

Association Between Physical Activity, Social Withdrawal, and Quality of Life Among Older Adults: A Case Study of Mumbai and Navi Mumbai

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Abstract

The increasing proportion of elderly individuals in India has emerged as a major public health and social concern, particularly in urban regions where lifestyle changes, reduced social interaction, and sedentary behavior are becoming more prevalent. The present study aims to examine the relationship between physical activity, social withdrawal, and quality of life among older adults residing in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.

A case study research design was adopted for the study, involving a purposive sample of 30 elderly participants aged between 65 and 80 years. Data were collected using a structured interview schedule, physical activity questionnaire, quality of life scale, and observation method. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, percentage analysis, and cross-tabulation techniques to identify patterns and relationships among variables.

The findings indicate that a majority of participants were physically inactive, and this inactivity was significantly associated with higher levels of social withdrawal, including reduced communication, isolation, and mood disturbances. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of respondents reported low levels of quality of life. In contrast, participants who engaged in regular physical activity demonstrated better emotional stability, higher levels of social participation, and improved life satisfaction.

The study establishes a clear positive relationship between physical activity and quality of life while highlighting the negative consequences of sedentary behavior on social and psychological well-being. It emphasizes the need for promoting active aging through structured physical activity programs, community engagement initiatives, and supportive policy interventions to enhance the overall well-being of the elderly population.

Keywords: Physical Activity, Social Withdrawal, Quality of Life, Elderly, Active Aging

1. Introduction

Aging is a natural and inevitable process characterized by gradual physiological decline, psychological adjustments, and changes in social roles and responsibilities. With advancements in healthcare and increased life expectancy, the proportion of elderly individuals in India is steadily rising. While longevity is a positive development, it also brings challenges related to maintaining health, independence, and overall quality of life.

for developing effective strategies to improve the well-being of elderly individuals. Physical activity is widely recognized as a crucial factor in promoting healthy aging. Regular participation in physical activities such as walking, yoga, and light exercises helps maintain functional ability, reduces the risk of chronic diseases, and improves mental health. However, many elderly individuals, especially in urban areas, tend to lead sedentary lifestyles due to lack of awareness, limited access to facilities, and age-related health constraints.

In addition to physical inactivity, social withdrawal has emerged as a significant concern among older adults. Reduced communication, isolation, and emotional disturbances are commonly observed among elderly individuals who are less physically active. These factors negatively influence their psychological well-being and overall life satisfaction.

Quality of life in old age is a multidimensional concept that includes physical health, emotional stability, and social interaction. Therefore, understanding the interrelationship between physical activity, social withdrawal, and quality of life is essential.

2. Review of Literature

The concept of active aging emphasizes the importance of continued participation in physical and social activities for maintaining well-being in later life. Several researchers have highlighted the role of physical activity and social engagement in improving quality of life among older adults.

Rowe and Kahn (1997) defined successful aging as a combination of low disease risk, high physical and cognitive functioning, and active engagement in life. Their model emphasizes that aging successfully is not merely about the absence of disease but also about maintaining active participation in daily life.

Havighurst (1961), through the Activity Theory, proposed that individuals who remain physically and socially active experience greater life satisfaction compared to those who withdraw from activities. This theory forms a foundational basis for understanding the importance of engagement in old age.

Chodzko-Zajko et al. (2009) emphasized that regular physical activity improves cardiovascular health, mobility, and psychological well-being among elderly individuals. Similarly, Paterson and Warburton (2010) reported that physical activity reduces functional limitations and enhances independence.

Taylor (2014) highlighted that physical activity plays a crucial role in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety among older adults. This indicates that exercise is not only beneficial for physical health but also for mental well-being.

Berkman and Glass (2000) demonstrated that strong social networks and interactions significantly contribute to better health outcomes. Glass et al. (1999) further emphasized that social participation and productive engagement are associated with improved longevity and functional health.

Netuveli and Blane (2008) reported that quality of life in older adults is influenced by multiple factors, including physical health, social participation, and economic stability. Rejeski and Mihalko (2001) found that physical activity enhances emotional well-being and life satisfaction.

Dishman et al. (2013) concluded that physical inactivity is a major contributor to chronic diseases and reduced quality of life. In the Indian context, Singh and Misra (2009) found that elderly individuals often experience loneliness and reduced social interaction, particularly in urban settings.

Despite extensive research, limited studies have examined the combined relationship between physical activity, social withdrawal, and quality of life among elderly individuals in urban India. This study attempts to fill this gap.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level and patterns of physical activity among elderly individuals
2. To examine the extent and nature of social withdrawal
3. To evaluate the quality of life of elderly individuals
4. To analyze the relationship between physical activity and quality of life
5. To study the association between physical inactivity and social withdrawal
6. To identify factors influencing physical activity participation
7. To examine the impact of social interaction on psychological well-being
8. To suggest measures for improving overall well-being

4. Hypotheses

- H1: There is a significant relationship between physical activity and quality of life
- H2: Lower physical activity is associated with higher social withdrawal
- H3: There is a relationship between social withdrawal and quality of life
- H4: Quality of life differs across activity levels

5. Methodology

The present study adopted a case study research design to examine in depth the relationship between physical activity, social withdrawal, and quality of life among elderly individuals.

The sample consisted of 30 elderly individuals aged between 65 and 80 years residing in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai. A purposive sampling technique was used.

Data were collected using:

- Structured interview schedule

- Physical activity questionnaire
- Quality of life scale
- Observation method

Data collection was conducted through personal visits. Participants were interviewed, and their daily routines were observed. Ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality were strictly maintained.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis reveals that 60% of participants were physically inactive, indicating a high prevalence of sedentary lifestyle. Social withdrawal indicators such as reduced communication (55%) and isolation (40%) were prominent.

Quality of life analysis showed that 47% of participants had low quality of life, while only 20% had high quality of life.

Cross-tabulation analysis demonstrated that physically active individuals had significantly higher quality of life compared to inactive individuals. A majority of inactive individuals were found in the low quality of life category.

These findings clearly indicate a strong association between physical activity and quality of life.

7. Discussion

1. The study confirms that physical activity plays a vital role in enhancing quality of life among elderly individuals.
 2. Physical inactivity is strongly linked with social withdrawal and emotional instability.
 3. The findings support previous research highlighting the importance of physical activity and social engagement.
 4. Urban lifestyle factors contribute significantly to inactivity and isolation.
 5. Physical, social, and psychological dimensions of aging are closely interconnected.
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8. Conclusion

The study concludes that physical activity is a key determinant of quality of life among elderly individuals. Regular engagement in physical activity improves physical health, emotional well-being, and social interaction.

Promoting active aging through structured programs and community participation is essential for ensuring healthy and independent living among older adults.

9. Recommendations

1. Promote physical activity programs such as walking and yoga
 2. Develop community-based activity centers
 3. Encourage family and social support
 4. Conduct awareness programs
 5. Implement supportive government policies
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10. Limitations

- Small sample size
- Limited geographical area
- Case study design
- Lack of advanced statistical analysis
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11. References

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