



Abstract

Older adults are beginning to have longer life expectancies as medicine and other technologies advance. As life expectancy grows, the desire for positive life satisfaction increases. This study looks at the relationship between life satisfaction and cognitive functioning. This study was a secondary data analysis using the second Midlife in the United States Study (MIDUS 2) data set. The MIDUS 2 sample originally included 4960 individuals that participated in the MIDUS 2 study. In addition to the MIDUS 2 study, the BTACT was incorporated to evaluate the cognitive functioning of those in the study. The number of participants who participated in the BTACT was 4186. In order to collect the responses from the participants, a survey was provided. The BTACT was a cognitive test, where participants were asked a series of memory-based questions. The results of the current study did not show any statistical significance between life satisfaction and cognitive functioning; however, there was a general trend toward those with higher levels of cognitive functioning having better life satisfaction

Introduction

Significance of the Study

With higher levels of life satisfaction older adults feel as though their life was meaningful, they will feel a sense of integrity. With lower cognitive functioning, the ability to reflect on one's life is diminished (Erikson, 1994; Hutchinson, 2017; Robbins, Canada, Chatterjee, & Leibowitz, 2019).

Older adults are more susceptible to mental degenerative diseases such as Dementia or Alzheimer's disease. These diseases can cause cognitive functioning to decline lowering life satisfaction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to increase knowledge related to life satisfaction among older adults. With life satisfaction being a newly researched topic in the social work field, this study provides a look on previous research to show the effects of cognitive functioning on life satisfaction.

Research Question

The research question for this study is, what is the relationship between life satisfaction and cognitive functioning in older adults?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study is that the level of life satisfaction and cognitive functioning will have a positive correlation, meaning that the higher the level of life satisfaction the higher level of cognitive functioning.

Literature Review

Life Satisfaction in Older Adults: Life satisfaction is a way to determine the level of happiness in adults, and especially older adults (Sartori et al., 2012). The loss of independence can cause an older adult to lose their sense of life satisfaction (Sartori et al., 2012).

Cognitive Functioning and Well-being: Cognitive functioning plays a major role in the well-being of older adults. An older adult's well-being is threatened by the loss of cognitive functioning either because of disease or general loss of ability (Gerstorf, Ram, Rocke, Lindenberg, & Smith, 2008).

Gaps in Research: One of the limitations to the study is the definition of life satisfaction. Different studies and different individuals have varying definitions on life satisfaction. Life satisfaction studies on older adults are relatively new in the world of social work, especially when looking at the effects; it may have on an individual's cognitive functioning. Many of these studies look at different populations in different sample sizes and different age groups. Many of the existing studies look into older adults starting in the participant's 60s and continues until they are in their 90s.

- Based upon the results, there is no statistical significance between life satisfaction and cognitive functioning. With a statistically significant relationship between age and Episodic Memory and Executive Functioning of $p < .05$. A statistically significant relationship was found between Cognitive Functioning and age of $p < .004$.

- Through multiple regression models younger male participants with higher levels of education have a score of .30 higher on life satisfaction measures than other participants.

-Through multiple regression models, younger female participants with higher levels of education have a score of .51 higher on life satisfaction than other participants

-Through a multiple regression model, older male participants that did not have a college education scored the lowest, and overall seemed to influence the level of life satisfaction of the participant.

Methods

Research Design: The current study is a secondary analysis of data from the MIDUS 2 study conducted between 2004-2006, looking at the data in regard to the life satisfaction and cognitive functioning of older adults throughout the United States. Through the use of surveys and phone calls, data was collected from 4960 participants to determine factors for their life satisfaction and cognitive functioning.

Sampling Method : Using the MIDUS 2 study, the population are those that originally participated in the study. To determine those that could be used for the current study, the participant needed to be aged 55 years or older and completed the main survey from the MIDUS 2 study and the BTACT.

Measures: There are five projects that were completed by the original MIDUS 2 study. For the current study, the primary study was used to gather demographic data and information about the life satisfaction of the participants. Additionally the Brief Test of Adult Cognition by Telephone (BTACT) was used to determine the level of cognitive functioning of the participants. The BTACT uses a series of cognitive based tests to determine the level of memory and thinking skills the participants have

RESULTS

Table 2

Regression Model for Executive Functioning, Episodic Memory, and Cognitive Functioning

Predictor	Executive Functioning	Episodic Memory	Cognitive Functioning
	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)
Constant	1.778 (.376)	1.712 (.346)	2.026 (.340)
Age	-.034 (.005)*	-.037 (.005)*	-.042 (.004)*
Gender	-.623 (.074)	.034 (.068)	-.199 (.067)
College Graduate	.295 (.075)	.506 (.069)	.572 (.068)
Life Satisfaction	.056 (.033)	.049 (.030)*	.050 (.029)

Reference groups: Age, Male, College Graduation, and Life Satisfaction.

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Conclusions

Life satisfaction is an important factor into the happiness of older adults. With cognitive functioning has no significant relationship to life satisfaction, there may be other outside factors that resulted in this finding. Such factors could consist of varying definitions of life satisfaction as well as having different levels of cognitive functioning.

Implications of Future Research: Gathering participants for future research may be difficult, however, a need for a diverse population is necessary in order to strengthen the significance of the study. Many of the participants in past studies are in more advanced stages of life. The need for a more extensive age range is necessary to gather a proper sample size. Additionally, a way to strengthen the study is to create a definition for life satisfaction and develop a measuring tool to evaluate life satisfaction and cognitive functioning.



References

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