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Physical Activity, Fine Manual Dexterity and a Coach' s Self-Efficacy in a Physical Activity Program for Older Persons Living in Residential Care Facilities

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at assessing the efficacy of a physical activity intervention on a group of older elderly individuals living in residential care facilities, in terms of the functionality of their upper limbs, hands, and fingers. It also aimed at determining if the coaches' level of self-efficacy can contribute to the efficacy of the physical activity program. The project involved 44 institutionalized older persons: Their mean age was 84.3 (SD = 7.4) in the experimental group and 85 (SD = 6.6) in the control group; they were all self-sufficient. Seven female coaches, with degrees in physical education and an average age of 29 (SD = 4.4), conducted the physical activity program for 16 weeks. The participants were pre- and post-tested for hand and finger strength with dynamometers. The coaches' level of perceived self-efficacy was assessed through a self-reported questionnaire (Caprara, 2010). The results obtained by using non-parametric statistical techniques, due to the small sample size, confirmed that the physical activity intervention had positive effects on the fine manual dexterity of the elderly in the experimental group, and the high level of self-efficacy perceived by the coaches influenced the effects of the physical training. The results emphasize the importance of setting realistic objectives, and prove that the choice and training of coaches is fundamental for physical exercise practiced in a condition of frailty, such as that of older people living in residential care facilities.

KEYWORDS

Elderly; Physical Activity; Coach; Self-Efficacy

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