

Quality of Life (QOL) Of Masters' Athletes: Toward Sports Participation in Social Activities

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Abstract

Psychosocial conditions of Masters' athletes were clarified who participated in sports competitions. Subjects are 97 male participants (63.9±11.5 years old) for International Gold Masters in Kyoto 2013, Japan. Their average career was 15.2±11.1 years. Questionnaires were distributed and they were asked to fill in during the day. The survey included basic attributes, life satisfaction, and how to spend leisure time. Methods included the comparison for non-elderly (<64), early elderly (65-74), and elderly (75< years) groups. As a result, life satisfaction was generally good, and leisure time was mainly for exercise/sports and other social activities. These results suggest that participating Masters sports would lead to social activities and improve their QOL.

Keywords: Sports; Sports Medicine, Rehabilitation, Arts, Culture and Music

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Introduction

Today, a longevity society has come and our life becomes much longer after work retirement [1]. The issue of how to get elderly men to participate in social activity is a problem that should be considered worldwide [2]. In Japan, there have been some plans for social participation, including various long-term care prevention projects. Such involvement of male participants has been actually low. Similar situation has been also found in other countries. The participation for social activities would be usually lower in male than female, in such as senior centers [3]. Men show tendency to spend their long lives centered on the workplace for years, and then it would be difficult to find an adequate place where they can feel comfortable other than workplace or home [4]. To create an applicable environment would be ordinary measure where elderly men can easily participate. It would be recommended for men to make a comfortable place with friends before work retirement.

From this point of view, sports play an important role. In addition to maintaining and improving health, opportunities for communication can be increased by interacting with others [5]. This can promote social participation and increase a sense of belonging. Japan Sports Masters commented as follows. "This is a sports festival aimed at the senior generation of sports enthusiasts who are highly competitive-minded. It contributes to the formation of a meaningful society and the improvement of a healthy mind and body." Through such sports activities, participants are expected to obtain psychological benefits such as

motivation and happiness in their daily lives [6].

We have conducted many research in various fields [7,8]. They cover psychology, sports medicine, rehabilitation, arts, culture and music [9,10]. In this paper, we clarified the daily quality of life (QOL) of male athletes who participated in the masters' competition. Based on this analysis, some perspectives will be considered for masters' sports in our society.

Subjects and Methods

The subjects enrolled for this article were 97 male participants. They were 63.9±11.5 years old in average, and attended Masters' athletics assembly in Kyoto, Japan. It was International Gold Masters track and field competition in 2013. For their athletic career, average years of participating competition was 15.19±11.09 years. As regard to the survey, the questionnaires were provided for attending athletes, and they were asked to write the answer. All questionnaires were gathered during the competition days.

The question of the survey showed some category, which were fundamental attributes, daily satisfaction, and the way to spend their leisure time. Concerning how they spend their leisure period, they were asked to choose one of the 6 categories. They were hobbies, exercise and training, family, social activity, education and knowledge, and others.

For examining the age difference, participants were divided into 3 groups. They were non-elderly group aged 64 and under, early-elderly group aged 65-74, and late-elderly aged group aged 75 and over. In statistical processing, a cross tabulation way was conducted for each age group.

Ethical consideration

Current research was reviewed and also implemented by the ethics committee. It was along with the Declaration of Helsinki and also the Personal Information Protection Act. As regards to the research purpose and design, authors and collaborators have explained to the subjects by verbally and document way. This project is voluntary manner and obtained results would be statistically calculated in a way that cannot identify individuals. Informed consent was taken through written responses.

Results

Attributes of subjects

Based on general age distribution of the participants in the Masters competition, they were roughly divided into middle-aged and elderly groups. Figure 1 shows the age composition of 97 male Masters athletes in this paper. There were 46 non-elderly athletes under the age of 64 years old (47%), and 51 persons aged 65 years or older (53%). Among the elderly, 31 were early elderly aged 65 to 74 years (32%), and 20 were elderly aged 75 or older (21%). Regarding the borderline of 65 and 75 years old, Japan government decided the categories as follows: the early elderly is defined as aged 65 and over, and late elderly is defined as aged 75 and over.

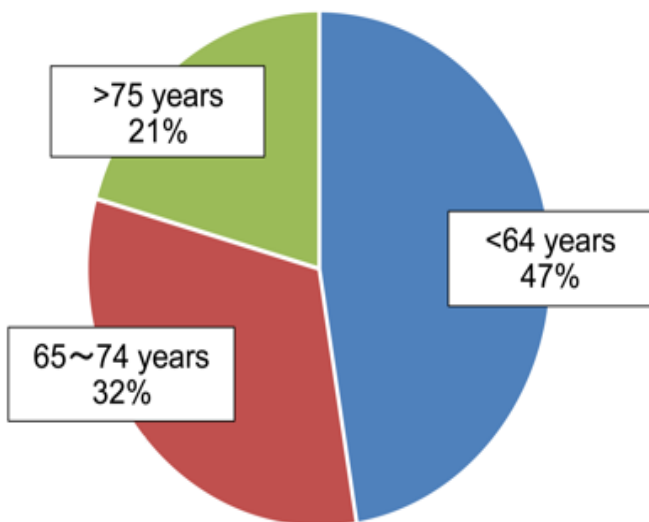


Figure 1: Age composition of applicants in current study.

Daily life satisfaction

The results of analyzing the life satisfaction levels were shown for 3 age groups in Figure 2. It seems to be apparent that the participants were satisfied with their current lives in all age groups.

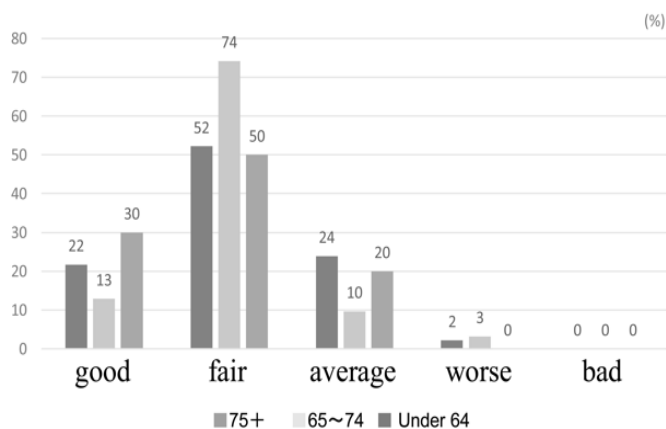


Figure 2: The results of life satisfaction levels for 3 age groups.

Spending leisure time

The results of tabulating the main ways of spending leisure time were shown for 3 age groups in Figure 3. The most frequent response was "Exercise and training" in all age groups, followed by "hobby" as the next item. No differences were observed among the three groups for the top two items. Successively, "family" continued in the non-elderly group, and "education and knowledge" continued in the late elderly group. Specifically, some replies were found for "other" in the non-elderly people, where the detail behavior was shown to "just resting".

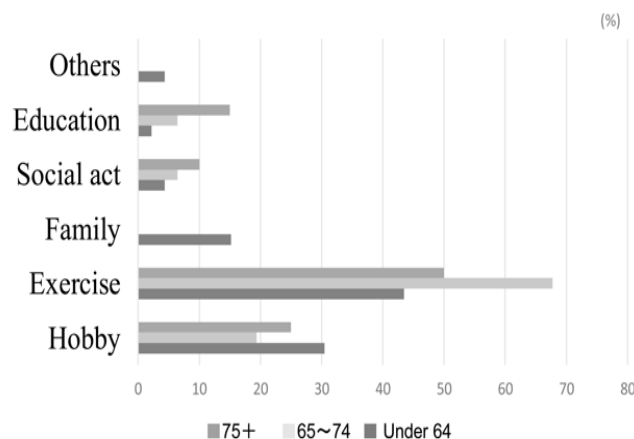


Figure 3: The results of tabulating the main ways of spending leisure time.

Discussion

Current investigation was to study Masters' athletes using adequate survey. Authors have been engaged in International Masters Athletics Federation (IMAF) and related research fields [11,12]. In this study, we focused on men who participated in the Gold Masters athletics competition. The degree of subjective health and life satisfaction has been generally used as an indicator of "healthy aging" [13]. In addition to these data, three age groups were examined for how they spend their leisure time.

Regarding current subjects, more than half of the subjects (53%) were over 65 years old, and 47% were under the age of 64. Men (<64 years) are considered less likely to participate in social activities because of their busy working lives. According to the report of "Public Opinion Survey on Sports Implementation Status" by the Japan Sports Agency every year, people of 20-50s and over 60s were compared [14]. As a result, elderly people considerably participate sports opportunities more frequently than that of young people. On the other hand, the results in this report show that age difference seems to be small or not significant. This reason seems to be related to the fact that sports such as athletics and swimming can be performed at a pace suitable to one's ability in an one's spare time.

The male Masters athletes who participated in this research had good subjective health conditions and were highly satisfied with their lives. This trend is consistent with many previous studies [15]. In other words, those who participate in social activities such as sports have higher subjective health and life satisfaction than those who do not.

Participation in social activities continues to be an encouragement for further new areas of social activity [16]. In this study, many masters' athletes selected "exercise/training" during the leisure time. This result seems to reflect the difference between general exercise and Masters sports. In other words, the Masters may be evaluated as serious leisure considering the motivation, purpose, frequency and intensity of participation. Formerly, an author Stebbins wrote the book "serious leisure" [17]. His comment was "The characteristic of Masters is the systematic pursuit of the core activities of amateurs, hobbyists and volunteers. They find the activities very important, interesting and fulfilling. In such cases, they acquire a combination of specialized skills, knowledge, and experience, and begin their leisure careers in the direction of demonstrating them." In this way, hobby as serious leisure has two characteristics, which are continuity as leisure activity, and practice of professional way of enjoying. For this reason, they can continue to work out and train themselves on daily basis [18].

On the other hand, some notable results exist in this study. There are not a few men who engage in hobbies and social activities in different fields, in addition to exercise and sports. This is thought to reflect previous research that social activity triggers the next another social activity [19]. Alternatively, it is possible to predict that maintaining the balance of the mind and body through other activities can lead to further devotion to exercise and training [20].

Conclusion

In this article, we focused on men who participated in the Masters Athletics Championships and examined their subjective sense of health, life satisfaction, and how they usually spend their leisure

time. As a result, i) subjective sense of health and life satisfaction were generally good, and ii) they were exercising or playing sports as their main leisure time, iii) they were also participated in other social activities. Consequently, lots of male masters' athletes not only spend time on their specialized sports, but also commit other projects, probably trying to balance their lives.

With the development of a super-aging society, no one doubts that there is a period of time to live as an "older person." Among them, the elderly may face some problems. They include i) the mental and physical influence of losing job at retirement age, ii) an increase in accompanying nursing care burden, medical expenses and social security costs, and iii) promotion of social participation from work-oriented business people. These issues are not limited to Japan, but can be found all over the world. Based on the results obtained from this paper, the "serious leisure" associated with some burden, can be one of the opportunities for social participation of masters' athletes.

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