



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Leisure time physical activity among employed and unemployed women in Poland



Elżbieta Biernat <sup>a,\*</sup>, Monika Piątkowska <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Warsaw School of Economics, Al. Niepodległości 162, 02-554 Warsaw, Poland

<sup>b</sup> Josef Pilsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw, Marymoncka 34, 01-813 Warsaw, Poland

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## KEYWORDS

Employment Status;  
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Women

**Summary** *Objective/Background:* The aim of the paper was to investigate the leisure time physical activity (LTPA) among Polish employed and unemployed women in light of meeting the *World Health Organisation* (WHO) recommendations and analysed its relationship with employment status. The concept of personal responsibility for a healthy lifestyle plays in the modern times a crucial role here and is an integral part of the prevention process (including the necessity for LTPA).

*Methods:* A sample (n=527) of Polish women was surveyed by the long form of *International Physical Activity Questionnaire* (IPAQ-LF), with statistically significant differences between variables (intensity and duration of the activity vs. employment status), in the model being verified by chi-square testing. Multi-variable logistic regression analysis was performed to find the relationship between socio-demographic criteria and the amount of exercise recommended by WHO. The relationship between LTPA and the amount of exercise recommended by WHO was assessed using the log-linear analysis.

*Results:* Over one-third of the respondents did not engage in any LTPA (employed – 38.6 and unemployed – 36.6%). Employed women engaged in vigorous exercises more often (18.2%) than those who were unemployed (5.8%). The amount of LTPA undertaken by the majority of respondents (58.7% employed and 65.2% unemployed) was not sufficient to maintain their health owing to lack of walking, moderate and vigorous LTPA.

*Conclusion:* Polish women nowadays (regardless of whether they are employed or not) still do not engage in a sufficient amount of LTPA to maintain their health. Intervention programme in both groups is needed.

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\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [elzbieta.biernat@sgh.waw.pl](mailto:elzbieta.biernat@sgh.waw.pl) (E. Biernat).

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## Introduction

Gender are determinant factors in undertaking physical activity in leisure time (Miller & Brown, 2005; Rutkowska & Bergier, 2015). The gender bias defines typically masculine and feminine activities, which has a detrimental effect on women's engagement in sports during their leisure time. Apart from work and household management, women, regardless of their age, marital status, education level, income, place of residence, type of work and (subjectively evaluated) physical fitness level, are less likely to devote their time to sports and recreation (Brown, Mishra, Lee, & Bauman, 2000; Henderson & Hickerson, 2007; Łysoń, 2013). Furthermore, women are found to prefer different types of physical activities (Taniguchi & Shupe, 2014) and spend much less time in physical training than men (Eoley, 2005).

However, it is noticeable that modern times bring changes into women's lives. In developing societies, it is the most educated, working and urban women who are moving ahead to achieve a status equal to their male counterparts (Khan, 2011). These women are those who do not perceive gender, familial or social restrictions as constraints (Henderson & Hickerson, 2007). However, working women usually have role conflicts – they have to be a full-time worker and homemaker, which might lead to depression and interpersonal conflicts (Hoshino, Amano, Suzuki, & Suwa, 2016). Moreover, the picture of women with poor education, poverty and living in rural areas still reflects their subjugation (Khan, 2011). Owing to more attractive and better-paid jobs, higher socioeconomic status, better education, living either single or in a relationship in which their partners share family responsibilities, women appear to be more independent. They have fewer restrictions in their choices. The concept of self-management plays a crucial role here and is an integral part of the prevention process (including the needs of exercise).

Due to significant societal changes, it is expected that health promoting behaviours among women will also change. This, in turn, yields the need for further research in the area of women's physical activity. Their way of spending leisure time is particularly important from the societal point of view. A previous study shows that only about 15% of their energy consumption is spent on leisure activities, while about 85% is spent on non-leisure activities (LaMonte, 2008). According to the *European Social Survey*, a staggering 57.5% of European females do not undertake any physical activity (this include housework and gardening) (ESS, 2012). In Poland, the percentage of inactive women is even greater. Leisure time physical activity (LTPA) of at least moderate intensity (MVPA) is taken up by 61.2% of the women in a previous study (Mynarski et al., 2014). Similar findings are found by Biernat, Poznańska, and Gajewski (2011), who observed only 29% in occasional participation of Warsaw health workers in LTPA. These findings led to the aim of this study, which was to assess leisure time physical activity among Polish women – employed and unemployed, and the intensity of the exercise undertaken by them – vigorous, moderate, and walking. This was particularly important in light of the recommended amount of physical activity. The outcome of the current investigation might give valuable

insights for the promotion of preventive health behaviours and effective intervention measures in the target groups (Ehrman, Gordon, Visich, & Keteyian, 2009).

## Methods

### Procedures

The survey conducted in April 2014, using a computer-assisted personal interview technique (CAPI), was commissioned by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland and conducted by GfK Polonia. It covered a representative sample of 1020 Poles (15 years old and over), which reflected the structure of the adult Polish population in gender, age, education, number of people in the household, macro-region and place of residence, according to the Local Data Bank of the Polish Central Statistical Office. The sampling frame was provided by the Department of the State Central Register and Computer Networks of the Polish Ministry of the Interior and Administration.

The respondents were selected using the proportionate stratified sampling. Fifty-five strata were obtained as a result of crossing macro-regions (9) with classes of place of residence (7). In the second step, 170 municipalities were independently drawn from 55 strata, with probability proportional to the number of residents aged 15 years and older. In the third step, for each of the 170 municipalities, 6 addresses were drawn independently. Each of the respondents was contacted personally, interviewed, and was constantly monitored and checked.

The study was approved by the Committee of Ethics in Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland (Authorization Number KEwN/60/2014).

To fulfil the methodological requirements, several procedures have been implemented. Firstly, the full survey was preceded by a pilot ( $n = 12$ ), which confirmed the correctness of the sampling procedure and intelligibility of the questionnaire. Secondly, the sampling procedure included not only the first-best respondents, but also the substitute respondents of identical characteristics (sex, age, municipality) that were included in the sample in case of refusal. Refusal rate was negligible ( $<1\%$ ,  $n = 8$ ). After three attempts to contact respondents with no responses, they were immediately replaced with the substitute respondents.

The interviews were conducted by trained interviewers who delivered the questionnaire in a simple and standardized way. The Polish version of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) was used as a research tool (Biernat, 2013). This questionnaire allows the analysis of physical activity in different areas of everyday life, i.e. at work, communication, housework, sports and recreation.

In this study, only data from the domain of leisure-time physical activity were used. Respondents above 15 years old ( $n = 527$ ) were asked to give the following information regarding their physical activity in the leisure time during the last 7 days:

- vigorous physical activity (i.e. aerobic activity, running, fast cycling, fast swimming),

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