



Lifestyle of Middle-Aged Women and Masters' Competition

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Abstract

Female athletes have been recently making remarkable achievements. "Masters sports" is regarded as a new lifestyle to develop and mature the motivation, skills, and enjoyment. In particular, female athletes after 35 years have major life events such as marriage, childbirth, and child rearing. Female masters' athletes have direct benefits from participating, such as becoming healthier, making friends, gaining confidence, realizing difference from daily life, and rediscovering themselves. The cohesive capital formed in this way creates positive interactions with trust and faith among members. Masters' competitions can increase self-satisfaction and empowerment for middle-aged female athletes, and improve the athletes' QOL.

Keywords: Female masters' athletes; Masters' competition; Self-satisfaction; Empowerment; Life cycle

Commentary

In recent years, female athletes have been making remarkable achievements. At 2024 Paris Olympics, daycare rooms were provided for female athletes who are raising children, and pregnant athletes also participated in competitions and announced the situation on their own social media. Until now, pregnancy and childbirth have been considered the reason for female athletes to halt or abandon their athletic careers. However, current movement at world championships has been a glimpse of the development of support measures to ensure that pregnancy and childbirth are not a reason for women to quit their competitions [1]. As a matter of fact, there are still pros and cons regarding this matter. Quite a few people have been present who frown upon the idea of athletes continuing to compete "even after becoming a mother" or "even after becoming pregnant." Furthermore, various criticism has been found through social media and other media.

On the other hand, the situation seems to be a little different when it comes to recreational sports performed by women who have experienced pregnancy and childbirth in the same way. When middle-aged and older people are enjoying exercise and sports, few people frown upon women exercising and sports [2]. Since exercise

and sports have been recommended as part of health maintenance and promotion policies, we can now see many women enjoying exercise and sports in various situations, not just men. Masters' sports are no exception. Masters' competitions are a type of sporting activity carried out by people with a competitive streak. As compared to other youth sports and competitive sports with similar characteristics, more opportunities have been observed for women to play an active role.

When focused on the studies of masters' athletes, women are always chosen as subjects or applicants. These results may suppose that masters' competitions are not only linked to health promotion for women, but also to women's empowerment in their lives [3]. For their background, characteristic life cycle of women may exist that is unique to this period. In this report, we will examine the life cycle of middle-aged women and masters' competitions with some perspectives.

Life cycle of middle-aged women

"Masters sports" is regarded as a new lifestyle that aims to develop and mature the motivation, skills, and enjoyment of sports as individuals. Masters' athletes can continue them, regardless of

previous or current sports performance level [4]. They are generally defined as people over the age of 35 who participate in or train for competitions. Many of these athletes are experienced competitors who continue to compete after their higher sports careers. On the other hand, some athletes return to the sports after a long period of inactivity, while others sometimes simply participate or train sporadically [5].

From the perspective of lifelong development, this age group tends to enjoy themselves in middle to elderly age period. Among masters' athletes, people in the middle age group are relatively economically stable compared to other life cycles. They are usually in a period of responsibility and obligation from social point of view. They are in the main or prime period of their meaningful lives, and they can achieve their goals in terms of motivation to achieve their important works [6].

However, this period would be the time when physical and mental aging has begun. At the same time, they may face and feel psychological anxiety that has been named as the second adolescence [7]. Focusing on women in particular, the age after 35 is not just a time when they experience major life events such as marriage, childbirth, and child rearing. They are in the age of continuing employment and career choices, and their children become independent [8]. Furthermore, their spouse usually retires, and they have to take care of their elderly parents with certain responsibility. During this period, they become aware of the physical changes from aging process, including menopause. They have other major changes in their human relationships for their home, working place and other their third places. Compared with those of men working in the office every day, female people have usually wider human network and communication in their daily lives, and then, the changes would be also quicker and greater [9]. Furthermore, middle-aged women often prioritize their family matters for investing in their health, whereas woman tends to regard own health promotion as less indispensable [10]. For this period, the important role of raising children has been over, in which the home becomes less important, and social activities and relationships involving children becomes shrinking [11]. Some people have revived friendships again from their school days or make new friends by participating in various activities based on their interests and concerns. In contrast, others become isolated from the local community, unable to rebuild relationships with their neighbors without their children, and suffer from depression and other illnesses.

Involvement in masters sports

Research on masters athletes clearly shows that women of this age are participating in and excelling in sports [12]. There are common findings in these studies. Female masters' athletes have direct benefits from participating, such as becoming healthier and making friends. In addition, there are psychological benefits, such as

gaining confidence, realizing difference from my daily life, and rediscovering myself [13]. They want to belong to a homogeneous group with similar age, occupation, social level, lifestyle, and region [14]. In such a social environment, their values are recognized properly, and they form even stronger solidarity relationships by interacting with members over common interests. The cohesive capital formed in this way creates positive interactions such as trust and faith among members. It also induces a sense of belonging and identity to the group, and provides opportunities to obtain new information and resources in relationships with others [15]. Consequently, such process can strengthen the impact of leisure competence on QOL [16]. From mentioned above, masters' competitions can gather people with the same interests and goals as the athletes [17]. This group not only increases the middle-aged women's sense of self-satisfaction, but also improves the athletes' QOL through mutual interaction [18].

Conclusion

It has long been said that issues related to an aging society are equal to women's issues. If participating in the Masters' competition can empower women and lead healthy, fulfilling lives both physically and mentally, the world of Masters' sport will have made a great contribution.

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