

The Role of Recreational Physical Activities in Reducing Chronic Diseases in the Elderly

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Summary:

The study aimed to identify the role of recreational physical activity as a suitable means to manage and stabilize health problems in the elderly and alleviate them. The researchers used the descriptive method due to its suitability for the nature of the study. The sample consisted of 30 elderly individuals who practice recreational physical activities in the city of Ouargla, Algeria. To collect data, the researchers used a questionnaire comprising 9 items. Statistical data was processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study concluded that recreational physical activity plays a role in alleviating and stabilizing physical health problems in the elderly. The study recommends giving importance to recreational physical activities due to their numerous benefits in the health, educational, social, psychological, and economic fields, emphasizing the significance of recreational activities in the lives of individuals, especially the elderly.

Keywords: Elderly, Recreational Physical Activities, Health Problems

I- Introduction :

Physical activity in its broad sense encompasses all types of physical activity performed by humans in general. It is a primary manifestation of various cultural aspects of human society, infiltrating all daily life activities, if not constituting social life itself, ranging from biological duties to areas of education, work, production, defense, and services such as recreation and filling leisure time, traditions, and social phenomena (Al-Khuli, 2002).

Researchers in Algeria, through their work in the sports field, have observed a lack of attention to the elderly's health and sports aspects. There are no specific sports programs for them, nor is there regular health monitoring, such as periodic medical check-ups, as is done for school students. This is also observed in the city of Ouargla, leading to the emergence and spread of many diseases among the elderly, especially contemporary diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, arthritis, osteoporosis, obesity, and hypertension.

Physical activity has always been an integral part of individual and family life across different civilizations and has contributed to family cohesion and social life through various activities. It has brought happiness, joy, and security through recreational activities during leisure time and various celebratory events, positively affecting individuals' psychological and social security, as well as their health and medical life (Al-Khuli, 2002).

This prompted us to pose the main question: Is practicing recreational physical activity a suitable means to alleviate health problems in the elderly?

I.1 - General Hypothesis:

Practicing recreational physical activities is an important means to alleviate health problems in the elderly.

I. 2- Research Importance: The importance of this study lies in emphasizing the role of physical and sports activities in protecting individuals from diseases or reducing their severity and controlling them. This study highlights the significant role recreational physical activities play in the general health of individuals, especially the elderly, as they:

- Help recognize the importance of recreational physical activity in maintaining overall health and preventing contemporary diseases.
- Encourage the elderly and those with chronic diseases to engage in recreational physical activities to maintain health and overcome these diseases.

I. 3- Study Objectives:

- To demonstrate the role of recreational physical activity in reducing physical health problems in the elderly.
- To show the role of recreational physical activity in managing and stabilizing physical health problems in the elderly.

II– Methods and Materials:

II -1- Study Terms: Physical Activity: It represents various forms of physical activity in educational institutions and is part of education, with three forms: physical education class, internal activity, and external activity. It provides individuals with extensive experiences and skills enabling them to adapt to their society and shape their lives, helping them keep up with the era's development and growth (Al-Mansour, 1971).

Operational Definition: Recreational physical activity includes various skills and movements that individuals can acquire at any age to improve their quality of life by better adapting to their environment and society. It represents the level expressed by the study sample regarding their practiced physical activity, enhancing their circulatory system, moving body parts, and providing psychological comfort.

Recreation: It means refreshment and vitality through activities practiced during leisure time, free from work commitments. It is a purposeful and enjoyable activity practiced voluntarily with self-motivation and in various legally permitted forms, often during leisure time. It aims to develop individuals physically, mentally, socially, and enhance their interaction and cohesion, supporting their sense of belonging and loyalty to their community, and avoiding any tendency toward deviance affecting social integrity (Al-Munim, Alexandria).

Recreational Physical Activity: In its specific sense, it refers to games or sports practiced during leisure time, free from intense competition. It involves sports practiced outside the federal and organizational framework. Recreational physical activity is a means of occupying leisure time, having significant importance in the lives of developed societies. It is a physical activity based on the principle of enjoyment and contains a life philosophy (Druze and Al-Khuli, 1990).

Operational Definition of Recreational Physical Activity: It represents the level expressed by the study sample regarding their practiced physical activity during leisure time to release excess energy and relieve daily life pressures.

Physical Health: Defined by the World Health Organization as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Operational Definition: It represents the level expressed by the study sample regarding their physical health as the well-being of the body and organs, performing their functions optimally.

Physical Health Problems in the Elderly: Definition of Physical Disease: A physical disease involves a change in the body's physiology and the blood's chemistry that nourishes the body organs, leading to a disorder in body performance. Understanding the physical disease

process helps us know the internal activity affecting and changing the disease's severity (Salama, 2008).

Physical Health Problems: Common health problems in the elderly include hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, obesity, and heart disease. Researchers have focused on the most common five diseases affected by physical activity, which are:

- **Obesity:** Directly related to other contemporary disease risks, with the greatest danger in individuals with excess belly fat (waist circumference more than 40 cm for men and 35 cm for women). Exercise helps burn excess calories, and with regular exercise, men can reduce total body fat and belly fat, lowering risks of high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes. Following a diet and regular exercise is the only way to reduce excess body fat and maintain a healthy weight.
- **Cardiovascular Diseases:** Refers to disorders affecting the heart and the vascular circulatory system, including hypertension, arteriosclerosis, angina pectoris, and stroke (Mohamed, 2015).
- **Hypertension:** The force exerted by the blood on the artery walls as it flows through the body. Blood pressure is measured by the pressure blood exerts on the artery walls, consisting of systolic pressure (when the heart muscle contracts) and diastolic pressure (when the heart muscle relaxes). Blood pressure is considered high if it exceeds the normal rate of 120/80 mm Hg, and if it rises above 140/90, it is considered a disease (Mohamed, 2015).
- **Diabetes:** It means an increase in blood sugar levels due to a lack of insulin, the hormone that helps move glucose from food into cells for energy. When insulin is not produced sufficiently or cells cannot respond to its effect (insulin sensitivity), glucose accumulates, damaging the body's blood vessels (Mohamed, 2015).
- **Arthritis:** A joint is where two or more bones meet, covered with a smooth layer called cartilage. Bones are connected by ligaments and tendons linking bones and muscles. Muscles, ligaments, and tendons balance and move the joint. Arthritis is one of the most common medical problems, with over 100 types, varying in causes, symptoms, and treatments. Inflammation is a natural body response to injury or illness, characterized by swelling, pain, and stiffness in affected joints, sometimes developing into rheumatism (Mohamed, 2015).

Elderly: Linguistically: An elderly person is described as "aged" if he has grown old. Arabs use synonyms like "Sheikh" (old man), indicating someone with evident age and gray hair, often applied to those over fifty. The term "Elderly" is used for the peak of aging and "Kahl" for middle age, all indicating old age, with anyone beyond youth considered elderly (Arabic Dictionary, 1990).

Technically: Individuals aged 60 years or older, where physical and mental functions begin to decline more clearly than in previous stages of life (Rabie, 2008).

Elderly Age Classifications:

1. Young elderly: 60 to 74 years old.
2. Middle elderly: 75 to 84 years old.
3. Old elderly: 84 years or older.

Researchers sometimes use "aging" and "advancing in age" interchangeably, referring to the same meanings. Aging is a complex concept used differently, including chronological age, biological age, psychological age, and social age (Al-Fati and Al-Mazloun, 2017).

Operational Definition: Refers to individuals aged 60 years or older.

II -3- Previous Studies:

1. Study by Syed Al-Haj (2018): "Effectiveness of Some Recreational Sports Activities in Improving Psychological Adjustment and Life Satisfaction in the Elderly" (Ph.D. thesis, Science and Techniques of Physical Education and Sports Activities, specializing in Sports and Health). The study aimed to understand the effectiveness of recreational sports activities in improving psychological adjustment and life satisfaction in the elderly. The sample consisted of 20 practitioners aged 50 to 60, divided into experimental and control groups. The study concluded that proposed recreational sports activities improved psychological adjustment and life satisfaction in the experimental group.
2. Study by Aslami Nouria (2018): "Designing a Preventive Motor Guide to Improve Some Physical and Psychological Health Variables in Elderly Women (60 years and above)" (Ph.D. thesis, Science and Techniques of Physical Education and Sports Activities, specializing in Sports and Health in Old Age). The study aimed to understand the role of the proposed preventive sports program in improving physical health variables in elderly women. The sample consisted of 16 elderly women, divided into control and experimental groups. The study concluded that the proposed program positively affected physical health variables in elderly women.
3. Analytical Study by Mahmoud Sayed Hashem (2013): "Challenges and Motivators of Physical Activity for the Elderly in Light of Some Demographic Variables" (College of Physical Education for Boys, Helwan University, Egypt). The study aimed to understand the challenges and motivators associated with physical activity for the elderly. The sample consisted of 384 elderly individuals (268 men and 116 women) aged 60 to 79. The study found that challenges included weak vision, fatigue, lack of family encouragement, and limited ability to purchase sports equipment, while motivators included better sleep, improved balance, enjoyment, happiness, and improved overall health.
4. Study by Belaidouni Mustafa and Ben Zaidan Hussein (2013): "Effect of a Proposed Recreational Sports Program to Improve Some Physical Attributes of the Elderly (50-65 years)" (Journal of Science and Technology of Physical Activities). The study aimed to understand the effect of the proposed recreational sports program in improving some physical attributes of the elderly. The sample consisted of 20 elderly individuals divided into control and experimental groups. The study concluded that the proposed program positively affected physical attributes like general endurance, arm strength, and flexibility.

II -3 Commentary on Previous Studies:

The review of previous studies revealed that most addressed the role of recreational activities on the health of the elderly in various aspects (psychological, social, and physical). Our study aligns with these in focusing on the elderly but differs in some variables, such as the methodology, as most used experimental methods.

II -4 Methodology:

Research methodologies vary according to the studied topics to uncover the truth. Abdulrahman Badawi defined it as "the art of correctly organizing a series of various ideas to uncover the truth when we are ignorant of it, or to prove it when we know it" (Bouhouche and Al-Dhenibat, 2001). The descriptive-analytical method was chosen for its alignment with the nature of this study.

II -5- Study Population:

The study focused on the elderly practicing recreational physical activities in Ouargla city. The exact number is unknown due to the lack of statistics from the Directorate of Youth and Sports and statistical institutions.

II -6 - Study Sample:

The sample consisted of 30 elderly individuals aged 60 to 75, practicing recreational physical activities, selected intentionally.

II -7- Data Collection Tools:

The researchers used a questionnaire and interviews to gather information to answer the study question.

II -8- Tool Validity and Reliability:

II -8- 1- Face Validity: The questionnaire was presented to several judges, with an attached comprehensive form detailing the study topic, problem, general hypothesis, and the temporary solution.

II -8- 2- Reliability: The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) calculated was 1.000, indicating tool reliability.

III- Results and discussion :

The results of the questionnaire, calculating arithmetic means and standard deviations for each item, were considered using the three-point Likert scale.

Table 1: Likert Scale Distribution

Weighted Mean	Level
1 to 1.65	Disagree
1.66 to 2.31	Agree to some extent
2.32 to 3	Agree

Based on the information, the following results were obtained:

Table 2: Study Results

Statements	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Note	Rank
I feel physically better when practicing physical activity	2.93	0.36	Agree	2
Practicing physical activity reduces my doctor visits	2.87	0.34	Agree	4
My heart rate improves when practicing physical activity	2.90	0.40	Agree	3
Practicing physical activity helps stabilize my disease	2.90	0.40	Agree	3
Practicing physical activity relieves some pains	2.77	0.62	Agree	6
Practicing physical activity makes me eat well	2.83	0.53	Agree	5
Practicing physical activity helps me drink a lot of water	3.00	0.00	Agree	1
Practicing physical activity helps me maintain my weight	2.87	0.50	Agree	4
Practicing physical activity helps me maintain a good posture	2.87	0.50	Agree	4
Overall Mean	2.87	0.22	Agree	

The results in Table 2 indicate that all statements received a high level of agreement from the study sample, with an overall arithmetic mean of 2.87. This suggests that most of the sample agrees that practicing physical activity helps stabilize and overcome physical diseases (contemporary diseases) and reduces doctor visits, aligning with Nouria's study findings.

The study concluded that recreational physical activity plays a significant role in alleviating health problems in the elderly in Ouargla, reducing doctor visits.

Recommendations:

- Encourage the elderly to practice recreational physical activities.
- Provide facilities that encourage recreational physical activities.
- Promote the culture of practicing physical activities from a young age and encourage continued practice.
- Highlight the health, psychological, and mental benefits of physical activities.

- Allocate special times for the elderly to practice physical activities in various spaces.

IV- Conclusion:

This study focused on the importance and role of recreational physical activity in reducing health problems in the elderly. Using questionnaires in the practical phase, the study found that recreational physical activity helps alleviate health problems in the elderly. Therefore, recreational physical activity plays a vital role in reducing health problems in the elderly, necessitating attention and awareness of its practice. The benefits of recreational physical activity are numerous, and continued research in this field is essential to encourage widespread practice.

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