


Sex-Moderated Socio-Labor Aspects as Mediators of a Cognitive Stimulation Program in Older Adults: Randomized Clinical Trial

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Abstract

Cognitive stimulation is essential for successful aging. The influence of sex and socio-occupational elements on this area remains unknown. This study aimed to analyze the possible mediation of those elements in the effectiveness of a cognitive stimulation program in primary care. A randomized clinical trial was conducted with 232 adults aged 65 years or older without cognitive impairment. The intervention produced significant cognitive improvements. Women improved independently of social and occupational factors, while men's improvement occurred at a low role level (zero to one), a medium level of interests (two to three), with a medium level of mental occupation (neither high nor low), and with marked personal values. The mediating variables were the intervention group in both sexes and, also in men, a low and medium role level. Therefore, the intervention and roles appear as mediating variables moderated by sex. In conclusion, cognitive stimulation programs should be adapted.

Keywords

aging, cognitive stimulation, roles, interests, values, mental occupation

What this paper adds

- The cognitive effect achieved after the application of a cognitive stimulation program is different according to sex.
- Women's cognitive abilities improve regardless of their roles, interests, values, or mental occupation.
- Men's improvement is marked by roles, interests, values, and mental occupation.

Applications of study findings

- It is necessary to contemplate occupational elements by sex to adapt cognitive stimulation programs for older adults.
- The activities designed must be meaningful and add value and purpose, particularly for the male participants.
- Equality in educational and social tasks must be guaranteed, particularly for female participants.

Increased life expectancy brings with it the challenge of promoting healthy, meaningful, and participatory aging in the community (Freak-Poli et al., 2021). Social isolation and reduced participation in social roles could indicate a prodromal stage of dementia (Joyce et al., 2022; Kuiper et al., 2015, 2016). The risk of cognitive decline is lower in individuals with greater participation in leisure activities during adulthood and greater prior occupational complexity due to the improved cognitive reserve produced (Gatz et al., 2006; Tan et al., 2019).

According to Gary Kielhofner's (2007) model of human occupation (MOHO), social participation is based on the choice of meaningful activities (interests) that, according to the value system, allow adequate cognitive and social performance through role development. Interests are those activities which one enjoys or finds satisfaction in performing. Values are the coherent set of convictions that imply a

commitment and oblige one to act in a socially accepted manner, generating a sense of belonging to a group. Finally, roles represent a social position defined socially and/or personally, as well as a set of related attitudes and

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