

The Role of Group Cohesion in Pregnant Women's Attitude toward Participation in Fitness Classes

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Abstract

Background: Group cohesion indices are among important factors that influence human performance and behavior within groups. Group cohesion has also an important role in sports and physical exercise groups. Evidence indicates that sportive exercises during pregnancy have some positive effects, such as anxiety relief, heightened spirit and higher physical and psychological adaptation to pregnancy. The main purpose of this study was to compare group cohesion among pregnant women who participated in fitness classes.

Methods: This descriptive-comparative study included 400 women in their second trimester of pregnancy in Isfahan, Iran. They filled a Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) with four subscales, including attraction to group task, attraction to social group, social group interplay and task group interplay. Physical exercises were performed in twelve 20-30 minutes sessions. Exercises in each session were comprised of side walking, swimming, rhythmic movements and light to medium aerobic exercises. Absenteeism and delays were recorded in each session. In the twelfth session, the GEQ was handed out to the participants and those whose scores were two standard deviations below or above the mean for the group were, respectively, classified into low or high absenteeism or delayed groups. The significance level in the inferential level was 0.05.

Results: The mean values for the four domains, i.e. attraction to social group (ATG-S), attraction to group task (ATG-T), social group interplay (GI-S), and task group interplay (GI-I) for the group with low absenteeism were 34.7, 28.3, 17.3 and 25.9, respectively, and for the group with high absenteeism, respectively, were 27.3, 23.4, 16.9 and 24.7. Discriminant analysis showed significant differences between the low and high absenteeism groups in two domains: attraction to social group and attraction to group task ($p < 0.01$). The mean values for groups with low and high delays in the four domains of group cohesiveness (ATG-S, ATG-T, GI-S and GI-I) were 32.6, 22.7, 27.3 and 17.7 and 27.3, 23.1, 26.9 and 18.2, respectively. There was significant differences between the low and high-delay groups in attraction to social group (ATG-S) ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Trying to make group physical exercises attractive and forming homogeneous groups for the participating women could be a motivating factor for attending such classes with perseverance.

Keywords: Attraction, Group Cohesion, Group task, Interplay, Physical exercise, Physical fitness, Pregnant women, Second trimester, Social group.

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