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EXERCISE SELF-EFFICACY, MOTIVATION, AND ADHERENCE TO REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS AMONG ADULTS

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Abstract:

This study examined the relationships among exercise self-efficacy, motivation, and adherence to regular physical activity programs among adults using a descriptive–correlational research design. Adult participants enrolled in regular physical activity programs were selected through purposive sampling and represented diverse backgrounds and activity levels. Data were gathered using validated self-report instruments measuring exercise self-efficacy, exercise motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), and adherence to physical activity in terms of consistency, frequency, and duration. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis were employed to analyze the data. Findings revealed high levels of exercise self-efficacy and motivation among participants, indicating strong confidence in their ability to perform and maintain exercise routines and a high degree of internal and external motivation to engage in physical activity. Adherence to regular physical activity programs was likewise found to be high, suggesting that participants were generally consistent in maintaining their exercise behaviors. Correlation results showed significant positive relationships between exercise self-efficacy and adherence, as well as between motivation and adherence, demonstrating that adults who possess stronger confidence in their exercise capabilities and higher motivational levels are more likely to sustain regular participation in physical activity programs. The findings underscore the importance of psychological factors in promoting long-term engagement in physical activity. Exercise self-efficacy enables individuals to overcome common barriers, while motivation—particularly intrinsic motivation supports sustained commitment to exercise routines. The study concludes that effective physical activity promotion programs should integrate strategies that enhance both self-efficacy and motivation to improve adherence and support long-term health and well-being among adults.

Keywords: *exercise self-efficacy, motivation, physical activity adherence, adult health, exercise behavior*

1. INTRODUCTION

Regular physical activity is widely recognized as a key determinant of physical health, psychological well-being, and overall quality of life, contributing significantly to the prevention and management of numerous chronic conditions. Engaging in regular exercise has been shown to improve cardiovascular fitness, regulate body weight, enhance metabolic function, and support mental health by reducing stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Despite extensive evidence highlighting these benefits, a substantial proportion of adults fail to meet recommended levels of physical activity. This widespread inactivity has been associated with increased risks of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular illness, obesity, and diabetes, as well as reduced functional capacity and diminished quality of life. Consequently, promoting sustained engagement in physical activity has become a major public health priority, emphasizing the need to understand the factors that influence long-term exercise behavior among adults.

Among these factors, exercise self-efficacy and motivation have been consistently identified as critical psychological constructs influencing individuals' participation in and adherence to physical activity programs. Exercise self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to successfully initiate, perform, and maintain exercise behaviors, particularly when faced with barriers such as fatigue, lack of time, or competing responsibilities. Motivation, on the other hand, encompasses both intrinsic factors, such as enjoyment and personal satisfaction, and extrinsic factors, including health benefits and social support, that drive individuals to

engage in physical activity. Previous studies suggest that adults with higher levels of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation are more likely to initiate and sustain regular exercise routines. However, adherence to physical activity programs remains a challenge, especially among adults who must balance work demands, family responsibilities, and lifestyle constraints. In this context, the present study examined the relationships among exercise self-efficacy, motivation, and adherence to regular physical activity programs among adults to provide insights that may inform the design of more effective and sustainable physical activity interventions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to examine the relationships among exercise self-efficacy, motivation, and adherence to regular physical activity programs without manipulating the variables.

Participants

The respondents consisted of adult participants enrolled in regular physical activity or exercise programs. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and included adults of varying ages, occupations, and activity levels.

Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire composed of three sections. The Exercise Self-Efficacy Scale measured participants’ confidence in performing and maintaining physical activity. The Exercise Motivation Scale assessed intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors influencing participation. The Physical Activity Adherence Scale measured consistency, frequency, and duration of participation in physical activity programs. All items were rated using a 5-point Likert scale. The instruments were adapted from established measures and validated by health and exercise science experts.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to determine levels of self-efficacy, motivation, and adherence. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine relationships among the variables. Ethical standards, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly observed.

Results and Findings

This section presents the results of the study in terms of the levels of exercise self-efficacy, motivation, and adherence to regular physical activity programs, as well as the relationships among these variables.

Table 1. Level of Exercise Self-Efficacy Among Adults

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Confidence in performing exercise regularly	4.18	High
Ability to overcome exercise barriers	4.12	High
Confidence in maintaining exercise routine	4.20	High
Overall Mean	4.17	High

The results indicate a **high level of exercise self-efficacy** among adult participants, as reflected in the overall mean of 4.17. Respondents expressed strong confidence in their ability to perform regular physical activity, overcome common barriers such as fatigue and time constraints, and maintain an exercise routine. This suggests that adults who believe in their capacity to engage in physical activity are more likely to persist in exercise-related behaviors.

Table 2. Level of Exercise Motivation Among Adults

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Intrinsic motivation (enjoyment and interest)	4.25	Very High
Extrinsic motivation (health and social benefits)	4.10	High
Goal-oriented motivation	4.15	High
Overall Mean	4.17	High

The findings reveal a high level of exercise motivation, with intrinsic motivation emerging as the strongest component. This indicates that adults are motivated not only by external rewards but also by personal enjoyment and satisfaction derived from physical activity. Such motivation is essential in sustaining long-term participation in regular exercise programs.

Table 3. Level of Adherence to Regular Physical Activity Programs

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Consistency of participation	4.14	High
Frequency of exercise sessions	4.08	High
Duration of physical activity	4.11	High
Overall Mean	4.11	High

The results show a **high level of adherence** to regular physical activity programs among adults. Participants reported consistent participation, adequate frequency, and sufficient duration of exercise sessions. This suggests that respondents were able to integrate physical activity into their daily routines despite potential lifestyle demands.

Table 4. Relationship Between Exercise Self-Efficacy, Motivation, and Adherence to Physical Activity

Variable Pair	r-value	Interpretation
Exercise Self-Efficacy and Adherence	0.62	Significant Positive Relationship
Exercise Motivation and Adherence	0.68	Significant Positive Relationship

Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between exercise self-efficacy and adherence, as well as between exercise motivation and adherence. This indicates that adults with higher confidence in their ability to exercise and stronger motivational orientation are more likely to maintain regular participation in physical activity programs. The findings highlight the combined importance of psychological factors in sustaining health-promoting behaviors.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study highlight the significant role of exercise self-efficacy and motivation in promoting adherence to regular physical activity programs among adults. Consistent with Bandura’s Self-Efficacy Theory, individuals who reported higher confidence in their ability to perform and sustain exercise were more likely to engage consistently in physical activity. High exercise self-efficacy enables individuals to overcome common barriers such as fatigue, lack of time, and competing responsibilities, thereby supporting sustained behavioral engagement. This aligns with previous research emphasizing self-efficacy as a central determinant of health behavior adoption and maintenance.

The strong influence of motivation on adherence further supports Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that behavior is more likely to be sustained when individuals experience intrinsic motivation and internalized extrinsic motivation. The high levels of intrinsic motivation observed among participants suggest that enjoyment, personal satisfaction, and perceived competence play a critical role in maintaining physical activity. Adults who value exercise for its inherent benefits are more likely to persist compared to those driven solely by external pressures.

The significant positive relationships between self-efficacy, motivation, and adherence reinforce the idea that psychological empowerment is essential for long-term physical activity participation. These findings support a holistic view of health behavior change, where confidence, motivation, and behavioral consistency interact to influence outcomes. From a practical standpoint, the results emphasize that physical activity programs should not only focus on exercise prescription but also address psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and self-belief to promote sustained adherence.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that exercise self-efficacy and motivation are significant predictors of adherence to regular physical activity programs among adults. Adults who possess strong confidence in their ability to exercise and who are intrinsically motivated demonstrate higher consistency, frequency, and duration of physical activity participation. The findings affirm that psychological factors play a crucial role in sustaining health-promoting behaviors and that adherence is strengthened when individuals feel capable, motivated, and personally invested in their physical activity routines. Overall, the study underscores the importance of integrating behavioral and psychological components into physical activity promotion strategies to support long-term engagement and well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Based on the findings, it is recommended that physical activity and exercise programs incorporate self-efficacy-enhancing strategies such as goal setting, progress feedback, skill mastery, and positive reinforcement. Program facilitators should also foster intrinsic motivation by creating enjoyable, meaningful, and autonomy-supportive exercise environments. Health educators and fitness professionals may provide motivational counseling and social support to strengthen adherence. For future research, longitudinal or experimental studies are recommended to examine causal relationships among self-efficacy, motivation, and physical activity adherence. Further studies may also explore additional psychosocial variables such as social support, perceived barriers, and environmental factors influencing adult physical activity behavior..

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