

Elevating Hostel Life: The Transformative Power of Physical Activity on Mental Wellbeing and Body Image

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Abstract: *In this study, Elevating Hostel Life: The Transformative Power of Physical Activity on Mental Wellbeing and Body Image, the significant effects of consistent physical activity on hostel students' mental and physical health as well as their general quality of life are examined. The study looks at how exercise can enhance sleep patterns, lessen anxiety and depressive symptoms, and lower stress levels, all of which contribute to improved mental health. Furthermore, the research emphasizes how physical activity improves social relationships, body image, and self-esteem while also creating a supportive community inside the hostel setting. Additionally included are the cognitive advantages, which include enhanced academic performance, memory, and concentration. By promoting the integration of physical activity into daily routines, the study advocates for the development of long-term healthy habits and a balanced lifestyle. The findings emphasize the need for hostel administrators and policymakers to implement targeted physical activity programs and facilities, thereby creating a healthier and more vibrant hostel community. This study support a comprehensive approach for student wellness that takes into account their physical, mental, and social well-being by highlighting the transforming potential of physical activity.*

Introduction

Since the significant impact they have on general health and quality of life, mental wellbeing and a healthy body image have become increasingly important in today's society. Investigating the transformative potential of physical activity in different kinds of communal living arrangements, especially those with shared spaces and a diverse resident population—is the aim of this study. Whether in residential complexes or educational institutions, communal living situations create special dynamics that impact residents' well-being by bringing people closer together. A broad background for understanding the transforming power of physical activity is provided by the complexity of shared places, diversity of personalities, and issues faced by the community. Hostel residents frequently face unique difficulties, like social dynamics, academic expectations, and the requirement to form deep connections. Numerous studies highlight many advantages of physical activity, which include reduced stress and improved mental health. However, there is still a research gap about the precise application of these advantages in student life, which needs to be filled.

Hostel residents frequently face unique difficulties, like social dynamics, academic expectations, and the requirement to form deep connections. In today's society, where peer comparisons and cultural standards significantly influence an individual's body image, shared living spaces serve as platforms for these worries to potentially become more acute. It is both necessary and appropriate to look into how exercise promotes a positive body image in a student housing setting. Physical activity has been linked to the alleviation of symptoms related to anxiety and depression. It is also seen to be a non-stigmatizing remedy with minimal side effects (Morres et al., 2018). Several forms of physical activity, such as aerobic, stretching, yoga, dancing, and leisure-based physical activities, have been linked in population-based research to a lower prevalence of anxiety and depression (Mykletun et al., 2011). The distribution of promotional materials, assessments self-management, individual and group counseling sessions in a variety of contexts, curriculum revisions in health and physical education programs, and other traditional methods are all used to promote physical activity. Regardless of size, physical activity provides a number of important health benefits, such as improved psychological and emotional states and a lower risk of contracting specific illnesses and conditions (BLAIR & BRODNEY, 1999).

According to Patel et al. (2018), mental wellness is "an investment or capacity which promotes a state of satisfaction while offering the capacity for people to achieve their highest purpose". It's clear that a desirable state of health is mental wellbeing. When we have a good mental health state, we can become resilient to daily stress (Chase & Allsopp, 2020). When we are in a condition of positive mental health, we can recognize our strengths, manage the typical stressors of life, and work consistently and effectively (Urvashi Sharma & Ravindra Kumar, 2015). On the other hand, there has been minimal focus on how physical activity might improve students' mental health, despite compelling data showing that regular exercise can improve mental, physical, and psychological health in both therapeutic and preventive ways (Weissman, 1999). Exercise has been shown to improve mental health by boosting mood, lowering anxiety and depression risk, and raising life satisfaction and self-esteem (Beasley, dame Christine (Joan).

One of the key factors in the modern lifestyle that might influence someone's sense of satisfaction and wellbeing is their impression of their body. A positive body image involves an appreciation and acceptance of one's physical appearance as well as a general love and respect for the body's functions. Furthermore, according to Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015) Generally speaking, those who have more positive body views have a broad concept of beauty, prioritize their inner lives above their external appearance, and feel hopeful on the inside.

According to (Kaučič et al.2017). Given its importance in the beginning, and continuation, of physical activity, body image is a key component in the sport and exercise psychology area (Sabiston et al., 2019). An individual's self-perception and thoughts regarding their appearance can either increase or decrease their willingness to participate in physical exercise, as well as change their experiences with it (e.g., decreased enjoyment). According to Moreno-Murica et al. (2011) and Porter et al. (2013), teenage girls have been observed to avoid sports due to how they look. They also express a desire to be tall or slimmer. Conversely, for some females, higher levels of physical activity were associated with better body image or body appreciation (Andrew et al., 2016).

In several countries, hostels are specifically identified as places where students and visitors are housed. However, in Pakistan and other nations, the hostel is viewed as a place to call home. Every hostel run by a school, college, or university is supervised by other staff members and hostel wardens. There are frequently a lot of students in the hostel. All of them make form a group of students. These students come from a variety of social, cultural, and geographic backgrounds. They live in a hostel apart from their homes in order to obtain formal education. A hostel is a real, human-scale institution that serves as both a gathering place and an educational center. While living in a room, students learn just as much from their professors as they do from their roommates. Hostels for students provide more than just academic instruction; they also train visitors in skill development and independent living (Wong & Wei Jie, 2022). Students who spend a significant amount of time away from their families often carry with them certain lifelong memories. According to (Khozaei et

al, 2010), students adopting this new lifestyle learn how to live freely and how to reach agreements with their housemates and fellow students.

Numerous studies have been conducted on "positive" states of mental health and wellbeing (Rusk & Waters, 2013). Improvements in growth, mortality, and quality of life, as well as other outcomes, have been connected to high mental wellbeing for more than forty years of prospective and experimental research (Diener et al., 2017). For instance, in individuals without mental disease, enhancements in mental wellness over a ten-year period are linked to an up to eight-fold reduction in the chance of acquiring mental illness (Keyes et al., 2010). ("Beasley, dame Christine (Joan), (born 13 June 1944), chief nursing officer, Department of Health, 2004–12," 2007 conducted a scoping review recently. found over 80 peer-reviewed studies that provided evidence in favor of the following theories: Both constructs have common but distinct roots; both require evaluation using specialized scales; psychological interventions can improve both mental wellbeing and symptoms of illness, or they can only affect one of the domains; and "signals" or "states" of mental wellness may exist despite a history or examination of mental illness (Keyes, 2007). This line of inquiry opens the door to the methodical application of interventions and therapeutic modalities focusing on (1) the promotion of mental health as a primary goal independent that the existence of either a mental or physical illness; and (2) mental wellness as an additional objective in situations where interventions based on traditional therapeutic approaches fail to provide the desired outcomes, such as when they fail to produce clinically significant improvements or fail to connect with a particular patient (Slade, 2010). Every element of students' physical, cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal functioning can be significantly impacted by psychological distress (Kitzrow, 2003). Young individuals must adjust to new surroundings and social settings when they start university, which is a significant time of transition (Richardson et al., 2012). Living in shared rooms is the most common form of housing for prospective students at UK universities, according a new Unite Students research. Moving from home to a hostel presents a variety of problems, too, including managing household responsibilities and demands, living with strangers, and fostering independence (Walther et al., 2014). It has been suggested that the shift from one place, like home, to another, like the university, conceptualized as a "betwixt space " (Palmer et al., 2009), and it is typical for mental health issues to surface while students are getting used to their new surroundings.

Hostel life and mental health

Aristotle said that human beings are social animal by nature. This idea emphasizes how social creatures by nature, humans always want to adjust and learn within their social contexts. It is a known fact that human personalities are shaped by their environments and that environments also shape human personalities (Asir Ajmal, 2015). The social structure has a big impact on how people behave and how their personalities develop. It has been observed that the students pursuing their education come from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. They are residing in hostels at various institutions. They have various mental health issues that impact their personality, academic achievements, and overall quality of life, often as a result of being cut off from their families or having difficulty adjusting to a new environment.

Physical activity and hostel students

For young students, living in hostels and spending a significant amount of time away from home is an unforgettable experience. This unique way of living offers the chance to practice living freely, making compromises with classmates and housemates, sharing resources like space and restrooms, and other life skills. Universities are very interested in studying the impact of the environment and student satisfaction levels, as this is a significant field of study. According to these research, university campuses with well-maintained hostels and other facilities have a favorable impact on the total number of students enrolled (Bekurs, 2007). The transition from adolescents to adulthood is a critical time for the development of behavioral habits that influence the risk of chronic diseases and long-term health. However, a lot of students living in hostels adopt habits that raise the risk of mental and physical health issues and lower the chance of being in good health. (Huang and others, 2003)

Body image

Body image refers to an individual's views, emotions, and ideas about their physical appearance. It is commonly understood to include an assessment of one's physical beauty, an estimation of one's body size, and feelings related to one's size and form (Grogan, 2021). Most people agree that body image is a complex concept. Although different body image disturbance values do not neatly fit into one of these two categories, body image disturbance is commonly classified into two unique and independent groups (Garner, 1981). Men's body image has been the subject of more research in recent years. Men and women experience body image disturbances in similar ways, according to this field's study. In other words, a lot of men and women feel unsatisfied with a certain part of their bodies. Men's body image disturbances, however, are more complicated than women's. Males tend to want to be either larger or slimmer than they are, while women nearly always respond to being thinner than they are; this tendency has been observed in both adult males and boys of different ages (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2001).

Social factors

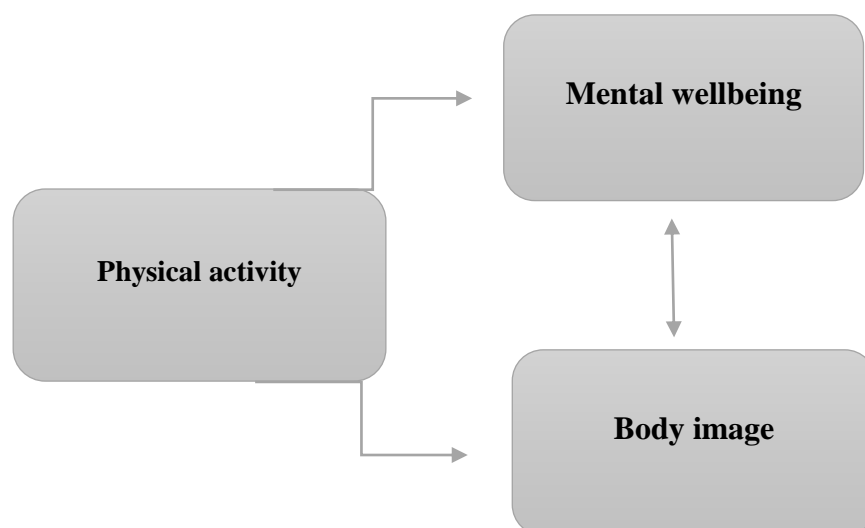
The significance of sociocultural variables on body image is the first major issue that runs across the content in this collection. An increasing amount of research suggests that one's perception of their physical appearance is unpredictable and vulnerable to social influence (Groesz et al., 2001). Social variables have been linked in models of the antecedents of body image to the causes of body dissatisfaction, weight concern, and the difference between the current and ideal body form and size (Hekman, 1995). While "perceiving overweight" and being dissatisfied with our looks might sometimes motivate us to work out, our body image may influence whether we work out or not. It might also prevent us from engaging in organized sports, including going to the fitness center or working out at a sports center, because we are anxious about displaying our bodies in front of others while wearing sports gear and questioning whether we have the right body type to blend in with a culture of sports that promotes an extremely thin ideal (Choi, 2023).

Theories of Body Image

Cognitive theory of Body Image

According to the cognitive approach to body image dissatisfaction, individuals who concentrate on their size and shape of their bodies interpret information about their bodies in an unfavorable manner. In particular, according to (Williamson et al, 2000), these people may pay different attention to and keep information about their bodies, which contributes to their continued dissatisfaction with their bodies. Furthermore, according to Jackman et al. (1995), people might evaluate confusing circumstances or stimuli in ways that are identical with what they think is wrong about how they look. "For example, an adolescent who is obsessed with weight can take someone else's laughter personally rather than seeing it as a fun joke about his body size. It is believed that this biased cognitive processing happens on autopilot, without the person's conscious awareness (Williamson, 1996).

Theoretical framework:



Applications for improving various aspects of student life in a hostel setting can be found in the study "Elevating Hostel Life: The Transformative Power of Physical Activity on Mental Wellbeing and Body Image". First of all, exercise has been shown to be an effective means of lowering stress and easing the symptoms of anxiety and depression, The study shows that regular exercise is a safe and natural method to boost mood, improve mental health, and encourage healthier sleep pattern, all of which are crucial for maintaining overall wellbeing.

Apart from its psychological advantages, physical exercise is also crucial for enhancing one's body image and confidence. Regular exercise can improve one's physical health and body composition, which can help one feel better about their physical appearance. The social connections that come with group activities and sports also contribute to this increase in self-esteem, creating a supportive community and lowering feelings of loneliness among hostel residents.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the mental wellbeing of residents through surveys or assessments, focusing on stress levels, mood, and overall psychological health.
2. To Investigate how group exercises, sports, or other communal physical activities contribute to social interactions and community bonding among residents.

Research Methodology

The study employs a quantitative research design, focusing on statistical data to draw conclusions. It measures various variables at a single point in time. The participants include 200 university students from Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, recruited from different educational programs through convenient sampling. Data collection involves three questionnaires: the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) with seven items, the HERO Wellness Scale with five items, and the Body Image Questionnaire (BIQ) with nine items.

Data analysis will be conducted using SPSS software version 2023, applying multiple statistical tests like multiple linear regression, Hayes mediation procedure, impact coefficient analysis, t-test, and Pearson's correlation coefficient to evaluate relationships between variables. Ethical considerations ensure that all participants provide informed consent, their privacy is protected, and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Results

Table 1 Demographic Information of the Respondent

Demographic Information	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	139	65%
Female	69	35%
Age		
18 - 22	128	64%
23-27	70	35%
28& above	2	1%
Hostalized		
Yes	196	98%
No	4	2%
Study Program		
BS	195	97%
MPhil	3	1%
PhD	2	1%
Total	264	100%

The Table 1 shows demographic data indicates that the group consists predominantly of males (65%) and young adults, with 64% aged between 18-22 years and 35% aged between 23-27 years. A significant majority (98%) are hostalized, highlighting the importance of hostel accommodations for this population. The study program distribution reveals that 97% are enrolled in a Bachelor of Science (BS) program, with minimal representation in MPhil (1%) and PhD (1%) programs. Overall, the data portrays a youthful, predominantly male group, heavily reliant on hostel accommodations, and primarily engaged in undergraduate studies.

Table 2 Correlation of the variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3
PA	1.6857	.36344	1		
BI	3.3106	.64253	.511 **	1	
MW	3.3790	.92435	.634 **	.645 **	1

Note: N=264 *p<0.05, **P <0.001

The data from Table 2 shows the correlation between three variables: PA (Physical Activity), BI (Body Image), and MW (Mental Well-being). The mean and standard deviation (SD) for each variable are as follows: PA (Mean = 1.6857, SD = 0.36344), BI (Mean = 3.3106, SD = 0.64253), and MW (Mean = 3.3790, SD = 0.92435). The correlation coefficients reveal significant positive relationships among the variables. PA and BI have a moderate correlation of 0.511 (p < 0.001), indicating that higher levels of physical activity are associated with better body image. PA and MW show a stronger correlation of 0.634 (p < 0.001), suggesting that increased physical activity is linked to better mental well-being. Similarly, BI and MW have a correlation of 0.645 (p < 0.001), indicating that a better body image is associated with improved mental well-being. All correlations are significant at the p < 0.001 level.

Table 3 Regression analysis

Variable	BI	MW
Constant		
Gender	-.087	-.127 *
Age	.014	-.164 **
PA	.511 **	.634 **
BI		.645 **
R2	.400	.599
ΔR2	.398	.597
F	174.658	391.364

Note: N=264 *p<0.05, **P <0.001 ***p<0.0001,

The data from Table 3 presents the results of a regression analysis examining the predictors of Body Image (BI) and Mental Well-being (MW). The analysis includes gender, age, and physical activity (PA) as independent variables for both BI and MW, with BI also being an independent variable for MW.

For BI:

- **Gender** has a non-significant negative coefficient (-0.087).
- **Age** shows a non-significant positive coefficient (0.014).
- **PA** has a significant positive coefficient (0.511, p < 0.001).

For MW:

- **Gender** has a significant negative coefficient (-0.127, p < 0.05).
- **Age** has a significant negative coefficient (-0.164, p < 0.001).
- **PA** shows a significant positive coefficient (0.634, p < 0.001).
- **BI** also has a significant positive coefficient (0.645, p < 0.001).

The R-squared (R²) values indicate that 40.0% of the variance in BI and 59.9% of the variance in MW is explained by the respective predictors. The change in R-squared (ΔR²) values are nearly identical to the R-squared values, indicating a strong fit for the models. The F-values (174.658 for BI and 391.364 for MW) denote that both regression models are statistically significant. Overall, PA and BI are strong positive predictors for both BI and MW, with gender and age having notable impacts on MW

Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first cross-sectional study investigating the connection between hostel residents' physical activity, body image, and mental health symptoms. This study's main goal was to identify the critical variables—mental health and body image—that best predict students' experiences living in hostels. According to this research, residents who engage in more physical exercise may be less likely to experience mental health issues. The study's conclusions highlight the important role that physical activity plays in hostel residents' mental health and

perceptions of their bodies. Regular exercise can significantly improve the quality of life for students residing in hostels, according to our research, providing insightful information that might inform future practices and policies in educational establishments.

One of the key takeaways from our study is the profound effect of physical activity on mental wellbeing and it shows a stronger correlation of 0.634 ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that increased physical activity is linked to better mental well-being. . Students who regularly participated in exercise reported reduced levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, regular physical activity contributed to better sleep patterns, which are crucial for maintaining overall mental health and optimizing academic performance.

Our study also highlights the positive influence of physical activity on body image and self-Appearance. Students who engaged in regular physical activity felt more confident about their bodies and reported higher levels of self-esteem. PA and BI have a moderate correlation of 0.511 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that higher levels of physical activity are associated with better body image This enhanced body image can significantly affect various aspects of life, including social interactions and academic engagement. The findings of our study align with and are supported by a growing body of research that highlights the significant impact of physical activity on mental wellbeing and body image among students. The relationship between regular physical activity and reduced mental health issues has been well-documented in the literature. For instance, (Pirrie & Lodewyk, 2012) conducted a study on college students and found that those who engaged in regular physical activity reported significantly lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Their research supports our finding of a strong correlation between physical activity and improved mental wellbeing (0.634, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, (Pedersen & Saltin, 2015) discussed the role of exercise as a preventive and therapeutic tool for mental health issues, reinforcing our conclusion that increased physical activity volume can potentially reduce the risk of mental problems.

Our research also demonstrates the beneficial effects of exercise on self-esteem and body image (Hausenblas & Fallon, 2006). Their meta-analysis stated a moderate relationship between physical activity and a positive body image, with regular exercisers reporting higher levels of body satisfaction and self-esteem. This conclusion confirms our finding that physical activity and better body image have a slightly positive connection (0.511, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, (Thompson et al) discovered that teenagers who regularly exercised had better body images and higher levels of self-esteem, which improved their social connections and academic engagement. This strengthens our finding that improved body image from exercise has an important effect on social relationships and academic achievement, among other elements of life. These supporting researches serve to confirm the accuracy of our conclusions and improve knowledge of the many advantages of physical activity. By adopting these observations, we may more effectively promote the adoption of physical activity programs in hostel environments as a means of improving students' general well-being.

Conclusion

In summary, this groundbreaking cross-sectional study illuminates the pivotal influence of physical activity on the mental health and body image of hostel residents. The research demonstrates that students who maintain a regimen of regular exercise exhibit significantly fewer mental health problems, including stress, anxiety, and depression, and benefit from improved sleep patterns. Moreover, consistent physical activity enhances self-esteem and body confidence, which positively affects social interactions and academic performance.

The study reveals a strong correlation between physical activity and enhanced mental well-being ($r = 0.634$, $p < 0.001$), alongside a moderate correlation with improved body image ($r = 0.511$, $p < 0.001$). These findings underscore the multifaceted advantages of an active lifestyle and corroborate existing literature that posits exercise as vital for mental health and positive body image among students.

Given these results, it is advisable for educational institutions to implement and promote physical activity programs within hostel environments to bolster the overall well-being of their students. By fostering a culture that prioritizes regular exercise, these institutions can significantly contribute to better mental health, improved body image, and an elevated quality of life for hostel

residents. These insights pave the way for future research and practical applications, ultimately supporting the health and academic success of students living in hostels.

Limitation and future suggestion

The relatively limited and homogeneous sample size of this study—which concentrated on hostel residents from a single institution—is a major disadvantage. The experiences of hostel inhabitants in other areas or cultural situations may differ from those of this small sample. Furthermore, biases including social attractiveness and memory bias are introduced when mental health, body image, and physical activity levels are measured using self-reported data. The reported information's accuracy may be influenced by certain assumptions.

The short research period is another disadvantage since it makes it challenging to track the long-lasting impacts of exercise on mental well-being and body image. Additionally, the study did not account for other factors like dietary practices, sleep quality, academic workload, and social support networks that can have an impact on these results. The association between physical activity and the indicated advantages may be complicated by this missing element. Finally, different physical activity types and intensities may have various impacts on mental health and body image, which were not investigated in this study.

To generalize the results and provide an extensive understanding of the effects of physical activity, future research should try to include a bigger and more different sample of hostel residents from different institutions and cultural backgrounds. By performing longitudinal studies, researchers may assess the long-lasting effect of physical activity on mental well-being and body image, which would provide insights into sustained consequences. The accuracy of the results can be increased by combining self-reported data with objective measurements, like personal activity monitors. Further research should account for extra factors that could impact the results by gathering information on the food practices, sleep patterns, amount of academic work, and social support networks of the participants.

A greater awareness of the various consequences of various forms and levels of physical activity can be obtained by looking into the effects of these activities. Hostel environments can benefit from the implementation and assessment of organized physical activity intervention programs, which will help determine causal links and the best ways to make improvements. Future research can build on the results of this study and contribute to a greater understanding of the role that physical activity plays in improving the lives of hostel residents by addressing these limitations and implementing these suggestions.

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