



A STUDY OF ACTIVITY LEVELS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG THE RETIRED OLDER PERSONS

K. Maheswari*

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu.



*Corresponding Author: K. Maheswari

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu.

Article Received on 05/03/2024

Article Revised on 25/03/2024

Article Accepted on 15/04/2024

ABSTRACT

It is important to recognize that retirement and the experiences of the elderly are diverse and can vary greatly from person to person. The needs differ depending on their circumstances, health, support systems, and personal preferences. Activity is often accompanied by the achievement of personal goals; goal setting and goal-achievement are essential aspects of good mental health, self-validation, and a sense of competence (Jahoda, 1958). The present study aims to measure the activity levels and psychological well-being of retired older persons living in town panchayat of Perambalur District. The researcher has used descriptive research approach for the current study, and the sample size is 60 and a purposeful sampling technique was used. The findings of the study revealed that majority of respondents (65%) claimed to be moderately active and are not regularly participating in social, psychological, or physical activities and more than half of the respondents (55%) have lower psychological well-being.

KEYWORDS: Older Persons, Activity, Psychological Well-being, Retirement.

INTRODUCTION

Retirement and the experiences of elderly individuals are significant topics that encompass various aspects of life, including financial, social, health, and emotional well-being. Providing a supportive and inclusive environment that respects their autonomy and offers opportunities for engagement and well-being is crucial for a fulfilling retirement experience. Each individual's circumstances, health, financial situation, and personal choices shape their retirement journey. The socioeconomic conditions of retired elderly individuals can have a significant impact on their well-being and quality of life. Some key factors related to the socioeconomic conditions of retired elderly individuals in addressing these problems require a multi-faceted approach involving government initiatives, community support, and individual efforts. Improving pension schemes, enhancing healthcare infrastructure and affordability, raising awareness about elder rights and protections, and fostering age-inclusive communities are some of the steps that can contribute to addressing the challenges faced by retired elderly individuals in India. Supporting their needs requires a holistic approach that addresses financial, physical, emotional, social, and intellectual well-being while respecting their autonomy and personal choices. There is a strong relationship between activity and psychological well-being among the elderly. Engaging in various

activities, both physical and cognitive, has been found to have positive effects on the mental and emotional health of older adults.

In Carstensen's (1971) selectivity theory, the value of social interaction has been emphasized. She has argued that older people place more value on the type of emotions felt during social engagement than younger people. It was also believed that social interaction promotes the social environment to improve the potential for the experience of positive emotions and reduce the possibility of negative ones and was mainly crucial as people age, even though social interaction may generally serve three functions such as the acquisition of information, development, and maintenance of identity, and the regulation of emotions. It was also understood that the social activities preferred by older people were essential for their psychological well-being. Harlow and Cantor (1996) believed that community service gives happiness in life by assisting friends, neighbours, and the larger community. They have qualities that are innately satisfying and also have social advantages. Furthermore, decision-making and choice are likely to play a lead role in potentially increasing the participation of those with better personal well-being in community service activities. Various studies have proven that activity can contribute to the psychological well-being of the elderly

significantly. Furthermore, it's crucial to consider factors such as physical health, cognitive abilities, and social support when designing activity programs for the elderly to ensure they are accessible and enjoyable. The psychosocial activity levels of retired elderly individuals in India can vary depending on various factors such as personal preferences, health conditions, socioeconomic status, and family support. While it's important to remember that individual experiences may differ, some general information on psychosocial activities that retired elderly individuals in India often engage in socializing, exercises, lifelong learning, and volunteering etc., It's important to understand that psychosocial activity levels can vary among individuals based on their circumstances and preferences. While some retired elderly individuals in India may actively engage in a variety of activities, others may prefer a quieter lifestyle or face limitations due to health issues. It's crucial to respect individual choices and provide support and opportunities that cater to their unique needs. In addition to the psychological benefits, regular physical activity can also have positive effects on physical health and overall quality of life for retired elderly individuals. It is important to consult with a healthcare provider before starting any new exercise routine, particularly if there are any underlying health conditions. A healthcare provider can help determine the appropriate type and level of activity to ensure safety and maximize the health benefits of the elderly.

Activity and Psychological Well-being

Owen, Berry and Brown (2022) reviewed about population aging as a significant challenge for health and social care services. Older adults who engage in activities that offer a sense of purpose have significantly better physical and psychological health outcomes. This review aimed to determine the nature and effectiveness of purposeful activity interventions in older adults, aged 80 years and older, concerning well-being and quality-of-life outcomes. Three databases were searched from their inception to April 2020. The search yielded 8,916 records, which resulted in eight eligible studies. The interventions were divided into two groups: (a) interventions that gave participants a specific functional role, such as volunteer or mentor (n = 5), and (b) interventions that supported participants to develop a new skill (n = 3). The strongest evidence was for interventions that assigned a functional role, which appeared to be somewhat effective in improving well-being outcomes. Molinero, Salguero and Márquez (2021) have explored the possible effect of physical activity level on quality of life, subjective psychological well-being, and depression levels depending on osteoarticular illness. The sample consisted of 263 Spanish adults aged 65 to 98 years with high or low physical activity and osteoarticular disease. Results indicated that physical activity influenced the perceived quality of life, depression levels, and subjective well-being in older adults regardless of osteoarticular disease. The study recommended the need for physical exercise

due to its positive effect on older adults' mental health; bringing about a significant reduction in the risks of suffering from a variety of diseases and disorders. Maheswari and Maheswari (2022) conducted a study on attitude towards ageing and well-being of community dwelling older persons residing in rural and urban areas of Perambalur district. The major findings of the study revealed that 35 per cent of the respondents have high attitude towards ageing and 48 per cent of the respondents had moderate attitude towards ageing, and more than half of the respondents (51%) had high autonomy, moderate level of environmental mastery, purpose in life and positive relation and nearly majority of the respondents (59%) had moderate level of psychological well-being. A study by Liang and Brown (2011) investigated the impact of social activity participation on psychological well-being in older adults. The results revealed that higher levels of social activity engagement, including participation in clubs, organizations, and social events, were associated with better psychological well-being, including higher levels of life satisfaction and lower levels of loneliness and depressive symptoms.

Park and Bischof (2013) examined the relationship between cognitive activity and cognitive well-being in older adults. The findings indicated that engaging in cognitively stimulating activities, such as reading, puzzles, and learning new skills, were associated with better cognitive function and reduced risk of cognitive decline, thus positively impacting psychological well-being. Netz, Becker, and Tenenbaum (2005) examined the association between physical activity and psychological well-being among older adults. The findings indicated that higher levels of physical activity were associated with better psychological well-being, including reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Another study by Keyes, Shmotkin and Ryff, (2002) examined the relationship between leisure activities and psychological well-being in older adults. The results showed that engaging in leisure activities, such as hobbies, socializing, and cultural pursuits, was associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, positive effects, and lower levels of depressive symptoms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Aim and Objectives

This descriptive study aims to find out the activity levels and psychological well-being of retired older persons in the Perambalur District. The first objective of the study is to assess the socio-economic status of the retired older persons. 2.) The second objective is to describe the activity levels based on physical, psychological and social activities among the older persons 3.) to measure the psychological well-being of retired older persons. 3) Role of Socio-economic status on the activity levels and psychological well-being of retired older persons. In combination, these objectives provide a portrait of activity levels and psychological well-being among retired older persons and association between the socio-

economic status with key variables that join a growing body of work describing the need and importance of physical and psychosocial activities and the well-being of the retired elderly.

METHOD

Study population and sample description

For the present study, the researcher has used a descriptive research design and this study is based on a sample of community-dwelling retired older persons aged 60 years and above. The respondents had been working in government service and retired. A purposive sampling method is applied to collect the data from 60 retired older persons residing in rural and urban areas of Perambalur district. Sample inclusion criteria are: aged between 60 to 80 years without disability; retired from government services; community-dwelling older persons in Perambalur district; ability to participate, speak and understand Tamil language. The respondents were willing to take part in the research study and only the willing retired older persons are included in this study. The study contains information on age, gender, socio-economic characteristics, activity levels, and psychological well-being. For the present study, the researcher has included only able older persons from both genders. A sample description is evident from analysis; the respondents' mean age was 66.8 and the majority of the respondents (73.3%) were male, the majority of the respondents (71.7%) were married and living with a spouse and 48.3% of them have been educated up to M.Phil degree.

Measures

As per the purpose of the study the information's on socio-demographic data such as age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, family status, socio-economic conditions, and basic facilities at home are included in the self-prepared interview schedule. In order to find the association of key variables, standardized tools on Activity and psychological well-being are used. To collect the needed information from the respondent's interview schedule method was followed.

Variables

Measurement of Activity

The activity of older persons was assessed using the Activity rating scale for older persons (ARSOP) developed by K.Maheswari and P.Ilango in 2010. ARSOP standardized tool consists of 30 items with 3 dimensions as physical activity, psychological activity and social activity, which range from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree on a Likert type scale. Respondents were asked to rate the level of agreement on each item and there is no negative items. The reliability value for ARSOP was good and the value is $\alpha = 0.881$.

Psychological Well-being Scale

The psychological well-being of the respondents was measured using the PWB scale developed by Ryff and Keyes (1995) which consists of 42 items with 6

dimensions namely self-acceptance, positive relation with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Respondents were asked to select the options that best reflected how descriptive each item was to them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-Demographic findings of the study

The socio-demographic profile findings have been described in detail and the information on age, sex, educational qualification, marital status, and religion are described and these data are recorded from interview schedule responses. From the present study it is found that, majority of the respondents (70%) are between 60 to 70 years of age i.e young old age group whereas 23.3 per cent of them are in old old age group (71-80years) and only 6.7 per cent are in oldest old age group (81years and above). Regarding sex of the respondents, majority of the respondents are male older persons (73.3%) and 26.7 per cent of them are female older persons. It is noted from the present study that, nearly half of the respondents (48.3%) have been educated up to M.Phil and B.Ed degree and 18.3 per cent are educated up to SSLC whereas 16.7 per cent of them have studied up to 12th standard, 13.3 per cent are qualified with under graduation and only 1.7 per cent with post graduation degree.

When it comes to marital status, majority of the respondents (71.7%) are married and living with spouses whereas 25 per cent are in widowhood/separated and only 3.3 per cent of them are unmarried. The great majority of them are following the Hindu religion (80%) and 18.3 of them follow Christianity and 1.7 per cent of them follow Islamic religion.

Respondents were also asked to describe their family status and it is evident from the study that more than half of them are living in joint families and 45 per cent of them are living in nuclear families it is also interesting to note that 28.3 per cent of the respondents are living together with their spouses for three decades and 43.3 per cent of them have two children and the family size encompasses four members. Sivapriya and Maheswari (2019) found that majority of the respondents (70%) had fair (acceptable) relationship with their grandchildren and majority of them (57.4%) expect their grandchildren to be with them. Regarding family headship, the majority of the respondents (71.7%) have said that their husbands lead the families. As per this study, the majority of the retired government servants (78.3%) are residing in urban areas of Perambalur district and the remaining 21.7 per cent of them are residing in rural areas of Perambalur district. Regarding previous occupation of the respondents, nearly half of them (48.3%) have worked as school teachers and retired, Electricity board (12%), Hospitals as nurses (9%), Clerks in government offices (28.3%), other departments (2.4%) and presently great majority are not re-employed and they get pension and lead their living.

Financial conditions were measured in two ways. First, respondents were asked to specify their approximate monthly income 33.35 per cent of them earned between Rs.15000-30000 and 43.3 per cent of the families had single earning members and 31.7 per cent were dependent on them. Second, household financial status focused on savings, property owned, assets, and debts. The majority of the respondents (61%) possess both movable and immovable properties. A great majority (81.7%) of them are living in concrete houses and all of them have drinking water and electricity facilities without interruptions whereas 96 per cent of them use toilets at their houses and remaining use open space.

Findings related to Activity levels and Psychological well-being

The majority of the respondents (65%) have said that they have a moderate level of activity on all dimensions such as physical, psychological and social activities and are not much actively doing household indoor and outdoor activities and as majority of the retired employees are men, they are in a position to get works done by their family members and they are keen to participate in social activities. Given that the average personal value of each is the same regardless of a person's gender, it appears likely that links between well-being and certain types of activities are similar for men and women. There are no anticipated differences in those connections. Women's activity is more dependent on household chores and men's activity is based on outdoor activities, walking and sports.

Findings related to psychological well-being and its six dimensions are as follows and it is revealed from the study that, 55 per cent of them have a low level of psychological well-being and 45 per cent of them have high level of psychological well-being. In autonomy dimension, majority of the respondents (63.3%) have said that they do not have autonomy in decision making and must have a word from their children to express and moreover their decisions are not taken into account many times but 36.7 percent of them have power to autonomy to do their work and the economic status has given power in decision making. Retirement itself makes them to be withdrawn from the society and their role in decision making, power structure decreases in families and it creates a barrier for them to share their feelings freely to others. In environmental mastery dimension, more than half of the respondents (53.3%) have said that they are good at managing the responsibilities and arrange their life accordingly and 46.7 per cent have said that they listen to family members and accord their responsibilities. Regarding the personal growth aspect there is no personal growth or even planning for personal after retirement (61.7%) and the elderly think that it is a not needed topic among the elderly and 38.3 per cent have said that they have opportunities for personal growth even at their age. It is happy to see the findings that nearly half of them (48.5%) are developing positive relations with others like grandchildren, peer groups,

neighbours and relatives. A majority of the respondents (60%) have low level of feeling towards purpose in life and have said that they must lead a healthy life till death without being burden to anybody. Majority of them (56.7%) have low of self-acceptance towards life. There is a significant relationship between the activity levels and psychological well-being of the older persons, if the activity level increases the well-being of the older persons also increases. Higher activity levels plays a vital role in enhancing the psychological well-being of the older persons' and in this study it is found that respondents have low level of activity which has led to low level of psychological well-being. Jenkins et al (2021), investigated the relationship between physical activity (PA) and psychological well-being during a country-wide COVID-19 lockdown in New Zealand and similar results indicated that physical activity was positively associated with psychological well-being and the motivational quality mediated the relationship between physical activity and psychological well-being.

It can be understood from ANOVA test that there is no significant difference among the age of the respondents and their activity levels. From the mean value, it is evident that young old people expect to live longer with good health and hence they are actively involved in physical activities like doing their daily living activities by themselves, walking, etc, decision making, mental efficiency, and social interaction and participation in social gatherings also increases and this condition is seen more among young old age groups (60 to 70 Years) and their activity levels decreases as age increases. There is no significant difference between the gender, domicile, and activity levels of the respondents. From the mean score it is understood that, female older persons are more active than their counterparts and it is also similar for psychological well-being that older women have better psychological well-being than older men. However, a significant difference among monthly income and physical, psychological, and social activities is seen. It is shown in this study that there is a significant association between monthly expenditure and levels of activity. Income is an important factor in deciding the activity levels of an individual, money decides the chances of a healthy lifestyle without diseases, improves psychological level by creating secure life, and participation in social gatherings and social status of a person is also decided by the income factor. Regarding educational qualification and psychological well-being, respondents with high educational qualification have better well-being than others and it is because they have more opportunities to explore and understand the needs and importance of well-being and it is also dependant of healthy and active lifestyle. Age, years of living together with spouse, income and expenditure, self-acceptance and positive relation have significant correlation with psychological well-being. Number of years living together with spouses (at least 33 years) has strong relationship with active ageing and psychological well-being. Physical and psychosocial activities and well-

being have been shown to improve older person's socio emotional skills while also increases autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, self-acceptance, self—appraisal, self-confidence and physical competence. As per the purpose of this study, associations were found between the activity levels and psychological well-being and it is clearly understood that if activity levels are higher than the psychological well-being gets improved. In this study, it is seen that the respondents had low level of activity which in turn led to lower psychological well-being and socioeconomic factors such as age, sex, educational qualification, marital status, economic status, assets, and number of years living together, health aspects also contributed to the well-being of older adults.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it is clear that physical activity should be continued and maintained by the elderly because health and well-being of older persons will be improved due to engagement and active lifestyle. A decrease in physical activity increases the risks of developing several common diseases and disorders, highlighting costs and the potential to improve the self- perceptions, state mood, life satisfaction, social interaction, and well-being of older persons. There is evidence that purposeful activity, particularly those that are required for older persons to assume a functional role, can enhance well-being and quality of life for those who are 80 years of age and older. Furthermore, research studies may be carried out to design and develop intervention programmes for various needs and health concept, with the support and interest of multidisciplinary work groups. The various contingencies of skill training treatments and cognitive functioning must be designed to have active ageing among senior citizens. It is concluded that if the adults maintain and continue their activity levels on physical, psychological and social dimensions even during their old age, they can lead an active life with sound psychological well- being and vice –versa.

REFERENCES

- Black SV, Cooper R, Martin KR, Brage S, Kuh D, Stafford M. Physical Activity and Mental Well-being in a Cohort Aged 60-64 Years. *Am J Prev Med*, 2015 Aug; 49(2): 172- 80.
- Carstensen Selectivity theory: social activity in life-span context. *Annual Review of Gerontology and geriatrics*, 1971; 11: 195–217.
- Harlow, R.E. & Cantor, N. Still participating after all these years: a study of life task participation in later life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1996; 71: 1235– 1249.
- Keyes, C. L., Shmotkin, D., & Ryff, C. D. Optimizing well-being: The empirical encounter of two traditions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2002; 82(6): 1007- 1022.
- Liang, J., & Brown, J. W. Social activity and well-being: Does church participation matter? *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 2011; 73(2).
- Maheswari, K., & Ilango, P. Construction and Validation of Activity Rating Scale for Older Persons. *Indian Journal of Gerontology*, 2014; 28(3): 348-356.
- Maheswari, R., & Maheswari, K. Assessment of Attitude towards Ageing and Well-being of Community Dwelling Older Persons. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 2022; 4412-4417.
- Matthew Jenkins, Susan Houge Mackenzie, Ken Hodge, Elaine Hargreaves, Jessica Calverley and Craig Lee, Physical Activity and Psychological Well-Being During the COVID-19 Lockdown: Relationships With Motivational Quality and Nature Contexts. *Frontiers in Sports Active Living*, 2021; 3 – 2021.
- Molinero, Olga, Alfonso Salguero, and Sara Márquez. "Perceived Health, Depression and Psychological Well-Being in Older Adults: Physical Activity and Osteoarticular Disease" *Sustainability*, 2021; 13: 15: 8157.
- <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13158157>.
- Netz, Y., Wu, M. J., Becker, B. J., & Tenenbaum, G. Physical activity and psychological well-being in advanced age: A meta-analysis of intervention studies. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 2005; 13(3): 293-298.
- Park, D. C., & Bischof, G. N. The aging mind: Neuroplasticity in response to cognitive training. *Psychophysiology*, 2013; 49(1): 143-160.
- Rebecca Owen, PhD and others, Enhancing Older Adults' Well-Being and Quality of Life Through Purposeful Activity: A Systematic Review of Intervention Studies, *The Gerontologist*, August 2022; 62(6): 317–327.
- Sivapriya. A and Maheswari K. Changing Relationship of Grandparents and Grandchildren. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Reviews*, 2019; 8(2): 3786-3791.