


Self-perception of life quality and the practice of physical activity in elderly

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ABSTRACT

The aging of population is an increasingly observable fact in several developed countries. We know that this life period can mean loss of life quality due to biological losses, psychological problems and social relations. The present study intends to verify if elderly people practicing a regular program of formal physical activity have a better perception of their quality of life compared to non-practicing elderly. The number of participants consisted of 64 elderly people ($n = 64$), living in Proença-a-Nova, being divided into two groups of 32 elements, in which one group had formal physical activity and the one was non-practitioners. The perceived quality of life was measured using the MOS SF-36 questionnaire. The results revealed that the perception of the quality of life presents only statistically significant differences in the physical and social functions and the health change item, in which that the group of practitioners presents higher values. **Keywords:** Aging; Active aging; Quality of life; Physical activity.



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Supplementary Issue: Spring Conferences of Sports Science. International Seminar of Physical Education, Leisure and Health, 17-19 June 2019. Castelo Branco, Portugal.

JOURNAL OF HUMAN SPORT & EXERCISE ISSN 1988-5202

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doi:10.14198/jhse.2019.14.Proc4.82

INTRODUCTION

Recently the increase in the elderly population has grown, and in Portugal, as a result of several changes in society, such as an increase in life expectancy and a decrease in the birth rate. Aging and old age has assumed an undeniable importance in our day (Oliveira, 2010). In Portugal, according to the NSI (2017), the population aged 65 or over may increase from 2.1 to 2, 8 million people between 2015 and 2080. We know that aging is a process characterized by functional weakness, so health is an essential condition for the well-being of this population. But not only, the WHO reports (2015) that "old age often involves significant changes beyond biological losses. These changes include changes in social roles and positions, as well as the need to deal with the loss of close relationships "(p.12). As a result, there has been a growing concern about the well-being and quality of life of this population. Our society, which, according to the WHO (2002), aims to optimize the possibilities of good health, participation and safety in order to increase the quality of life during old age. Quality of life is then the main purpose of active aging. According to Antão (2017), is related to self-esteem and personal well-being, which includes several concepts such as satisfaction with daily activities or with the environment, lifestyle and functional level. This functionality of the elderly, according to the literature, depends very much on the avoidance of sedentary behaviour. Therefore, a good perception of quality of life can be influenced by the regular practice of physical activity. Although the existing literature indicates that formal physical activity brings with it many benefits. Therefore, it is important that they reveal to us what they think and feel differently in their quality of life with physical activity. In addition, it is also important to realize the extent to which this perception may be different from that of elderly people who do not practice physical activity.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants

A quantitative and descriptive study, in which 64 elderly individuals aged 65 years and over, all of them living in Proença-a-Nova, were evaluated. The participants were selected according to subjective criteria of the researcher, and individuals were invited to participate voluntarily in the research. After the acceptance, two groups of 32 elements were defined, one being the group of practitioners, with 32 individuals practicing formal physical activity in two programs (gymnastics and hydrogymnastics). The other group was referred to as a group of non-practitioners and had also 32 non-physically active elderly individuals.

Measures

In consideration with ethical aspects, all individuals who participated in this research signed the informed consent form, agreeing to participate in all activities established in the study. In order to evaluate the quality of life we used the MOS SF - 36v2 questionnaire, as an interview and duly validated for application for the Portuguese population (Camões et al, 2016). This questionnaire contains 36 enclosed responses items that allow us to evaluate 8 dimensions: physical function, physical performance, body pain, general health, vitality, social function, emotional performance and mental health. There is also an item related to the transition or change in health status. The eight dimensions mentioned above are grouped into two components: physical and mental.

Procedures

This study was intended to be a "photographic picture" of the study population. For this reason, the application of the data collection instrument was carried out in a single moment and on the same day. For this, we used the Proença-a-Nova sports facilities, in which tables and chairs were prepared to complete the questionnaire. After completing the informed consent form, a copy of the MOS SF - 36v2 questionnaire was sent to

everyone. Later, we read it aloud, in order to confirm that everyone understood each item well, and this step was done individually. The elderly have responded to the questionnaire as they were being asked.

Analysis

For the results analysis, the computer program "IBM SPSS Statistics version 24 was used. Descriptive statistics were performed and the normality was verified by the Shapiro-Wilk test. According to the data obtained, the T-test was used. To measure the internal consistency of the questionnaires, we used Cronbach's alpha. Regarding acceptable reliability values, in this study, we considered values above 0.6, according to Morocco and Garcia-Marques (2006), and almost all variables revealed higher values, except for the social function that was of 0.463. The level of significance was $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

From the analysis of the results we found that almost in all domains, the group of practitioners obtained higher values than the group of non-practitioners. The only exception was the item of health change, in which the values were higher in the group of non-practitioners. In the variables of physical function, social function and health change, there are statistically significant differences.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed that the elderly practicing formal physical activity have higher quality of life values when compared to the elderly who do not practice. This trend is only contradicted in the health change item. Also in other similar studies with this questionnaire (MOS SF - 36v2), the results are similar as well. Camões, et al., (2016), sought to describe the perception of quality of life in individuals over 70 years of age, considering the participation in physical exercise programs, having verified higher values in physical exercise practitioners and statistically significant differences in physical function, general health, mental health, vitality and social function. In the study by Gomes (2010), who compared two groups of elderly people, one of them practicing physical activity and one of non-practitioners, it was concluded that, except for the body pain variable, in which the groups had very similar mean values, in all other dimensions had statistically significant differences, and the group of practitioners had higher values. In the present study, there were only statistically significant differences in the variables of physical function, social function and health change.

CONCLUSIONS

We found that perceived quality of life was not significantly different between the two groups. This means that the quality of life of practicing and non-practicing seniors is similar and tends to be higher for those who practice.

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