Depressive Symptoms, Social Activity, and Physical Activity in older adults

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Background

- Depression is a common condition in older adults[1] and the main health problem among seniors, causing both emotional difficulties and a decreased quality of life[2].
- Social activity has been considered a beneficial component of healthy aging, potentially decreasing risk factors that lead to depression, cognitive and motor decline, mortality, and dementia[3].
- Physical activity is beneficial to prevent depressive symptoms in older adults[4].

Purpose

- To explore the following relationships among older adults residing in independent living facilities:
  1. Physical activity levels and self-reported depressive symptoms
  2. Social activity levels and self-reported depressive symptoms

Method

- Participants (N=22)
  - Older adults living in assisted living facility (18 females and 4 males)
  - Age (M = 87.50 years; SD = 7.50; Range = 67- 96)
- Assessments
  - Depressive symptoms: The Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS)
  - Social activity level: The Revised Change in Activity and Interest Index (CAII-R)
  - Physical activity level: Godin Leisure-Time Exercise Questionnaire (GLTEQ)
- Analysis
  - Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between depressive symptoms and social and physical activities.

Results

Table1.
Relationship between total social activity scores and depression level

Predictor Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Age	-.11	.13	-.19	-.08	.11	-.13
Gender	2.80	2.55	.24	3.99	2.29	.35
Education	.37	.75	.11	.47	.66	.14
Depression level				-.67	.26	-.50*

Dependent Variable: Social activity total score

Note. *p < .05. **p < .01

Table2.
Relationship between going to new restaurants or places and depression level

Predictor Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Age	-.01	.02	-.14	-.01	.02	-.09
Gender	-.36	.19	-.16	-.16	.16	-.07
Education	.17	.14	-.27	.19	.13	.29
Depression level				-.11	.05	-.44*

Dependent Variable: Going to new restaurants or places

Note. *p < .05. **p < .01

Table3.
Relationship between attend meeting group and depression level

Predictor Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Age	-.02	.02	-.21	-.01	.02	-.14
Gender	.43	.52	.19	.72	.43	.31
Education	.01	.15	-.01	.03	.12	.04
Depression level				-.16	.05	-.60**

Dependent Variable: Attend meeting group

Note. *p < .05. ** p < .01

Results

- No association was found between physical activities and depressive symptoms.
- Participation in social activities was related to lower depressive symptoms (Table 1).
- In particular, going to new restaurants/places (Table 2), and attend meeting groups (Table 3) were significantly correlated with lower depressive symptoms.

Discussion

- Social activities that involved a shared purpose and socialization with some familiar individuals were more strongly associated with self-reported depressive symptoms.
- Understanding that meeting with at least some familiar people in a social context that has a purpose (such as a group meeting and/or dining or exploring new places) may be particularly beneficial for older adults that choose to live in a retirement community and are still functioning independently.

Future Directions

- Physical activity assessment needs to be expanded to explore the older adults' physical activity levels in daily activities.
- Longitudinal research will be needed to understand changes in depression symptoms and social and physical activity participation.

References

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2. Blazer & Hybels (2005). Psychological Medicine, 35(9), 1241–1252.
3. James et al. (2011). The Journals of Gerontology Series A: Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences, 66(4), 467-473.
4. Jung et al. (2016). Geriatrics & Gerontology International, 18(3), 421–427.