

Physical activity, lifestyle and leisure constraints in a selected female population

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Abstract

Research has revealed that physical activity and a healthy lifestyle are inter alia considered as crucial factors in maintaining optimal health. These relationships are however influenced by age and sex. Women are often constrained in their ability to reach optimum levels of physical activity participation and healthy lifestyle. The aim of this study was to determine the relationship of physical activity participation and lifestyle with the constraints experienced by a selected group of women. The respondents in this study included 440 South African Caucasian women, aged 30-65 years ($\bar{x} = 42.98 \pm 9.34$) that were randomly selected in an urbanised community. Data were collected by using questionnaires reporting demographic information as well as physical activity participation, lifestyle and constraints to participation. From the descriptive data, it is clear that the most frequently reported individual constraints are those associated with the ambivalent role of women in their daily life. Physical activity and lifestyle showed individual significant relationships with the total constraints to participation of women. Using one-way analysis of variance it became clear that when constraints for participation decrease, the lifestyle of women became significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) better. A multiple regression analysis indicated that lack of opportunities, work and school responsibilities, insufficient money, lack of friends to participate with, family responsibilities, feelings of guilt, poor health and lack of time, contribute significantly ($p \leq 0.05$) to total constraints regarding participation.

Key words: *Female, physical activity, lifestyle, leisure constraints.*

Introduction

A sedentary and an unhealthy lifestyle are inter alia major risk factors in the development of chronic ill-health and hypokinetic diseases (McGinnis, 1992; Bouchard & Shephard, 1994; Storm, 2001; Wilders, 2002, Wang, McDonald, Champagne & Edington, 2004). Despite the salutogenic effect of physical activity (Bolton, Wilders & Strydom, 2004) many people still remain physically inactive. Multiple reasons for this sedentary lifestyle exist, however research indicates several obstacles to participation (Jackson, 1991; Jackson & Henderson, 1995). In South Africa political changes during the last decades lead to a considerable influx of women into the labour market (Loock, 2008). This situation may result in a deterioration of their health (Popovic, McNeill, Chette,