



FITNESS AND QUALITY OF LIFE: A STUDY ON WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract : Physical fitness stands as a cornerstone of well-being for working women, serving as both a health safeguard and an empowerment tool. This investigation of 60 employed women frequenting Palakkad fitness centers illuminates how consistent exercise fortifies their ability to manage professional and domestic pressures. Beyond visible physical benefits like improved stamina and weight regulation, participants reported profound psychological gains—enhanced stress resilience, emotional stability, and mental acuity that directly improved their work performance and family interactions. The study uncovers significant implementation challenges shaped by India's socioeconomic context. Professional women face a triple burden: workplace exhaustion from extended hours, financial constraints limiting gym access, and cultural expectations prioritizing family care over self-care. Many participants described collapsing into bed after completing household chores, with 68% citing evening fatigue as their primary exercise barrier. Social constraints emerged as equally potent, with unmarried women facing scrutiny for attending co-ed facilities and married participants requiring spousal permission for fitness expenditures. Yet the study identifies promising adaptive strategies employed by successful participants. Women who integrated micro-workouts throughout their day, taking stairs, performing desk stretches, or engaging in lunchtime walks, maintained better consistency than those relying solely on gym visits. Those with familial support systems reported 2.3 times greater exercise adherence, highlighting how domestic cooperation enables health prioritization. These findings advocate for reimagining fitness support for working women through workplace policies permitting activity breaks, community centers offering women-only hours, and public health campaigns educating families about shared responsibility models. When societies recognize women's fitness as an investment rather than an indulgence, we unlock cascading benefits—healthier mothers, more productive professionals, and stronger communities. The study ultimately calls for dismantling structural barriers to create environments where every working woman can access the transformative power of movement.

IndexTerms - working women, exercise barriers, mental health, family support, quality of life

INTRODUCTION

For contemporary working women, maintaining physical fitness goes beyond exercise it is a critical tool for managing their complex societal roles. Today's professional women balance career growth, household responsibilities, childcare, and elder care, leaving little room for personal health. Ironically, regular exercise, which could enhance their ability to manage these demands, is often overlooked. The health impacts are significant. Sedentary office lifestyles lead to chronic back pain, metabolic disorders, and persistent fatigue. However, physical activity addresses these problems by building physical resilience and improving mental and emotional well-being. Beyond physical benefits, active women report lower stress, greater emotional balance, and higher life satisfaction. Exercise boosts cardiovascular health, metabolic function, and immunity while reducing anxiety and improving sleep and focus. These advantages create a positive cycle: women who stay fit tend to be more productive at work and more engaged in relationships. Yet challenges remain. Lack of time, financial constraints, and family responsibilities make it difficult to prioritize fitness. After-work exhaustion, expensive gym fees, and cultural barriers further discourage exercise. Practical solutions such as flexible work policies, shared household duties, and low-cost fitness alternatives offer hope. Women who successfully incorporate movement into their daily routines experience increased energy, stronger relationships, and greater self-assurance. This study examines the fitness challenges faced by working women in Palakkad, analyzing both systemic barriers and individual strategies. It advocates for treating physical activity as a necessity, not a luxury, and recommends tailored support at work, home, and in the community to make fitness accessible. By doing so, we can improve not only individual lives but also the broader networks that depend on these women.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive study examined the relationship between physical fitness and quality of life for working women in Palakkad Municipality. Researchers selected 60 employed women aged 30-50 through purposive sampling from local fitness centers, focusing specifically on those balancing work and family responsibilities while maintaining regular exercise routines. Data collection utilized

a 69-item structured questionnaire incorporating Likert scales and yes/no questions to assess exercise patterns and resource accessibility. The research team refined the instrument through a 10-responder pilot test before full implementation. Using SPSS software, the analysis combined descriptive statistics with inferential methods, including Spearman's correlation tests, which revealed a significant positive relationship ($r=0.474$, $p<0.001$) between family support and mental well-being. The study adhered to strict ethical protocols, obtaining informed consent, ensuring participant anonymity, and securing institutional permissions. While the findings offer valuable insights into the challenges working women face in maintaining fitness routines, the moderate sample size and geographic focus may limit broader generalization. Nevertheless, the rigorous methodology yielded practical recommendations for workplace wellness programs and community health initiatives tailored to this demographic's unique needs.

RESULTS

Understanding the Socio-Economic Background of the Respondent

The study analyzed key socio-economic factors affecting working women's fitness habits. Age emerged as a significant factor, with 42% of active participants aged 30-35 compared to just 13% aged 46-50, indicating higher exercise participation among younger women. Geographic location showed notable differences, with urban residents (60%) demonstrating greater fitness engagement than their rural counterparts (15%), likely due to better access to exercise facilities.

Educational attainment correlated strongly with fitness habits, as over 40% of college-educated women maintained regular exercise routines. Financial considerations played a dual role: while 38% of participants earned more than ₹30,000 monthly, 53% still considered gym memberships prohibitively expensive. Family structure also influenced fitness patterns, with 68% of respondents coming from smaller households (3-4 members), and those with fewer children showing greater exercise consistency. Additional challenges included financial obligations (58% had outstanding loans) and caregiving responsibilities (23% provided care for sick family members).

Sl.No	Age	Frequency	Percent
1	30-35	25	41.7
2	36-40	16	26.7
3	41-45	11	18.3
4	46-50	8	13.3
Total		60	100.0

The highest number of respondents (41.7%) was in the age group of 30–35 years. The least number (13.3%) were between 46–50 years. This shows that most working women in the study are in their early thirties. Younger participants may be more health-conscious and active in fitness. The data reflect that middle-aged women also show interest, but in smaller numbers.

Studying How Fitness Improves Physical Health

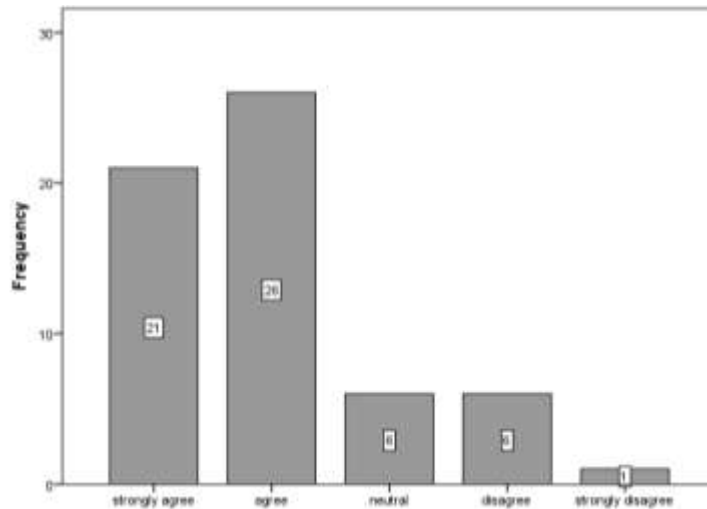
The study demonstrated significant physical health improvements among working women who exercised regularly. Half of the participants (50%) dedicated over two hours daily to workouts, reflecting a strong commitment to fitness. Key benefits included enhanced stamina (68% reported easier stair climbing and walking) and effective weight management (87%). Flexibility improvements were notable, with 53% achieving greater mobility in movements like toe-touching. Adaptability was another advantage, as 66% of women with health conditions modified their routines to remain active. However, 45% still experienced fatigue from prolonged standing, indicating a need for targeted strength training. Overall, regular exercise contributed to measurable gains in strength, health maintenance, and body confidence among participants.

Sl. No	Ability to Work Longer Without Tiring	Frequency	Percent
1	Strongly agree	3	5.0
2	Agree	30	50.0
3	Neutral	3	5.0
4	Disagree	23	38.3
5	Strongly disagree	1	1.7
Total		60	100.0

The table titled ability to work longer without being tired 50% agreed and 1.7% strongly disagreed. Half the respondents felt improved stamina with fitness, meaning workouts help in daily work life. Very few strongly disagreed, indicating positive change in endurance.

Examining Fitness's Impact on Mental Well-Being

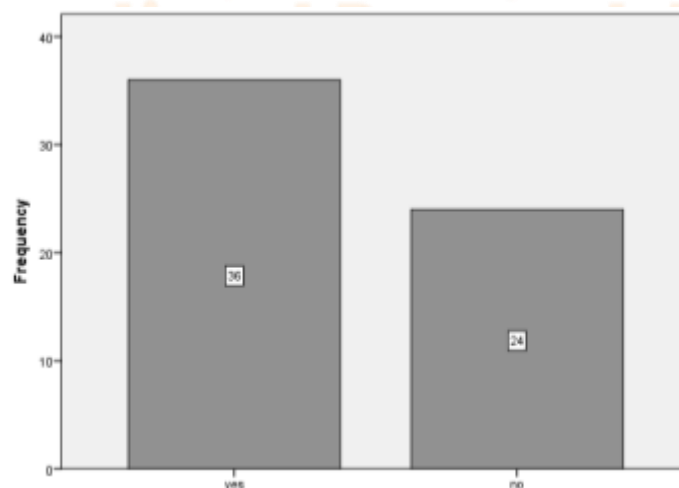
The research demonstrated substantial psychological benefits associated with physical activity among working women. A striking 87% of participants reported significant stress reduction through regular exercise. Cognitive enhancements were equally notable, with 67% experiencing improved concentration and memory function. The emotional benefits extended to better self-regulation, as evidenced by 80% of women gaining improved control over their emotions, while 82% developed greater body confidence. These benefits translated to professional environments, where 65% of respondents noted enhanced workplace relationships. The study particularly highlighted the pivotal role of family support, with 88% of women who received emotional encouragement maintaining consistent exercise regimens. Quantitative analysis reinforced this connection, revealing a statistically significant correlation ($p = 0.47$) between familial support and reduced stress levels, underscoring the importance of social support systems in promoting women's mental well-being through physical activity.



Most working women (about 8 out of 10) say exercise helps them feel less stressed. When they walk, stretch, or work out, it clears their mind and relaxes them. This shows that physical activity works like natural stress relief for many women. While some do not feel this effect, for most, it is a healthy way to handle daily pressures. Moving your body regularly can be just as helpful for your mood as it is for your health.

Identifying Challenges in Maintaining Fitness

Despite the benefits, women faced many problems. Time was the biggest issue—60% said long work hours stopped them from exercising. Many (70%) also found it hard to restart workouts after a break. Money was another hurdle. Over half (53%) said gyms were too expensive, and 35% couldn't afford healthy food. Bad weather stopped 65% from exercising, meaning indoor workouts are needed. Family challenges were also common. While 50% got help with housework, 27% did everything alone, leaving no time for fitness. Married women (73%) exercised less than single women because of family duties. Some (8%) got no support at all and even faced complaints about gym costs. To fix these issues, cheaper fitness options, workplace flexibility, and family education are needed. When women get support, they can stay healthy and happy.



The graph clearly shows that 60% of working women cannot maintain regular exercise due to long work hours, while the remaining 40% manage to stay active despite their schedules. This significant majority facing time constraints highlights how demanding jobs directly interfere with fitness routines. The data proves that work-life balance challenges substantially impact health habits.

Correlations			EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FROM FAMILY	Mental well-being and less stress
Spearman's rho	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FROM FAMILY	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.474**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	60	60
	mentalwellbing_ less_stress	Correlation Coefficient	.474**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	60	60

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The hypothesis test revealed a statistically significant, moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.474$, $p < 0.001$) between emotional support from family and improved mental well-being (reduced stress) in working women. This finding supports the alternative hypothesis (H1), indicating that family encouragement plays a crucial role in enhancing mental health outcomes for working women engaged in fitness activities. The null hypothesis (H0), which posited no relationship, was rejected. The results underscore the importance of familial support in fostering resilience and stress management among working women, aligning with the study's broader emphasis on socio-environmental factors influencing fitness and quality of life.

DISCUSSION

This research highlights physical fitness as a fundamental pillar of working women's holistic well-being. The study demonstrates that regular exercise yields multifaceted benefits, including enhanced physical stamina, improved cognitive function, and greater emotional resilience. Participants reported these advantages translating into higher energy levels, better sleep quality, and increased capacity to manage stress. However, the investigation identifies persistent barriers including time constraints from professional and domestic responsibilities, financial limitations restricting access to fitness facilities, and sociocultural factors that discourage consistent exercise. Notably, the research reveals that practical support systems—whether through shared household duties or verbal encouragement—significantly increase exercise adherence rates. The findings suggest that redefining fitness as adaptable personal practice rather than rigid routine proves most sustainable. Many participants valued their workout time as vital personal space for mental rejuvenation, with even those facing physical limitations developing modified approaches to stay active. These insights advocate for systemic changes in how society views and supports women's fitness. By implementing workplace wellness initiatives, affordable community programs, and family education about shared responsibility models, we can transform fitness from an aspirational goal to an achievable reality. The study ultimately positions women's physical well-being not as self-indulgence but as a crucial investment with far-reaching benefits for families, workplaces, and communities.

CONCLUSION

This study establishes physical fitness as a transformative practice that extends far beyond physical health, significantly enhancing working women's mental resilience, emotional balance, and social well-being. The findings demonstrate that regular exercise serves as a critical tool for maintaining psychological stability, building self-confidence, and mitigating professional stress, essential capacities for navigating the dual demands of career and personal life. The research identifies multiple barriers to consistent fitness participation, with time constraints (particularly long work hours) and caregiving responsibilities emerging as the most pervasive challenges requiring systemic solutions. Financial limitations and social pressures further compound these obstacles. Crucially, the study reveals family support as a decisive factor, with spousal and familial encouragement proving instrumental in sustaining exercise routines, while its absence significantly increases difficulty. These insights underscore the necessity for accessible, inclusive fitness programs adaptable to diverse needs, especially for women with limited resources or health considerations. Moving forward, a multi-level approach addressing institutional, social, and individual barriers is essential. Collaborative efforts among employers, policymakers, and fitness organizations should focus on developing cost-effective, flexible solutions that accommodate working women's realities. Ultimately, prioritizing working women's fitness yields benefits that ripple through society, creating healthier workforces, stronger families, and more resilient communities. By implementing these strategies, we can shift fitness from being perceived as a luxury to becoming an ingrained cultural norm, securing lasting health advantages for current and future generations.

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