

02 ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Exploring the Health Benefit of Taekwondo Intervention Among Nursing Home Residents

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Keywords: Taekwondo intervention, physical health, cognitive ability, social health, mental health, nursing home resident

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Prior studies have shown that physical inactivity is prevalent among nursing home residents, and it has a direct influence on loss of lower body muscle mass, which increases the risk of falling for the elderly. Accumulative evidence suggests that participating in leisure-time physical activity increases physical functions, mental health, and cognitive abilities and provides social benefits for older adults. Taekwondo, a form of Korean traditional martial arts, can be an effective means for promoting health benefits among nursing home residents in the United States.

Purpose: Thus, the aim of this study was to explore the health benefits for nursing home residents of participation in a Taekwondo program modified to accommodate their physical and cognitive conditions.

Methods: Observational research method was incorporated to explore the health benefits of Taekwondo. Ten prospective participants (5 females, 5 males; mean age = 80 years) from the local nursing home facility participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. The Taekwondo program consisted of 8 weeks of basic movements, including stances, punching, blocking, and kicking. The program was implemented by a certified Taekwondo instructor with volunteers. The researchers used a grand-tour and mini-tour question strategy guided by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and followed Creswell's (2009) five steps of data collection and analysis. For the data analysis, the constant comparative method was used for this study.

Results: Four main themes were identified as health benefits resulting from Taekwondo participation: (a) promoting mental health, (b) increasing physical functions, (c) stimulating cognitive abilities, and (d) facilitating positive social interaction. This study indicates Taekwondo can be instrumental in promoting their physical functioning, cognitive functioning, social interactions, and mental health.

Conclusions: The results of this study indicate that Taekwondo can be used as an intervention to increase the physical activity participation and ameliorate negative psychological consequences associated with confinement to nursing homes. In particular, Taekwondo is significantly associated

with Korean cultural components that provide intellectual stimulation that can motivate participation. Overall, this study suggests that providing the invigorating bodily engagement in Taekwondo in a group format makes it a vehicle for improving physical, social, emotional, and cognitive functioning among nursing home residents.

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