

Work-load and Exercise Participation among middle-aged University of Lagos Senior Administrative Staff

By

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Abstract

This study surveyed the University of Lagos middle aged senior administrative staff's participation in physical activities vis-à-vis the variables of workload, place of residence, availability of sport facilities and perception on value of exercise. Using a self-developed questionnaire, respondents were purposively surveyed from among senior administrative staff. The reliability of the questionnaire was 0.87 using test re-test method while face and content validity was used to determine the validity of the instrument. The inferential statistics of Chi-square was used to test hypotheses. Findings of the study indicated that senior administrative staff of University of Lagos were not exercisers; they were unaware of sport facilities available at their disposal on campus; and closing late from work may make engagement in physical exercise difficult. The study however showed that the respondents attached value to participation in physical activities. The study recommends that the University authority should institutionalize wellness programme for staff; experts in exercise physiology should be commissioned to run seminars on exercise and the University should provide incentives for staff participation in the wellness programme.

Keywords: Work-load; Senior administrative staff; physical activity; wellness programme.

1. Introduction

With advancement in technological development, mankind is gaining a lot in work efficiency. Some tasks which used to take days can now be accomplished within minutes. Accuracy, to a greater extent can now be guaranteed. We do not need to sweat when cutting the grass as the machine is there to do the work for us. With just the press of a button, you have all the information you need on a particular issue without having to walk to the library. We can go on and on mentioning how easy life can be in this era of technology. These gains however are not without costs. One of the many un-noticeable costs of the gains of technology is self-deprivation of physical activities. We take a ride while we should have walked. A lot of things we ordinarily should have done manually are now done for us by machines and other technological devices. Even standing up in the sitting-room to change the television channel is now the concern of the television set's 'remote control'.

Aging gracefully involves engaging in a range of healthy lifestyles. Prominent among these healthy life styles is regularly physical exercise. World Health Organisation (2011) recognizes physical exercise as a key factor in promoting health of the individual especially older persons. We need to realize that physical exercise should not be delayed till old age. It is a practice that should start early in life for it to be part and parcel of the individual for a maximum carry-over advantage. If one has missed the starting early target, the middle age is another starting point to consider. Going by 2012 report on life expectancy in Nigeria which is 47 years (Vanguardonline, 2012), the middle age of Nigerians should be put around 36 years. Often, this is a period when most workers are moving up in their career and the tendency is for them to be more involved in their work and consequently neglect other aspects of their wellbeing. This current study assessed the University of Lagos senior administrative staff's participation in physical activities in

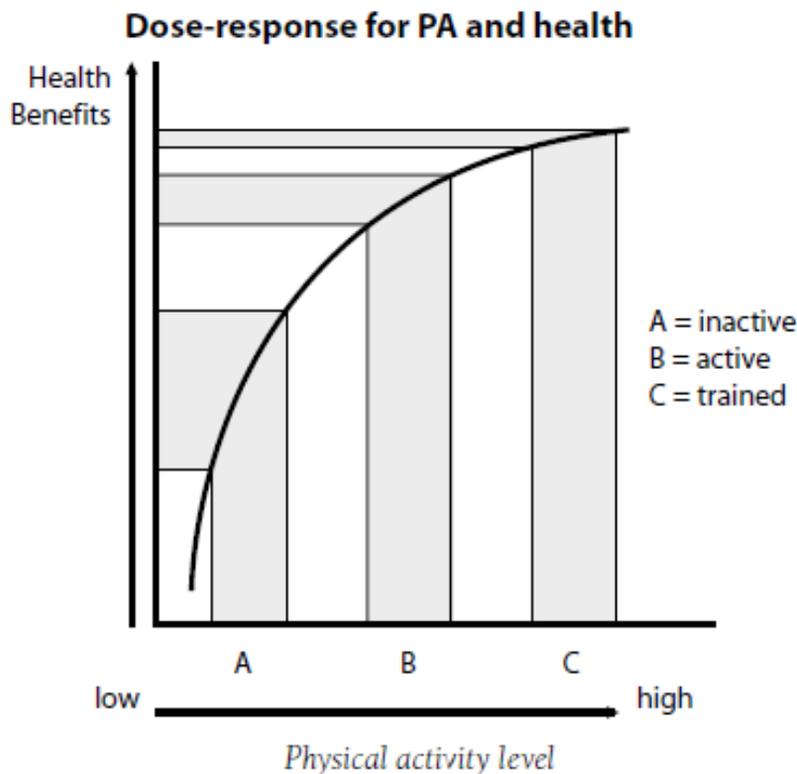
relation to their work-load and variables of residence, availability of sport facilities and perception on value of exercise.

2. Framework

Participation in physical activities has been recognized as a way of promoting fitness and reducing non communicable diseases (WHO, 2006). As part of efforts to raise level of physical activity, Steps to Health (2007) is of the opinion that attention should be directed at reducing sedentary behaviour and in addition, combined with promoting physical activity. Looking at physical inactivity from both health and economic perspectives, WHO (2006) stress that physical inactivity is a “major independent risk factor, causing about 3.5% of disease burden and up to 10% of deaths in the European Region”. Even when the economic cost attributed to physical inactivity is enormous, the health impacts and their related cost can be reversed by increasing the level of physical activity.

The Dose-response curve (figure 1) below illustrates that health benefits from physical activity increase as physical activity level increase.

Figure 1



Source: Steps to Health (2007)

In an attempt to promote physical activity, a major move was made in May 2004 by WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. At the World Health Assembly in 2004, member states were provided with a political mandate to initiate or expand actions to curb chronic disease and obesity by giving attention to two major risk factors – physical and diet.

One other important document focusing on the importance of physical activity came in 2006 by the European Charter on Countering Obesity. At the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Obesity held in Istanbul, Turkey in November 2006, opportunity for concerted action and increased attention to physical activity were provided with the intention to improve public health.

Studies on exercise as reported by The New York Times (2013) indicate that age should not be a barrier to exercise. Findings of studies show that older person who exercise twice a week can significantly increase their body strength, flexibility, balance and agility.

However older adults should not go into exercise without a guide. Exercise at that level should be viewed as a physician prescribing drugs for treatment that is not done loosely. It should be handled by experts.

Literature provides the under-listed tips which are to be considered for safety before going into exercise (The New York Times, 2013):

- Older people should have complete physical medical examination.
- There should be professional instruction before engaging in exercise.
- It is advised that exercise should start low and go slowly.

Specifically for sedentary older people, one or more of the underlisted exercises can be helpful and safe: Low-impact aerobics, gait (step) training, balance exercises, self-paced walking and lower leg resistance training.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to establish the level of participation in physical exercises among senior administrative staff of the University of Lagos with the view of how physical activities can be incorporated into the respondents' busy work schedule of middle-aged senior administrative staff of the University of Lagos.

3. Materials and methods

Population and Samples

Population of the study comprised University of Lagos senior administrative staff. As at the time of data collection, June 2013, total work strength of the University senior administrative staff was put at about 1,625.

A total of 177(104 men and 73 women) were involved in the study. The sample was purposively selected taking into consideration the following factors: a spread across all categories of senior administrative staff; and age range not lower than 40 years.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were developed and tested:

- Workload does not have effect on participation in physical activities among University of Lagos middle-aged senior administrative staff.
- Pattern of residence does not have any effect on participation in physical activities among University of Lagos middle-aged senior administrative staff.
- Availability of sport facilities does not have any effect on participation in physical activities among University of Lagos middle-aged senior administrative staff.
- University of Lagos middle-aged senior administrative staff will not have a positive perception on the value of physical activities.

Instrument for Data Collection

A self-developed “staff workload and exercise participation questionnaire (SWEPQ)” was the only instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire had two parts: Sections A and B. Section A solicited demographic information on the respondents. In addition, the section also asked questions on excess workload, how official break time was spent; and respondents’ participation in physical activities. In Section B of the questionnaire, respondents’ perception of value of physical activities was rated. Questions were also raised to find out if respondents were involved in some ‘in-house’ physical activities. The modified likert scale format was used in this section. The face and content validity was used to determine the validity of the instrument while the Test Re-test method of reliability was used to measure the reliability of the instrument with an r value of 0.87.

Procedure for Data Collection

Ten research assistants recruited from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, University of Lagos were trained on the use of the questionnaire. These research assistants administered the questionnaire on the respondents. In some cases, the questionnaire was administered and collected on the spot. In most of the cases, the research assistants collected filled questionnaire after a couple of days. Out of the 300 copies of questionnaire distributed, only 258 were returned giving a response rate of 86%. Questionnaire returned by respondents below 40 years of age were removed, further reducing the usable returned questionnaire to 177. The reason for including age range 30-40 years in the questionnaire was to prevent unnecessary suspicion of the survey targeting specific group of staff for retirement. In recent time, the issue of retirement in the University has been a sensitive issue.

Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics of simple percentage and frequency count was used to present data while the inferential statistics of Chi-square was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

4. Result and Discussion

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Responses	
<i>Sex</i>	Female	73(42.2%)
	Male	104(58.8%)
<i>Age</i>	41-46 years	112(43.4%)
	50-55 years	45(17.5%)
	56 and above years	20(7.8%)
<i>Marital Status</i>	Single	5(2.8%)
	Married	140(79.1%)
	Divorce/separated	25(14.1%)
	Widowed/Widower	7(4%)
<i>Additional Responsibility</i>	Yes	67(37.8%)
	No	110(62.2%)
<i>Time of closing at work</i>	4.00pm	59(33.3%)
	5.00pm	79(44.6%)
	7.00pm	29(16.4%)
	After 7.00pm	10(5.6%)

Table 1 presents information of the senior administrative staff of University of Lagos involved in the study. 73(41.2%) of the respondents were female while 104(58.8%) were male. Majority of the respondents, 110(62.2%) claimed that they do not have additional responsibilities assigned to them outside their regular office schedule. Only 59(33.3%) of the respondents claimed they close at 4.00 pm which is the official closing time. The remaining 118(66.7%) claimed they spent extra hours at work after the official closing time.

Table 2: Respondents' by type of residence and activities during break

Characteristics	Responses	
<i>Residence on Campus</i>	Yes	21(11.8%)
	No	156(88.2%)
<i>Hame distance from office</i>	Walking distance	36(13.9%)
	Not far	45(17.4%)
	Very far	112(43.4%)
<i>Time respondents get home after work</i>	Before 6.00pm	47(26.6%)
	Between 6-7.00pm	44(24.9%)
	Between 7-8.00pm	42(23.7%)
	Between 8-9.00pm	23(13%)
	After 9.00pm	21(11.9%)
<i>Observed official break time</i>	Yes	53(29.9%)
	No	124(70.1%)
<i>Activity during break</i>	Go for lunch alone	55(31.1%)
	Go for lunch with other colleague (s)	42(23.7%)
	Eat in the office	48(27.1%)
	Attend to mails/ read newspaper	13(7.3%)
	Attend to other issues	19(10.7%)

Table 2 shows that a very small proportion of the respondents, 21 (11.8%) reside on campus. 156(88.2%) stay off campus. Only 10(5.7%) claimed that their residence were within a walking distance from their offices. On when they get home after work, 47 (26.6%) of the respondents claimed they get home before 6.00 pm; 86 (48.6%) claimed they get home between 6 – 8pm and 21 (11.9%) claimed they get home after 9.00pm.

Table 3: Participation in physical exercises; types of exercise; and availability of facilities

Characteristics	Responses	
<i>Participation in physical exercises</i>	Yes	92(52.8%)
	No	85(48.2%)
<i>Type of activity</i>	Walking	102(57.6%)
	Jogging	33(18.6%)
	Floor exercise	10(5.6%)
	Aerobics	4(2.3%)
	Dumb-bells	2(1.1%)
	Swimming	2(1.1%)
	Cycling	10(5.6%)
	Dancing	14(8.1%)
<i>Availability of sport facilities at home</i>	Yes	42(23.7%)
	No	135(76.3%)
<i>Availability of sport facilities at work</i>	Yes	27(15.3%)
	No	150(84.7%)

Work-load and Exercise Participation among middle-aged University of Lagos Senior Administrative Staff

Regarding official break time during office hours, only 53(29.9%) of the respondents claimed that they observed official break time while 124 (70.1%) indicated that they did not observe official break time. 97 (54.8%) of the respondents go for lunch either alone or in the company of one or two colleague. 48 (27.1%) ate in their office during break time. 13 (7.3%) attended to mails and read newspapers while 19(10.7%) attended to other issues during official break time.

Table 3 shows that 92(52%) of the respondents claimed they participate in physical exercises while 85(48%) said they do not participate in physical exercises. On availability of facilities for physical activities at home and at work, majority of the respondents, 135(76.3%) said facilities for physical exercises were not available to them at home. The same situation was reported regarding sport facilities at work: 150(84.7%) of respondents claimed there were no facilities for physical activities for them at work.

Majority of the respondents, 102 (57.6%) claimed that they walk. This is followed by 33(18.6%) of the respondents who claimed that they jog. Other physical exercises like floor exercise, aerobics, dumb-bells, swimming, tennis, cycling and dance were not frequently engaged in by the respondents.

Table 4: Means of getting to work/Television watching

		Items	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Never	
<i>Means of getting to work</i>		By car	84(47.5%)	44(24.9%)	42(23.7%)	7(3.9%)	
		By public transport	51(28.8%)	51(28.8%)	63(35.6%)	11(6.2%)	
		By walking	45(24.4%)	17(9.6%)	56(31.6%)	60(33.9%)	
		Partly by walking/partly by public transport	41(25.2%)	41(25.2%)	61(34.5%)	34(19.2%)	
<i>Hours spent on watching television programmes</i>			None	Less than 1 hr/day	1-2 hrs/day	2-3 hrs/day	3 hrs or more/day
		On a week day before 6:00pm	80(45.2%)	52(29.4%)	35(19.8%)	4(2.2%)	6(3.4%)
		On a week day after 6:00pm	25(14.1%)	49(27.7%)	62(35%)	8(4.5%)	12(6.7%)
		On a weekend before 6:00pm	32(10.1%)	46(26%)	40(22.6%)	22(12.4%)	32(18%)
		On a weekend after 6:00pm	20(11.3%)	43(24.3%)	48(27.1%)	25(14.1%)	45(25.4%)

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents 135(76.3%) went to work either in private cars or by public transport as against 45(25.2%) who walk to their offices. There is not much difference in the number of respondents who make part of their journey to work by walking and partly by public transport; 45(25.4%) and 41(25.2%) respectively. On hours spent watching television programmes, majority of the respondents do not watch television during the week before 6.00 pm

Table 5: Summary of Chi-square Analysis of hypotheses 1-4 at 0.05

S/N	Variable	df	Crit-tab	X ² cal Value
1	work-load			23.113
2	Pattern of Residence	3	7.818	168.785
3	Availability of Sport Facilities			21.486
4	Perception on the value of physical activities			171

Table 5 above shows the result of the tested hypotheses. The four null hypotheses were rejected thereby accepting the alternate hypotheses since the calculated values Chi-square values are greater than the table value. The findings are that: work-load, pattern of residence and availability of sport facilities affect the middle-aged senior administrative staff of the University of Lagos' participation in physical exercise. It is also revealed that the respondents have positive perception on the value of physical activities in promoting health.

5. Discussion of findings

The state of health of an individual at old age, to some extent is determined by the experiences of earlier years. Specifically, in relation to lifestyle, what we do that we should not be doing and what we should be doing but neglect are strong factors in this respect. This supposed carelessness expose people to various non-communicable diseases. Worldwide, non-communicable diseases have been identified as leading causes of morbidity and mortality. The WHO (2011) global health risks report implicate the following as leading causes of mortality: high blood pressure (13% of total death); tobacco use (9%); high blood glucose (6%); physical inactivity (6%) and obesity (5%). Even when physical inactivity is fourth among these risk factors, the fact is that it can influence most of the other causes of morbidity and mortality. This shows how important physical activity is in the prevention and treatment of health conditions (Kruk, 2007). Krut further observed that engaging in moderate physical activity is very important for the primary prevention of chronic diseases and decrease in all causes of mortality. She also stressed that exercise is one of the determinants for physical and psychological well-being. Corroborating this position, WHO (2011) indicated that with physical activity, there is decrease mortality and age-related morbidity especially in older adults.

In spite of the advantages of physical activities, many people do indulge in sedentary lifestyle environmental challenges. Identifying and charting a course around these challenges is what is important. As shown by the result of this study, many of the respondents were not exercisers; neither can they be described as people who engaged in physical activities. Closing late from work and getting involved in additional responsibilities like serving on committees, involvement in other special assignment may be a major factor hindering the respondents' participation in physical exercise. In a study on occupational stress on the performance of university lecturers in Nigeria, Anazodo, Onyeizugbe and Agbionu (2012) observed that workload affects the health of Nigerian university lecturers. Even when the respondents in this current study were non-academic staff, the fact remains that their heavy workload prevent them from deliberate physical exercises. This may affect their health negatively, and their performance at work. According to Warren (2005) "many full-time workers say that one of the biggest barriers to getting enough exercise is that there is not enough time in a day"

The fact that most of the respondents stay off-campus is another issue to consider. Taking into consideration the peculiar traffic situation in Lagos, a worker who closes late at work may not get to the house early enough to have a work- out or exercise. He is likely to be tired and his mind may be focused on how to beat the 'traffic jamb' the next morning. Findings of Warren, Oakes and Kathryn (2005) indicate that having the spare time to exercise promotes participation in exercise.

The possibility of the respondents walking to office as against going by private cars or other forms of transportation is also very un-realistic as many of the respondents do not stay on campus. Walking is a good form of exercise, but there should be a conducive atmosphere for walking for it to be safe and meaningful. The Lagos busy roads without side-walks can make walking a very risky pursuit.

Both at home and at work, the respondents claimed that sport facilities were not available. Ironically, the University of Lagos Sports Centre provides good facilities for physical exercise. The problem could be that the respondents were not aware of the facilities, hence depriving themselves access.

One important finding of this study that is heartening is the fact that respondents were aware of the benefits inherent in participation in physical exercises. What is necessary, at present, is to encourage them to start exercising. In changing people's behaviour, some predisposing factors are essential. One of these predisposing factors is belief. That respondents in this study believed there are benefits in physical exercises is an advantage that should be capitalised on. This belief can help them to start exercising if other appropriate enabling factors are put in place.

6. Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is concluded that middle-aged senior administrative staff of University of Lagos are non-exercisers. They are also not aware of the sports facilities available at their disposal on campus. That majority of the respondents do not stay on campus, and that because most of them close late may make participating in physical exercises difficult.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are recommended:

- The university authority should institutionalize exercise for staff. A 'keep fit' programme should be organized for staff regularly.
- Experts in exercise physiology should be commissioned by the University to run seminars on physical exercises. Such seminars should focus more on what exercises the individual worker can do on his/her own even in the office during break time.
- Creating awareness on the importance of physical exercises and available sport facilities will also be necessary to encourage staff members to participate in physical exercises.

8. Suggestion for Further Study

It may be desirable to replicate this same study among academic staff of the University of Lagos for comparison. Such a comparative study will provide a 'wholistic' view point of exercise culture among University of Lagos senior staff.

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