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Gender Differences in Exercise Motives Among UiTM S3 Negeri Sembilan Students

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I. INTRODUCTION

Physical inactivity remains a major public health concern, particularly among university students who often experience a decline in physical activity upon entering higher education. Despite the well-established physical and psychological benefits of regular exercise, many university students struggle to maintain consistent participation because of competing academic commitments, time constraints, and lifestyle adjustments [1][2]. Understanding the underlying reasons that motivate students to exercise is therefore essential for promoting sustained engagement in physical activity within the university setting.

Exercise motivation is a multidimensional construct that includes health-related, psychological, social, and performance-oriented motives. The Exercise Motivations Inventory-2 (EMI-2) provides a comprehensive framework to assess these diverse motivational dimensions. Previous research indicates that health-related motives are consistently endorsed as important reasons for exercising across both males and females, suggesting that health improvement and illness prevention motives tend to be shared in many populations. However, studies also demonstrate that gender differences often emerge at the level of specific motivational domains rather than overall motivation. Males frequently report higher endorsement of intrinsic and performance-related motives, such as enjoyment, challenge, and fitness development, including strength and endurance, while females tend to report stronger weight management motives [3][4]. Empirical evidence examining these differences within the context of UiTM Seremban 3 remains limited. Therefore, this study aimed to identify dominant exercise motives and examine gender differences among undergraduate students at UiTM Seremban 3 to inform more relevant and gender-sensitive campus physical activity strategies.

II. METHODS

A quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted among 400 undergraduate students at UiTM Seremban 3 aged 18 to 25 years. Participants completed a self-administered questionnaire that included demographic items and the Exercise Motivations Inventory-2 (EMI-2). Descriptive

statistics were computed to identify dominant exercise motives, and an independent-samples t-test was used to examine gender differences. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The students reported high exercise motivation across the 14 EMI-2 subscales. The highest-rated motives were Ill-Health Avoidance (male: $M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.76$; female: $M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.62$) and Positive Health (male: $M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.73$; female: $M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.75$). Strength and Endurance was also highly endorsed (male: $M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.69$; female: $M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.66$), followed by Enjoyment (male: $M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.76$; female: $M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.68$). This suggests that UiTM Seremban 3 students mainly exercise to maintain health, prevent illness, improve fitness, and enjoy the activity.

TABLE I
DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF EXERCISE MOTIVATION INVENTORY (EMI-2)

	Gender	N	Mean	SD
Stress Management	Male	204	4.00	0.707
	Female	196	4.03	0.636
Revitalisation	Male	204	4.05	0.719
	Female	196	4.01	0.666
Enjoyment	Male	204	4.09	0.758
	Female	196	3.92	0.675
Challenge	Male	204	4.05	0.705
	Female	196	3.84	0.616
Social Recognition	Male	204	3.93	0.759
	Female	196	3.93	0.663
Affiliation	Male	204	4.08	0.758
	Female	196	3.95	0.728
Competition	Male	204	4.09	0.749
	Female	196	3.97	0.675
Health Pressures	Male	204	3.93	0.723
	Female	196	3.85	0.670

Ill-Health Avoidance	Male	204	4.15	0.755
	Female	196	4.08	0.620
Positive Health	Male	204	4.10	0.734
	Female	196	4.14	0.746
Weight Management	Male	204	3.85	0.765
	Female	196	4.00	0.680
Appearance	Male	204	4.07	0.712
	Female	196	4.02	0.549
Strength & Endurance	Male	204	4.10	0.689
	Female	196	3.96	0.663
Nimbleness	Male	204	4.05	0.666
	Female	196	3.94	0.661

TABLE II
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST

	STATISTIC	DF	P
Stress Management	-0.5296	398	0.597
Revitalisation	0.4636	398	0.643
Enjoyment	2.3779 ^a	398	0.018
Challenge	3.1458	398	0.002
Social Recognition	-0.0501	398	0.960
Affiliation	1.8251	398	0.069
Competition	1.7691	398	0.078
Health Pressures	1.2320	398	0.219
Ill-Health Avoidance	1.0185 ^a	398	0.309
Positive Health	-0.4923	398	0.623
Weight Management	-2.0972 ^a	398	0.037
Appearance	0.8541 ^a	398	0.394
Strength & Endurance	1.9954	398	0.047
Competition	1.5849	398	0.114

Results showed significant differences in four EMI-2 subscales: Enjoyment ($p = .018$), Challenge (p

$= .002$), Strength and Endurance ($p = .047$), and Weight Management ($p = .037$). Male students scored higher in enjoyment-, challenge-, and strength/endurance-related motives, whereas female students scored higher in weight management. This pattern suggests that males are relatively more driven by intrinsic and performance-based motives, while females place greater emphasis on weight control, which is consistent with prior research on gendered exercise motives [3][4]. No significant differences were found for the remaining subscales ($p > .05$), indicating that many motives, particularly health-related motives, are broadly shared across genders.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

UiTM Seremban 3 students showed generally high exercise motivation, mainly driven by health and fitness motives, including ill-health avoidance, positive health, strength and endurance, and enjoyment. Gender differences were selective: males scored higher in enjoyment, challenge, and strength/endurance, while females scored higher in weight management. These findings support the need for inclusive, motivation-based campus programmes with gender-sensitive elements where appropriate.

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