

UNDERSTANDING GENDER VARIATIONS IN ADOLESCENT PERSPECTIVES ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Abstract

Physical inactivity and sedentary behavior during adolescence often continue into adulthood, presenting a significant challenge for physical education professionals and health experts. Studies highlight the importance of fostering positive attitudes toward physical activity among adolescents. Additionally, understanding gender differences in attitudes and participation in physical activity is particularly relevant for adolescent students in India.

Methodology: The study utilized the Attitudes Toward Physical Activity Scale (ATPAS) to assess attitudes, with data analysed using SPSS. The statistical analysis included descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test

Result: The results indicate a significant difference between males and females in variables such as Social Experience, Health & Fitness, Risks, Thrill and Excitement, Aesthetic Experience, Catharsis, and Ascetic Experience. The mean score differences reveal that male students scored higher across these dimensions.

Conclusion: The study concludes that students' attitudes toward physical activity are strongly influenced by social and ascetic experiences. Additionally, the mean scores show that adolescents generally have a positive attitude toward physical activity, with male students exhibiting a higher attitude compared to female students.

INTRODUCTION

Sufficient physical activity has become an area of concern that needs to be addressed intensively by international public health organizations. The World Health Organization notes people in the world die in great numbers (over 14 million deaths per year) because of chronic ailments which are linked to physical inactivity and other factors (2015). According to a study, these chronic ailments greatly reduce the quality of life of people around the world. A major contributor to these illnesses is physical inactivity (Albright & Thompson, 2006). Over the past 30 years, the percentage of people remaining physically inactive has, in all cases, decreased. But the rate of general physical inactivity is still very concerning in several parts of the world (An, Xiang, Yang, et al., 2016). Regular physical activity is recommended for people suffering from certain medical conditions apart from the already healthy children and adolescents. (American Academy of Paediatrics Committee on Sports Medicine and Fitness and Committee on School Health, 2000). It is likely that individuals will have positive intentions and perceptions towards physical activity when they experience its effectiveness, when they are in a position to control the activity, and when the activity itself is enjoyable. This suggests that physical activity intentions are predicted crucially by attitudes and perceived behavioural control (Lin, 2018).

Exercise is universally acknowledged as a vital element of physical fitness and a significant contributor to overall well-being (O'Brien, 2005; Adeogun & Dansu, 2006). According to Biddle, Fox, and Boutcher (2000), engaging in exercise positively influences happiness, posture, mood, anxiety, depression, and self-esteem. Likewise, Fox (1999) emphasizes that exercise not only aids in disease prevention but also enhances the quality of life and the joy that comes with maintaining good health.

Fostering a positive attitude toward physical activity and fitness is vital for leading a healthy lifestyle. Okuneye (2002) observes that societal modernization and development have significantly influenced people's physical activity habits. According to the Centers for Disease Control, over 60% of individuals do not engage in regular exercise, while 25% are completely inactive.

Furthermore, research indicates that adolescents who are physically active are more likely to maintain an active lifestyle into adulthood, promoting better health and fitness outcomes (Pethkar, Naik, & Sonawane, 2010). Adolescents with greater participation in physical activities and sports before the age of fifteen tend to demonstrate higher psychological readiness for physical activity by the time they reach thirty.

Biddle (2008) highlights the strong link between physical activity and its health and fitness benefits. However, the rise in physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour during adolescence often persists into adulthood, posing a significant challenge for physical education professionals and health experts. Studies emphasize the importance of fostering positive attitudes toward physical activity among adolescents. Furthermore, understanding gender differences in attitudes and participation in physical activity is particularly important for adolescent students in India.

Methodology

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study are to compare attitudes toward physical activity across genders.

Participants

The sample comprised 610 (303 males and 307 females) students from Malabar region of Kerala. Age between 14 and 19.

Measures

Attitudes Toward Physical Activity Scale (ATPAS)

The scale comprised six subscales designed to measure various dimensions of attitudes. Each subscale included 9 to 10 statements, which respondents rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Positive statements were scored from 5 ("strongly agree") to 1 ("strongly disagree"), while negative statements were scored in reverse, from 1 ("strongly agree") to 5 ("strongly disagree"). The attitude score for each subscale ranged from a minimum of 9 to a maximum of 45, with higher scores indicating a more positive attitude.

Statistical Analysis

SPSS 26.0 software was used for data analysis in this study. The statistical analysis include 1) Descriptive statistics; 2) independent sample t-test;

Result

Researcher calculates the descriptive statistics of the data. The result is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: descriptive statistics of attitudes toward physical activity Scale sub variables.

	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Social Experience	32.34	4.47	20.03	-.82	.56
Health & Fitness	28.50	4.13	17.04	-.64	-.24
Risks, thrill and excitement	28.84	4.01	16.11	-.98	1.03
Aesthetic Experience	29.60	3.64	13.25	-.95	.099
Catharsis	29.22	3.88	15.06	-.83	.87
Ascetic Experience	32.50	4.23	17.86	-.97	1.18

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of attitudes toward physical activity Scale sub variables. From the table, it can be explained that the Social Experience variable obtained a mean of 32.34 ± 4.47 , skewness-.82, kurtosis .56. The Health & Fitness variable obtained a mean of 28.50 ± 4.13 , skewness -.64, kurtosis -.24, Risks, thrill and excitement variable obtained a mean of 28.84 ± 4.01 , skewness -.98, kurtosis 1.03, Aesthetic Experience variable obtained a mean of 29.60 ± 3.64 , skewness -.95, kurtosis .099, Catharsis variable obtained a mean of 29.22 ± 3.88 , skewness -.83, kurtosis .87, Ascetic Experience variable obtained a mean of 32.50 ± 4.23 , skewness -.97, kurtosis 1.18.

Gender Differences

Researcher used an independent sample t-test to explore the gender differences in attitudes toward physical activity Scale sub variables. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: T-test of different genders on attitudes toward physical activity Scale sub variables

		Paired Difference				t	df	Sig. (2 Tailed)
		Mean	Std. Error mean	95% Confidence interval of the difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Social Experience	Female	29.85	4.50	-5.59	-4.41	-16.63	608	.00
	Male	34.86	2.69					
Health & Fitness	Female	26.12	4.10	-5.32	-4.25	-17.58	608	.00
	Male	30.91	2.39					
Risks, thrill and excitement	Female	26.95	4.37	-4.35	-3.22	-13.21	608	.00
	Male	30.74	2.42					
Aesthetic Experience	Female	27.85	3.89	-4.03	2.23	-13.68	608	.00
	Male	31.38	2.25					
Catharsis	Female	27.35	4.13	-4.32	-3.24	-13.75	608	.00

	Male	31.12	2.42					
Ascetic Experience	Female	30.47	4.32	-4.67	-3.49	-13.63	608	.00
	Male	34.55	34.55					

In Table 2, there is a significant difference between men and women in Social Experience, Health & Fitness, Risks, thrill and excitement, Aesthetic Experience, Catharsis and Ascetic Experience ($p < 0.01$). The mean score difference shows that males are higher in Social Experience, Health & Fitness, Risks, thrill and excitement, Aesthetic Experience, Catharsis and Ascetic Experience.

Discussion

The study's findings indicate that both male and female students demonstrate positive attitudes toward physical activity, aligning with Schutz and Smoll's (1980) research, which also found a generally positive attitude toward physical activity in both genders.

However, the results reveal significant gender differences when comparing variables such as Social Experience, Health and Fitness, Risks, Thrill and Excitement, Aesthetic Experience, Catharsis, and Ascetic Experience. Male students consistently scored higher across all these variables, showing a stronger attitude toward physical activity in all age groups. This finding supports the conclusion that male students exhibit greater attitudes toward physical activity, as also observed in the study by Schutz and Smoll (1980).

Conclusion

- The means score shows that the student attitudes toward physical activity are due to social experience and ascetic experience.
- The mean score also reveals that adolescents generally exhibit a strong attitude toward Physical Activity.
- The results show that male students have a higher attitude toward Physical Activity compared to female students.

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