

Modern Sport

Volume 25

Issue 3 *Special Issue of the Fourth International Scientific Conference, Titled: "Applications of Entrepreneurship and Knowledge Parks: Horizons for Excellence in Sports Sciences"*

Article 2

7-3-2026

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Recommended Citation

Allami, Fathil Bakir Mutsher (2026) "Psychological Attitude Toward Physical Exercise Content on Social Media as a Predictor of Body Mass Index," *Modern Sport*. Vol. 25: Iss. 3, Article 2.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54702/2708-3454.2123>

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SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Psychological Attitude Toward Physical Exercise Content on Social Media as a Predictor of Body Mass Index

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Abstract

The present study used a survey research design to collect data from 240 Iraqi women regarding their attitudes toward social media that have been presented physical exercise and fitness content, the duration and intensity of training woman did per week, and to predict body mass index based on the level of psychological attitudes they have. Descriptive statistics revealed that the majority of the sample have moderate attitudes toward physical exercise and fitness platforms. The intensity and duration of physical exercise have not met the standard recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), which emphasizes 150–300 minutes per week at moderate to vigorous intensity. Further, Iraqi women have five levels of attitudes toward physical exercise and fitness content on social platforms (very low, low, moderate, high, and very high). A very high level of women's attitudes toward social media predicts BMI ($\beta = -.35$, $p < .05$). Besides, a high percentage of women are overweight and obese (37%, 22.10) consecutively, Based on indicators of body mass index. In light of these findings, the study recommended establish local platforms, deliver information about exercise and fitness in the Arabic language, aiming to provide women with essential knowledge and experience about equation of calories expenditure, and guide them to select the duration and intensity that appropriate her goals. in addition study the women attitudes to doing physical exercise in gym in or at home according to digit platform is priority to boost women's' calories expenditure, and their maintain health and fitness

Keywords: Women's attitudes, Social media, Exercise, BMI

1. Introduction

Social media followers have been growing constantly. Many men and women spend a lot of time on social media. [Toresdahl and Asif \(2020\)](#) illustrated that social media hurts humans' health when individuals use it for long periods of sedentary time. In contrast, individuals use it to gain knowledge and experience about dietary regimens, physical exercise, and fitness to enhance their health and weight. [Selkie et al. \(2011\)](#) noted that many influencers post about physical exercise and information that stimulates followers to commit to exercise and healthy life habits, which has a positive effect on lifestyle. This disposition to follow these platforms increased during and after the COVID-19 lockdown, when it served as a means to motivate individuals to practice at home.

Then, this trend is becoming increasingly popular in worldwide to achieve the desired physical benefits ([Baiga et al., 2023](#)). Many advanced countries, such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and China, harness these digital platforms to motivate people to live active, healthy. particularly, an individual could reach it whenever and wherever they want ([Ding et al., 2020](#); [To et al., 2021](#)).

Based on the findings of ([Wilksch et al., 2020](#)). Indicated that women are more attentive to their body weight and shape, and they strive to maintain their body and shape in an ideal state. Women continually compare their body shapes to those of celebrities who post videos and photos on social media. The result of the comparison may encourage women to exercise, follow a dietary regimen, and follow healthy

Received 1 February 2026; revised 7 March 2026; accepted 18 March 2026.
Available online 3 July 2026

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<https://doi.org/10.54702/2708-3454.2123>

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habits. In contrast, other women experience feelings of shame and disappointment, eventually withdrawing from social life (Shimoga et al., 2019).

A large number of women believed that social media is a rich source of healthy information, diet foods, eating habits, and physical exercise, which help improve women's health and physical shape (Baiga et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Khadim et al., 2019). Furthermore, ease of use, abundant knowledge and experience available on social media provide women with a wide range of options to identify content that satisfies their needs. These characters encourage women to use fitness and exercise platforms or follow influencers who present content that meets their needs (Wang et al., 2024).

In Iraq, according to the Iraqi Minister of Communications, the number of Iraqis who use the internet reach to 82.9% in 2025, and there is an expectation that this percentage will double in the next few years. A large segment of Iraqi women follows physical exercise and social media (Bakir & Abdalzahrah, 2026). However, there is a substantial need to understand how this digital platform improves their lives, fitness, and physical appearance and weight in the local environment. On the other hand, the results will provide officials with the means to plan to harness fitness and exercise platforms to improve healthy life and well-being of women.

2. Problem statement

Indubitably, humans' productivity and well-being are strongly and positively associated with the level of active life (Jiménez-Pavón et al., 2020). The World Health Organization (2019, 2020) recommended that adults age (17–68) years old practice (150–300) minutes of physical exercise per week to avoid cardiovascular disease risk. The Overweight and obesity are major reasons for cardiovascular disease, lung disease, high blood pressure, and joint diseases; these diseases require a huge budget from the Iraqi health minister to buy medicine for those chronic diseases annually (Mayo Clinic Press, 2023). Some advanced countries established plans to strengthen citizens' attitudes toward physical exercise and fitness platforms, thereby encouraging practice based on their content, eventually boosting human health, since these platforms offer a wide range of exercises, duration of exercise, and intensities, further making this content accessible whenever and wherever individuals want to exercise. Iraqi women follow influencers on these platforms to exercise and maintain their body shape, this meant purpose for them (Bakir & Abdalzahrah, 2026). In light of Iraqi women's attitudes who affect their choice of duration and in-

tensity of exercise, and the level of psychological attitudes predicts the indicator of women's body mass index (BMI), which needs further study to understand these attitudes and put official plans in place to use it as an advanced country to improve women's health.

Aim of the study

- To Identify Iraqi women's attitudes toward social media-based physical exercise and the content of such exercise.
- To Identify the weekly duration, frequency, and intensity of Iraqi women's exercise.
- To Predict Iraqi women's BMI based on attitude level and age group.

Theoretical frame of study

Psychological attitudes important latent variable has a great influence on humans' strength and directions of behavior toward tangible or intangible issue (Olufemi, 2012).

Ajzen (2014) explained that Constitute humans' attitude whether positive or negative based on cognitive, emotional and behavioral actions, as a result if we create controllable environment could largely constitute humans' attitudes to specific ideal or issue. On the other hand (Williams et al., 2021) illustrated that social media primarily establish as a communication mean, then becoming grow and developed to new environment has its norms, culture and way of utilize to serve humans' need. Design judgmental environment may use to change humans' attitudes and espoused behavior and ideal.

There are many post on social media-based on physical exercise, fitness, health life, dietary regime, and various stores about individual succeeded in change their weight and lifestyle to better pattern ((Xiao et al., 2025; Ahmed, 2025). these post instituted new digit environment impacts on individual attitudes to change their improve his life physical appearance. This influence according to (Williams et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2025.) differ according individuals' thought and norms, this reason why the influence on individuals in disparate way. As a result current study try to study the prevalent psychological attitudes after divide participants into different age groups, then find out the how Iraqis women use digital content in various age groups to shape her healthy life and physical appearance.

Research methodology

This study used a survey to collect and analyze data. Surveys research design was employ to

survey participant that relevant to current gap, a survey study mostly use questionnaire to collect data from participant. Then, questionnaires can provide useful information for research questions (Jones et al., 2013; Edwards et al., 2023). Participants have to filled out a questionnaire voluntarily to share their information (Edwards et al., 2023).

Sample of study

The study used convenience sampling, which is helpful when it is hard to reach large groups directly. This method allowed the researchers to collect both qualitative and quantitative data (Edwards et al., 2023). The sample included 240. The age groups women aged explained in Table 1. All participants has received the Google form link to answer questions of survey, the link open in Dec.11, 2025 and closed in closed in Feb. 3, 2026.

Table 1. Range of age for participant.

From 20 to 17	From 20 to 30	From 31 to 40	Older than 40
38	95	63	44

Protocol of study

A questionnaire was used to measure attitudes toward exercise and fitness content on social media. It was developed in Iraq and published in 2025, and includes 16 items rated on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire showed strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of .79, a Spearman-Brown coefficient of .90, a KMO of .86, and a Confirmatory Factor Analysis of .86 (Bakir & Kadnan, 2025). First section of survey questionnaire included three questions.

1. May write your height (in cm) and weight (in kg)?
2. how often participants exercised each week per week?
3. Third question include three question about duration and level of intensity (high, moderate, or low) of weekly exercise?
 - (a) How many minutes per week do you spend doing high-intensity physical exercise?
 - (b) How many minutes per week do you spend doing moderate-intensity physical exercise?
 - (c) How many minutes per week do you spend doing low-intensity physical exercise?

Body mass index (bmi)

Body mass index calculate by dividing weight in (Kg) on height in (Cm)^{square}. then interpret result according BmI range (Underweight Below 18.5, Healthy 18.5–24.9, Overweight 25.0–29.9, Obesity 30.0

or above) in order to indemnified body state (National Heart, Lung And Blood Institute, N.D).

Statistical procedures

After answering these questions, participants moved on to answer attitudes' questionnaire section. The data were collected, coded, and analyzed using SPSS version 20.

3. Result and discussion

The questionnaire of attitudes five likert scale. This employ the range of five likert scale as standard which explained I Table 2 to interpret statistical analysis result.

Table 2. Standard interpretation of likert scale.

Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
1.00–1.80	1.81–2.60	2.61–3.40	3.41–4.20	4.21–5.00

First aim - Identified the Iraqi women's attitudes toward social media-based physical exercise and fitness.

Descriptive statistics in Fig. 1 show that 5% to 12% of participants in all age groups had low or very low attitude levels, just group (20–30) reach of over 10% in very low level category. These are small numbers compared to the total sample in each age group. Most participants had moderate attitudes, ranging from 8% to 33%. High attitude levels were seen in just over 10% to more than 25% of participants. The very high attitude level did not appear in the oldest age group, but ranged from 5% to 10% in the others. Overall, participants had a strong, positive attitude toward social media-based fitness and exercise.

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de Aquino Carlsson (2018) found that following online fitness videos lets women choose content that matches their favorite, daily schedules, and physical fitness levels. Advice from trusted virtual coaches can boost commitment and effort during workouts. Further, exercise at home based on sport platforms, saves commuting time and giving women more time to exercise. These factors may help women exercise more regularly (Oyibo et al., 2018). Influence mostly Combine exercise routines with timing cues or music, The music's rhythm matches the exercise's intensity and

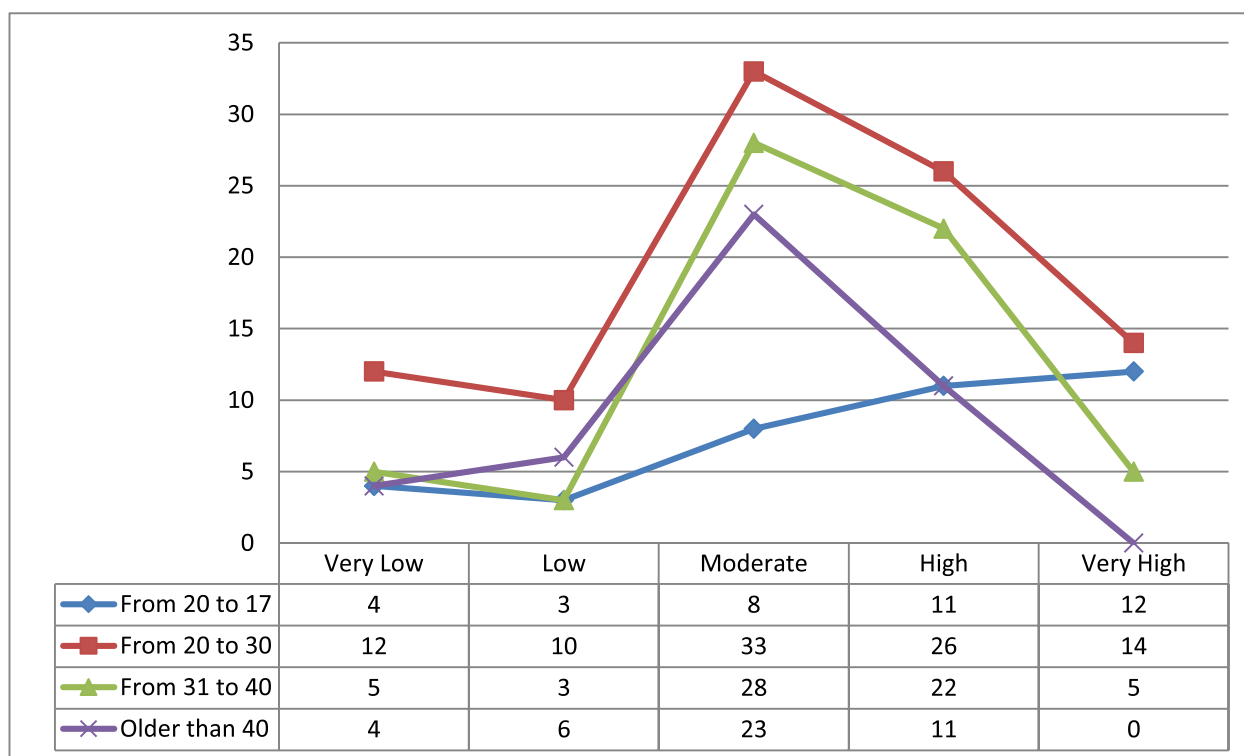


Fig. 1. Iraqi women attitudes towards social media-based physical exercise and fitness according to their age.

pace. According to Wang et al. (2024), this stimulate followers and keeps them in sync with the routine.

Nathan et al. (2022) found that exercise intensity is an important feature that makes social media platforms more useful for fitness. It gives followers flexibility in how long and how hard they work out, which can improve their attitudes toward using social media for exercise. Offering different options may also help more women engage with online fitness content.

Doing fitness activities at home through social media can help people get past barriers like strict social norms, limited time, and low motivation to go to the gym. This may make them more willing to use social media for exercise content (Bakir & Kadnan, 2025).

Second aim - Identified the Iraqi women's duration, frequency, and intensity of training per week

Table 3 shows that participants exercised two to three times per week. The average weekly session was between (22.40 to 19.75) minutes for all age groups. the shortest was 19.75 minutes for women over 40. Remarkably, all exercise duration have not meet World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended 150–300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week for adults. Based on these result infer, Iraqi women who follow social media-based exercise content are not meeting these (WHO) guidelines.

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Not getting enough physical activity is linked to higher risks of high blood pressure, heart disease, and other chronic conditions (Dairy Council of California, 2023). On the other hand, regular exercise can reduce stress, improve sleep, and lower the risk of early death. Being active also helps burn more calories, which can prevent obesity and being overweight (Khan et al., 2023).

AlMarzooqi (2021) found that many Saudi women are obese and not active enough, partly because of cultural restrictions on women's sports in gym and their follower of sport platforms also have obese and overweight due to low commitment to duration, frequency and intensity of exercise sessions. which are also present in Iraq. This means Iraqi women may face similar barriers, raising their risk for chronic diseases. Sedentary sitting is associated with lower physical activity. They suggest that organized exercise programs can help improve health. The results of this study agree with these findings, showing that Iraqi

Table 3. Explain durations and intensity of training of age groups.

Physical exercise	From 20 to 17	From 20 to 30	From 31 to 40	Older than 40
How many session per week,in general	2 to 3	2 to3	3 to 4	2 to 3
Mean of duration per-week	21,35	20.40	22.10	19.75
Mean of Low intensity sessions	2.20	2.23	2.10	1.60
Mean of Moderate intensity sessions	0.50	0. 43	0.22	0. 42
Mean of High intensity sessions	0	0.22	0.18	0.13

Table 4. Show predictability of BMI based on level of psychological attitudes.

Very Low Attitude	0.25	0.18	.12	1.39	.175
Low Attitude	0.18	0.17	.09	1.06	.29
Moderate Attitude	–0.05	0.16	–.03	–0.31	.75
High Attitude	–0.20	0.16	–.11	–1.25	.21
Very High Attitude	0.42	0.15	–.35	2.80	.03
Constant	24.50	0.80		30.63	< .001
Model Fit	Value				
R	.3081				
R ²	.093				
AdjustedR ²	.076				
Standard Error	3.42				
F(5, 234)	4.93,p< 0.05				

women are not meeting the WHO's recommended activity levels.

Third aim: Predict body mass index (BMI) among Iraqi women based on attitudes and age groups.

Table 4 shows the analysis of five attitude levels toward social media-based exercise content as predictors of BMI. The results were statistically significant, $F(5, 234) = 4.93$, $p < .05$, and explained 9.3% of the difference in BMI ($R^2 = .093$). Only a very high positive attitude was linked to lower BMI ($\beta = -.35$, $p < .05$), with each increase in this attitude level lowering BMI by 0.32 units. Other attitude levels did not have a significant effect (all $p > .05$). So, only a very positive attitude has a real impact on BMI. A strong positive attitude boosts motivation and effort toward fitness goals, which matches Baiga et al. (2023), who found that seeing social media content can increase motivation for physical activity.

Social media helps build positive attitudes toward exercise by sharing energy and motivation from influencers to followers. This can make followers more committed to active and a healthy lifestyle (Zhang et al., 2016). Many people say they lost weight after being inspired by influencers' stories and encouragement.

However, the results for Iraqi women whom follow fitness abd exercise platforms were not as positive as expected. In this study, 37% were overweight and 26.5% were obese. Table 3 shows higher segment of sample had only moderate attitudes. which led to moderate motivation and limited effort to manage their weight according to attitudes theory (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960). These women may choose

moderate-intensity exercise videos, which usually do not burn enough calories for weight loss. while women in very high category get significant effect of BMI, may they work hardly under effect of very high positive psychological attitudes to get their goals.

The language that social media influencers use is important for inspiring, motivating, and teaching followers (Sichach, 2023). Bakir and Abdalzahrah (2026) found that many Iraqis have trouble understanding non-Arabic content, which makes it harder for them to use online weight-loss resources. This may reason interpret Iraqi why big segment of women over fitness standard.

Table 3 shows that women of all ages spend about 20 minutes on exercise content, usually at low to moderate intensity. This suggests they may not know how to choose content that boost burns more calories or helps with body composition goals. Picking the wrong exercise duration and level of intensity can make it harder to lose weight, which matches earlier research (Bakir & Abdalzahrah, 2026).

Social media gives information about diet and nutrition, which needs to be combined with exercise to reach weight goals. Only physical Exercise, without changing diet, is not likely to lead to significant weight loss or reach favorite body shape (Alwafi et al., 2022).

4. Conclusion

This study found that most age groups had moderately positive attitudes toward social media-based fitness and exercise content, and only a few reported low or very low attitudes. However, Iraqi women exercised an average of 20 minutes per week, which is much less than the World Health Organization's recommended 150–300 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity.

Most participants exercised two to three times per week, mostly at moderate intensity. This amount and intensity are not enough for body shaping or weight loss because they have not burn enough calories.

A large number of Iraqi women had excess body fat, with 26.5% classified as obese and 37% as overweight based on BMI. Only women with a very high positive attitude had a lower BMI; other attitude levels were not linked to BMI.

5. Recommendations

Established physical exercise and fitness platforms, under governmental supervision, offer their content in the national language as a means to boost followers' understanding and. Further present the online bulletin on these platforms to help women identify the duration and intensity of exercise which appropriate for his long and short –term goals, and also explain the equation for energy expenditure by age, since this experience highly recommends getting benefits from exercise and reach wanted BMI.

Improve Psychological attitudes due to it association with a high level of motivation and exerting effort to achieve wanted goals. Moreover make use of trials of other countries in this regard, have to study these trials in depth, and modeled the Iraqi trial on their successful results.

Use other instruments to measure individuals' attitudes, as respondents may sometimes overrate or underrate their attitudes when answering a survey questionnaire, which can effect on result analysis.

Eventually, compare women who practice at home, based on the availability of physical exercise and fitness platforms, with those who attend a gym to practice physical exercise, in terms of exercise duration, intensity, knowledge and experience with exercise, and indicators of BMI.

6. Limitation of study

The study's sample was too small to generalize the results. To understand the mainstream of attitudes toward physical exercise and fitness content, a bigger representative sample is needed. This study focuses on levels of psychological attitude toward physical exercise as the only independent predictors of BMI. Next, the study has to examine dietary regime, socioeconomic status, and personal working as moderated variables, due to their effects on the time allocated for exercise.

Author's declaration

Conflicts of interest

None.

We confirm that all tables and figures in this article are ours and written by the researchers themselves.

Ethical clearance

This manuscript approved by the Scientific Committee of the College of Physical Education and Sports

Sciences for Women, University of Maysan, Iraq, on (2025/1/7).

Author's contributions

This manuscript has achieved individually by author (Dr. Fathil Bakir Mutsher). The topic, research methods and analysis data accomplished by author only.

Facilitate the task

This study was supported by the College of Physical Education and Sports Sciences/University of Maysan.

Roles of each researcher in the research

A present manuscript accomplished by author only, I hold full responsibility about the data and procedures of study.

Funding statement

This research received no external funding.

Data availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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الميل نحوى المحتوى الرياضي في منصات التواصل الاجتماعي للتنبؤ بمؤشر كتلة الجسم لدى بعض النساء العراقيات

فاضل باقر مطشر

كلية التربية البدنية وعلوم الرياضة- جامعة ميسان

ملخص البحث

هدفة الدراسة الحالية التعرف على مستوى الميل نحو استخدام التواصل الاجتماعي وفق للفئات العمرية للنساء في العراق. والتعرف على ز من وشدة التمرينات الاسبوعية ومقارنتها بالمستوى المطلوب وفق مؤشرات منظمة الصحة العالمية والتي بينت ان الجهد المتوسط يجب ان يستمر من 150 الى 300 دقيقة كل اسبوع وبشدة تتراوح من متوسط الى عالي. واخيرا قدرة مستويات الميل النفسى على التنبؤ بمؤشر كتلة الجسم. وكانت عينة الدراسة 240 مراءة اجبن على مقياس الميل النفسى الذي وزع بشكل الكتروني على افراد العينة. وكشفت نتائج الدراسة ان النساء العراقيات من حيث مستوى الجهد وزمنه لم يصل للمستوى المحدد من قبل منظمة الصحة العالمية. كما ان مستوى الميل توزع على خمسة مستويات و(المنخفض جدا , المنخفض , المتوسط , العالي , والعالي جدا). الميل العالي جدا كان له اثر معنوي في التأثير بمؤشر كتلة الجسم ($\beta = -.35, p < .05$). وفي ضوء هذه النتائج اوصت الدراسة بتقديم برامج تعليمية باللغة المحلية حول طرق والية اختيار ما يناسبهم من التمرينات المتاحة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. حيث ان هذا سوف يطور قدرتها في اختيار ما يناسبها ويعزز ميلها للتمرين وحررق السعرات والحفاظ على وزنها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المسل النفسى – منصات التواصل الاجتماعي- التمرينات والرشاقة –النساء