

Differences in physical fitness of Vietnamese and German adults

H.M. NGUYEN, V. CIHLAR. **The differences in physical fitness of Vietnamese and German older adults.** *Gerontechnology* 2014;13(2):267; doi:10.4017/gt.2014.13.02.050.00. **Purpose** Functional losses are related to aging and these losses may also be the result of physical inactivity¹. Previous findings show that avoiding a sedentary lifestyle during adulthood not only prevents cardiovascular diseases independently of other risk factors, but also substantially expands total life expectancy and the cardiovascular disease-free life expectancy for men and women². We suggest that different cultural backgrounds lead to a different degree in lifestyle-moderated physical activity which is passed on from the older generation to the younger one. This study aims to examine the differences in physical activity performance levels between Vietnam and Germany. As these countries represent two continents of very different cultural and traditional backgrounds³, connections shall be drawn between possible differences in performance levels and differences in socio-cultural conditions. **Method** This is a cross-sectional study. The data was taken at pre-test of an intervention study in both samples. The Vietnamese sample was recruited in Vinh City, Vietnam and consists of 96 individuals, who were at the time of exploration 60 to 80 years old ($M=69.0\pm 5.1$). They were registered for a Tai Chi course as beginners⁴. The German sample was recruited in eleven regions in Germany and consists of 159 individuals aged 59-90 years ($M=72.2\pm 6.1$). German data was collected during the pretest phase of an evaluation study conducted in collaboration with the German Red Cross⁵. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form. Inclusion criterion for both samples was that subjects were able to fully perform the Senior Fitness Test. Exclusion criteria were serious diseases such as symptomatic coronary insufficiency. The outcome measure is Senior fitness test⁶. **Results & Discussion** The study findings show a higher level of motor abilities in Vietnamese participants than in German participants (*Figure 1*). A lower level of motor abilities may mean that the German sample experiences an earlier loss of independence, less social participation, and worse general health. The higher levels of Vietnamese participants reflect a more active lifestyle throughout the whole life span, especially after retirement. Activities include sports and more challenging, physically active lifestyles. The comparably high numbers of people in Vietnam who still engage in work after retirement seems to reflect their active lifestyle.

References

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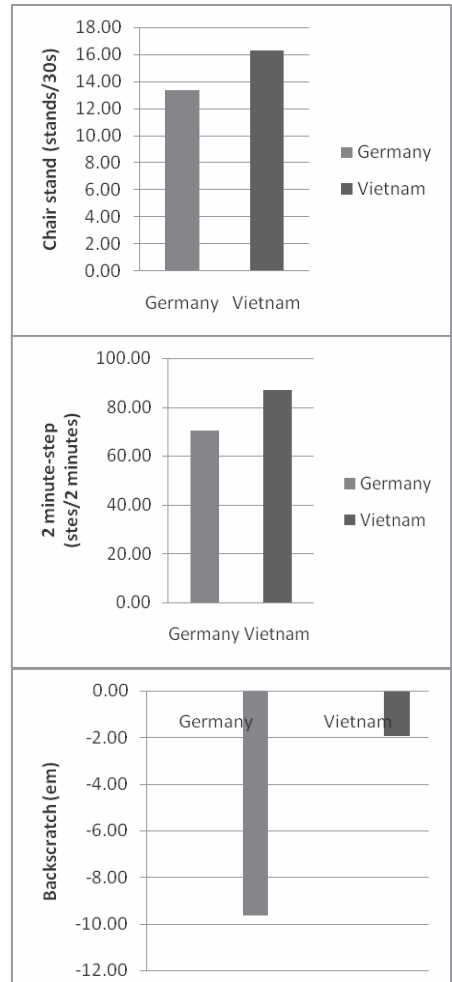


Figure 1. Performance levels of leg strength (upper), endurance (middle), upper flexibility (lower)