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RESEARCH ARTICLE

RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT AS A PREDICTOR OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS REGULAR EXERCISE AMONG THE MIDDLE-AGED ADULTS

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Abstract

Exercise refers to any intentional activity aimed to promote or maintains physical fitness and overall wellness. Regular exercise is crucial in maintaining healthy well-being. There is a growing concern that most middle-aged adults commit less to physical exercise. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of middle-aged adults towards regular exercise based on religious commitment. One hundred and six middle-aged adults within the age range of 40-49 (M = 45.04, SD = 2.37) comprising males and females were mainly pooled from the Kogi state civil service between January and March, 2021. A cross-sectional design was adopted. It was hypothesized that religious commitment would significantly account for the variance in adult's attitude towards regular exercise. However, the linear regression analysis conducted on the data revealed no statistically significant effect of religious commitment on attitude towards regular exercise. The study concludes that religious belief does not account for the variation in attitude towards regular exercise among the middle-aged adults in Nigeria.

Introduction: -

Physical inactivity is a growing public health crisis (Al-Hazzaa, 2004; Blair, 2009; Hudson et al., 2020; Kovacić, 2007; Piercy et al., 2015), and has been associated with increased mortality across the globe (Choi & Kwon, 2018; Kohl et al., 2012; World Health Organization, 2017). Lack of exercise is a critical risk factor for a variety of chronic diseases and other health-related issues (Anno et al., 2019; Booth et al., 2012; Etter et al., 2018; Gu et al., 2015; Haileamlak, 2019; Miller et al., 2016; Watson et al., 2015). Thus, the negative outcome of physical inactivity has been investigated around the world (Kamphuis et al., 2007; Pinto et al., 2017; Roschel et al., 2020; Silva et al., 2019; Szender et al., 2016; Zhou et al., 2018).

Certainly, one important aspect of healthy living is engaging in physical activities. Exercise refers to any intentional activity aimed to promote or maintains physical fitness and overall wellness (Kylasov & Gavrov, 2011). The health benefit of regular exercise is widely documented (Barker & Eickmeyer, 2020; Childs & de Wit, 2014; Ling & Rönn, 2014; Luan et al., 2019; Nieman & Pence, 2020; Parr et al., 2020; Petridou et al., 2019; Rice et al., 2019). For instance, it has been proven that regular exercise delays the onset of chronic diseases (Ruegsegger & Booth, 2018), and benefits cardiometabolic, neuromuscular and cognitive function (Zelle et al., 2017). Regular exercise is also one of the most effective method of improving mental health (Lawrence et al., 2017), muscle function and quality of life (Carter et al., 2015), maintains weight loss (Foright et al., 2018) enhances insulin sensitivity in adults (Way et al.,

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2016), reduce risk of cardiovascular disease(Dungey et al., 2017), and improves daytime sleep intensity (Li et al., 2020).

However, despite the benefits of regular physical activity, it is observed that most people within the stage of middle adulthood do not regularly engage in physical exercise thereby leading to much reported decline in health and wellness. Several factors have been reported as predictor variables in regular exercise engagement in Nigeria. These include certain demographic variables, as well as, perceived personal, social and environmental factors (Adegoke & Oyeyemi, 2011; Anjali & Sabharwal, 2018; Awotidebe et al., 2014). However, the present study is aimed to explore religious commitment as a previously unexplored variable that could influence regular exercise participation among the middle-aged adults.

In this study, religious commitment is viewed as an individual's intrinsic value that attempts to reflects self-righteousness and the level to which a person is devoted to religious beliefs and activities and the amount of worth derives from religion's teachings. Religious commitment implicates the role of religion in the personal and social life of man (Ebrahim, et al., 2020). For instance, (Hardin, 2018) reported that religious commitment creates possible script for changing health practices and managing stress.(Steffen et al., 2001) found that increased application of religious coping was associated with reduced exercise among adults.

The primary purpose of the present investigation was to explore how religious commitment may be associated with attitude towards regular exercise. Precisely, we were interested in getting answer to the following question. Can religious related beliefs be associated with how the adults perceive regular exercise? Thus, a specific hypothesis was formulated regarding this question. First, in view of the notion that religious belief is an essential component of every culture and a significant determinant of human behavior (Borzooei, Mahdi., Asgari, 2014), we hypothesized that religious commitment would significantly account for the variance in adult's attitude towards regular exercise.

Method: -

Middle-aged adults within the age range of 40-49 (M = 45.04, SD = 2.37), were enrolled for the study. The participants comprising males and females were mainly recruited from the Kogi state civil service between January and March, 2021.Cross sectional design was adopted. With the aid of contact persons in the respective offices, civil servants that qualified for the inclusion criteria were approached and the aim of the study was explained to them. Thereafter, those who consented to partake in the study were given the study instrument. A total of 122 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and was filled and retrieved on the spot. However, following the assessment of the returned questionnaires, some (16) were improperly filled and were discarded. Hence, only the properly filled questionnaires (106) was used for the study

Measure: -

Attitude towards regular exercise was measured using a developed Attitude towards Physical Activity Scale. The 10-item scale was developed to ascertain the attitudes of the middle-aged adults toward regular exercise. The Likert-type scale was validated following a pilot study and Cronbach alpha .78 reliability coefficient was obtained.

Religious Commitment was measured using the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10; Worthington et al., 2003). The scale has been previously validated and used in Nigeria (Onu et al., 2021)

Result: -

Table 1: -Table showing the frequency and percentage score of attitudes towards regular exercise .

	Frequency	Percent
Positive attitude	56	52.8
Negative attitude	50	47.2
Total	106	100

The table above shows that 52.8% of the respondents indicated positive attitude towards regular exercise, while 47.2% of the participants revealed negative attitude towards regular exercise.

Table 2: -Table showing the linear regression result on the effect of religious commitment on attitude towards regular exercise.

		95% CI for B						
	B	LL	UL	SEB	β	R^2	t	Sig
Model						.021		
Constant	1.56	1.43	1.69	.066			23.43	.000
RC	-.174	-.365	.018	.097	-.174		-1.79	.075

Note. B = Unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = Confident Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; SEB = Standardized error of the coefficient; β = Standardized coefficient; R^2 = Coefficient of determination, ΔR = Adjusted R^2. *P>.0.05

A linear regression analysis was performed to examine the attitude of middle-aged adults towards participation in regular exercise based on religious commitment. The result of the linear regression analysis showed that religious commitment does not statistically predict attitude towards regular exercise, F (1, 104) = 3.231, p > 0.05.

Discussion: -

The current study was set to investigate the predictive role of religious commitment on attitude towards regular exercise among the middle-aged adults. Specifically, the study intended to provide insight to the role that religious belief may play in influencing adults exercise behaviors. First, the study assessed the overall attitudes of the participants towards regular exercise. The percentage score obtained showed that 52.8% of the respondents indicated positive attitude towards regular exercise, while 47.2% of the participants revealed negative attitude towards regular exercise. The finding indicate that most adults understand the relevance of regular exercise to their well-being. Previous study, Poobalan et al. (2012), had reported a correlation between positive attitudes and participation in physical activity. On the other hand, it is observed that a good number of the respondents expressed unfavorable attitude towards exercise and this could be attributed to lack of proper exercise knowledge.

Furthermore, it was hypothesized that religious commitment would significantly account for the variance in adult's attitude towards regular exercise. The result of the linear regression conducted on the data revealed no statistically significant effect of religious commitment on attitude towards regular exercise. Thus, contrary to the research expectation, it appears that religious commitment as a factor is not associated with how adult's perceive regular exercise. The probable explanation to this outcome could be attributed to the perception of physical activity as a non-sinful behavior. It appears that if religious commitment influences exercise behavior, it could be through an interaction with situational factors. Although, religious belief is a crucial determinant of behavior, the result of this study suggests that religion as a variable do not necessarily predict sport engagement. However, when it does influence exercise decision, it could be based on religious related programs and not belief. Rahman et al. (2020) noted that Middle-aged and older adults' attitude towards physical activity can be influenced by different variables, such as age, gender, family, and friends influence and attachment with cultural activities. This absence of evidence of a relationship between religious commitment and attitude towards regular exercise observed in this study, however, should be interpreted with some caution because the study focused on Christianity and Islamic religion as an entity and thereby, neglected interdenominational differences.

Limitation, strength and future direction

Caution is advised in generalizing the outcome of this study because self-report measures of participating in regular exercise poses a limitation. Also, the study samples may not reflect a reliable criterion for generalization. However, the present study contributed to the physical and health literature by dissociating religious commitment from factors that influence exercise behavior among the middle-aged adults in Nigeria. The study recommends that future researchers focus on religious inter denominational differences.

Conclusion: -

The perceived religious influence on health-related behaviors has attracted a huge attention of research. There is a common belief that religiously committed people are healthier because they engage in healthy lifestyles in accord with their religious beliefs (Holt et al., 2014). Thus, it is assumed that this belief will influence exercise behavior, hence, the justification for this study. However, the result of the study did not implicate religious commitment as factor that could account for the variation in attitude towards regular exercise among the middle-aged adults. Therefore, it is concluded that religious commitment does not predict attitude towards exercise participation.

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