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Gender Differences in the Relationships between Physical Activity and the Psychological and Physical Self-Reported Condition of the Elderly in a Residential Care Facility

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate the differences pre- and post-test after introducing an aerobic program of physical activity in the psychological and physical self-reported condition (feelings of depression, perception that one's own health limits physical activities, negative self-perception, and execution of activities of daily living) of a group of elderly Italians deemed to be slightly compromised based on the Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE: median 23) and living in a residential care facility in northern Italy. The self-reported measures were drawn from the 36-Item Short Form Health Survey Questionnaire (SF-36), the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS), and the Italian short version of Scale of basic Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). The participants were 17 elderly people of both genders (10 women and 7 men), with a median age of 85.56 years. The findings (we used non-parametric statistical techniques) showed that: 1) dropping activities/interests (due to feelings of depression) and taking a bath/shower autonomously (from activities of daily living) improved in women; 2) perceiving health as a limitation to moderate physical activity and feeling really down (based on negative self-perception) improved in men. These results underscore the importance of considering gender differences when evaluating the relationships between participation in physical activity and the psychological and physical condition of the elderly.

KEYWORDS

Elderly People, Training, Psychological and Physical Condition, Gender Differences.

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