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Physical Activity Levels & Successful Aging

Ryan R. Bourque
University of Southern Maine

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Ryan R. Bourque - Graduate School of Social Work - University of Southern Maine
Caroline Shanti Ph.D. LCSW - School of Social Work - University of Southern Maine

Introduction

The average life expectancy in the United States has risen from approximately 47-years-old in 1900 to almost 80-years-old in 2005 (Dunifon, 2013). It is foreseeable most individuals will live their lives into their fifties, sixties, and hopefully longer. For those who can live out their lives to this point, it is easy to understand that one would hope to live their later years relatively healthily and happily. There is a gap in current literature addressing successful aging; specifically contributing factors related to better outcomes with health-related quality of life and levels of independence with the elderly population (i.e.65+ years of age).

Theory

Physical Activity Theory states that the more you do, the better you will age. Per physical activity theory; the more often individuals engage in a full day of activities and maintain a level of productivity, the more likely they are to age successfully. People who remain active and engaged tend to be happier and healthier; this is true at any age for Physical Activity Theory (Nilsson, Bulow, & Kazemi, 2015). This psychosocial theory of aging considers physical and social activity to be essential to health and happiness for older persons (Nilsson, Bulow, & Kazemi, 2015).

Hypothesis

Greater levels of physical activity have a positive correlation with greater levels of independence as well as better outcomes with respect to self-perceived health-related quality of life for elderly individuals (65+ years of age).

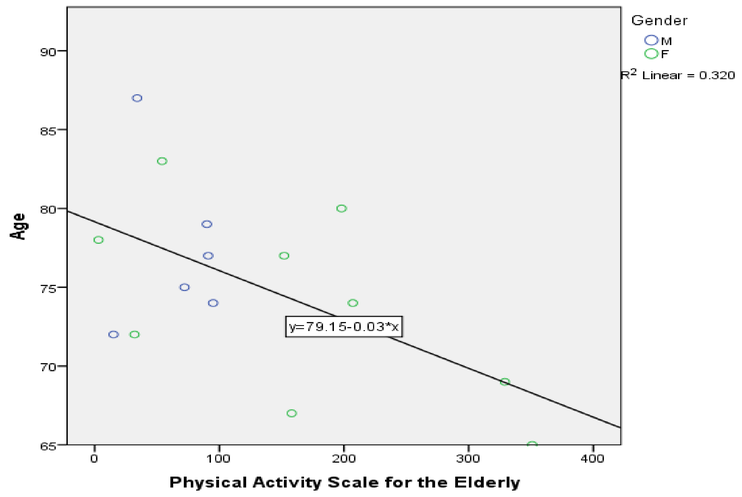

Figure 1. Moderate negative correlation between Age and Physical Activity Levels.

Figure 2. Moderate positive correlation between Physical Activity Levels and Health-Related Quality of Life.

Methods

- Three Questionnaires tested for validity and reliability with the elderly population.
  - Physical Activity Scale for the Elderly (Washburn, et al., 1993)
  - Lawton-Brody Instrumental Activities of Daily Living Scale (Vittengl et al., 2006)
  - 36-Item Health Related Quality of Life Short Form Questionnaire (Ware & Gandek, 1998)
- Participants (N=15) were selected from a variety of settings to diversify the sample (i.e. restaurants, malls, assisted living, etc.).
- Ages ranged from 65-87 years-old. (Mean=75.2)
- 60% Female Participants / 40% Male Participants
- Pearson Correlation Coefficient tests determined the strength of a linear relationship between variables.

Correlations

		Physical Activity Scale for the Elderly	Lawton-Brody Instrumental Activities of Daily Living
Physical Activity Scale for the Elderly	Pearson Correlation	1	.640*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	15	15
Lawton-Brody Instrumental Activities of Daily Living	Pearson Correlation	.640*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	15	15

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 3. Moderate positive correlation between Physical Activity Levels and Levels of Independence.

Discussion

- Results from Figure 1 seem to confirm the underlying assumption of this study; that levels of physical activity decrease as age increases.
- Results from Figures 2 & 3 seem to confirm the hypothesis of this study; greater levels of physical activity have a moderate positive correlation (at <.05 significance level) with both Health-Related Quality of Life and Independence for elderly individuals.
- Due to this small sample size further research will be needed to explore the strength of correlations between variables.

Results

~Results suggest that as individuals age, levels of physical activity tend to decrease (See Figure 1).
~A moderate positive relationship was found between Physical Activity Levels and Health-Related Quality of Life (see Figure 2) as well as levels of independence for participants (see Figure 3).

References

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