

Social representation of older people in relation to physical activity and health at old age: A qualitative study

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Abstract

The phenomenon of aging requires a series of adjustments by individuals to the new nuances of everyday life. Aging represents a gradual, dynamic, natural and inevitable process that occurs throughout life. This study was carried out with the purpose of exploring the social representations built around the quality of life of older people who participate in sports workshops oriented around physical activity and health. The study was developed in 2017 during the months of August-November, and it is a qualitative investigation that used conventional content analysis, with 30 older adults from the Maule region, Chile, participating in the investigation. Data were collected through four focus groups, which were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed with a content analysis approach, by means of the Nvivo 10 software. The data analysis allowed the emergence of two main categories of physical activity and quality of life, which are displayed through six subcategories: socialization, new learnings, role of the teacher, benefits, diversity of exercise and physical difficulties. The results showed that older people highlight the need to generate socialization processes through participation in sports-recreational workshops, recognizing the role of the teacher in learning new activities and exercises. On the other hand, they highlight the benefits it generates for their health and quality of life, the systematic practice of physical activity, social participation, coexistence and interaction with other people, which allows for greater independence and autonomy. Therefore, it is suggested that more qualitative studies should be conducted in this age group, with the aim of understanding how older people live this fundamental stage of their lives.

Author keywords

Older adults

Physical exercise

Quality of life

Social representation