

CORRELATES AND PREDICTORS OF SELF-ASSESSMENTS OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL FITNESS AMONG FEMALE PARTICIPANTS OF UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE CLASSES

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Abstract

Introduction. We tested how female University of the Third Age (U3A) attendees evaluated their health, physical fitness, and satisfaction with health. We also examined various factors potentially underlying those self-assessments, that is objective indicators of health and physical fitness, their potential determinants (age and financial situation), and potential modifiers of self-assessment (mood, perceptive ability, and education). **Material and methods.** A total of 116 female participants attending U3A classes in Warsaw aged 50-88 years evaluated their health and fitness on a 100-level visual scale and their satisfaction with their health on a five-level Likert scale. Each participant completed the UWIST mood adjective checklist (UMACL) by Matthews, Chamberlain, and Jones and Yesavage's geriatric depression scale, underwent the Fullerton fitness test, a hand grip strength test, Romberg's test, and Ciechanowicz and Stanczyk's attention and perception test, as well as filling out a specially designed questionnaire. **Results.** Self-assessments of health were found to correlate with aggravated symptoms of depression and certain components of physical fitness, but not with age or financial situation. Self-assessments of physical fitness, in turn, were strongly correlated with objective indicators of physical health and depression and less strongly with dexterity test results. General satisfaction levels, in turn, were found to be associated with long-term conditions, aggravated symptoms of depression, and financial situation. **Conclusions.** Overall, our results confirm that self-assessments are a moderately accurate indicator of the general health and physical fitness of elderly people: they correlated to a certain degree with more objective indicators of health/fitness but were influenced by modifying factors, particularly cognitive ones.

Key words: elderly people, cognitive ability, physical activity, depression