

*Relationship Between Exercise/PA and
Sexual Satisfaction among Women*

Duston Morris, PhD, MS, CHES

Alexandra Marshall, PhD, MPH, CHES

Presenter Disclosures

Duston Morris, PhD, MS, CHES

Alexandra Marshall, PhD, MPH, CHES

Both of these presenters have no relationships to disclose.

Introduction

- Sexuality is an important contributing factor to quality of life.
- Sexuality is consistently defined to include numerous interrelated factors such as biological, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, & sociocultural components.
- Sexuality is a major part of relational intimacy.
- Sexuality includes the sexual health indicators *sexual performance* and *sexual satisfaction*.

Context

- Typically an unappealing factor of aging is the decline in sexual functioning in people of both sexes.
 - *For males, such loss has been related to erectile competence.*
 - *For females, the loss has been linked to untreated menopausal conditions and decreased social opportunities.*
- We believe many adults desire increased sexual activity (or sexual sustainability).

Background

- Exercise has been shown to have various health benefits and can improve overall quality of life.
- Research also indicates that vigorous exercise/physical activity (PA) may promote the sexual response for healthy adults.



Previous Research

- Research has demonstrated that females with and without sexual dysfunction improved on sexual performance scores after participation in physical activity.
- Additional research examined exercise/PA activity and female sexual response and demonstrated that vigorous physical exercise/PA activated the woman's sexual response.

Need for Study

- Very little research has examined the relationship between sexual satisfaction and exercise/PA among a broad population of healthy adult women.



Purpose

- The purpose of this study was to determine if different modes of exercise/PA (based on frequency, duration, general level of participation, and rate of perceived exertion) was related to sexual satisfaction among healthy women.

Research Questions

- 1) Is there a relationship between exercise/PA frequency and sexual satisfaction among women?
- 2) Is there a relationship between exercise/PA duration and sexual satisfaction among women?
- 3) Is there a relationship between exercise/PA rate of perceived exertion and sexual satisfaction among women?
- 4) Is there a relationship between general level of exercise/PA participation and sexual satisfaction among women?
 - *Each of these variables were assessed across the different modes (aerobics, strength training, sports, & recreation)*

Recruitment

Used online social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, lamTri, Active.com and an email listserv of triathlon clubs provided by the USA Triathlon Organization (USAT)

Participants were adults, ages 18-74, who either:

a) viewed an ad inviting them to the study via one of the social networking sites

OR **b)** received an invitation email through the USAT email listserv.

Methods

- 30-item online questionnaire
- Exercise/PA was measured using performance indicators of: *1) frequency, 2) duration, 3) general level of participation, and 4) rate of perceived exertion.*
- Sexual satisfaction was measured by: *1) overall satisfaction with quality of orgasm, and 2) level of pleasure of orgasm.*

Exercise Items

- Frequency of participation:
 - Q#27 *"During the past 30 days, how frequently did you participate in any of the following activities? (sports, aerobics, recreation, strength training)."*
- Duration of participation:
 - Q#28 *"During the past 30 days, when you took part in this activity, for how many hours or minutes did you usually keep at it? (sports, aerobics, recreation, strength training)."*
- General level of activity participation:
 - Q#29 *"During the past 30 days, what was your level of physical activity? (sports, aerobics, recreation, strength training)."*
- Rate of perceived exertion (RPE):
 - Q#30 *"During the past 30 days, on average what was your perceived level of exertion (intensity) during physical activity or exercise? (sports, aerobics, recreation, strength training)."*

Sexual Satisfaction Items

- Satisfaction with partner:
 - *Q#16 “Overall, how satisfactory to you is your sexual relationship with your partner?”*
- Satisfaction for your partner:
 - *Q#17 “Overall how satisfactory do you think your sexual relationship is to your partner?”*
- Number of orgasms:
 - *Q#20 “In general, how satisfied are you with the number of orgasms that you have during sexual activity with you partner?”*
- Quality of orgasms:
 - *Q#21 “In general, how satisfied are you with the quality or experience of orgasm that you have during sexual activity with your partner?”*
- Level of pleasure from orgasms:
 - *Q#23 “How much enjoyment or pleasure do you get from your orgasms?”*

Results

- RQ1 – Is there a relationship between exercise/PA frequency and sexual satisfaction among women?
 - *YES: aerobic frequency was positively correlated ($r=.154$, $n=249$, $p<.05$) with overall satisfaction with quality of orgasm.*
- RQ2 – Is there a relationship between exercise/PA duration and sexual satisfaction among women?
 - *YES: aerobic duration was positively correlated ($r=.131$, $n=248$, $p<.05$) with overall satisfaction with quality of orgasm.*

Results

- RQ3 – Is there a relationship between exercise/PA rate of perceived exertion and sexual satisfaction among women?
 - *YES: aerobic RPE was positively correlated ($r=.129$, $n=244$, $p<.05$) with overall satisfaction with quality of orgasm.*
- RQ4 – Is there a relationship between general level of exercise/PA and sexual satisfaction among women?
 - *YES: general level of recreation participation was positively correlated ($r=.208$, $n=129$, $p<.05$) with overall satisfaction with quality of orgasm.*
 - *YES: general level of recreation participation was positively correlated ($r=.225$, $n=129$, $p<.05$) with the level of pleasure of orgasm.*

Conclusions

Significant relationships existed between various components of exercise and sexual satisfaction among healthy women.



May be motivating factors for exercise participation which could contribute to improved sexual experiences among healthy women.

References

1. Addis, I.B., Van Den Eeden, S.K., Wassel-Fyr, C.L., Vittinghoff, E., Brown, J.S., & Thom, D.H. (2006). Sexual activity and function in middle-age and older women. *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 107(4), 755-764. doi: 10.1097/01.AOG.0000202398.27428.e2.
2. Dabrowska, J., Drosdzol, A., Skrzypulec, V. & Plinta, R. (2010). Physical activity and sexuality in perimenopausal women. *The European Journal of Contraception and Reproductive Health Care*, 15, 423-432.
3. Gelfand, M.M. (2000). Sexuality among older women. *Journal of Women Health (Gen-B)*, 9, 15-29.
4. Gupta, B.P., Hassan, M., Clifton, M.M., Prokop, L., Nehra, A., & Kopecky, S.L. (2011). The effect of lifestyle modification and cardiovascular risk factor reduction on erectile dysfunction: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 171(20), 1797-1803. DOI: 10.1001/archinternmed.2011.440.
5. Johnson, B.K. (1998). A correlational framework for understanding sexuality in women age 50 and older. *Health Care for Women International*, 19, 553-564.
6. Masters, W. & Johnson, V. (1970). *Human sexual response*. Boston, MA: Little Brown & Co, Inc.
7. Meston, C.M. (2000). Sympathetic nervous system activity and female sexual arousal. *American Journal of Cardiology*, 86(2A) Suppl., 30f-34f.
8. Penhollow, T.M. & Young, M. (2004) Sexual desirability and sexual performance: Does exercise and fitness really matter? *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality*. Retrieved from <http://www.ejhs.org/volume7/fitness.html>
9. Penhollow, T.M., Young, M. & Denny, D. (2009). Predictors of quality of life, sexual intercourse, and sexual satisfaction among active older adults. *American Journal of Health Education*, 40(1), 14-22.
10. Robinson, J. & Molzahn, A. (2007). Sexuality and quality of life. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 33, 19-27.