GENDER DIFFERENCES AND INEQUALITIES IN THE HABITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF THE ADULT POPULATION IN SPAIN

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This investigation was based on the Theories of Difference and I analyses the possible inequalities and differences in the practice of physical activity of the adults with regard to their gender.

A quantitative methodology was applied. A representative sample of the Spanish adult population (ranging from 30 to 64 years old, n=3,463; 1,731 women and 1,732 men) filled a questionnaire through a personal interview.

The results revealed gender differences within this demographic group (t(3)=176.00; p<.001; Cohen’s d=2.19). Men practiced (51.2%) more frequently physical activity and sport (not including walking) than women (31%) and there were more men (26.8%) than women who walked (13.2%). On the other hand, there were more women (20.9%) than men (1%) who did not practice but they would like to do so. These inequalities could be explained by a series of differences in the activities practiced (t(112)=4.52; p<.001; Cohen’s d=0.19), in the type of organization (c2=113.48; p<.001; Cohen’s d=0.99), in the monthly physical activity expenses (r=0.16; p=0.01; Cohen’s d=0.32) as well as in the monthly physical activity expenses (r=0.16; p=0.01; Cohen’s d=0.32).

The 82.1% of men would prefer self-organized activities (41.7% soccer, 29.1% with family or friends). Six out of ten men practiced outdoor activities, mainly cycling (29.7%) and running (18.3%). Four out of ten men practiced in an indoor sport facility (22.7% public, 19.2% private) a competitive sport—mainly football (11.1%) and padel (9.9%)—or weight training (9.3%).

Part of these women would rather to practice fitness group exercise (46.5%) or to swim (15.2%). The 88.6% of the women practice in an indoor sport facility. One out of two women practiced under professional guidance an activity offered by a sport organization (29.5% private, 12.8% public). Women spent an average of 22.4±6.9 in the monthly physical activity while men spent 11.9±6.0. These differences could probably reflect a sports feminine culture of the adult women.