

EVALUATING RESEARCH INTO ATTITUDES TO EXERCISE AND SPORT

Sampling

The study by Stevens and Lane used students as the participants and it can be argued that results from samples of students are not easily generalisable to the rest of the population. In contrast, the sample used in the Garcia and King study comprised men and women aged 50-64. This is interesting as this advanced age group are not often studied in sports research. However the sample is biased by the fact that the majority were white, well educated and married. The Gill study provides a very large sample of young people of a fairly wide age range and participating in a wide range of sports.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires feature strongly in research into attitudes to exercise and sport. In the Gill study they were used to identify reasons for participation in sport, in the Garcia and King study self- motivation and self- efficacy were measured. Stevens and Lane used questionnaires to identify strategies to change moods and Morgan et al used the POMS questionnaire to measure mood states.

Questionnaires are a convenient method of collecting data, they are quick and easy to administer and large sets of data can be gained. However questionnaires also have limitations, situational factors may influence participants responses, closed questions or limited response options often provide a restricted picture, participants may be influenced by demand characteristics or demonstrate a social desirability bias. These limitations may reduce the reliability and validity of the results.

The POMS questionnaire used in the Morgan et al study and referred to in the Stevens and Lane study was originally developed for use in the clinical field and despite adaptations made to utilize it in the sports arena, it has been argued that the sense of measuring psychological disturbance still remains, hence reducing its effectiveness.

Usefulness/ Practical Applications

Research into attitudes to exercise and sport is useful as it helps us to understand why people participate in sport and how to encourage those who do not. This is obviously valuable information that has wider implications for today's society where children spend more and more time sitting in front of television and computer screens and where obesity and heart disease are on the increase and are a major drain on NHS resources. The Gill and the Garcia and King studies give us an insight into how to encourage both young and elderly people to become involved in sport. The Stevens and Lane study tells us of the benefits of exercise for improving mood states and the Morgan et al study warns us of the dangers of excessive exercise.