

## **Exercise and Social Activities for Elderly with an Impairment Who Are Living Alone in the Community: Effects and Influencing Factors of a Dutch Program**

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**Abstract :** Elderly who are living alone and who are having one or more impairments are vulnerable for a loss of wellbeing and institutionalization. Physical exercise and social activities together with peers have the potential to make them more resilient. The Dutch program 'More Resilience, Longer at Home' initiated by FNO funded 126 local projects to stimulate vulnerable older citizens to participate in exercise and social activities, and as such to improve wellbeing and independent living. The program evaluation addressed the following questions: (1) what are the effects of the program on older (65+) participants exercise behavior, social activities and what is the relationship with wellbeing?, (2) which factors contribute to successful implementation of the projects and their outcomes? A mixed method approach was used. Effects on participants were assessed with a short survey, containing questions on exercise, social engagement, daily functioning, loneliness and life satisfaction. Results of the participants were compared with those of a reference group from the Dutch national population. Perceived influencing factors were investigated with a questionnaire for project leaders. This questionnaire was based on site visits and interviews with project leaders, volunteers and participating elderly. Preliminary results show that social engagement of the participating elderly rises significantly ( $p \leq .05$ ) as do their exercise levels and daily functioning. They experience less social loneliness, but not less emotional loneliness. Additionally, there is a positive association between daily functioning and life satisfaction and between exercise and life satisfaction. Perceived influencing factors that contribute to successful implementation of the projects can be categorized in 4 types: (1) characteristics of the activities; (2) profiles of the involved staff (professionals and volunteers), (3) characteristics of the organization, (4) the social political environment. Conclusions are that local projects have been successful in stimulating older citizens to participate in exercise and social activities. Multiple factors need to be addressed to ensure sustainability and scaling-up of the good practices.

**Keywords :** elderly living alone in the community, exercise and social activities, resilience, quality of life

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