

Physical Activity Among Young Educated Saudi Women

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For you my light, beautiful mother and greatest supporter

Fatima Al Ajaji

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Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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Date: 10 / 11 / 2017

Abstract

Physical inactivity is an important risk factor for the long term health of young people. Health risk behaviours established during youth often persist into adulthood, resulting in potentially harmful effects on long-term health. Although research on physical activity in Saudi Arabia is limited, the few available studies reveal high rates of physical inactivity, especially among youth and women. Hence, there is an urgent need to understand the factors that may shape engagement of young Saudi women in physical activity in Saudi Arabia.

This study uses the Social Ecological Model of physical activity to analyse the effects of multiple factors (individual, social environment, physical environment, and policy) on physical activity behaviour among young educated Saudi women (YESW). A sample of YESW aged between 18 and 24 years old currently enrolled as undergraduate students in the Faculty of Health Sciences at one University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia were recruited. The study used a combination of in-depth interviews, focus groups and self-reported surveys to explore YESW's understanding of physical activity and the factors that affect their engagement in it.

The findings highlight a range of individual, environmental and policy barriers to physical activity behaviour among YESW. In addition, findings show how gender influences these factors and shapes physical activity behaviour. Potential intervention strategies include empowering young women in decision making, raising family and male guardians' support for physical activity, and increasing affordable and accessible physical activity options at individual and environmental levels.

Presentations arising out of this thesis

- AlMarzooqi M. Braunack-Mayer A, Xafis V, Salter A, Mahmood A. Walking behaviour among young educated Saudi women; Walking and Cycling Across our Lives, The Australian Walking and Cycling Conference, Adelaide, Australia, July, 2016.
- AlMarzooqi M. Braunack-Mayer A, Xafis V, Salter A, Mahmood A. Gender related barriers to physical activity among young educated Saudi women: A qualitative investigation; Differences, Inequalities and Sociological Imagination, 12th Conference of European Sociological Association 2015, Prague, Czech Republic, August 2015.
- AlMarzooqi M. Braunack-Mayer A, Xafis V, Salter A, Mahmood A. Factors that affect engagement in physical activity among young educated Saudi women. Public Health Association of Australia (South Australia Branch) State Population Health Conference, Adelaide, Australia, October 2014.
- AlMarzooqi M. Braunack-Mayer A, Xafis V, Salter A, Mahmood A. Physical activity among young educated Saudi Women; Health Issues in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Conference, Centre of the Gulf & Arabian Peninsula Studies, Kuwait University, Kuwait, April 2014.

Poster presentation

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“Self-knowledge has no end- you don’t come to an achievement, you don’t come to a conclusion. It is an endless river” ~ Jiddu Kishnmurti

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Abbreviations

YESW	Young Educated Saudi Women
IPAQ	International Physical Activity Questionnaire
GPAQ	Global Physical Activity Questionnaire
ATLS	Arab Teens Life Style Questionnaire
BRFSS	Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance State Questionnaire
MET	Metabolic Equivalent
PA	Physical Activity
BMI	Body Mass Index
U.S.	United States of America
m	Meter
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization
EMRO	The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
PAT	Policy Audi Tool
kg	Kilogram
HEPA	Health Enhancing Physical Activity
PubMed	Public Medicine
CDC	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
ACSM	American College of Sports Medicine

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