

Improving mental power of post graduate students by considering leisure-time

Hamid Reza Sayebani¹⁺, Aminuddin bin Yusof², Mamoud Reza Sayebani³, Mohammad Sadegh Bijandi⁴, Mohammad Reza Tolooe Esmeilzadeh⁵

¹ Sport Department- Islamic Azad University, Qeshm, Iran

^{1,2} Department of sport studies, Faculty of Educational Studies Universiti Putra Malaysia

³ Education Center for Applied Science and Technology Bandar Abbas 1 (Markaz-e Amouzesh-e Elmi Karborodi Bandar Abbas1), University of Applied Science, Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan, Iran

⁴ Academic staff in university of science and culture, Tehran, Iran

⁵ Department of sport Science, Faculty of physical Education, Shomal University, Iran

Abstract. Leisure-time, as an important factor for reducing and predicting most diseases not only is emphasized by many studies but also it considers as a cause in order to be an active and healthy. Our information this regard on post graduate students is very limited. Their physical activities have decreased due to many factors such as assignments and some courses. To improve physical activity among the students, this qualitative study concentrates on the questions whether or not they play sport or do any physical exercises; if so, how they do it, and if not, why not? The aim of this study is to find out ways of spending leisure-time physical activity by post graduate students. For this study the researchers have selected 5 convenient samples from among third semesters post graduate students who accepted to participate in this research at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), “1st semester 2010”. The researchers derived 36 codes from interviews with students and categorized them into five categories. Respondents argued sport and physical activities can control, prevent and decrease many of different diseases such as cardiovascular illness, arthritis, diabetes, depression, and obesity. All respondents believe leisure-time physical activities improve mental power. Finally, for the latter case, this study intends to propose a suggestion for improving this condition.

Keywords: Leisure-time, Mental Power, Physical Activities, Predicting Diseases

1. Introduction

The relationship between occupation and health is well documented, but not well understood. Epidemiological studies have shown that leisure-time physical activity has the ability to decrease risk of all kind of mortalities such as from cardiovascular disease and mortality type II diabetes, hypertension, and site-specific cancers. Some activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, gardening, and repair work have positive influence on decreasing these problems. There are many studies that show the importance and need for physical activity. The studies have different focuses, but all of them indicate clearly the effect of the sport and physical activities in our life. Following are a brief report on other studies.

There is ample evidence to support the beneficial effects of regular physical activity on health [1]; On this regards Wandel and Roos also demonstrated that little work has been done concerning the dynamic relationship between work and health-related habits. The aim of the present study, which is qualitative in nature, is to explore the health-related options given and choices made by men of various occupations [2]. From other point of view, many studies have demonstrated that sport and physical activities during leisure time prevent many unhealthy conditions and mortality from chronic disease, such as obesity, cardiovascular

⁺ Corresponding author. Tel.: + 60129156460
E-mail address: hamid.saybani@gmail.com

disease and depression [3]. On this regard, based on the previous studies “Leisure or free time” is a period of time spent out of work and essential domestic activity. It is also the period of recreational and discretionary time before or after compulsory activities such as eating and sleeping, going to work or running a business, attending school and doing homework, household chores [4]; “time spending or free for relaxation and enjoyment” [5]. On the other hand, taking part in short times of moderate physical activity every day influence health outcomes in a positive manner, at least when they contribute to high total energy expenditure [6].

On this point, various studies also have shown a direct link between physical activities and habits, They show that regular physical activity has positive influence on changes to blood lipids, skeletal health (Hardman, 2001), decrease in colon cancer, breast cancer [6, 7] and weight maintenance (Hardman, 2001). Leisure time, sport and physical activities are important to promote and maintain physical and mental health, independent of the domain they take place in [8].

Studying is like a professional job, and many post graduate students are too busy: For example they have some classes, do some difficult and time consuming assignments, have to read many articles, do some work besides their study, and do house work, and so on. Thus it is difficult for them to plan for sport and physical activity. In other words, Physical activity declines during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. In order to evaluate this transition, it is important to assess physical activity behaviors in the young adult population. This is possible by assessing college students, which represent a large proportion of the young adult population. Currently, the determinants of physical activity participation in college students are poorly understood and a more detailed understanding is needed to help prevent the decline in physical activity [9].

There have been some studies on different jobs such as driving and carpentry which have shown decreased leisure-time physical activities among these jobs; however we don't know how post graduate students spend their leisure-time physical activity. Although many researches were conducted in the leisure-time module, however it is not enough. As mentioned before, post graduate students are usually too busy with work, homework and chores. So the main aim of this study is to find out ways of spending leisure-time physical activity by post graduate students and another purpose of this study is to find out the position of sport and physical activities among post graduate students.

2. Methodology

This study is based on a “qualitative research”, which was getting increasing attention from researchers in diverse fields of inquiry. In addition qualitative research lacks sophistication in the techniques available to synthesize findings, as they are often elementary in nature [10]. Also research design was cross-sectional. The researchers have selected 5 convenient samples from among third semesters post graduate students who accepted to participate in this research at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) during the 1st semester 2010. Before starting interviewing, researchers explained to each participant about the aim of the study. Subjects allowed the researchers to record the interviews for the study.

Considering the research methodology in the study the researchers were the instrument. And the technique of data collection was semi structure interview which was flexible and useful for collecting the necessary information. The interview is one of the important types of data gathering technique in qualitative research (Mathers, N & et al, 1998). Data collection, processing and analyzing was carried out by the researchers. Data was obtained from interviews and audio recordings and a set of questions were designed for getting information needed for addressing the three research questions as follow:

- How post graduate students spend their leisure time in terms of playing sport and doing physical activities?
- What barriers or problems are post graduate students facing?
- If any problem exists, how can they be solved?

The interviews were audio-recorded. The recorded data were transcribed and the data were read through in order to get an overall sense of the interview. After that, the data was read completely in order to identify statement related to the leisure-time and sport activities by the participants. These statements were marked, and tentative codes were written in the margin for the detection of emerging patterns. Differences and

similarities in content were subsequently grouped and classified into various categories. The codes were repeatedly reviewed to ensure consistency of the coding. When interviews finished, the researchers and participants reviewed the questions together to make sure the questions were understood the way, they were designed to.

3. Findings and discussion

Based on the answers; the theme for the question how post graduate students spend their leisure time in terms of playing sport and doing physical activity, all respondents liked sport and physical activities a lot. They believe in a proverb which says, “Healthy mind in healthy body.” The best time to do exercises according to their regular schedule was in the afternoon about 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm or 8:30 pm and sometimes after 9 pm. All respondents believe their classmates like sport and physical activities during their leisure time. They identify leisure-time physical activities as an important program in their life. Participants believed doing exercises are very important for body and mental health. For example subjects believed that regular physical activities increase self-confidence, strengthen heart muscles.

The findings also show that students agree with this point that leisure-time and physical activities improve mental power. They also argued sport and physical activities can control, prevent and decrease many of different diseases such as cardiovascular illness, arthritis, diabetes, depression, and obesity. Exercise helps relaxation. Their answers to the questions supported the previous findings by Bedimo and Rung [11]. They have shown that regular physical activity play an important role in reducing morbidity and mortality through decreasing heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, colon cancer, feelings of depression/anxiety, and weight, while building and maintaining healthy bones, muscles, and joints.

Some studies have reported that athletes like to participate in social activities more than non-athletes, this reports were also emphasized here by the respondents (see Fig 1). Based on the other themes of research about what barriers or problems post graduate students are facing, respondents stated that student’s assignments, participation in class activities are some of the reasons for decreasing their leisure-time physical activities. Many post graduate students have a lot of assignments, homework, and some classes. Last theme was designed to answer the question, if any problem exists, how it can be solved. Answers can be categorized as: group assignments can help students to participate in sports activities. While university has to make plans, programs for encouraging students to participate in physical activities are very important.

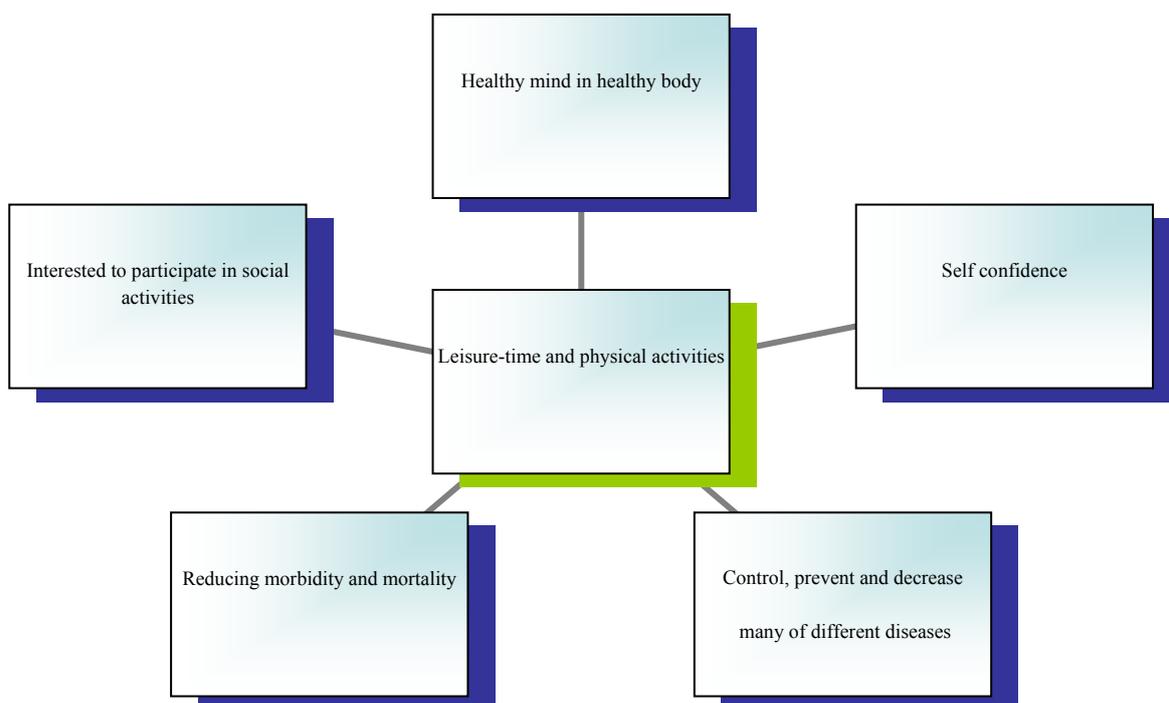


Figure 1- Benefits of leisure-time and physical activities among postgraduate students

4. Suggestions

Number of respondents in this study was low. In order to obtain a more accurate result, this study should be repeated with more post graduate students using a quantitative method. It seems that participants would like to arrange their studies in a way that doesn't interfere with their leisure-time physical activities. Here are administrators of university called to take care of this issue, and find a solution for providing a high quality education so that students can also benefit from physical activities. It should be evaluated if reducing assignments affects the quality of education, and find alternative methods that could give students more time for other important issues like physical activities. Scheduling courses is a difficult task, there are many factors involved in making decisions, and the question is, whether or not it is possible to add one more factor to it, which would address the issue of health and physical activities of all participants alike. This could be the topic of another research.

5. Implications

University administrators could use the result of this study to get a better understanding of the need for leisure-time physical activities among post graduate students. With the knowledge gained from this study, the university management could coordinate both education and physical activities more efficiently.

6. Reference

- [1] Wijndaele, K.,L. Matton,N. Duvigneaud,J. Lefevre,I. De Bourdeaudhuij,W. Duquet,M. Thomis ,R.M. Philippaerts, Association between leisure time physical activity and stress, social support and coping: A cluster-analytical approach. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 2007. 8(4): p. 425-440.
- [2] Wandel, M. ,G. Roos, *Work, food and physical activity. A qualitative study of coping strategies among men in three occupations*. *Appetite*, 2005. 44(1): p. 93-102.
- [3] Xiao-Jun, W.,L. Balluz,J. Shire,A. Mokdad ,H. Kohl III, *Association of self-reported leisure-time physical inactivity with particulate matter 2.5 air pollution*. *Journal of Environmental Health*, 2009. 72(1): p. 40-44.
- [4] Goodin, R.E.,J.M. Rice,M. Bittman ,P. Saunders, *The time-pressure illusion: Discretionary time vs. free time*. *Social Indicators Research*, 2005. 73(1): p. 43-70.
- [5] Barker, R.,B. Harris ,L. Sutton, *Sport & Leisure*. 2005.
- [6] Hardman, A.E., *Physical activity and health: current issues and research needs*. *International journal of epidemiology*, 2001. 30(5): p. 1193.
- [7] Herman, C.W., *Examining the relationship between leisure-time physical activity and the risk of colon and breast cancer: A methodological review and meta-analyses*. 2008, The University of Michigan.
- [8] Abu-Omar, K. ,A. Rutten, *Relation of leisure time, occupational, domestic, and commuting physical activity to health indicators in Europe*. *Preventive medicine*, 2008. 47(3): p. 319-323.
- [9] Ode, J.J., *Assessing physical activity behaviors in college students*. 2008, Michigan State University.
- [10] Douglas, A.C.,J.E. Mills,M. Niang,S. Stepchenkova,S. Byun,C. Ruffini,S.K. Lee,J. Loutfi,J.K. Lee ,M. Atallah, *Internet addiction: Meta-synthesis of qualitative research for the decade 1996-2006*. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2008. 24(6): p. 3027-3044.
- [11] Bedimo-Rung, A.L.,A.J. Mowen ,D.A. Cohen, *The significance of parks to physical activity and public health.: A conceptual model*. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2005. 28(2): p. 159-168.