

Social Cohesion Among Older Adults in the Lifetime Fitness Program: Does Participation Frequency Matter?

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INTRODUCTION

- **Social cohesion:** the strength of relationships, mutual support, and shared belonging within a group.
- **Physical Activity Programs provide essential opportunities for older adults to engage in meaningful social interactions, reduce feelings of isolation, and develop supportive relationships within a community context.**
- **Understanding the of the Lifetime Fitness Program on social cohesion among older adults is crucial for enhancing social well-being in this population**

PURPOSE

To examine social cohesion among older adults engaged in the UIUC Lifetime Fitness Program (LFP) as a function of weekly participation

METHODS

Participants

- N = 16 Older Adults from the UIUC – LFP of both sexes
 - N = 8 (LFP < 5 days/week)
 - N = 8 (LFP ≥ 5 days/week)

Assessment

- **Social Cohesion:** Physical Activity Group Environment Questionnaire (PAGEQ) - a 21-item questionnaire (response score per item range: 1 – 9)
- PAGEQ: 4 Domains: Individual Attractions to the Group—Task (ATG-T); Individual Attractions to the Group—Social (ATG-S); Group Integration—Task (GI-T), and Group Integration—Social (GI-S).

Data Analysis: t-test, $p < 0.05 \rightarrow$ SPSS v.28

RESULTS

Table 1. General characteristics of the sample

	Overall (n = 16)	LFP < 5 times per week (n = 8)	LFP ≥ 5 times per week (n = 8)
Age, years	76.31 (6.69)	76.75 (6.84)	75.88 (6.98)
Marital Status, n (%)			
Single	2 (12.5)	1 (12.5)	1 (12.5)
Married	11 (68.8)	6 (75.0)	5 (62.5)
Widowed	4 (18.3)	1 (12.5)	2 (25.0)
Education, n (%)			
Some College or College	6 (37.5)	2 (25.0)	4 (50.0)
Master's	6 (37.5)	3 (37.5)	3 (37.5)
PhD	4 (25.0)	3 (37.5)	1 (12.5)
BMI, kg/m ²	25.94 (3.64)	26.90 (3.60)	24.98 (3.66)
Perceived Health, n (%)			
Excellent/very good	11 (68.8)	5 (62.5)	6 (75.0)
Good	5 (31.2)	3 (37.5)	2 (25.0)
Number of chronic diseases, mdn (min-max)	0 - 1	1.00 (0 - 1)	1.00 (0 - 1)
Falls in the past 12 months, mdn (min-max)	0 - 2	1.5 (0 - 2)	0.50 (0 - 2)
LFP Years of Membership, years	8.9 (7.51)	9.10 (8.40)	8.80 (7.10)

NOTE: BMI = Body Mass Index; LFP = Lifetime Fitness Program

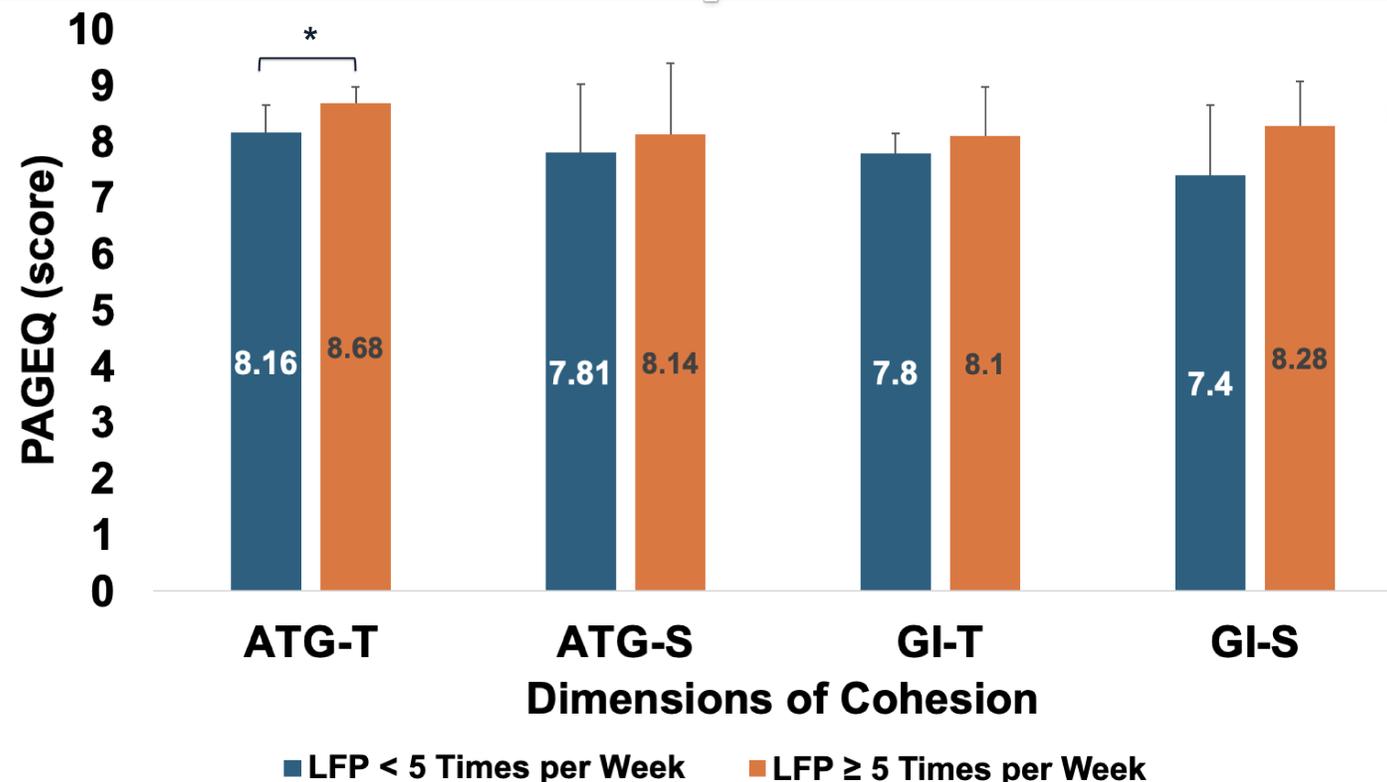
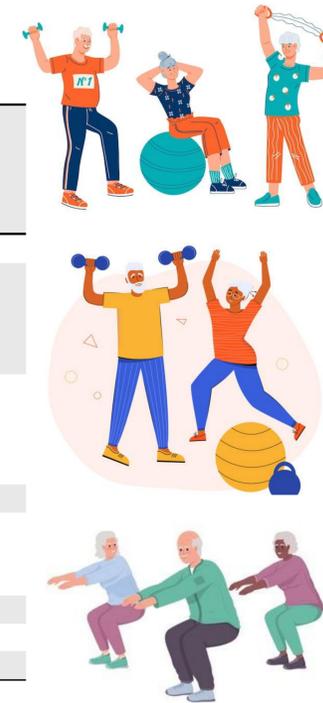


Figure 1. Mean and standard deviation values for participant-reported scores across the four dimensions of the Physical Activity and Group Environment Questionnaire (PAGEQ) separated by LFP weekly participation

CONCLUSION

- ✓ The LFP≥5 group consistently demonstrated higher scores across all dimensions compared to the LFP<5 group.
- ✓ However, statistical significance was only observed for ATG-T - Individual Attractions to the Group
- ✓ This suggests that individuals in the LFP≥5 group are more personally motivated to remain in the group.
- ✓ This greater motivation appears to stem from their perception of enhanced task-related benefits, which likely contribute to a stronger sense of commitment and satisfaction within the group dynamic.
- ✓ These results underscore the potential impact of task-related benefits in fostering engagement and cohesion among group members.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

- AHS - START Program
 - START Coordinator: Dr. Andiana Schwingel
- Faculty Mentors
 - Dr. Emerson Sebastião
- Graduate Student Mentors
 - Emmanuel Dubure
- Lifetime Fitness Program
 - Older Adults
 - Graduate Assistants