

Perceived effects of a health exercise programme related to socio-economic inequality

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AIMS

Low socio-economic status is inversely associated with health and functioning among older adults. The aim of this study was to find out whether an intersectorally organized health exercise programme could alleviate health inequalities.

METHODS

A questionnaire concerning demographic and socioeconomic status, intervention type, physical activity habits, perceived effects of intervention and general well-being was mailed to 2,563 participants in the health exercise programme, *Strength in Old Age*, April 2015. The response rate was 32.5 % (648 women and 180 men). The mean age of respondents was 72.3 years. The data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and univariate linear model.

FINDINGS

Of the respondents, 28 % experienced difficulties in getting on with available income. Between genders there were no statistically significant differences. When adjusted for age, those who experienced difficulties with money perceived that participation in the exercise programme promoted their physical condition ($p=0.025$) and mood ($p=0.001$) more than those who experienced no difficulties (Fig.).

In addition, they felt that everyday exercising ($p=0.049$) and interaction with other people ($p=0.016$) increased and fear of falling decreased ($p=0.020$) more than among those who experienced no difficulties.

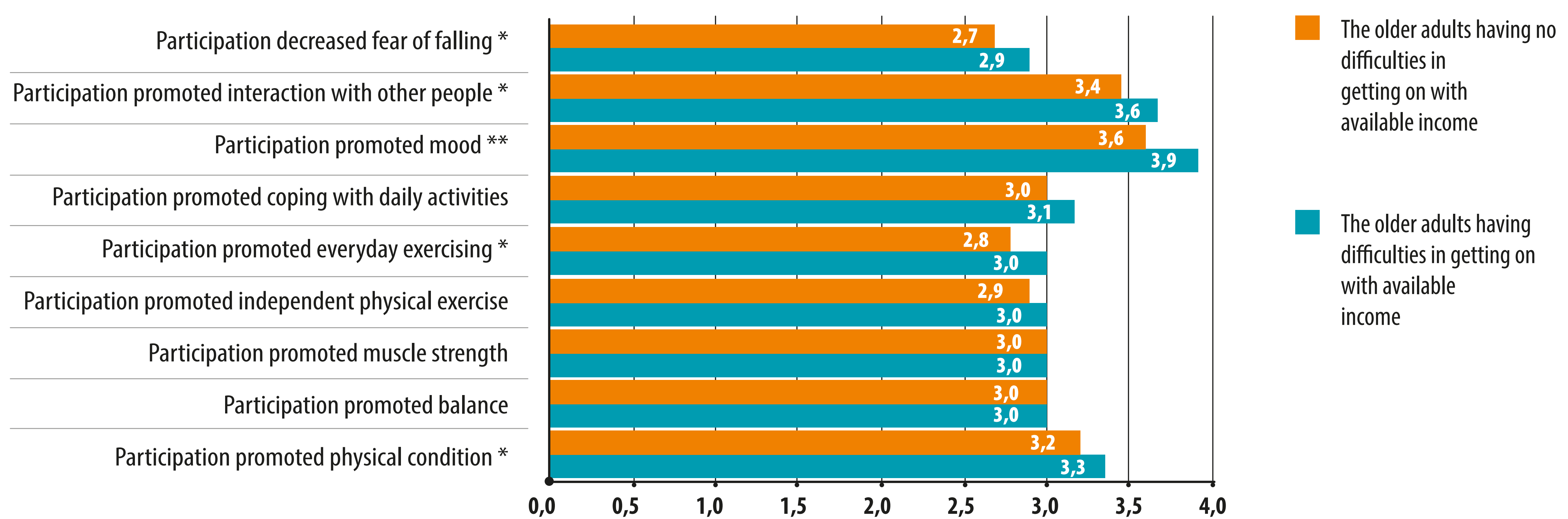


Fig. Means for perceived effects of health exercise programme among older adults having difficulties in getting on with available income compared to those having no difficulties. Scale: 1 = not at all...5 = very much. * difference between means significant at $p > 0,05$ ** difference between means significant at $p > 0,01$

CONCLUSIONS

With an intersectorally organized health exercise programme, older adults with financial difficulties were reached. They perceived the benefits of group exercise interventions

more favourable than persons with no such difficulties indicating that health inequalities among older adults may be alleviated by targeted programmes.