researcher used the personality profile scale and production curve to determine the amount of time allocated for rest periods and to apply the proposed program and measure the quantity of production. This scale consists of four personality traits: control, responsibility, emotional balance, and sociability. The results of the proposed physical exercise program had a positive impact on increasing workers' production rates and developing certain traits. Atiyat Khattab (1976) asserts that engaging in recreational sports provides an opportunity to escape stress and frustration, even going beyond psychological therapy in many cases. From this perspective, a study by Benshamisha titled "The Impact of Recreational Sports on Psychological Security and Quality of Life among the Elderly in Tiart Province" found that recreational sports significantly improved psychological security and quality of life among the elderly.

It is evident that everyone has the right to recreation, and there is no distinction between men and women, especially working women whose entry into the workforce is a new social phenomenon in Algerian society. This change is due to various economic, social, cultural, and political factors that have led to the advancement of women's status. As a result, women's social sphere has expanded, leading to psychological disturbances due to the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities. Therefore, it is necessary to help women alleviate these tensions by engaging in recreational sports, which play a significant role in their daily lives. Butler notes that recreational sports contribute to reducing psychological problems, providing joy and pleasure, developing social relationships, and improving overall health. Based on these findings, this study aims to answer the following questions:

-Does engaging in recreational sports contribute positively to reducing certain psychological symptoms (anxiety, nervousness, and emotional arousal) among working women?

-Does engaging in recreational sports contribute positively to achieving social adjustment (relationships with family and colleagues) among working women?

2- Study Importance:

This research holds significance in the following aspects:

-This research responds to the call of experts in the field of recreation, which has become an integral part of social systems and a necessity of life. Moreover, recreational sports serve a social and psychological need that contributes to building and developing an individual's personality.

-Recreational sports help to alleviate stress and nervous tension associated with modern life, and they also provide a happier and more stable personal and family life for working women.

3- Study Objectives:

-To determine the positive impact of engaging in recreational sports activities on reducing certain psychological symptoms (anxiety, nervousness, and emotional arousal) among working women who participate in such activities.

-To investigate the positive influence of recreational sports activities on achieving social adjustment (relationships with family and colleagues at work) among working women who participate in such activities.

4- Definition of Concepts and Terms:

4-1- Recreational Activity:

Operational Definition: A voluntary activity undertaken by an individual with the aim of achieving personal satisfaction and fulfilling psychological and social needs. Ramli Abbas argues that free physical activity serves several beneficial functions, as it provides emotional satisfaction for adolescents, offers means of self-expression, creativity, innovation, and a sense of confidence and accomplishment. Moreover, it provides most people with meaningful physical and mental recreation. The primary purpose is to enhance bodily functions for acceptable fitness and a sense of happiness and well-being. (Shathata, 1991, p. 20)

4-2- Mental Health:

Operational Definition: A relatively stable state in which an individual is psychologically, personally, and socially adjusted to themselves and others. They are capable of self-actualization and maximizing their abilities and potential. They are also able to cope with life's demands, have a well-integrated personality, and exhibit normal behavior, allowing them to live peacefully. (Al-Zubaidi Kamil Alwan, 1997, p.112)

5-Theoretical Chapter:

5-1- Recreational Sports Activity:

5-1-1-The Concept of Recreation:

The term "recreation" in its Arabic form has been used relatively infrequently in Arabic social literature. Instead, other terms such as "leisure time," "play," and "pastime" have been employed. These terms are derived from the Arabic root "raha" (راح), which signifies pleasure and joy. The term "recreation" itself implies "re" (again) and "creation" or renewal. Rommey views recreation as an activity, emotion, and emotional response, as well as a behavior and a way of understanding life. Nash clarifies that leisure time refers to those aspects of activity that bring individuals happiness, allowing them to express themselves, align with their motivations, and offer freedom of choice. De Geazzia suggests that recreation is an activity that contributes to providing individuals with relief from the burdens of work and offers them a means of restoring their vitality. Kraus, on the other hand, defines recreation as those aspects of activity or experiences that arise from leisure time, chosen by the individual to achieve pleasure, enjoyment, and acquire various personal and social values.

5-1-2-Types of Recreation:

a) Recreational Sports:

It is considered a foundational aspect of recreation programs and includes small and recreational games such as agility and running games, small ball games, and other sports, as well as large team sports like football, individual and team competitive games, and water sports such as swimming, water polo, and rowing (Hassan Mahmoud Mohamed, 2013, p. 33). It also refers to the type of recreation whose programs include many physical and sports activities. It is also considered the most influential type of recreation on the physical and

physiological aspects of the individual practicing the various activities that include sports and games.

b) Cultural Recreation:

Cultural recreation includes various aspects of activity that play a fundamental role in developing the human personality and broadening its horizons and contributes to integrating the individual into their social environment. The most important activities of cultural recreation are reading, such as reading newspapers, novels, and stories; writing, such as publishing a newsletter or printed newspaper; lectures, seminars, debates, and research workshops (Atiyat Mohamed Khattab, 1982, p. 46).

c) Therapeutic Recreation:

Recreation from a therapeutic perspective helps patients with respiratory diseases get rid of respiratory contractions, which helps them accept others and increase their self-confidence. It also makes them happier and more communicative, and contributes to achieving a speedy recovery, such as therapeutic swimming used to treat asthma and rehabilitation movements (Mahmoud Ismail, 2010, p. 40).

5-1-3-The Importance of Recreational Activities:

Recreational activities have a significant impact on individuals regardless of their age. While it is challenging to enumerate all the benefits derived from engaging in such activities, it can be asserted that they shape individuals, facilitate their adaptation to society, and assist them in fulfilling their roles successfully. Beyond the numerous physical benefits, the primary objective of recreational activities is pleasure, rather than achieving a high level of performance or mastery. Physical recreational activities enhance vitality, motivation, and resistance to fatigue, while also relieving stress and promoting relaxation. Additionally, these activities improve the efficiency of various systems such as circulatory and respiratory systems and help dissipate excess energy. (Wafaa Darwish, 2008, p. 80)

Tahany Abd El-Salam Mohamed further adds that "individuals acquire certain feelings and emotions through recreational activities, such as a sense of accomplishment and relaxation resulting from the utilization of their physical, mental, and emotional capabilities. This is a byproduct of a balanced life that harmonizes work and leisure. (Tahany Abd El-Salam, 1998, p. 99)"

6-Mental Health:

Mental health is a state of balance and integration of mental functions that leads to behavior enabling an individual to accept oneself and society. As a result, the individual experiences a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment, while achieving maximum personal growth and realization.

Concepts Related to Mental Health:

Personal Adjustment: This refers to a set of responses indicating an individual's sense of personal security and self-reliance. It includes self-esteem, freedom to direct one's behavior without external control, a sense of belonging, and freedom from the tendency towards isolation and neurotic disorders. Additionally, it encompasses self-acceptance and satisfaction.

Frustration: A fundamental concept in mental health, frustration is encountered when an individual faces obstacle that hinder the achievement of their goals and the fulfillment of their needs. It is also an emotion and motivation experienced when individuals find themselves unable to realize their aspirations or desires.

Aggression: it is a behavior directed towards others with the intention of causing psychological or physical harm. It can also be directed inward, causing self-harm.

Anxiety: A painful emotion acquired by an individual through experiences, anxiety differs from other negative emotions such as frustration or anger due to the physical changes it induces within the individual, as well as external manifestations evident in their facial expressions.

Psychological Conflict: This refers to a situation where an individual is subjected to equal forces pulling them in multiple directions, leaving them unable to make decisions. (A. M. Al-Khaldi, 2011, p. 60)

7-Women in the Educational Sector:

7-1- Impetus Behind Women Joining the Workforce:

The increasing number of women in the workforce, particularly in administrative and leadership positions, is a result of cultural shifts. Before delving into this aspect, it's essential to define "work." Work can be manual, physical, or mental, whether it's agricultural, commercial, industrial, professional, or non-professional, if it is within a woman's capacity. An idle individual is considered to have an empty life. Therefore, it was a grave mistake

to view women as idle beings. As the writer Françoise Giroud stated, "Work is a necessity, not a pastime. Work is not a cure for illness, but rather a necessity of life or life itself."

a) Economic Motivations:

Studies have shown that the primary motivation for women to enter the workforce is economic necessity. This refers to a woman's urgent need to earn a living for herself or to contribute to her family's income. A survey conducted by Pidgeon in 1952, involving 1300 women, revealed that 71% worked to support their families (Mustafa, 2003, p. 32). Given the significance of this motivation in ensuring a family's income and standard of living, particularly for lower socioeconomic classes, the importance of economic factors in women's decision to work cannot be underestimated. This is especially true when work is not motivated by luxury or an escape from traditional roles within wealthy families.

b) Personal Motivations:

The desire to affirm one's self-worth and social status, as well as the need for recognition and personal fulfillment, are additional motivations for women to enter the workforce. Various factors, such as personal inclination, the desire for self-actualization, the need to improve family income, and the necessity to support the family, have led increasing numbers of women to enter the paid labor force. As Fisher noted in his study, many mothers who graduated from colleges in New York found that half of those who worked felt bored and restless while at home, and that taking care of children and doing housework had become routine.

c) Social Motivations:

Social factors play a significant role in motivating women to work. However, entering the workforce without proper coordination with home responsibilities, such as childcare and maintaining a healthy marital relationship, can disrupt the family's educational and moral foundations. This can lead to increased marital problems and, in some cases, family breakdown. The pursuit of material wealth and fame at the expense of family well-being can deteriorate family relationships and negatively impact children's upbringing. Therefore, it is essential to strike a balance between work and home life to avoid negative consequences on the psychological and social development of children. (Benshamisha Al-Eid, 2018, p. 66)

7-2-The Roles of Employed Women and Psychological Strain:

The role of women in our Arab societies has undergone a radical transformation. Women have become active partners in shouldering family responsibilities. Whether single or married, women are increasingly expected to contribute to family income and ambitions. This, coupled with the added pressures of household chores, child-rearing, and providing comfort to family members during both ordinary times and crises, has placed significant burdens on women. Especially in societies marked by instability and a pursuit of personal ambitions, women, like men, seek a haven and an outlet for self-expression.

While men may express their stress through irritability, depression, or vocal outbursts, women often experience physical symptoms such as menstrual irregularities, tension, headaches, postpartum depression, and menopausal symptoms. Other common symptoms of distress include appetite loss or overeating. (Baha El-Din Ibrahim Salama, 2007, p. 85)

8-Conclusion

Recreational physical activity is a contemporary topic that has garnered significant attention and research across various fields. It has revolutionized many aspects of life, and a nation's progress is now measured by its commitment to recreation. Our strong belief in the importance of recreational activities for working women motivated us to conduct this research to confirm or refute this significance, particularly in the psychosocial realm. Based on our study objectives, we have concluded that recreational physical activity has a positive impact on reducing various neurotic symptoms such as anxiety, tension, boredom, and stress. It also fosters strong family relationships, promoting positive interactions within the family and bringing joy and happiness to the household.

Considering these findings, we recommend the following:

-Promoting Recreational Sports Awareness Among Female Employees and Providing Opportunities for Them to Understand the Importance of Recreational Sports Activities in Enhancing Their Productivity, Psychological Well-being, and Social Interactions.

-Encourage women to engage in recreational physical activities, especially exercises that promote physical fitness, psychological development, and social adjustment.

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