

UNDERSTANDING LIFE SATISFACTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING IN ELDERLY POPULATIONS: A DESCRIPTIVE SURVEY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Psychological well-being is significant since it affects many elements of human life and is related to significant goals for individuals, particularly the elderly. Hence, it is essential for identifying the influential factors on the elderly for their life satisfaction and psychological well-being. **Objectives:** This study aims to assess the levels of life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing among the elderly population. **Method:** A descriptive survey design was adopted, and 150 elderly participants were selected by the purposive sampling technique. The data was collected using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and the Psychological Wellbeing Scale. **Results:** The average life satisfaction score among the elderly was 19.04 ± 2.31 , and the average psychological wellbeing score was 75.9 ± 1.82 . There was a positive correlation ($r = 0.51$) between life satisfaction and psychological wellness in the elderly population. **Conclusion:** The study concluded that life satisfaction and psychological well-being are interrelated. Therefore, it is significant to identify specialised care to support the wellbeing of the elderly.

Keyword: Elderly, Life satisfaction, Psychological wellbeing, Aging.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the demographic picture is changing dramatically, with an enormous rise in the number of older people. The reasons behind this change are higher life spans, decreased fertility rates, and advancements in healthcare. As per the World Health Organization's (WHO) forecasts, there would be more than 2 billion people over the age of 60 by 2050, which is over double the current amount. This demographic shift has significant consequences for public health, culture and economic status particularly in regard to the general well-being of the elderly.

According to World Population Projections, by 2050, there will be more than twice as many the elderly as children under the age of five. In comparison to the developed world, Asian countries have more challenges due to their large population size and weak social security programmes for elderly persons. India surpassed China as the world's most populated country in 2023, making it even more crucial to examine the adult population's mental health and well-being.¹⁸

Life satisfaction and psychological well being are essential for promoting better health behaviours. However it will difficult to achieve life satisfaction and psychological well being for elderly due to increase age, change of life style, physical , emotional and social issues.

Approximately 70.37% of the elderly population expressed contentment with their existence, with no discernible discrepancy between genders. Nevertheless, distinguishable discrepancies in contentment with life were detected among different urban and rural residential areas, various age groups, marital statuses, and types of elder care, thus highlighting the importance of social engagement and financial stability in their overall welfare.¹⁶ The life satisfaction of elderly individuals in

rural regions is contingent upon social cohesion and the presence of an environment that accommodates their age-related needs.¹² Social activities and socialisation have positive impact on better life style. Studies have indicated that older adults who regularly engage in social activities and have significant connections with others tend to have better levels of psychological wellbeing. It was signified that close interpersonal relationships, involvement in social activities has considerable impact on psychological wellbeing of older adults. This highlights the importance of developing good social contacts and community participation for promoting a better ageing experience.¹¹

Based on sociodemographic variables, the degree of life satisfaction among older persons in India varies. There are various factors such as social , mental and physical well being for acquiring higher life satisfaction.² A strong sense of self-worth, the significance of life, the existence of goals, life satisfaction, the ability to manage one's life, interest in life, positive self-esteem, a cheerful disposition, consistency in reaching goals, and consistency between set and achieved goals are some of the factors that contribute to an elderly person's high level of psychological well being.¹³ Hence it is important to assess life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing among elderly population.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing among elderly population
- To find out correlation between life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing among elderly population

HYPOTHESIS

- RH1: There is a significant level of difference in life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing among elderly population
- RH2: There is a significant relation between life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing among elderly population

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive survey approach was used to investigate the levels of life satisfaction and psychological well-being among the elderly in a specific community area of Kottayam. A total of 150 elderly people aged 60 to 75 residing in Kottayam were selected through the non-probability purposive sampling technique. Elderly people who are undergoing any treatment for mental illness excluded from the study. A formal informed consent was obtained from the study participants, and their confidentiality is maintained. Data was collected for four weeks, from December 2023 to January 2024.

INSTRUMENTS

The tool consists of three sections.

Part A: Demographic variables including age, gender, education, occupation, marital status, and number of children.

Part B: Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), which is a self-report questionnaire consisting of five items with 7-point likert scale that ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" for each statement.

Part C : Psychological Wellbeing scale, which was composed of 18 items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". These items were further divided into six subscales: Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with Others, Purpose in Life, and Self-Acceptance.

RESULTS

Socio – demographic factors analysis

The dataset provides a comprehensive overview of the demographic and socioeconomic factors among the participants. More than half of the samples 52.67% were from 66-70 years of age. Among 150 samples, 65.33% were males and near to half of samples 45.33% were graduates. When considering occupational status the majority are employed in private firms (38%) or are self-employed (26.67%), whereas minor category are retired (14.67%). Majority of participants (86.67%), are living with spouse but 6.67% are divorced/separated or widowed/widower. In relation to family sizes, households with two children are the most prevalent (56%).

Level of life satisfaction among elderly population

The findings of the life satisfaction among the elderly reveal a mean score of 19.04 ± 2.31 . However, the majority of older individuals are placed in the categories of "Slightly satisfied" (31.33%) and "Dissatisfied" (26%). This implies that although the overall satisfaction level is moderate, a significant portion of the elderly population experiences dissatisfaction.(fig 1)

Figure 1: Level of life satisfaction among elderly population

| Level of life satisfaction | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Extremely satisfied | 0 | 0 |
| Satisfied | 22 | 14.67 |
| Slightly satisfied | 47 | 31.33 |
| Neutral | 10 | 6.67 |

| Level of life satisfaction | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Slightly dissatisfied | 32 | 21.33 |
| Dissatisfied | 39 | 26 |
| Extremely dissatisfied | 0 | 0 |

Level of psychological wellbeing among elderly population

An adult’s psychological well-being evaluation provided an average of 75.9 ± 1.82 . The subcategories of well-being in the following order from highest to smallest were personal growth (27.6 ± 4.37), environmental mastery (16.15 ± 2.36), self-acceptance (15.67 ± 2.75), purpose in life (14.27 ± 2.6), autonomy (11.46 ± 2.16) and positive relations (10.9 ± 2.91).

Correlation between life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing among elderly population

The coefficient of correlation, equal to 0.51, suggests a moderately strong positive relationship between life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing among the elderly. This implies that improvements in one domain are likely to align with enhancements in the other. Therefore, these findings enhance the importance of focusing holistic pattern of elderly care.

DISCUSSION

In the present investigation, it was observed that 31.33% of the elderly population experiences a mild level of life satisfaction, whereas 26% have dissatisfaction. A study conducted in India (2023) revealed that 25.4% of older individuals have low level of life satisfaction, whereas 45.5% experienced a high level of life satisfaction.⁹ An individual’s perception on aging, life style , social support and the health status has an influence on the life satisfaction of elderly individuals.

It is supported on a study, where a significant positive association between the level of life satisfaction and the perception of old age ($r=.203, p<0.01$) identified. In contrast, a weak inverse correlation was discovered between perceived social support and life satisfaction ($r=-.284, p<0.001$). Additionally, age emerged as a crucial factor in the perception of aging, and this perception of aging steadily increased with age ($p<0.05$).⁷

Furthermore, studies have indicated that living with either children or a spouse can enhance life satisfaction and reduce feelings of loneliness in the elderly.^{3,17} Conversely, living alone and experiencing poor health, limitations in daily activities, and symptoms of depression are associated with lower levels of life satisfaction.⁹ In addition, Papi and Cheraghi (2021) emphasized that a noteworthy positive correlation existed between health ($\beta = 0.253$), social support ($\beta = 0.204$), and cognitive status ($\beta = 0.17$) in relation to life satisfaction. Additionally, the connection between daily life activities and life satisfaction was both negative and significant ($\beta = -0.91$).¹⁴

Jeong J M and Lee G S (2017) propose that the augmentation of self-esteem yields a substantial increase in overall life satisfaction. Moreover, it was highlighted that self esteem act as an important element between oldage , good health , social support and their daily activities.⁶

It will be useful in identifying those determinants and can aid in the development of policies or strategies , which will promote the life satisfaction and overall wellbeing of elderly.

The well-being of the elderly population from a psychological standpoint is a matter of significant concern due to the multitude of challenges they encounter in terms of health, economic stability, and adapting to the modern world.¹⁵ Numerous studies

have demonstrated that higher levels of psychological well-being are associated with enhanced decision-making abilities in older adults, particularly those with lower cognitive function.⁴ Furthermore, psychological well-being has been found to be linked with improved physical health outcomes, whereas psychological distress is associated with an increased risk of developing chronic diseases and premature mortality.¹⁰ In the field of geriatric psychiatry, the significance of psychological well-being has been established for older adults diagnosed with depression.⁸ Additionally, specific dimensions of psychological well-being have been shown to predict effective coping strategies across various domains, including health, finance, and relationships.⁵

The present investigation reveals a positive correlation ($r=0.51$) between life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing among older adults. This findings is supported by Ahn A. S. et al (2020) which presents a significant positive relationship between the subjective well-being and life satisfaction of older individuals ($r=.841$, $p<.001$). Furthermore, the study revealed a negative association between subjective well-being and self-neglect in the elderly ($r=-.501$, $p<.001$). Moreover, it found that both life satisfaction ($\beta=.787$, $p<.001$) and the source of income ($\beta=-.114$, $p=.028$) significantly influenced psychological well-being.¹

Hence research continuously shows a positive relationship between elderly people's psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction, indicating that better psychological health frequently follows higher life satisfaction levels, improving people's quality of life overall.

Moreover, this connection is influenced by the ability to involve in health-enhancing activities, strong social connections and effective coping strategies. Nevertheless, there can also be differences in satisfaction and well-being among the elderly because of such factors as subjective nature of well-being, life events implications, cultural disparities and impacts of health conditions. All these aspects point out how hard it is to understand or manage various aspects of psychological well-being and life satisfaction among older adults.

LIMITATIONS

The utilization of purposive sampling could lead to selection bias due to non-randomness in the selection of subjects. The study was conducted within a given community area in Kottayam, Kerala which could limit its generalizability to other geographical areas. The study primarily focused on demographic variables, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being. Henceforth, this excluded other potential factors as social support, physical health and cognitive functioning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to implement random sampling for further studies, in order to have a better representation of the sample population. Longitudinal designs could enable an examination of changes in mental health and life satisfaction over time thereby highlighting dynamic trends. It would be possible for inclusion of quantitative measures aside from self-reports so as to increase reliability of information collected. Additionally, taking into account more parameters like social support, health status among others would assist in having a comprehensive understanding concerning factors that influence well-being among elderly persons.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides important insights on the satisfaction and mental health of the elderly. The findings

emphasise the need for interventions aimed to promote positive ageing and overall well-being of them. To better understand the components of their mental health and life satisfaction, it is necessary to develop focused interventions to address these characteristics.

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