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Exploring Male Perspectives on Physical Activity and Sedentary Time in a College Workplace in District Peshawar

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Abstract

This study, "Exploring Male Perspectives on Physical Activity and Sedentary Time in a College Workplace in District Peshawar," employs a qualitative design to uncover the experiences and attitudes of male college students and staff toward physical activity and sedentary behavior. Focusing on a diverse sample of 20-30 participants aged 22

to 60, purposive sampling ensured targeted representation. Through engaging interviews, key themes emerged regarding current activity habits, barriers to staying active, and the influence of the college environment. Findings reveal a wide range of activity levels, with barriers including academic pressures, inadequate facilities, and cultural norms. Participants recognized the health risks of sedentary behavior but often felt resigned to their habits. The study underscores the need for tailored interventions to promote healthier lifestyles among male college populations, highlighting both supportive aspects of the college environment and areas for improvement.

Keywords: Male perspectives, physical activity, sedentary behavior, college students, qualitative research, Peshawar, barriers to exercise, academic pressures, cultural norms, college environment, tailored interventions, health risks.

INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly sedentary society, understanding the dynamics of physical activity and sedentary behavior is critical, particularly in the context of college workplaces. As universities often serve as microcosms of broader societal trends, the health implications of sedentary lifestyles among male employees warrant urgent attention. Research indicates that sedentary behavior is linked to a range of health issues, including obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health disorders (Owen et al., 2020; Dempsey et al., 2021). With academic environments characterized by long hours spent at desks and extensive computer use, promoting physical activity among male staff becomes a pressing concern.

Despite the growing awareness of the importance of physical activity, interventions tailored specifically for men in workplace settings remain limited. Studies suggest that male employees often face unique barriers that can hinder their engagement in physical activity, such as time constraints, workplace culture, and a lack of organizational support (Katzmarzyk et al., 2019; Wiese et al., 2022). Additionally, male perceptions of physical activity can differ significantly from those of women, often influenced by traditional gender norms that prioritize productivity over health-related behaviors (Rosen et al., 2021). Understanding these perceptions is essential for developing effective interventions that resonate with this demographic.

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Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated sedentary behaviors, leading to increased screen time and decreased physical activity among college staff (Palumbo et al., 2022). As institutions adapt to post-pandemic realities, there is an opportunity to reshape workplace policies and culture to prioritize health and well-being. Male employees have expressed a desire for more structured opportunities to engage in physical activity, suggesting that organizational changes can play a pivotal role in promoting a healthier work environment (Martin et al., 2023).

Given the substantial amount of time that college employees spend in sedentary activities, it is crucial to identify both motivators and barriers to physical activity from the male perspective. This study aims to explore these dimensions through focus groups, providing insights that can inform targeted interventions to promote physical activity and reduce sedentary time. By recognizing and addressing the specific needs and perceptions of male employees, universities can foster a culture that supports active living, ultimately enhancing employee well-being and productivity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding Sedentary Behavior and Physical Activity

Sedentary behavior has become a significant public health concern, particularly in workplace environments where prolonged sitting is common. Research indicates that sedentary lifestyles are associated with a range of negative health outcomes, including increased risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes (Owen et al., 2010; Dempsey et al., 2017). In academic settings, where employees often spend extensive hours at desks engaged in computer work, the need to address sedentary behavior is particularly urgent (Thorp et al., 2015).

Physical activity, conversely, is widely recognized for its health benefits, including improved physical fitness, mental health, and overall well-being (Rebar et al., 2015). However, the transition from sedentary behavior to an active lifestyle can be challenging, especially for specific demographics such as male college employees. Research has shown that men often face distinct barriers to physical activity, including workplace culture, social norms, and personal perceptions about fitness (Dunstan et al., 2012; Stinson et al., 2013).

Male Perceptions of Physical Activity

Understanding male perspectives on physical activity is essential for developing effective interventions. Studies have revealed that men may prioritize work and productivity over physical health, often viewing physical activity as secondary to their professional responsibilities (McMahon et al., 2016). This can result in a lack of engagement in health-promoting behaviors, with men sometimes perceiving exercise as a time-consuming endeavor that competes with their work commitments (Tremblay et al., 2010).

Additionally, research suggests that traditional masculine norms can influence men's attitudes toward physical activity. Men may associate physical activity with competitiveness and strength, leading to hesitance in participating in less intense or socially supported activities (Kimmel, 2015). This perspective may further contribute to their reluctance to engage in physical activity programs that are not aligned with these norms.

Barriers to Physical Activity in Academic Settings

In college environments, several barriers prevent male employees from engaging in regular physical activity. Time constraints due to academic responsibilities, long working hours, and the high demands of academic roles are significant obstacles (Santos et al., 2016). Moreover, the workplace environment often lacks the infrastructure to support physical activity, such as accessible fitness facilities or policies that encourage active breaks (Berg et al., 2013).

The social environment also plays a crucial role in shaping male attitudes toward physical activity. A study by Kahn et al. (2013) highlighted that male employees often look to peers for motivation and support. If physical activity is not perceived as a norm within the workplace culture, men may be less likely to engage in it. Furthermore, a lack of organizational encouragement can lead to feelings of isolation among those who wish to be more active (Parry et al., 2014).

The Role of Interventions

Interventions aimed at promoting physical activity among male employees in academic settings must consider these unique barriers and perceptions. Effective strategies may include workplace wellness programs that focus on creating a supportive culture around physical activity, offering flexible schedules for exercise, and providing resources such as fitness classes or group activities (Cohen et al., 2014).

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Additionally, interventions that emphasize the health benefits of physical activity in relation to work performance may resonate more with male employees. Programs that incorporate social elements, such as team-based challenges, can help foster a sense of camaraderie and motivation among colleagues (Owen et al., 2015).

In summary, while there is a growing body of literature addressing physical activity and sedentary behavior, the specific experiences and perceptions of male college employees require further exploration. By understanding the barriers they face and the factors that motivate them, universities can implement more effective interventions that promote active lifestyles and reduce sedentary time.

Research Design

This study will utilize a qualitative research design to gather in-depth insights into male perspectives regarding physical activity and sedentary behavior.

Study Population

The focus of this study is on male college students and staff from selected colleges in Peshawar, offering a unique opportunity to explore their perspectives and experiences related to physical activity and sedentary behavior in an academic setting.

Sample Size

The selected sample included 20-30 participants, ranging in age from 22 to 60 years. This diverse age range ensured a rich variety of perspectives while keeping the group manageable for in-depth qualitative analysis.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling techniques were employed to thoughtfully select participants based on specific criteria, including age, academic discipline, and engagement in physical activities, ensuring a targeted and insightful representation.

Data Collection Methods

The researcher conducted engaging interviews to delve into participants' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes regarding physical activity and sedentary behavior. Key questions included:

- What are your current physical activity habits?
- What barriers do you face to staying active?
- How do you view sedentary behavior?

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- In what ways do you think the college environment influences your activity levels?

ANALYSIS

The researcher conducted engaging interviews to explore male participants' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward physical activity and sedentary behavior. This analysis focuses on key themes that emerged from the responses to the questions posed during the interviews.

Current Physical Activity Habits

Participants revealed a wide range of physical activity habits, highlighting individual differences in engagement levels. Some participants reported regular exercise routines, while others described minimal or inconsistent activity. Factors influencing these habits included personal motivation, health awareness, and time constraints imposed by academic responsibilities.

Barriers to Staying Active

Several barriers to physical activity were commonly identified:

Time Constraints: Many participants cited academic pressures and busy schedules as significant obstacles to maintaining an active lifestyle.

Lack of Facilities: Some expressed frustration over inadequate sports facilities and resources on campus, which limited their opportunities for exercise.

Cultural Norms: Participants noted cultural attitudes toward masculinity and physical activity, suggesting that social expectations sometimes discouraged them from pursuing certain types of exercise.

Views on Sedentary Behavior

Responses regarding sedentary behavior revealed a nuanced understanding:

Recognition of Risks: Participants acknowledged the negative health implications of prolonged sitting, such as weight gain and decreased energy levels.

Resignation to Habits: Despite recognizing the downsides, many expressed a sense of resignation, feeling unable to change their habits due to lifestyle demands.

Influence of the College Environment

Participants reflected on how the college environment impacted their activity levels:

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Supportive Elements: Some noted that the availability of fitness classes and organized sports events fostered a more active lifestyle.

Limitations: Conversely, others pointed out that a lack of encouragement or resources from the college administration hindered their engagement in physical activities.

CONCLUSION

The interviews provided rich insights into male perspectives on physical activity and sedentary behavior. Participants' varied responses highlighted key barriers and facilitators that influence their habits. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing targeted interventions that can promote healthier lifestyles among male college students and staff. Addressing time constraints, enhancing facilities, and fostering a supportive college environment could significantly improve engagement in physical activity.

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