

22

Exercise Behaviour of Female Religious Conservatives in Ojo Local Government, Lagos, Nigeria

Taiwo Abdulkareem Babatunde

ABSTRACT

Religion plays a significant role in the lives of individuals; the level of religiosity varies and it has direct influence on individuals' behaviour and lifestyle. The study assessed the exercise behaviour of female religious conservatives in Ojo Local Government, Lagos Nigeria. Snowball sampling technique was employed to select 287 participants. Self-structured exercise behaviour questionnaire (EBQ) was used to obtain information during the study. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, mean and percentage and inferential statistics of chi-square at 0.05% level of significance. Findings revealed that despite having good knowledge of benefits of regular exercise, the exercise behaviour of the respondents is abysmal. The study also reveals that the major reason for not engaging in exercise is because they cannot expose their bodies in public, laziness and tight schedules. The study recommended indoor exercises with the use of exercise equipment such as bicycle ergometer and treadmills, for those who can afford it, while those who cannot afford such equipment can still do their exercises in loose fitting clothes that will not expose their bodies; also formation of female only exercise groups should be encouraged wherein female instructors will lead exercise sessions and others will follow either physically or virtually.

Keywords: exercise behaviour, religious conservatism, BMI, obese, overweight, underweight, virtual training

INTRODUCTION

Religion plays a significant role in the lives of individuals; it affects every domain of human life. Majority of the world population identifies itself with a religion and the level of religiosity differs from one to another, but any level of religiosity has a direct influence on the behaviours, attitudes, feelings, and thoughts of individuals (Turkmen, 2018). Religious conservatives are people who adhere strictly to the teaching of their religion, and their religious belief which prohibits exposure of female body parts in public may hinder their engagement in regular exercises.

Regardless of race, tribe and religious affiliation, exercise is important for physical, mental and social development and overall wellbeing; as well as emotional and psychological development of the individual. Regular exercise has been reported to have substantial physical and mental benefits, ranging from protection against obesity to greater quality of life (Harvard School of Public Health, 2014).

The benefits of exercise to humans have been documented; for instance, Okuneye (2002) asserts that exercise can reduce mild to moderate hypertension which is the result of chronic elevation of the blood pressure above optimal level (Musa, Uzonicha & Dikko, 2003 in Okuneye, Dansu & Idowu 2011). The efficacy of exercises in improving hypertensive situation, according to Okuneye (2002), manifests from improved cardiac functioning which results in a reduced resting heart rate, increased maximal oxygen consumption and decreased cardiac work. Also, lack of regular exercise can lead to onset of hypokinetic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, lower back pain and coronary heart disease and exercises have been reported to be potent in improving these conditions as well as control excess fat in the body. Similarly, Okuneye & Adewale, (2004), asserted that exercise has also been widely reported to have positive effects on resting heart rate and blood pressure.

In women, exercises have been reported to ameliorate menstrual cramps, Hightower in Suneela (2021) reported that participation in moderate amounts of exercise affects the experience of menstrual pain. According to Hightower, women exercise participants reported less pain than sedentary women during menses. Exercise promotes the release of endorphins, the "happy hormones" that helps to relieve pain caused by menstrual cramps, exercise also reduces stress which sometimes increase menstrual cramps. The increase in blood flow, as a result of exercise, can also ease menstrual cramp.

It is worrisome that despite the enormous benefits of exercise, many studies have reported negative exercise behaviours among various groups of people. Okuneye (2002) observes that exercise behaviour of people has been tremendously altered due to modernization or technological development in the society. The way people spend their leisure nowadays, particularly television viewing has also made people to be less active. While there has been reports on exercise behaviour of different group of people, much have not been done on the exercise behaviour of religious conservatives in Lagos State. It is against this background that this study is designed to examine the exercise behaviour of female religious conservatives in Ojo Local Government, Lagos, Nigeria.

METHOD

Participants

The population of this study include all female religious conservatives in Ojo Local Government, Lagos Nigeria. The religious conservatives include female Muslims using hijabs and those who cover their face completely, nuns, members of Deeper Life Bible Church, Jehovah's Witnesses and other Muslims and Christians who adhere to the prohibition of exposing their bodies in the public. Snowball sampling technique was adopted to select 287 religious conservatives who participated in this study.

Instrumentation

A self-developed exercise behaviour questionnaire was used to collect data on exercise behaviours of the participants. The first section of the questionnaire sought demographic information of the respondents - their age, religion affiliation, marital status, height in meters and body weight in kilogram. The height and body weight were used to calculate the Body Mass Index (BMI) which was used to determine the body structure. Section B sought information on how regularly respondents exercise; the frequency, the duration and type of exercise engaged in and where it is done. The questionnaire also measures the respondent's knowledge of the benefits of regular exercise and the reasons for not exercising regularly in the case of those who did not engage in regular exercise. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in test and measurement and was also subjected to test-retest method of reliability and r value 0.89 was recorded.

DATA COLLECTION

Printed and electronic questionnaires in form of Google Forms were used to collect information from the respondents. The researcher visited the places of worship such as mosques, churches and Islamic and Arabic schools to select respondents for the study through referrals. Those who could not be accessed physically were sent the link to the electronic questionnaire, the link was also shared on religious groups on WhatsApp and other social media platform. Data collection exercise lasted for a period of seven days, after which data clearing was done to remove incomplete entries, those whose place of residence was outside the study area, male respondents were also removed before analysis was done.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected were coded; points were assigned to responses of participants to the maximum of 10 points on exercise behaviour and knowledge of benefits of regular exercise. All data were subjected to statistical analyses of frequency count, simple percentage and chi-square at 0.05 level of significance. All the statistical analyses were done using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 24.0.

RESULTS

Table 1: Summary of demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographics		Percentage
Age (years)	Below 20	16
	21-25	39.4
	26-30	13.2
	31-35	9.8
	Above 35	21.6
Marital status	Single	53.3
	Married	49.9

Demographics		Percentage
Religion	Divorced	1.7
	Islam	59
	Christianity	41
BMI	Obese	22.6
	Overweight	12.2
	Normal weight	56.8
	Underweight	8.4

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents. The age, marital status, religion and BMI distribution are shown in the table.

Table 2: Distribution of respondent by exercise behaviour

Exercise frequency	1-2 times/week	77 (26.8%)
	3-4 times/week	47 (16.4%)
	everyday	31 (10.8%)
	Not at all	132 (46%)
Total		287
Knowledge of benefits of exercise	Good knowledge	198 (68.5)
	Poor Knowledge	89 (31.5)
Total		287
Reasons for not exercising	I can't expose my body in the public because of exercise	150 (40.1%)
	I feel lazy to engage in exercise	123 (32.9%)
	My schedule is tight	67(17.9%)
	I don't have interest	34 (9.1%)
Total		384

N.B: the frequency count in reasons for not exercising is 374. This is because some respondents chose more than one reason for not exercising

Results in Table 2 shows that a high percentage of the respondents do not engage in exercise (46%); only a few engage in exercise at least 3 times in a week (27.2%). In spite of the respondents' poor exercise behaviour, majority of the respondents have good knowledge of benefits of exercise (68.5). For those who do not exercise regularly the major reason for not exercise is because they cannot expose their bodies in public (40.1%), other reasons are laziness (32.9%, tight schedule (17.9%) and lack of interest (9.1%)

Table 3: Summary of chi-square analysis on age and exercise behaviour of respondents

Exercise behaviour		Age					Total	Chi-square	p-value
		Below 20	21-25	26-30	31-35	Above 35			
Poor Behaviour	Observed	34	108	36	28	62	268		
	Expected	43.0	105.5	35.5	26.1	57.9	268		
Good behaviour	Observed	12	5	2	0	0	19		
	Expected	3.0	7.5	2.5	1.9	4.1	19		
Total	Observed	46	113	38	28	62	287	35.573	0.00
	Expected	46.0	113.0	38.0	28.0	62.0	287		

The results presented in Table 3 indicated a significant difference between in the means of respondents' age and exercise behaviours of the respondents $\chi^2=35.573$, P-value < 0.05. Therefore, age has significant influence on exercise behaviour of female religious conservatives in Ojo Local government, Lagos, Nigeria.

Table 5: Summary of chi-square analysis on marital status and exercise behaviour of respondents

Exercise behaviour		Marital Status			Total	Chi-square	p-value
		Single	Married	Divorced			
Poor Behaviour	Observed	136	127	5	268		
	Expected	142.9	120.5	4.7	268.0		
Good behaviour	Observed	17	2	0	19		
	Expected	10.1	8.5	.3	19.0		
Total	Observed	153	129	5	287	10.710	0.005
	Expected	153.0	129.0	5.0	287.0		

The results presented in Table 5 indicated a significant difference between marital status and exercise behaviours of the respondents $\chi^2 = 10.710$, P-value < 0.05. Therefore, marital status has a significant influence on the exercise behaviour of female religious conservatives in Ojo Local government, Lagos, Nigeria.

Table 6: Summary of chi-square analysis on BMI and exercise behaviour of respondents

Exercise behaviour		BMI				Total	chi-square	p-value
		Obese	Over-weight	Normal weight	Under-weight			
Poor Behaviour	Observed	53	34	161	20	268	27.133	0.00
	Expected	60.7	32.7	152.2	22.4	268.0		
Good behaviour	Observed	12	1	2	4	19		
	Expected	4.3	2.3	10.8	1.6	19.0		
Total	Observed	65	35	163	24	287		
	Expected	65	35.0	163.0	24.0	287.0		

The results presented in Table 6 indicated a significant difference between BMI and exercise behaviours of the respondents $\chi^2 = 27.133$, P-value < 0.05. Therefore, the body structure has significant influence on exercise behaviour of female religious conservatives in Ojo Local Government, Lagos, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The study assessed the exercise behaviour of female religious conservatives in Ojo Local government, Lagos, Nigeria. It also evaluates the type of exercise the respondents engage in, their knowledge of benefits of regular exercise and the reasons for not exercising regularly.

The result of this study reveals poor exercise behaviour among female religious conservatives in the study area. The exercise behaviour of female religious conservatives in the study area follows a similar pattern with previous reports which indicated that majority of the respondents do not engage in regular exercise. Similar poor exercise behaviour among different female groups has been reported by different authors. For instance, Okuneye, Dansu and Idowu (2011) reported poor exercise behaviour among female nurses in suburb areas in Lagos State. Similarly, Okuneye and Dansu (2007) reported poor exercise behaviour among female employees of Lagos State University, Ojo. Adeniyi, Ogwumike and Bamiyefa (2013), also reported poor exercise behaviour among female participants in Ibadan.

The result also reveals that age, marital status and body structure have significant influences on the exercise behaviour of the respondents. Engagement in exercise and other physical activities reduces as women get older; the reason could be that younger female adults are stronger and have less daily commitments compared to older females. Previous reports indicated that young females engage in exercise than older females. Oyeyemi et al (2017) reported that age influences physical activity level and sedentary behaviour of health professional students in Nigeria. Awotidebe et al (2017), asserted that older women are likely to be physically inactive than younger women. Marital status has also been reported to influence the exercise behaviour of women. Furthermore, results reveal that marital status has a significant influence on exercise behaviour of the respondents. Married respondents reported less engagement in exercise compared to single respondents. The reason for this could be because the married

respondents get involved in many household chores such as cooking, taking care of children, washing clothes among other family responsibilities which reduces the time spent in exercising. This result is similar to the finding of a previous research that being married is associated with the decline in frequency of exercise.

The study also reveals that BMI has a significant influence on the exercise behaviour of the respondents. Those with obesity and are overweight exercise more than the normal and underweight respondents. The need to burn exercise fat and control weight could be the reason those with high BMI have better exercise behaviour than the group with low BMI. This result is similar to the report of Okuneye, Dansu and Idowu (2011), which reported a strong relationship between exercise behaviours and body mass index of female nurses in suburb areas in Lagos State. Also, Okuneye, Dansu and Idowu (2008) found high BMI among a group of child-bearing age women and recommended that these women should be encouraged to participate in programmes that work against gaining excessive weight, thus helping to prevent obesity and associated diseases.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that there is general poor exercise behaviour but good knowledge of benefits of regular among female religious conservatives in Ojo LGA and the reasons for this poor behaviour are unwillingness to expose the body in public, busy schedule, laziness and lack of interest in exercise. Also, age, marital status and body structure have an influence on the exercise behaviour of the respondents. It is therefore recommended that indoor exercises with the use of exercise equipment such as bicycle ergometer and treadmill be encouraged for those who can afford it, and outdoor exercises should be performed in loose fitting clothes that will not expose the body. Also formation of female only exercise groups should be encouraged wherein female instructors will lead the exercise sessions and others will follow either physically or virtually. This will help to encourage participation of those who do not feel comfortable being touched by the opposite sex during exercises. Religious leaders should also encourage their female members to engage in regular exercises for the benefit of their health.

REFERENCES

- Adeniyi, A.F, Ogwumike, O. O. and Bamikeya, T. R. (2013). Postpartum Exercise among Nigerian Women: Issues Relating to Exercise Performance and Self-Efficacy. *ISRN Obstetrics and Gynecology Volume 2013, Article ID 294518*, 7 pages <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2013/294518>
- Awotidebe, T. O., Adedoyin, R. A., Adegbesan, O. A., Babalola, J. F., Olukoju, I. O., Mbada, C. E. Chirwa, E. & Bisiriyu, L. A. (2017). Psychosocial correlates of physical activity among university students. *International Journal of Sports Science*, 4(6): 205-211 DOI: 10.5923/j.sports.20140406.01.
- Harvard School of Public Health (2014). Obesity Prevention Source. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/obesity-prevention-source/obesity-consequences/health-effects/> Retrieved 29th January 2022
- Mindy Hightower BA (1998). Effects of Exercise Participation on Menstrual Pain and Symptoms, *Women & Health*, 26:4, 15-27, DOI: 10.1300/J013v26n04_02
- Musa, D.L. Uzonicha, J.O. & Dikko, A. U. (2003). The role of physical exercise in the management of hypertension. *Journal of Research in Health and Sports Science*. 5 (1): 17-26
- Okuneye, R.O. & Adewale, E.O. (2004). Weight and age as determinant of blood pressure among adolescents in Lagos City, Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Physical Health Education and Recreation*. 3:17-21
- Okuneye, R.O. & Dansu, A. (2007). Exercise behaviour as correlate of resting heart rates and blood pressures of LASU female employees. *Journal of Nigeria Association of sports Science and Medicine 1X*: 87-91 Ibadan.
- Okuneye, R.O, Dansu, T & Idowu, B.B. (2008). Percentage Body Fat and BMI Profiles of Selected childbearing Age Women Among LASU Students. *Journal of Nigeria Association of Sports science and medicine*, X (1)
- Okuneye, R.O. (2002) Regular exercise and individual health. *Nigerian Journal of Physical Health Education and Recreation*. 2:5-10
- Oyeyemi, A. L., Ishaku, C. M., Oyekola, J., Wakawa, H. D., Lawan, A., Yakubu, S., & Oyeyemi, A. Y. (2017). Patterns and associated factors of physical activity among adolescents in Nigeria. *Plus One*, 11(2), 1-16
- Turkmen M. (2018). Religiosity and Female Participation in Sport: Exploring the Perceptions of the Turkish University Students. *Physical Education of Students* 22(4):196-206. DOI: 10.15561/20755279.2018.0405.