

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF RECREATIONAL DANCING ON QUALITY OF LIFE IN OLDER ADULTS

How do we measure the quality of life? As adults age, the decline of physical health can have a detrimental effect on a person's mental state. Conversely, the mental state of an individual can have a similar effect on a person's physical state. This psychosomatic consequence can have monumental impact on how persons value themselves, how they perceive that others value them, and the value society places on them. These values can affect whether a person feels a sense of worth and value in other peoples' lives as well as in society as a whole. This study examines how older adults use recreational dancing as a method for coping with depression and improving their quality of life. The key research question examined is: What is the perception of how dancing has affected the quality of life in older adults? Eight individuals were selected from a group called *The New Wrinkles*. The 8 participants were asked open-ended questions on how dancing has affected their lives and to what degree. Four major themes were developed as they pertained to the quality of life defined in the literature review of this thesis. All the participants addressed how dancing had enhanced the physical, psychological, social, and environmental aspects of their lives. The participants also suggested that the challenges of dancing and of the socialization involved in this cooperative activity helped them combat the symptoms of depression.

Damien Gabriel Terronez
May 2008