

Swimming Proficiency and Self-reported Mental Health Outcomes in Chinese Individuals

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Abstract: This research examines the relationship between swimming proficiency and self-reported mental health outcomes in Chinese adults, considering different demographic variables. A descriptive-correlational research technique was used to recruit a varied sample from various areas and backgrounds in China. Systematic surveys evaluated swimming proficiency in multiple aspects, such as water confidence, breath control, body positioning, propulsion, coordination, and safety awareness. Additionally, self-reported mental health outcomes were measured, including emotional well-being, life satisfaction, self-esteem, sense of purpose, resilience, and social connectivity. The findings suggest that respondents usually have high confidence and proficiency in swimming abilities. However, there needs to be more understanding of safety measures, highlighting the need to enhance education on recognizing hazards and following safety procedures. Although respondents were skilled swimmers, they said that participating in swimming activities did not substantially impact their mental well-being, self-esteem, sense of purpose, resilience, or social connectivity. Nevertheless, a significant correlation between swimming proficiency and mental health outcomes was established, indicating that enhancing swimming abilities might benefit mental well-being. The study revealed many primary obstacles to participation in swimming, such as financial limitations, cultural and societal expectations, difficulties in accessing facilities, safety and health worries, and educational and psychological hindrances. The obstacles differ across different demographic groups, emphasizing the need for focused solutions.

Keywords: Swimming Proficiency; Mental Well-Being; Self-Esteem; Sense of Purpose; Resilience; Social Connectivity.

1. Introduction

Swimming has been a fundamental aspect of Chinese culture for ages, originating in ancient times for survival and transportation. Swimming has been a popular leisure activity and competitive sport in China throughout the years, showcasing the country's rich history and cultural traditions (Lee, 2019). There is an increasing awareness of the need of investigating the connection between swimming skills and self-reported mental health outcomes among Chinese adults, notwithstanding the historical relevance. This introduction seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current situation and historical context of swimming in China, the health advantages linked to swimming, evidence of low swimming participation among the Chinese populace, the significance of this study in China, and the present research deficiency.

China's historical interest in swimming dates back to ancient times when it served as a vital survival skill, mode of transportation, and form of leisure (Xu & Ren, 2018). Swimming has been significant in Chinese culture historically, as seen by its presence in ancient literature, art, and folklore. China has been a prominent presence in global swimming events, known for consistently producing top-tier swimmers (Zhang & Zhang, 2020). The success may be credited to government assistance, investment in training facilities, and a culture that emphasizes athleticism and competitiveness (Wang & Liu, 2017).

Swimming provides a variety of physical, social, and mental health advantages that enhance overall well-being. Swimming is a low-impact, full-body workout that improves cardiovascular health, develops muscular strength, and promotes flexibility and endurance. Swimming is a beneficial aerobic workout that may help with weight control and

general fitness (Pate et al., 2019).

Further, swimming has been shown to provide therapeutic benefits for mental health, including encouraging relaxation, decreasing stress levels, and enhancing mood (Nakhostin Ansari et al., 2020). Swimming's rhythmic movement, together with water's soothing characteristics, has a relaxing impact on the mind and body. Swimming regularly has been associated with decreased feelings of anxiety and sadness, along with enhancements in general psychological well-being (White et al., 2018).

Swimming also promotes social connections and community participation, allowing people to interact with others, form relationships, and cultivate a feeling of belonging (Weyland & Cobb, 2017). Engaging in swimming activities such as classes, clubs, or social swims allows people to build connections and establish supporting networks, which are crucial for mental and emotional health.

Although swimming offers many advantages, there is data indicating that a considerable section of the Chinese population is not actively engaged in or enthusiastic about swimming. Various variables influencing this phenomena include restricted availability of swimming facilities, budgetary limitations, cultural perceptions of swimming, safety apprehensions, and other recreational pursuits (Zhang et al., 2019). Despite attempts to increase swimming participation via programs like the "National Fitness Program" and the establishment of public swimming pools, there are still notable inequalities, especially among disadvantaged groups and underprivileged areas (Wu et al., 2021).

Understanding the correlation between swimming skills and self-reported mental health outcomes is essential in China due to the significance of swimming for physical and mental well-being. Studying this connection allows politicians,

health providers, and community leaders to create specific initiatives to encourage swimming participation and enhance overall mental health outcomes in the population. Improving access to swimming facilities, introducing water safety education programs, and promoting a culture of inclusive swimming may greatly benefit public health promotion and illness prevention in China (Zhang et al., 2020).

Research on the correlation between swimming skills and self-reported mental health outcomes in China is lacking, despite the importance of swimming in the country. Research on the physical and mental health advantages of swimming has been undertaken in several nations, however there is a lack of specialized studies within the Chinese setting according to Lam et al. (2018). Therefore, there is a need for thorough study to examine the distinct socio-cultural, economic, and environmental influences that affect participation in swimming and its effects on mental health in China.

Swimming skills have significant potential to influence self-reported mental health outcomes in Chinese persons. Nevertheless, substantial obstacles impede broad involvement and restrict access to the many advantages of swimming. China can maximize the benefits of swimming for promoting population mental health and general well-being by overcoming these obstacles with focused research and evidence-based initiatives. This research aims to explore the correlation between swimming skills and self-reported mental health outcomes in Chinese persons, addressing a significant gap in the existing literature. It also aims to provide practical recommendations for policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community members.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored in The Biopsychosocial Model. This theoretical framework is well-suited because it effectively considers the complex interactions among biological, psychological, and social factors. This model acknowledges the many aspects of human health and highlights the need of comprehending the interactions between these various dimensions in influencing persons' welfare. The research investigated how biological variables like physical fitness and genetic predispositions affect swimming ability and mental health outcomes by using this paradigm. The model emphasizes the psychological components of self-perception, motivation, and coping strategies, which play a crucial role in affecting both swimming participation and mental well-being. The Biopsychosocial Model emphasizes the importance of social elements such social support, cultural norms, and socioeconomic level in influencing swimming participation and mental health outcomes in the Chinese environment. The study aimed to offer a thorough understanding of the intricate connection between swimming skills and self-reported mental health outcomes in Chinese individuals. This helped in creating specific interventions and strategies to enhance health and well-being through swimming.

3. Research Design

This study used a descriptive-correlational research methodology to investigate the association between swimming proficiency and self-reported mental well-being in Chinese individuals. The study started using a stratified random sampling method to ensure diverse representation

across demographic parameters within the Chinese population. This approach was designed to expand and enhance the significance of the outcomes. The data-gathering process included administering standardized questionnaires and assessments, using defined metrics to assess swimming proficiency. This included individuals providing subjective evaluations of their level of comfort and skill in several aspects of swimming, including their confidence in the water, ability to manage their breathing, proper positioning of their body, ability to move through the water, coordination, and knowledge of safety measures. In addition, the participants provided self-reported evaluations of their mental health outcomes, such as their emotional well-being, level of life satisfaction, self-esteem, sense of purpose, ability to bounce back from adversity, and level of social connectedness. Mandarin Chinese surveys were given to participants to facilitate comprehension and ensure cultural sensitivity. Upon receiving informed consent, participants were allowed to complete the surveys online or participate in in-person interviews. This ensured that their responses remained secret and anonymous. Analyzed using descriptive statistics, the acquired data was used to summarize participant characteristics and variable distributions. The study used correlational analyses, namely Pearson's or Spearman's correlation coefficients, to examine the association between swimming proficiency and mental health outcomes. The study prioritized ethical concerns, including obtaining informed consent and safeguarding participant confidentiality. The research acknowledged and addressed constraints such as reliance on self-reported data and using a cross-sectional design by implementing rigorous methodological procedures and conducting sensitivity analyses. These measures were taken to minimize biases and enhance the validity and reliability of the finding

4. Significance of the Study

Chinese individuals may get insights on how their swimming skills impact their self-reported mental health. They may learn about the psychological advantages of swimming and use this information to make informed decisions about their leisure and recreational activities.

Healthcare practitioners, such as psychologists, therapists, and doctors, might use the results to support swimming as a supplementary method for promoting and managing mental health. Swimming advice may be included in therapy programs for persons with mental health difficulties.

Swimming teachers and coaches may use the study's findings to customize their teaching techniques and programs to enhance the mental health of their pupils. They could include mental health-related conversations and exercises in their swim classes to enhance overall growth.

Public health practitioners may use the study's results to guide the development and execution of public health initiatives focused on enhancing physical exercise and mental well-being. They may support expanding access to swimming facilities and activities as part of larger public health campaigns.

Policy makers at many levels may use the study's findings to guide choices on recreational infrastructure, education, and public health policies. They can dedicate money to enhancing access to swimming facilities and enacting supporting policies to promote mental health via physical exercise.

Community organizations like swim clubs, leisure centers, and mental health support groups may use the study's results

to create specific programs and projects that encourage swimming participation and mental health improvement in their areas.

Educators at schools and colleges may integrate the study's results into their curriculum to teach students about the possible mental health advantages of swimming and promote involvement in aquatic sports as part of a well-rounded lifestyle.

Future researchers in the domains of psychology, sports science, public health, and leisure might find value in the results of this study. Future studies may enhance our comprehension of the correlation between swimming ability and mental health results in various demographics and settings by expanding on the methodology and findings.

5. Conclusion

The effectiveness of training programs in improving swimming skills is evident from the high levels of confidence and proficiency achieved. However, a notable lack of safety awareness indicates a crucial need for focused education on hazard recognition and safety protocols. This is necessary to ensure a comprehensive level of swimming proficiency and safety.

The absence of notable progress in emotional well-being, self-esteem, sense of purpose, resilience, or social connectedness resulting from participation in swimming suggests that existing programs may need to integrate more comprehensive methods, such as mental health assistance and community-building initiatives, to amplify the psychological advantages of swimming.

The strong correlation between swimming ability and self-reported mental health outcomes indicates that increasing swimming abilities might be a practical approach to promoting mental well-being. This emphasizes the need to provide comprehensive and inclusive swimming training programs.

Barriers to swimming participation, such as economic limitations, cultural and social norms, accessibility and infrastructure problems, safety and health worries, and educational and psychological obstacles, emphasize the necessity for comprehensive interventions designed to tackle these various challenges among different demographic groups in order to encourage broader participation in swimming.

6. Recommendations

Create and execute extensive safety education initiatives to

identify dangers, comprehend safety procedures, and advocate for suitable safety equipment.

Incorporate mental health assistance and community-building initiatives into swimming programs to augment emotional well-being, self-confidence, sense of direction, adaptability, and social cohesion.

Concentrate on augmenting swimming abilities via comprehensive training programs to enhance mental health results.

Enhance the affordability of swimming by providing subsidized or complimentary access to swimming facilities and instruction, mainly targeting low-income families and students.

Advocate for swimming as a universal and vital life skill, overcoming cultural biases, and promoting involvement among all population segments.

Allocate resources to establish and maintain swimming facilities, with a specific focus on underserved and rural regions, to guarantee fair and equal access.

Offer assistance to persons with aquaphobia and low self-assurance by gradually exposing them to water and providing expert guidance.

Integrate swimming instruction into the school curriculum to guarantee that all children acquire fundamental swimming abilities and knowledge of safety protocols from a young age.

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