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# Gender Study on Understanding the Role of Fitness in Self Concept

**Dr. P. Priyadarsini**
Professor & Head, Department of Management Studies,
Tagore Engineering College, Chennai-127.

**Dr. G. Kerinab Beenu**
Professor & Head, Department of Management Studies,
SA Engineering College, Chennai

**Abstract**

The objective of the paper is to analyses the relationship between self concept and fitness with respect to gender difference. 225 respondents were taken as sample. To evaluate the physical concept Bati can self concept scale was modified and adapted for this study. Self structured questionnaire was used to study the physical fitness. Factor analysis and correlation was applied to find the significant relationship between the study variables.

**Keywords**—Physical fitness, Self-concept, gender difference

## Introduction

Health is the greatest of all possessions is a common saying. There is a growing need for staying fit due changing life styles, ever increasing work pressure and unhealthy food habits. Fitness enhances one's self concept. Self concept is defined as "an individual's opinion of his appearance, strength, body fat, coordination and other related aspects of the physical self. Physical **self-concept** tends to be positively associated with physical activity participation and **exercise** behaviors'. Therefore one's level of fitness activity is realted to his self concept. Further World health Organisation has stated that health is the state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not just absence of disease or illness. In the Present technology driven lifestyle physical fitness has become a challenge for both men and women. The study explores the gender perspective on physical fitness and self concept.

## Physical fitness and Self concept

Various researchers have proved that physical fitness enhances one's self concept.It is also stated that Physical fitness contributes to the prevention of illness or the reduction of its effects through the process of improving self-esteem and also in the improvement of self concept (Gauvin & Spence, 1996, Danel (2011). The same view is supported by Sonstroem and Morgan (1989) who developed a model for the structure of self-esteem which is hierarchical in nature and progresses from an individual's perception of his behavior in certain situations through following categories to the end result of self-concept. The same finding is given by Danel (2011) in his study that in adolescents Physical self-concept and health-related physical fitness are positively correlated .

## Gender perspective on Physical fitness & Self concept

Men and women perceive different physical fitness and indulge in different fitness activities. Elizabath brown & James (1987) in their study among college women found that women showed significant differences in self-concept upon completion of the fitness program, the study proved that the Self-concept profiles of women who attended the fitness program developed. In yet another interesting study it was

found that there was significant elationship between between physical self-concept and physical fitness of elderly individuals The study variables were endurance, balance, muscle strength, muscle power. It was found that elderly individuals' global physical self and general sportiness are correlated to muscle strength. Global physical self is predicted by fitness in females and by concentric muscle strength in males Amesberger (2011), thus the study clearly indicates gender differences in fitness and self concept.

**Objective**

- To analyze the demographic profile of Fitness freaks
- To identify the reasons for one's interest in Exercising
- To explore the perception of individuals self fitness
- To find the relationship between reasons and perceptions on individuals self concept.

**Research Methodology**

The methodology chosen for this research is Descriptive design. A structured questionnaire was framed and used on 225 respondents who reside in Chennai. The sampling technique used by the researcher is convenience sampling since the population study is infinite. The data collected was analyzed using Exploratory Factor Analysis and reasons for exercising and perceptions on physical fitness were identified. The relationship between reasons and perception on self fitness on Self concept was further analysed using correlation analysis .Based on which findings and suggestions are given.

**Demographic Profile**

The demographic profiles of the respondents reveal that most of them 51% are in the age group of 18-25 and 24% in the age group of 26-35. 71% of the respondents are male and 29% are female.

**Table: 1. BEHAVIORAL PROFILE:**

| **Fitness Behaviour** | **Respondents** | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| **EXERCISE AS PART OF REGULAR ACTIVITY** | | |
| Yes | 187 | 83 |
| NO | 38 | 17 |
| **FREQUENCY OF EXERCISE** | | |
| Weekend | 37 | 16 |
| Daily | 96 | 43 |
| | | |
| Twice a Day | 24 | 11 |
| Twice a Week | 31 | 14 |
| Alternative Days | 11 | 5 |
| Others | 26 | 11 |
| **DURATION OF EXERCISE** | | |
| >6 hours Per week | 26 | 12 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4-5 hours Per week | 24 | 11 |
| 3-4 hours per week | 50 | 22 |
| <3 hours per Week | 72 | 32 |
| Not at all | 53 | 23 |

| **Variables with Category** | **Respondents** | |
|---|---|---|
| | **No.** | **%** |
| **AGE** | | |
| 18-25 | 115 | 51 |
| 26-30 | 54 | 24 |
| 30-35 | 31 | 14 |
| Above 35 | 25 | 11 |
| **GENDER** | | |
| Male | 160 | 71 |
| Female | 65 | 29 |

The Behavioural profile captures the fitness behaviour of the respondents and it is observed that 83% of them exercise regularly, 43% workout everyday and most of them workout (32%) for less than 3 hours per week.

**Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Exploratory factor analysis using Principal component method was used to discover underlying common themes for items in the measures of Fitness perception and self Concept. After examining items highly loaded on factors i.e. , more than .6, the researcher labeled factors to represent underlying dimensions. Exploratory Factor analysis using Varimax rotation allowed the researcher to reduce multiple items into a smaller number of latent constructs.3 sub themes were identified for Fitness perception and Self concept emerged as 1 factor.

**Table:2 Explorative Factor analysis**

| **Factor/Factor Item** | **FL** | **Eigen Value** | **% of Variance** | **Cronbach's Alpha** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ENDURANCE FITNESS** | | **2.976** | **42.52** | **.765** |
| I have good enduarance | .833 | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| My endurance matches with my age | .783 | | | |
| My body flexiblity matches my age | .760 | | | |
| **GENERAL FITNESS** | | **1.348** | **19.26** | **.760** |
| I am Completely fit | .891 | | | |
| I feel fit for my age. | .842 | | | |
| **WEIGHT FITNESS** | | **1.013** | **14.47** | **.724** |
| I am underweight for my age (R) | .896 | | | |
| I feel iam obese (R) | .831 | | | |
| **SELF CONCEPT** | | **2.188** | **43.76** | **.765** |
| I am happy and satisfied with my height. | .770 | | | |
| I am physically attractive | .702 | | | |
| I am physically strong. | .659 | | | |
| I feel energetic most of the time. | .624 | | | |
| I don't want any change in parts of my body | .604 | | | |

**Table:3 . Gender Differences on Self Concept and Fitness scale**

| Study Variables | Male N= 160 Mean (SD) | Female N=65 Mean (SD) | Test Statistic | df | Test Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self Concept | 3.83 (.722) | 4.79(.855) | 16.832 | 18 | No significance |
| Endurance Fitness | 3.92(.819) | 3.21(.865) | 6.160 | 11 | No significance |
| General Fitness | 4.24(.767) | 4.22(.847) | 3.475 | 7 | No significance |
| Weight Fitness | 2.73(1.24) | 2.68(1.123) | 11.217 | 8 | No significance |

To analyse the Gender difference on Self concept, Endurance fitness, General Fitness and Weight Fitness a median split analysis was done based on Gender and the mean scores of Male and Female were obtained separately for the four Study variables. It is found that women score high on Self concept when compared to men (Women MS=4.79 & Men MS=3.83), The endurance fitness of Men were higher than women ( Men MS= 3.92 & Women MS=3.21).The variable General Fitness and Weight Fitness did not evoke any Gender difference.

Further Chi square test was conducted to find if there is any difference between Gender and Study variables. It is found that Gender and Self Concept had a value (Asymp.sig .002) which is less than .005 hence significant difference. Gender and Endurance fitness value was (Asymp.sig,000) which is less than .001 hence significant difference. Whereas the Asymp.sig value of General fitness and Gender was 0.235 which is more than .005 and association between Gender and Weight fitness has Asymp'sig .354 which is more than .005 therefore there is no significant difference between Gender and general fitness and Gender and Weight Fitness

**Table:4 . Analysis of Gender difference Relationship between the Study Variables**

| Male | Self Concept | Endurance Fitness | Gender Fitness | Weight Fitness |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Self Concept** | 1.000 | .756** | .624** | -.077 |
| **Endurance Fitness** | .756** | 1.000 | .440** | -.254** |
| **Gender Fitness** | .624** | .440** | 1.000 | -.213** |
| **Weight Fitness** | -.077 | -.254** | -.213** | 1.000` |

| **Female** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Self Concept** | 1.000 | .577** | .608** | -.110 |
| **Endurance Fitness** | .577** | 1.000 | .769** | -.421** |
| **Gender Fitness** | .608** | .769** | 1.000 | -.260* |
| **Weight Fitness** | -.110 | -.421** | -.260* | 1.000 |

** 0.01 level of Significance
* 0.05 level of Significance

It was inferred that with respect to male Endurance Fitness and self concept(r=.756) , General fitness and self concept(r=.624) was strongly correlated. Weight fitness is negatively co related with self concept (r=-.077). In the female aspect self concept and Endurance fitness are positively correlated ( r=.577). With respect to weight fitness and self concept it is negatively correlated for female (r= -.110).

**Conclusion**

This study was embarked to explore the relationship of gender differences in self concept and fitness. Eventually it has found notable differences in the perception on fitness and self-concept among gender group after seriously analyzed the data with statistical tools such as exploratory factor analysis, Chi-square test and correlations. The result of this research signifies that females perceive and positively associate their self concept and their exercise & fitness activities substantially where as males perceive and positively associate endurance fitness is the consequences of their exercise activities. But there is negative evidence from this research that weight fitness has no significance with self concept or gender variances either. This suspicion is supported by empirical evidence. In one study investigating exercise programs and weight loss outcome in women, Church et al. (2009) found that women who exercised did not lose significantly more weight than women who did not exercise. This study is concluded with the key notes which inferred from the analysis that there are differences in gender group in respect to self concept and fitness behavior.

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