



Gendered Spaces: Social Conflict in Women's Weight Training

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to examine social conflicts in the context of weight training activities conducted by women, with a focus on gender spaces. The study explores how these spaces play a role in creating social dynamics that influence women's participation and experiences in weight training at the gym. This research employs a qualitative approach using phenomenological methods. Data collection techniques include observation, in-depth interviews, and literature review. The participants in this study are women actively engaged in weight training activities at the gym. The results indicate that there is undeniable social tension related to gender norms in the context of women's weight training. Some participants experience gender-based judgments and stereotypes, indirectly affecting their self-confidence and motivation. Additionally, these spaces create opportunities to understand how social norms guide member interactions and influence group dynamics. The implications of these findings include efforts to create inclusive spaces and advocate for gender equality in the context of high-intensity sports activities, with the goal of reducing social conflicts and increasing women's participation in fitness activities.

Keywords: *Gender, Weight Training, Female*

Abstrak: Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengkaji konflik sosial dalam konteks aktivitas olahraga latihan beban yang dilakukan perempuan, dengan fokus pada ruang gender. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana ruang-ruang tersebut memainkan peran dalam menciptakan dinamika sosial yang memengaruhi partisipasi dan pengalaman perempuan dalam latihan beban di

tempat gym. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologi. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah observasi, wawancara mendalam dan studi literatur. Partisipan penelitian ini merupakan perempuan yang aktif melakukan aktivitas latihan beban di tempat gym. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, tidak dapat dipungkiri bahwa adanya ketegangan sosial yang muncul sehubungan dengan norma-norma gender dalam konteks latihan beban yang dilakukan perempuan. Beberapa partisipan mengalami penilaian dan stereotip berbasis gender, yang secara tidak langsung mempengaruhi rasa percaya diri dan motivasi mereka. Selain itu, ruang-ruang ini menciptakan peluang untuk memahami bagaimana norma sosial memandu interaksi antaranggota dan memengaruhi dinamika kelompok. Implikasi temuan ini mencakup upaya untuk menciptakan ruang yang inklusif dan memperjuangkan kesetaraan gender dalam konteks aktivitas olahraga dengan intensitas latihan berat, dengan tujuan mengurangi konflik sosial dan meningkatkan partisipasi perempuan dalam kegiatan kebugaran.

Kata Kunci: *Gender, Latihan Beban, Perempuan*

INTRODUCTION

Women are often placed in a patriarchal conflict dilemma. One interesting aspect to discuss is women's participation in sports activities, especially those with high intensity and traditionally associated with male sports. Women's involvement in sports has grown alongside the feminist movement, challenging traditional notions that link women to slender bodies and the perception of physical weakness.¹ As a result of the feminist movement, which led to the development of gender equality ideologies advocating for equal rights between women and men. In 1978, sports and

¹ Isabel Fontbona Mola and Ulf Wuggenig, "Female Bodybuilding and Patriarchal Civilization. The Intrusion of a Practice in Sport into Artistic Fields and Visual Culture," in *Arts and Power: Policies in and by the Arts*, ed. Lisa Gaupp, Alenka Barber-Kersovan, and Volker Kirchberg (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2022).

physical activities were specifically recognized as human rights in the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport by UNESCO.² Women have begun actively contributing to sports traditionally associated with male physical activities. Indirectly, gender equality in sports opens up more opportunities related to cultural and ideological issues. The shift in societal perspectives indicates that sports are shaped not only by experience but also by values associated with masculinity-femininity and how sports are organized and played.³

The concept articulated by Mulvey may closely relate to how women are associated with the characteristic of “being looked at.” In this context, Mulvey suggests that women, through their bodies, are supposed to be objects to be observed and displayed. Thus, this perspective is rational, voyeuristic, sadistic, controlling, and controlled.⁴ If associated with the phenomenon of women participating in sports, Mulvey’s concept suggests that women engaging in sports activities ultimately fulfill the need for physical appearance rather than the intended purpose, such as for health. Indirectly, there is a complex relationship between Mulvey’s concept and how women are involved in sports, which is considered to highlight visual aspects that often dominate their narratives.

Women face the challenge of being positioned as objects solely viewed visually, placing them in a patriarchal condition. Women are indirectly constructed to participate in sports because of the need for their bodies to

² Sven Messing et al., “Physical Activity as a Human Right?,” *Health and Human Rights* 23, no. 2 (2021): 201–211.

³ Michelle Bootcov, “Australian Female Endurance Cyclists of the 1930s and the Commercialization of Their Athletic Femininity,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, no. 15–16 (2019): 1433–1456, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2020.1713107>.

⁴ Amy Clark, “Exploring Women’s Embodied Experiences of ‘the Gaze’ in a Mix-Gendered Uk Gym,” *Societies* 8, no. 1 (2018): 1–19.

always be visible. This implies that women still exist within a sexist social power structure aimed at controlling and restraining them. In the perception of this theoretical perspective, if reflected upon, it paints a picture that women are in a state of differing viewpoints and power. Women, according to Mulvey's conceptual viewpoint, can be considered not only as individual entities but something deeply embedded in symbolic structures and patriarchy.⁵

Currently, women's participation in sports is rapidly expanding. Even though women still face patriarchal challenges and sexist attitudes, it does not lead to a decrease in women's motivation and interest in engaging in sports activities. This phenomenon reflects a shift in societal paradigms regarding the roles and contributions of women in various fields, including sports. The rapid growth of women's participation in sports is not limited to a single type of activity. On the contrary, this development encompasses various sports, both game-based and those testing physical strength, such as weightlifting. This creates a more inclusive stage where women can explore their potential and abilities without being constrained by outdated gender stereotypes.⁶

The lingering patriarchal challenges are no longer an absolute barrier for women to achieve success in sports. On the contrary, women are increasingly proving that they can compete on equal footing with men in various sports disciplines. One interesting aspect in the development of women's sports is the diversification of the preferred sports branches. If in the past, attention was mainly focused on sports like swimming or athletics, now women are actively involved in more intense and demanding sports, such

⁵ Clark, "Exploring Women's Embodied Experiences of 'the Gaze' in a Mix-Gendered Uk Gym."

⁶ Sarah Zipp, Tavis Smith, and Simon Darnell, "Development, Gender and Sport: Theorizing a Feminist Practice of the Capabilities Approach in Sport for Development," *Journal of Sport Management* 33, no. 5 (2019): 440–449.

as weightlifting. This activity not only challenges women's physical strength but also breaks traditional stereotypes about women's limitations in terms of strength and endurance.⁷

In the current modern era, women actively engage in various sports activities, including weight training at the gym. According to a study by the World Health Organization, approximately 56% of women and 63% of men participate in various physical sports activities.⁸ These results indicate that more than 50% of women participating in sports suggest that the sports industry is moving towards a more inclusive environment. Additionally, in the Global IHRSA report in 2022, it was found that 57% of women have a significant interest in gym memberships.⁹ These results indicate that sports are not just physical activities but have also become an integral part of a healthy lifestyle for many women worldwide. This signifies that women view sports not only as a means to improve their physical fitness but also as a way to care for their mental and emotional well-being.¹⁰ Gym membership provides women with access to various facilities and fitness programs designed to meet their individual needs and goals. Women involved in sports activities are not limited by age or status. In this regard, modern women often find time and enthusiasm to lead an active lifestyle through sports activities. One of the inspirations for modern women engaging in sports is Wulan Guritno. Wulan

⁷ Katherine L. Schofield, Holly Thorpe, and Stacy T. Sims, "Feminist Sociology Confluences With Sport Science: Insights, Contradictions, and Silences in Interviewing Elite Women Athletes About Low Energy Availability," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 46, no. 3 (2022): 223–246.

⁸ World Health Organization, *Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030: More Active People for a Healthier World* (Switzerland: World Health Organization, 2019).

⁹ IHRSA Global Report, *The 2022 IHRSA Global Report* (Los Angeles: IHRSA Global Report, 2022).

¹⁰ Christer Malm, Johan Jakobsson, and Andreas Isaksson, "Physical Activity and Sports—Real Health Benefits: A Review with Insight into the Public Health of Sweden," *Sports* 7, no. 5 (2019): 1–28.

Guritno serves as an inspiration for women to adopt a healthy lifestyle through sports. Indirectly, the influence of someone, especially an idol, provides a positive boost to adopting an active lifestyle.

Despite the strong motivation and interest, many women face challenges in balancing various roles and responsibilities. One significant dilemma that many women encounter is the conflict between their roles and their desire to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle through fitness activities, especially weight training at the gym.¹¹ This complex and often overlooked issue poses several challenges for women, ranging from time management and societal expectations to personal well-being and self-identity. This background explores the conflicts experienced by women when attempting to balance their roles as women in general with the fitness activities they pursue.

As societal expectations regarding gender roles continue to evolve, the cultural landscape of fitness also undergoes changes. Weight training sports activities are typically dominated by male participants. The issue is that women interested in weightlifting sports activities are considered to be violating gender norms and engaging in strength development exercises.¹² Furthermore, gyms were once considered male-dominated spaces, which indirectly have become symbolic battlegrounds for women to challenge traditional norms.¹³ However, this shift in participation patterns has given rise to a series of complex social conflicts rooted in societal expectations, stereotypes, and gender-based judgments.

¹¹ Callie Batts Maddox, Jaime R. DeLuca, and Jacob J. Bustad, "Working a Third Shift: Physical Activity and Embodied Motherhood," *Sociological Inquiry* 90, no. 3 (2020): 603–624.

¹² Jesper Andreasson and Thomas Johansson, "Negotiating Female Fitness Doping: Gender, Identity and Transgressions," *Sport in Society* 24, no. 3 (2021): 323–339, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2019.1672152>.

¹³ Greta Helen Bladh, "Spatial Bodies: Vulnerable Inclusiveness within Gyms and Fitness Venues in Sweden," *Social Sciences* 11, no. 10 (2022): 1–24.

Historically, women's roles were largely confined to patriarchal responsibilities, such as household duties, with their primary functions revolving around raising children and managing household tasks.¹⁴ The feminist movement and changes in social norms have paved the way for women to expand their roles and pursue careers and personal interests. Today, women play diverse roles, including pursuing education, building careers, and actively participating in physical fitness activities, such as going to the gym and engaging in weightlifting sports activities. However, this expansion of roles is not always free from conflict and challenges.

The changing dynamics of social interactions and the growing awareness of the importance of a balanced life have led many women to embrace the desire for a healthy lifestyle, including engaging in fitness activities. However, challenges arise when the demands of their traditional roles as women, with all their responsibilities, clash with the desire to maintain health and fitness. These challenges become more complex when faced by women in cultural or social environments that still restrict their freedom to pursue a healthy lifestyle. Despite society increasingly valuing women's roles in various fields, traditional expectations placed on women often remain a significant burden.

In a previous study by Kerry R. McGannon, Jenny McMahon, and Christine A. Gonsalves (2018), it was stated that a woman with an interest in sports is constructed to have experiences engaging in outdoor activities, and they must continue to uphold traditional cultural norms regarding their role as a complete woman.¹⁵ Furthermore, in a study by Rhiannon Lord and Mykolas

¹⁴ Maureen Perry-Jenkins and Naomi Gerstel, "Work and Family in the Second Decade of the 21st Century," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82, no. 1 (2020): 420–453.

¹⁵ Kerry R. McGannon, Jenny McMahon, and Christine A. Gonsalves, "Juggling Motherhood and Sport: A Qualitative Study of the Negotiation of

Kavaliauskas (2023), it was also revealed that there is a pattern of structural bias and discrimination experienced by women.¹⁶ Thus, from the aforementioned previous studies, it can be inferred that women experiencing a conflict dilemma regarding their fitness activities, particularly weightlifting sports activities.

Even though modern women can pursue their interests and aspirations beyond traditional patriarchal roles, it is undeniable that social pressure and cultural expectations sometimes create dilemmas. Many women feel confronted with double standards, where they are expected to fulfill the traditional roles of a mother and homemaker. However, women are also required to be caring and resilient while maintaining an ideal physical appearance. This dynamic can lead to internal struggles and external pressures for women, especially in terms of maintaining fitness routines.

At the internal level, women may feel torn between prioritizing personal health and meeting societal expectations of their traditional roles. The emergence of guilt or concerns related to time spent on oneself, which could be allocated to children and family, can be an emotional burden. Meanwhile, external pressure comes from social norms and public perceptions of how women should appear and behave. Therefore, this in-depth study will delve into the complexity of challenges faced by women engaging in weightlifting sports activities amid the struggle with traditional patriarchal gender norms.

METHOD

Competitive Recreational Athlete Mother Identities,” *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 36, no. January (2018): 41–49, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2018.01.008>.

¹⁶ Rhiannon Lord and Mykolas Kavaliauskas, “Sociological Tools for Improving Women’s Representation and Experiences in Strength and Conditioning Coaching,” *Strength and Conditioning Journal* 45, no. 1 (2023): 40–48.

The research design used is qualitative with a phenomenological method. The phenomenological method will focus on feminist understanding, where this study explores the depiction of life experiences of women engaging in weightlifting sports activities. The choice of feminist phenomenology is based on examining the structural and social concepts of women in patriarchal systems and women's dual roles. Furthermore, in feminist phenomenological method, the analysis will explore women's experiences, whether in the form of self-awareness or formal research, with a clear goal to further understand how and why women are marginalized.¹⁷ The context of using feminist phenomenological method becomes the focus for an in-depth exploration, concentrating on women while considering the strong influence and pressures of social structures on women's life experiences as they navigate their roles and the conflict dilemmas they face while engaging in weightlifting sports activities.

Informants in this study were selected using criterion-based sampling. The researcher limited informants by specifying the criteria that selected informants were women engaged in weightlifting sports activities. Three informants were selected, with Informant A being 28 years old, Informant B 33 years old, and Informant C 40 years old. The selection of informants from different age groups was due to the varied experiences each individual goes through, providing diverse perspectives on how women at different stages of life manage the conflict between their roles and dedication in engaging in weightlifting sports activities. Younger informants may face new pressures such as a busy professional life, while older informants may encounter different challenges related to aging. By selecting informants from a wide age

¹⁷ Maura Kelly and Barbara Gurr, *Feminist Research in Practice* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

range, this study aims to embrace the diversity of women's experiences in managing these dual roles.

The data collection techniques employed include observation, interviews, and literature review. The observation process is conducted in a non-participant manner, where the researcher observes the daily activities of women engaging in weightlifting sports activities at the gym and during their everyday lives. The interview process is also carried out informally, with scheduling adjustments made based on informant availability. Meanwhile, literature review involves various sources such as books, photo documentation, journals, and other reports that support the analysis process of this research.

The analysis technique utilized is the use of coding techniques. The first process is open coding, which involves breaking down each finding by conceptualizing and categorizing. The second process is axial coding, in which each finding is organized to establish connections between one finding and another. The final process is selective coding, involving systematic categorization and validation of each finding to further develop relationships between them.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Women, in general, find themselves trapped in ambiguity, especially when dealing with sports activities. Generally, the sports world in the context of gender remains patriarchal. This phenomenon is reflected in various aspects, from representation to the norms applied in the fitness environment.¹⁸

¹⁸ Beniamino Cislighi et al., "Widening Cracks in Patriarchy: Mothers and Daughters Navigating Gender Norms in a Mumbai Slum," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* (2019): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2019.1580769>.

As women participate in weightlifting sports activities, there is an awareness of the importance of maintaining physical health.

Of the three informants with differing perceptions of gender conflict, the following is the analysis:

Informant A (28-year-old woman)

Informant A is a 28-year-old woman working in an office. The conflict experienced by Informant A highlights how gender norms related to women's roles in the workplace can limit the time available for activities outside of work. The expectation for women to divide their time between work and household responsibilities can create conflicts in engaging in sports activities.

Additionally, the conflict experienced also involves barriers imposed by norms associating intensive physical activities with masculinity. Informant A indirectly experiences internal conflict between traditional expectations of gender roles and obligations and the desire to be physically active. Conflicts often arise due to competing demands for time and energy, making it challenging for them to engage in fitness activities regularly without feeling guilty or overwhelmed.¹⁹

Informant A, who is unmarried, also faces conflicting perspectives when engaging in weightlifting sports activities from those around her, especially her family. The presence of myths surrounding weightlifting sports activities for women contributes to this ambiguity. One common myth is the belief that weightlifting can cause the uterus to prolapse.²⁰ Although there is no scientific evidence supporting such claims, myths like these can influence

¹⁹ Kim Toffoletti and Holly Thorpe, "Bodies, Gender, and Digital Affect in Fitpiration Media," *Feminist Media Studies* 21, no. 5 (2021): 822–839, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2020.1713841>.

²⁰ McGannon, McMahon, and Gonsalves, "Juggling Motherhood and Sport: A Qualitative Study of the Negotiation of Competitive Recreational Athlete Mother Identities."

women's decisions to engage in strength training. Uncertainty and concerns about potential health consequences can limit women's choices in sports, creating unnecessary ambiguity in their decisions to participate in weightlifting sports activities.

Informant B (33-year-old woman)

Informant B is a 33-year-old woman working in an office and also a young mother. As an office worker and a young mother, Informant B faces gender norms that can reinforce dual roles. Expectations for women to fulfill work duties and care for the family often limit the time and energy available for fitness activities, including weightlifting exercises.

Informant B reflects the conflict of gender norms related to the dual roles as an office worker and a mother. Her involvement in weightlifting exercises may be confronted with cultural expectations regarding women's roles, which may emphasize priorities in domestic work and the mother's role. As mothers, they often have busy schedules, filled with household responsibilities, work, and taking care of children.

The conflict between women's household responsibilities as mothers and their involvement in weightlifting sports activities has become an increasingly prominent issue in recent years. Time constraints and feelings of guilt often emerge as common findings among women facing these conflicts.²¹ Informant B acknowledges that they find it difficult to allocate time for fitness activities without feeling guilty about neglecting household responsibilities. This creates additional pressure, hindering motivation to stay active regularly.

Informant C (40-year-old woman)

²¹ Lyn Craig and Judith E. Brown, "Feeling Rushed: Gendered Time Quality, Work Hours, Nonstandard Work Schedules, and Spousal Crossover," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 79, no. 1 (2017): 225–242.

Informant C is a 40-year-old woman, a homemaker, who aims to lead a healthy life. Modern women often find themselves in challenging situations as they try to balance their roles as mothers or homemakers with their desire to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle.²² The conflict experienced by Informant C refers to health-related issues. Being no longer young imposes restrictions on engaging in high-intensity physical activities.

Heavy weightlifting activities can increase the risk of injuries such as muscle strain, tendon injuries, or joint issues.²³ A 40-year-old woman may be more sensitive to the risk of injuries due to changes in muscle elasticity and body structure. However, according to Informant C, she does not have concerns about weightlifting activities because her efforts are part of activities to improve bone density, supported by a nutritious diet.

The gender conflict experienced by Informant C involves a sense of pressure from self-assessment regarding her physical appearance. Often, when going to the gym, Informant C feels the pressure of not being young anymore and faces assumptions from men regarding her efforts in weightlifting activities. In engaging in heavy weightlifting activities, Informant C always employs the services of a female personal trainer, whom she finds more comfortable and understanding of her fitness goals.

Based on the findings from the three informants above, engaging in weightlifting fitness activities has made them realize that as women, it is important to maintain health and fitness in their lifestyles. Participating in a

²² J Tekavc, P Wylleman, and S CeciĆ Erpič, "Becoming a Mother-Athlete: Female Athletes' Transition to Motherhood in Slovenia," *Sport in Society* (2020): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2020.1720200>.

²³ Jeppe Bo Lauensten, Thor Einar Andersen, and Lars Bo Andersen, "Strength Training as Superior, Dose-Dependent and Safe Prevention of Acute and Overuse Sports Injuries: A Systematic Review, Qualitative Analysis and Meta-Analysis," *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 52, no. 24 (2018): 1557–1563.

routine of physical activities gives them additional energy to cope with daily demands.²⁴ Sports not only improve physical fitness but also have a positive impact on mental health. The informants express that moments at the fitness center are valuable time for themselves, allowing them to experience tranquility and focus their minds. Awareness of the importance of health through fitness activities triggers holistic lifestyle changes, creating a positive circle that influences their entire families. Indirectly, this condition may reflect increasingly supportive social norms for women's participation in the world of sports. In this framework, it appears that women are given the opportunity to verbally express support for their involvement in physical activities.²⁵

From the three informants above, one of the most prominent findings of this study is the significant variation in the levels of conflict experienced by women in balancing their roles and hobbies, specifically engaging in fitness activities. The informants explain that conflicts are often minimal, where they have successfully aligned their responsibilities effectively. Their experiences indicate a complex picture of the challenges faced by women in trying to achieve a balance between household life and a healthy lifestyle.

On the contrary, there are women who experience high levels of conflict, expressing feelings of being pulled in opposite directions. The main factor triggering this conflict is the lack of support from their partners or families in managing household responsibilities. The informants also highlight that the pressure to meet social expectations regarding the traditional role of

²⁴ Alyce T Barnes et al., "Effectiveness of Mother and Daughter Interventions Targeting Physical Activity, Fitness, Nutrition and Adiposity: A Systematic Review," *Preventive Medicine* (2017): 1–39, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2017.12.033>.

²⁵ Stephanie E Coen, Mark W Rosenberg, and Joyce Davidson, "It's Gym, like g-y-m Not J-i-m: Exploring the Role of Place in the Gendering of Physical Activity," *Social Science & Medicine* (2017): 1–33, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.10.036>.

women as homemakers makes it difficult for them to find time for themselves and invest in their health.

However, a paradox arises when we look at women's actual actions in the context of sports. The results of the observation indicate that, despite verbally expressing support for participation in sports, most women still uphold their own reality of having to be distinguished from men. They tend to choose physical activities considered “feminine” or more in line with traditional gender norms and avoid sports or activities seen as “masculine” or involving greater physical strength.²⁶

This ambiguity indicates that, despite encouragement for women's participation in fitness activities, traditional gender norms still play a significant role in shaping their choices and actions. Socially constructed expectations often discourage women from choosing sports like weightlifting and recommend activities such as zumba, yoga, and pilates instead.²⁷ This perspective reflects the inequality in perceptions of women's abilities and interests in the sports world. While zumba, yoga, and pilates are considered fitting within feminine stereotypes, these limitations restrict women's choices and rights to explore other types of sports that they may desire or find beneficial.

The factors influencing these ambiguities include social pressure and expectations regarding gender roles. One aspect contributing to this ambiguity is the social pressure faced by women to conform to beauty and femininity norms.²⁸ Society often teaches that the ideal female body is slim, light, and

²⁶ Mola and Wuggenig, “Female Bodybuilding and Patriarchal Civilization. The Intrusion of a Practice in Sport into Artistic Fields and Visual Culture.”

²⁷ Zipp, Smith, and Darnell, “Development, Gender and Sport: Theorizing a Feminist Practice of the Capabilities Approach in Sport for Development.”

²⁸ Cislighi et al., “Widening Cracks in Patriarchy: Mothers and Daughters Navigating Gender Norms in a Mumbai Slum.”

conforms to established beauty standards. Therefore, women may feel confined to an image that aligns with these expectations. Strength-focused weightlifting activities may be perceived as conflicting with the societal ideal body, creating a psychological barrier for women to choose this type of sport.

Gender roles also play a crucial role in this ambiguity. Patriarchal traditions often place women in roles more associated with gentleness, sensitivity, and politeness.²⁹ These beliefs can create restrictive expectations for women in choosing the type of physical activity. Stereotypes that limit women from engaging in sports considered masculine can create discomfort or even low self-confidence for women who want to pursue their physical fitness. This can impact their choices to avoid sports that might be considered incompatible with traditional gender norms.

In resolving the conflict dilemma experienced by women in engaging in weightlifting fitness activities, the informants state that they have successfully balanced household roles and fitness activities without significant conflict. They have developed effective strategies for managing their time and energy, allowing them to enjoy their fitness routines without sacrificing household responsibilities.

As part of this effort, a change in perception of leisure time also becomes a key factor. The informants emphasize the importance of viewing exercise time as an investment in personal health rather than an additional task to be completed. By changing this perspective, exercise becomes more meaningful and is considered valuable time for self-care.³⁰ This not only creates sustainable habits but also helps reduce the pressure and stress associated with prioritizing time for oneself.

²⁹ Tekavc, Wylleman, and Erpič, "Becoming a Mother-Athlete: Female Athletes' Transition to Motherhood in Slovenia."

³⁰ Ibid.

In addition to physical benefits, exercise also provides women with time to take care of themselves, reduce stress, and enhance mental well-being. This is an investment in mental and emotional health that can positively impact the entire family. Some women even engage in supportive sports communities where they can share experiences, motivation, and mutual support. These communities not only offer opportunities for exercising together but also foster close social relationships.³¹ In sports communities, women can inspire each other and serve as a source of support when facing challenges or fatigue.

CONCLUSION

Women who engage in fitness do so not only for health reasons but also as a means of empowerment and self-expression. Fitness centers, once dominated by men, have adapted to serve female clients, offering various classes and services tailored to women's needs. This transition allows women to make fitness activities a space where they can prioritize both physical and mental health, contributing to their overall personal growth and confidence.

Women's involvement in fitness activities reflects a paradigm shift in society. While in the past, women were often identified solely through domestic and family roles, many women are now proving that they can also be athletes, runners, or participants in various sports competitions. It's not just about maintaining their own physical health, but also setting a positive example for their children on the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle. The presence of women engaging in fitness activities also has a positive impact on combating stereotypes about the ideal body. Many women demonstrate that beauty is not solely associated with a specific body size or shape.

³¹ McGannon, McMahon, and Gonsalves, "Juggling Motherhood and Sport: A Qualitative Study of the Negotiation of Competitive Recreational Athlete Mother Identities."

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