Effect of physical activity on mood states of 50-65 year old male and female participants.

Konstantaki M., Thomas D.A.

School of Sport, Leisure and Travel, Faculty of Enterprise and Innovation, Buckinghamshire New University, United Kingdom

Abstract

The physiological and psychological benefits associated with regular engagement in physical activity are well documented. Previous research has noted enhanced feelings of control, competency, self-esteem and positive social interactions alongside a wide range of health benefits. However, most research has been concerned with young adults or clinical populations, while gender differences are rarely reported. This study aimed to investigate the effect of physical activity on mood states of older adults (50-65 year olds) in relation to gender (males versus females). A purposive sample of one hundred and sixty participants (males, n=80; females, n=80) was recruited from leisure centres across the Buckinghamshire region. All participants engaged in physical activity on average twice per week. One physical activity session was selected for investigation. Participants provided informed consent and completed the 20-scale Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) prior to, and immediately after, the designated physical activity session. This scale investigated feelings and emotions. Participants' responses were rated using a 5-point Likert scale. One-way ANOVA revealed lower mean scores for positive affect following physical activity in males (36.6 versus 32.5; P=0.002) and females (31.75 versus 28.37; P=0.03). Male scores following physical activity were significantly lower compared to females (-4.3 and -3.37, respectively). These results suggest that physical activity brings about positive affect in both males and females of 50-65 years of age, with males experiencing greater improvements in mood states. It appears that the positive mood changes associated with physical activity previously noted in the young and clinical patients also exist in the 50-65 year old population group. These findings call for a more concerted effort to engage older adults in regular physical activity.