

Impact of Exercise on Self-Esteem and Happiness among Exercises and Non-Exercisers

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Abstract:- For decades physicians have been encouraging people to engage in physical exercise. Previous researches have shown that regularly exercising has an instant impact on one's body be it physical or psychological. The present study aimed to examine the relationship of exercise with happiness and self esteem. A cross-sectional comparative study was conducted to understand the impact of exercise on self esteem and happiness levels of the 60 participants (30 exercises and 30 non-exercisers) using the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Convenience and purposive sampling was used and the age of the sample selected varied from 18-30 years. The findings of the present study show that there does not exist a significant difference between the levels of self esteem and happiness among those who exercise regularly and those who do not. Overall, this research suggests people tend to indulge in many activities other than exercising, that boost their self esteem and make them happy.

Keywords:- Exercise, happiness, self esteem.

I. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as “ a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. (“Constitution of the World Health Organization”, 2020)²¹. Mental health is a dynamic state of inner equilibrium which allows people to apply their abilities in harmony with normal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize ,explicit and modulate one’s very own emotions , as well as empathize with others; flexibility and capacity to deal with negative lifestyle activities and characteristics in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind constitute crucial components of intellectual health which contribute , to various degrees, to the state of inner equilibrium (Galderisi et. al, 2015)⁵. Physical health is described through what has, can and could have an effect on a people's bodily frame which includes genetics, diet, exercise, illness, disability, environment (consisting of housing, paintings/college situations and pollution), financial fame and some other elements that may harm or enhance one’s bodily frame. It might be the most crucial thing about health..¹⁵ Mental health and physical health are very carefully connected. Regular physical activity is established to assist save you and control noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) which includes coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and numerous cancers. It additionally facilitates saving one’s hypertension, keeps wholesome frame weight and may enhance intellectual fitness, fine lifestyles and well-being. Physical activity refers to any form of movement. Various methods

of being energetic consist of walking, cycling, wheeling, sportsy, and may be performed at any stage of talent and for leisure through everybody. (“Physical activity”, 2020)¹⁵. However, increased degrees of bodily inaction have terrible effects on people's fitness, wellness and great quality of life. Therefore, It is critical to approach “health” as a whole, in place of a chain of separate factors. All kinds of healthy behaviours are linked, and thus individuals should aim for overall well-being and balance as the keys to good health. ¹⁵

Health and happiness Well-being or happiness refers to both positive feelings such as joy or serenity, and to positive states such as those involving flow or absorption of positive emotions. Happiness results in positive emotions that facilitate creative, tolerant thinking and productivity. People who're typically happy, have the subsequent persona traits: extraversion, optimism, excessive shallowness and inner locus of control. Happiness has been determined to be carefully associated with workout, in the short term, proof shows that workout induces happiness, because it outcomes into fine temper states and in the long term, everyday workout ends in more happiness that's regular in numerous conditions of an individual. (Carr, 2004). ² In a study conducted by Perneger et. al 2004 ¹⁴ to explore whether or not self-mentioned happiness is related to mental and physical health status amongst younger adults. The outcomes confirmed that maximum individuals felt glad all the time or maximum of the time. In multivariate analysis, feeling glad all or maximum of the time became strongly related to higher mental health, additionally with the sensation of having sufficient love and affection, and better self-esteem.

Exercise and Happiness. Exercise goes a long way to improve one’s general mood. For instance, there is a large body of literature demonstrating that physical activity effectively reduces depression and anxiety (Ströhle, 2009). ¹⁹ An early literature review by Zhang & Chen, 2019 ²² highlighted the positive associations between physical activity and happiness. It was seen that even a 10-min physical activity per week might result in increased levels of happiness. Mediation effects have been tested in research indicating the positive relationship among physical activity and happiness is probably mediated through fitness and social functioning. The randomized managed trials that basically target older adults and most cancer survivors recommend that each cardio workout and stretching/balancing workout have been powerful in enhancing happiness. Another study found that both men and women who participate more in sports tend to gain more happiness and overall report higher life satisfaction. (Huang et.al ,2012). ⁸ Several other studies have shown that there exists a significant positive correlation between gymming and happiness. (Ola & Singh,2016) ¹³

Exercise and self-esteem. There are many blessings of workout, out of which one of them being a lift in self-esteem. Exercising could make you feel extra comfortable with yourself and boost your belief. Workout can enhance your self-esteem through making your appearance better, however firming muscle groups and dropping weight are simply the beginning. Workout can enhance intellectual health as well. It's been proven to lessen depression, tension and bad moods in addition to alleviating low self-esteem and social withdrawal. In areas of those bad emotions, workout boosts self-esteem and cognitive function. In the short-term, workout has been proven to beautify our temper and impact our minds in the direction of adopting extra advantageous thoughts. In the long-term, bodily workout can enhance our self belief through making us sense accurately our body and abilities ("[5 Ways Exercise Can Boost Your Self-Esteem | Excellence In Fitness](#)", 2020).²⁰ In a study done by [Rasmussen & Laumann, 2013](#)¹⁸ it was seen that exercise does seem to have a positive effect on several aspects of cognition and self-esteem in healthy children and adolescents. Moreover, in a study done by [Malekian & Colleagues ,2014](#)¹¹ which aimed at comparing happiness among male athletes and non-athletes students indicated significant variations among groups in self esteem, lifestyles satisfaction, superb cognition, physical fitness and intellectual fitness and overall happiness. Overall, the degree of athlete students' happiness was better than non-athletes. Another study indicated that middle-elderly ladies can enhance how they understand their circumstance and frame beauty through endured participation in physical activity, growing their self-esteem, and preserving healthful body mass index levels. ([Elavsky, S., 2010](#))⁴

Exercise includes a wide range of physical activities which includes walking, gymming, swimming, martial arts training, aerobic exercises and so on. In recent times as lives get hectic and people get less time to go to various health centers, this study includes individuals who also engage in different forms of activities to stay fit while being at home and how it affects their mental well-being. The current study broadens appreciably the focal point of preceding research in this area, which investigated limited samples that included either athletes or regular exercisers from health centers. Therefore the objective of the present study was to explore the relationship of exercise with happiness and self esteem in a sample consisting of both men and women belonging to the age range of 18-30 years.

On the basis of the above objective following hypothesis were proposed

Ho1: There will be no significant difference between individuals who exercise regularly and those who don't; on the dimension of self esteem.

Ho2: There will be no significant difference between individuals who exercise regularly and those who don't; on the dimension of happiness in life.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

The study consisted of 60 participants out of which 30 exercised regularly (at least 3-4 times per week) and 30 were non exercisers. The sample included unmarried individuals belonging to the age range of 18-30 years. The data was collected from the Delhi NCR region.

B. Tools used in the study

In the study conducted, happiness was measured using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire ([Hills & Argyle, 2002](#));⁷ which has been derived from the Oxford Happiness Inventory, (OHI). It is a highly reliable tool, having reliability of ($\alpha = .91$). Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES); it is a well-validated measure of general self-esteem having a test-retest reliability of 0.8. ([Rosenberg, 1965](#))¹⁷

C. Procedure

For the present study, keeping in mind the objectives, self esteem and happiness was compared among individuals who exercise regularly and those who do not exercise at all. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale was selected for measuring Self esteem, while Happiness was to be measured using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Convenience and purposive sampling was used. The independent variable of the study was exercising. The dependent variables of the study were self esteem and happiness. Participants received the online survey link and completed the survey electronically. The questionnaire included informed consent, general information about the goals of the study and participants were informed of the voluntary basis of their participation and anonymity of data handling. The final number of subjects surveyed in this study was 60. The responses were then gathered and scoring was done. After compiling the results, the statistical analysis was carried out using t-test.

III. RESULT

The results of the study were calculated by performing t-test. Table 1 demonstrates the mean and t scores of the participants for self-esteem. Figure 1 is the graphical representation of the mean scores of the participants for self-esteem. Table 2 demonstrates the mean and t scores of the participants for happiness.. Figure 2 is the graphical representation of the mean scores of the participants for happiness.

Dimensions	Number of Participants (n)	Mean scores	t- value
Self-Esteem among participants who exercise regularly	30	21.77	0.644
Self-Esteem among participants who do not exercise at all	30	21.23	

Table 1: Mean scores and t-value of the participants who exercise regularly and who do not exercise at all

*significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Dimensions	Number of Participants (n)	Mean scores	t- value
Happiness among participants who exercise regularly	30	136.7	0.854
Happiness among participants who do not exercise at all	30	124.3	

Table 2: Mean scores and t-value of the participants who exercise regularly and who do not exercise at all

*significant at 0.05 level of significance.

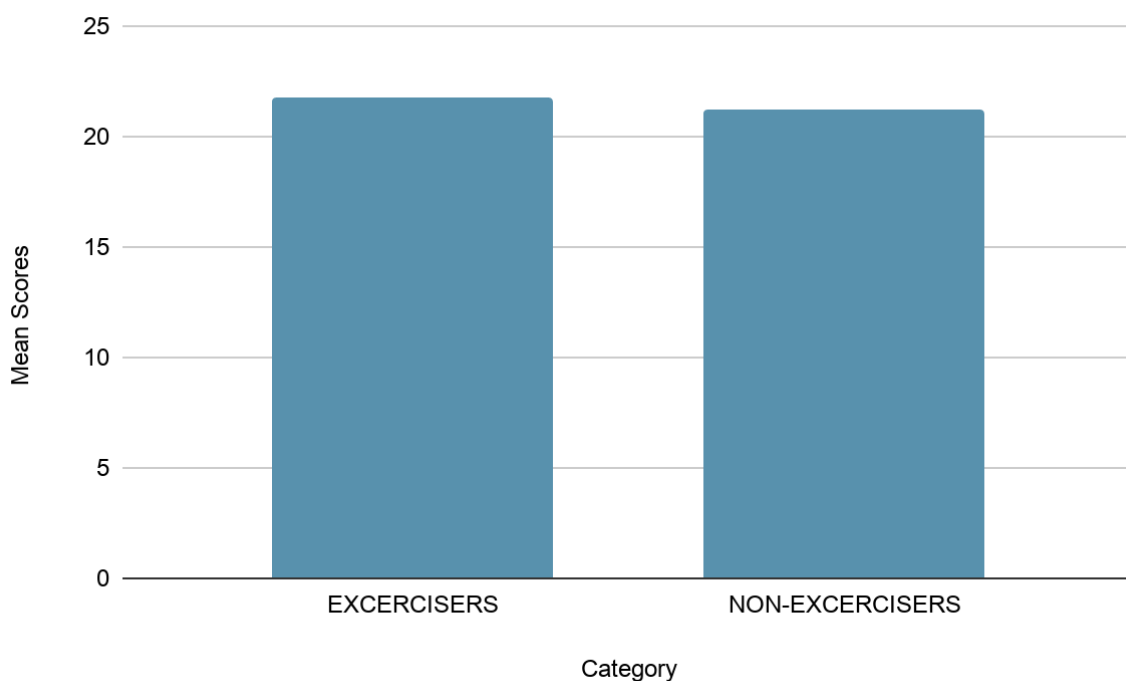


Fig. 1: Mean scores of participants on Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale

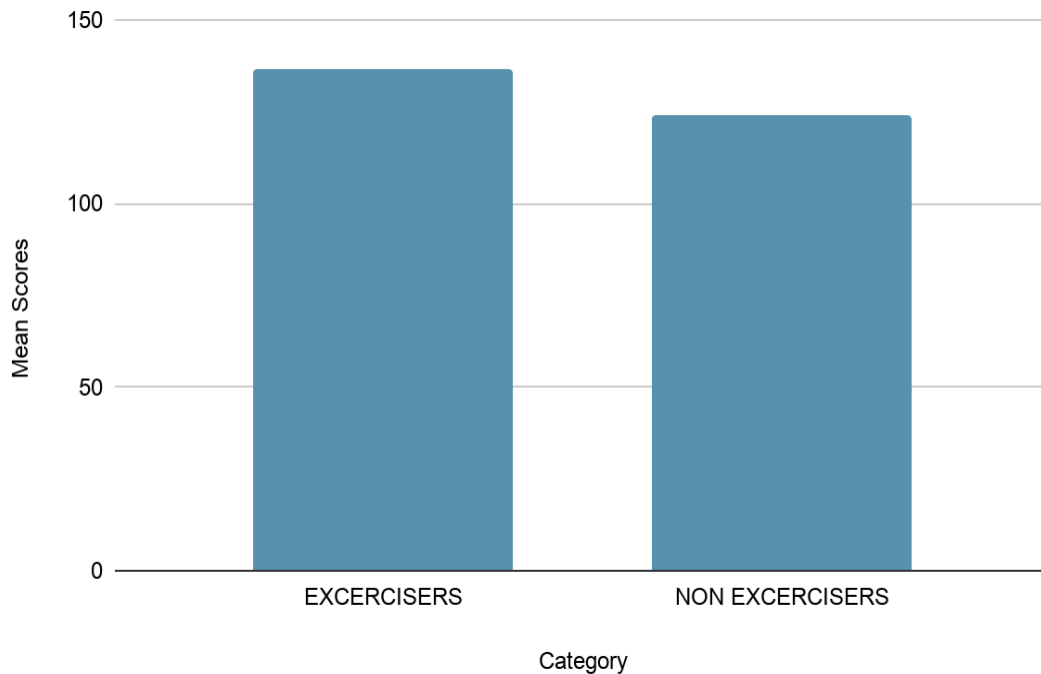


Fig. 2: Mean scores of participants on Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

IV. DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to study the impact of exercise on self esteem and happiness. Exercise can be any bodily movement done for maybe a minimum of 10-15 minutes per day, however it is always planned and repetitive in nature. Different individuals may perceive the term exercise very differently depending upon their preferences, area of interest, health habits and their daily schedules. Similarly different individuals engage in physical exhaustion of their bodies depending upon subjective interpretations of their physical as well as mental health. Some people may just do it as part of their leisure activity, for others it may act as an escape from daily stressors making them feel happy and healthy and for some it may be a source of livelihood. Overall exercising directly or indirectly tends to play an important role in maintaining and enhancing psychological, emotional and physical well being.

A cross-sectional comparative study was conducted to understand the impact of exercising on self-esteem and happiness levels of 60 participants (30 exercisers and 30 non-exercisers) using the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Convenience and purposive sampling was used and the age of the sample selected varied from 18 - 30 years. The objective of the present study was to explore the relationship of exercise with self esteem and happiness based on which two hypotheses were proposed.

The first hypothesis states that there will be no significant difference between individuals who exercise regularly and those who don't on the dimension of self esteem. According to the results of the study, the obtained value of t at 0.05 level is 0.644 (refer table 1). Since the

obtained value of t is less than t critical at degree of freedom 58, we retain the null hypothesis accepting that there is no significant difference between the self esteem levels of regular exercises and non-exercisers. Table 1 and graph 1 demonstrates the mean scores of exercises and non-exercisers which are 21.77 and 21.23 respectively. This depicts that there is not much difference in the level of self esteem between the participants of two groups.

There may be many other factors contributing to how an individual forms a perception about themselves than just exercising. Two of the most important influences that may determine an individual's level of self-esteem are his or her social interactions and the media. Spending quality time with loved one's and what they believe about the person largely influences one's perception of self, thus impacting one's social self esteem. For example, [Gorbett, K., & Kruczek, T. 2008](#)⁶ found that high levels of family cohesion and number of siblings significantly predicted strong social self-esteem. Researches have shown that there exists an inverse relation between self esteem and usage of social media. An increase in social media usage causes the self-esteem of individuals to decrease ([Jan et.al 2017](#)).⁹ Additionally, one's experiences in life, personality, gender and age significantly affects their self esteem levels. In a study on age and gender differences in self esteem, [Bleidorn, et.al 2016](#)¹ found age-related increases in self-esteem from late adolescence to middle adulthood and gender gaps (males consistently reported higher self-esteem than females).

The second hypothesis states that there will be no significant difference between individuals who exercise regularly and those who don't on the dimension of happiness. According to the results of the study, the obtained value of t at 0.05 level is 0.854 (refer table 2).

Since the obtained value of t is less than t critical at degree of freedom 58, we retain the null hypothesis accepting that there is no significant difference between the level of happiness among regular exercises and non-exercisers. Table 1 and graph 1 demonstrates the mean scores of exercises and non-exercisers which are 136.7 and 124.3 respectively.

The meaning of happiness may differ from individual to individual, what makes one person happy may not necessarily make another person feel good. One out of the many other factors that might play an important role in determining the level of happiness of an individual is family and other social relationships. Many researches have indicated that physical activity is related to higher levels of happiness, but this relationship disappeared in the presence of social functioning. A structural equation modelling (SEM) showed an indirect association between physical activity and happiness. In this model, social functioning was found to be the only variable directly associated with happiness. (de Souto Barreto, P. 2014).³ The psychological effects of physical activity may also depend on the personality traits of individuals. Nejadghani A., 2017¹² found that physical activity has the maximum impact on changing happiness levels in people with an extroverted personality and has the lowest impact in humans with neurosis and unadjusted type. Moreover, one's attitude towards life and how one deals with daily problems and hassles can influence one's experience of happiness. Happiness can also be affected by cognitive patterns, for example seeing opportunities instead of threat and generally trusting and liking other people.

The above mentioned arguments provide us with some of the reasons that contribute to the findings of our study that there does not exist a significant difference between the levels of self esteem and happiness among those who exercise regularly and those who don't. These results are supported by some of the researches done in this area. In a correlational study done by Rivers, C., & Dilger, J. 2015 no significant relationships between exercise, self-esteem, happiness, and body image was seen.¹⁶ Lyubomirsky, et. al. 2006 found that happiness can be best predicted by one's mood and temperamental traits (i.e., extraversion and neuroticism), social relationships (lack of loneliness and satisfaction with friendships), goals in life, and global life satisfaction.¹⁰ By contrast, the best predictors of self-esteem are inherited traits related to agency and motivation such as optimism and lack of hopelessness. Therefore, exercise may be one of the ways to improve one's physical and mental health but overlapping factors also contribute as strong predictors of self esteem and happiness.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to assess the impact of exercise on levels of self esteem and happiness. Findings show that there exists no significant difference between individuals who exercise regularly and those who do not on the dimensions of self esteem and happiness. Thus it is safe to say that exercise does not significantly affect self-esteem and happiness of a person.

This research is subject to several limitations. Due to time constraint the method opted for selecting participants was purposive and convenience sampling based in Delhi NCR, which has region specificity limiting the generalisation of the study. The research only focuses primarily on unmarried participants so the findings may not indicate this trend among married people. Another potential limitation is the age bracket of 18-30 which limits the findings. Additionally, participants' motives for exercising were also not investigated which could give important insights for example, some people may exercise under social pressure of achieving an ideal body type as promoted in their culture. Alongside the study doesn't identify factors such as personality characteristics and socio-economic conditions of the participants.

Few suggestions for future research. To begin with, age, employment and marital status can also be considered as independent variables for a comparative study. In addition, a longitudinal study can be conducted in order to observe the patterns of change if any, in the level of self esteem and happiness between people who exercise regularly and those who do not.

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