

Satisfaction and Unhappiness among older Europeans

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Background

Loss of muscle strength and physical strength is widespread among older Europeans.

Loss of muscle strength impacts satisfaction and unhappiness.

Aim is to raise awareness that muscle- and coordination training can have a positive impact on age related health issues.

The differences between varying European countries are analyzed.

Figure 1 To open a bottle or a box is a big problem for old people



Methods

SHARE data of Wave 4 from Austria, Italy, Denmark, Hungary, Portugal, Slovenia and Estonia was analyzed.

Only participants aged 60+ were filtered. SPSS 21 was utilized to evaluate the data.

Of special interest were measurements of right hand *) grip strength, sadness index**), physical difficulties index and the question of life satisfaction.

Definition.

*) right hand means per definition the "strong" hand, i.e. right hand of right handed persons and left hand of left handed persons

**) i.e. unhappiness

Methods - continued

The sadness index includes the variables

- sad or depressed last month
- tearfulness
- depressed ever
- affective or emotional disorders.

The difficulties index includes variables from difficulties in walking, climbing and sitting.

Both indices have shown sufficient reliability.

Significant results were then split into age and gender groups.

The Spearman-Correlation and Kruskal-Wallis-Test have been used for analyses.

Figure 2 Correlation between grip strength, satisfaction and unhappiness in different European countries

Country			Grip strength
Austria	sadness	Rho	,161
		Sig.	,000
		N	1591
	how satisfied	Rho	,079
		Sig.	,002
		N	1590
Italy	sadness	Rho	,222
		Sig.	,000
		N	1169
	how satisfied	Rho	,135**
		Sig.	,000
		N	1168
Denmark	sadness	Rho	,146
		Sig.	,000
		N	723
	how satisfied	Rho	,034
		Sig.	,362
		N	723
Hungary	sadness	Rho	,146
		Sig.	,001
		N	517
	how satisfied	Rho	,172
		Sig.	,000
		N	514
Portugal	sadness	Rho	,285
		Sig.	,000
		N	327
	how satisfied	Rho	,322
		Sig.	,000
		N	325
Slovenia	sadness	Rho	,120
		Sig.	,002
		N	641
	how satisfied	Rho	,099
		Sig.	,012
		N	642
Estonia	sadness	Rho	,145
		Sig.	,000
		N	1499
	how satisfied	Rho	-,003
		Sig.	,898
		N	1492

Figure 3 Comparison of countries by householdsize

	N	Groups		
		1	2	3
Denmark	724	1,61		
Austria	1597	1,70		
Estonia	2613	1,75		
Hungary	975		1,91	
Slovenia	758		1,91	
Portugal	405			2,16
Italy	1197			2,17

Results

As shown in Fig. 2 grip strength of right hand correlates most significantly with satisfaction, sadness and household income in all evaluated countries. Satisfaction and sadness do not correlate with age.

Denmark has the lowest correlation measure between physical strength and life satisfaction.

Denmark and Estonia show no correlation between grip strength and life satisfaction.

Hungary and Portugal see the highest correlation between physical strength, measurements of the right hand grip strength and happiness. Countries like Slovenia and Estonia show similar results as Austria.

Satisfaction stagnates slightly in the 80+ group in every observed country.

Results – continued

Surprisingly, the percentage of people suffering from hopelessness was not very high. Physical functional disabilities correlate with right hand grip strength in every analyzed country.

In addition the comparison of the countries by household size showed significant differences. But interesting is the grouping of countries by household size.

In Italy and Portugal older people appear to live in larger households than in the other observed countries.

Conclusions

Statistics show that there is a significant correlation between right hand grip strength and physical disabilities, sadness and satisfaction. This is important and easily attainable information for preventative health care policies. This study should be an impulse for older people to improve their physical mobility.

References

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