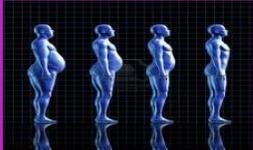


# The effects of a less active generation on both physical and mental health in modern society

## Abstract

A quantitative research design was completed for this research whereby two hundred participants completed a questionnaire; one hundred of these exercised regularly and the remaining one hundred engaged in little or no exercise on a weekly basis. The physical health of each participant was examined by calculating the Body Mass Index and mental health was analysed through both an anxiety and self-esteem measure. The results showed a significant difference that BMI and anxiety levels were higher and self-esteem levels were lower for those who did little or no exercise.



## Introduction

Modern society has recently experienced an overwhelming increase in people suffering with anxiety disorders and exercise and exercise can help cope more adequately with this in everyday life (Weinberg & Gould, 2010). According to Fox (1997), exercise and physical activity can also enhance an individual's self-concept, self-capability and self-esteem. There has been a lot of fear over whether there is a historical flow towards decreasing levels of exercise in the population as a whole (Cale & Harris, 2005).

**Hypothesis One:** Participants who do exercise regularly will have a healthy BMI, low levels of anxiety and high self-esteem.

**Hypothesis Two:** Those who do not exercise regularly will have unhealthy BMI levels, higher levels of anxiety and a lower self-esteem.

**Hypothesis Three:** Those participants that exercise regularly will show the positive effects that exercise has on their physical and mental health in comparison to those who do little or no exercise.

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## Methods

**Design:** A quasi-experimental research design was used in that the independent variable was exercise and the dependent variable was the health of the participants. Correlational analysis' and t-tests were completed for BMI, anxiety and self-esteem for those who exercised regularly and those who did little or no exercise.

**Materials:** Participants completed a short booklet of questionnaires containing questions about their gender and age followed by questions related to their height and weight in order to calculate their BMI. Anxiety was measured by the revised, brief version of 'The Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale' (Leary, 1983) and self-esteem was assessed by 'The Self-Esteem Scale' (Rosenberg, 1965).

**Participants:** Two hundred participants between the ages of twenty and forty took part in the questionnaire. The experimental group of participants were middle-aged adults that exercise regularly opposed to the control group of middle-aged adults that engage in little or no exercise.

**Procedure:** Participants voluntarily completed the questionnaire in their own time which took approximately ten minutes. SPSS was used to analyse the results.

Ethical considerations were applied for each participant that took part in the questionnaire.

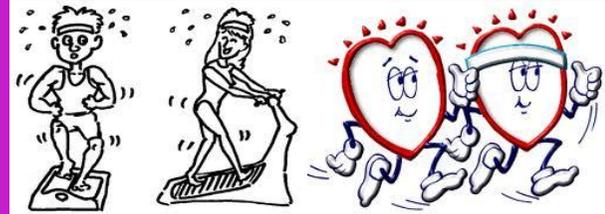
## Results

Each hypothesis was supported whereby participants who exercised regularly had lower BMI and anxiety levels and high self-esteem, those who did little or no exercise had higher BMI and anxiety levels and lower self-esteem. Finally, participants that exercised regularly showed the positive effects that exercise has on their physical and mental health in that. For instance, twenty-five percent of those who do little or no exercise suffer with stress as opposed to just fourteen percent of those who exercise regularly.

## Discussion

The research highlighted the positive effects of exercise on both physical and mental health, particularly in areas of BMI levels as physical health as well as anxiety and self-esteem levels as mental health. According to the results, it was suggested that more government spending should be placed on resources for those suffering with obesity, anxiety and low self-esteem. According to Morgan (1997), increased physical activity is often condoned for psychological and mental health benefits and therefore exercise should be used in modern society as a means of preventing and maintaining such health issues.

Limitations of this research included the use of a small sample size, a limited choice of questions and scales used in the questionnaire booklet and the lack of focus on diet in regards to healthy living. Directions for future research include using a larger sample size, a different age group or taking a different angle such as examining the role of genetics on BMI, anxiety and self-esteem.



## References

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