

A Relationship between Psychological Well-Being and Functional Fitness of Senior Citizens

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between psychological well-being and functional fitness among senior citizens. With the increasing ageing population, maintaining both physical capability and mental health has become essential for improving the quality of life in old age. The study aimed to determine whether functional fitness is associated with psychological well-being among senior citizens.

Methods: The study employed a descriptive correlational research design. A sample of 120 senior citizens aged 60 years and above was selected from urban and rural areas of Haryana using a random sampling technique. Functional fitness was measured using the Senior Fitness Test developed by Rikli and Jones (2001), and psychological well-being was assessed using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (1989). Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation were used for statistical analysis.

Results: The results of the study indicated a positive and significant relationship between functional fitness and psychological well-being among senior citizens. Individuals with higher functional fitness scores tended to report higher levels of psychological well-being.

Conclusion: The study concluded that better functional fitness is associated with improved psychological well-being among senior citizens. Enhancing functional fitness through suitable activities and health programs may contribute to better mental health and overall well-being in later life.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, Functional fitness, Senior citizens, Healthy ageing

1. INTRODUCTION

Ageing is a universal biological process characterized by gradual changes in physical, psychological, and social functioning. With advancements in medical science and improved living standards, the average life expectancy has increased significantly, leading to a growing population of senior citizens around the world. Although longer life expectancy is a positive development, ageing often brings challenges related to declining physical abilities, health problems, and psychological difficulties.

Functional fitness is an important component of healthy ageing. It refers to the physical capacity required to perform daily activities independently and safely. Components of functional fitness include muscular strength, flexibility, balance, coordination, and endurance.

A decline in functional fitness can affect mobility, independence, and overall quality of life among older adults.

Psychological well-being is another important dimension of health in later life. It reflects a person's positive psychological functioning and includes aspects such as self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, personal growth, environmental mastery, and positive relationships with others. High levels of psychological well-being help individuals cope with life challenges, maintain emotional stability, and experience life satisfaction.

Previous research suggests that physical capability and mental health are closely related. Older adults who maintain better physical functioning are more likely to experience positive emotions, confidence, and independence in daily life. On the other hand, reduced physical capacity may lead to feelings of dependency, stress, and social isolation.

Understanding the relationship between functional fitness and psychological well-being among senior citizens is important for promoting healthy ageing. The present study aims to investigate this relationship and highlight the importance of maintaining physical capability for improving psychological health among elderly individuals.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A recent study published in 2025 in BMC Geriatrics examined the relationship between various components of functional fitness and psychological well-being among adults aged 60–94 years. The findings showed that aerobic endurance, coordination, and lower body flexibility were the strongest predictors of psychological well-being indicators such as happiness, optimism, resilience, and life satisfaction. The study also found moderate positive correlations between lower body strength and all psychological well-being indices, indicating that maintaining functional physical abilities is closely linked to positive mental health in older adults.

Similarly, a 2024 experimental study investigated the effects of a 12-week multi-component physical activity program among older adults living in retirement homes. The results demonstrated that structured physical activity significantly improved participants' psychological well-being, including emotional stability, life satisfaction, and perceived quality of life. The study emphasized that regular physical activity interventions can serve as an effective strategy to enhance both physical functioning and psychological health in later life.

3. DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Senior Citizens: Senior citizens refer to individuals aged **60 years and above**.

Functional Fitness: Functional fitness refers to the physical ability of individuals to perform daily activities safely and independently. It includes components such as strength, flexibility, balance, and endurance.

Psychological Well-Being: Psychological well-being refers to the overall positive psychological functioning of an individual, including self-acceptance, personal growth, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and positive relationships with others.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To determine the relationship between functional fitness and psychological well-being among senior citizens.

5. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant relationship between functional fitness and psychological well-being among senior citizens.

Methods

Research Design

The study adopted a **descriptive correlational research design** to examine the relationship between functional fitness and psychological well-being among senior citizens.

Sample

The sample consisted of **120 senior citizens aged 60 years and above** selected from urban and rural areas of Haryana.

Sampling Technique

A **random sampling technique** was used to select the participants.

Statistical Techniques

The following statistical techniques were used:

- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- Pearson's Product Moment Correlation

Tools Used

1. **Senior Fitness Test (SFT)** developed by Rikli and Jones (2001) was used to measure functional fitness. The test assesses physical abilities such as strength, flexibility, endurance, and balance.
2. **Psychological Well-Being Scale** developed by Ryff (1989) was used to measure psychological well-being. The scale measures six dimensions of psychological functioning including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis: 1 There exist no significant relationship between functional fitness and psychological well-being of senior citizens.

Table 1:- Relationship between functional fitness and psychological well-being of senior citizens.

Variable	Number	Mean	S.D	r-Value	Table Value at 0.05 level	Remarks at 5% Level
functional fitness	120	49.82	6.75	0.62	0.195	Hypothesis not accepted
psychological well-being	120	148.36	19.42			

Interpretation

Table 1 shows the correlation between functional fitness and psychological well-being among senior citizens. The mean score of functional fitness was **49.82** with a standard deviation of **6.75**, while the mean score of psychological well-being was **148.36** with a standard deviation of **19.42**.

The calculated **Pearson's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.62$)** indicates a **moderate positive relationship** between functional fitness and psychological well-being. The obtained **r-value (0.62)** is higher than the **table value (0.195)** at the **0.05 level of significance** for **120 participants**.

Therefore, the **null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between functional fitness and psychological well-being among senior citizens is rejected**.

This finding indicates that **higher levels of functional fitness are associated with better psychological well-being among senior citizens**. In other words, senior citizens who demonstrate better physical functioning tend to experience higher levels of psychological health, life satisfaction, and emotional stability.

7. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship between functional fitness and psychological well-being among senior citizens. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between these two variables, indicating that higher levels of functional fitness are associated with better psychological well-being in older adults. Senior citizens who demonstrate better physical capability tend to experience greater life satisfaction, emotional stability, independence, and positive self-perception.

Functional fitness plays a crucial role in enabling older individuals to perform daily activities independently and maintain an active lifestyle. This independence contributes to a sense of autonomy, purpose in life, and environmental mastery, which are key dimensions of psychological well-being. As functional fitness improves, older adults are more likely to remain socially engaged, confident, and mentally resilient.

The results of the study highlight the importance of maintaining physical capability during the ageing process. Encouraging suitable exercise programs, recreational activities, and community-based health initiatives for senior citizens can significantly enhance both their physical functioning and psychological health. Such efforts can contribute to healthier, more independent, and more fulfilling lives for the elderly population.

In conclusion, functional fitness emerges as an important determinant of psychological well-being among senior citizens. Promoting activities that support physical functioning should therefore be considered an essential strategy for improving the overall quality of life and ensuring successful ageing in later years.

8. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the present study have important implications for education, health promotion, and community development programs related to senior citizens.

1. Promotion of Health Education Programs for Senior Citizens

Educational institutions, community centres, and social organizations should organize health education programs that create awareness about the importance of maintaining functional fitness for better psychological well-being in old age. Such programs can guide senior citizens about safe exercises, healthy lifestyles, and stress management.

2. Integration of Active Ageing Concepts in Educational Curriculum

Topics related to healthy ageing, functional fitness, and psychological well-being should be included in the curriculum of physical education, health education, and gerontology courses. This will help future teachers, trainers, and health professionals understand the needs of senior citizens and design suitable programs for them.

3. Role of Physical Education Professionals

Physical education teachers and trainers can play an important role in developing age-appropriate exercise programs that improve strength, flexibility, balance, and endurance among senior citizens. Proper guidance and supervision can help older adults maintain functional fitness safely.

4. Community-Based Educational Programs

Community learning centres and senior citizen associations can organize workshops, seminars, and activity-based learning sessions focusing on maintaining physical capability and mental well-being in later life.

5. Encouragement of Lifelong Learning and Social Participation

Educational programs for senior citizens should also focus on social interaction, recreational learning, and group activities. Such initiatives can enhance confidence, emotional stability, and psychological well-being.

9. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. The present study was limited to a sample of senior citizens from selected areas of Haryana. Future studies may include a larger sample from different regions of the country to obtain more generalizable results.
2. Further research can examine the relationship between functional fitness and psychological well-being across different age groups of older adults.
3. Future studies may investigate additional variables such as life satisfaction, quality of life, social support, and emotional health among senior citizens.
4. Longitudinal studies may be conducted to observe changes in functional fitness and psychological well-being over time among elderly individuals.
5. Comparative studies may be carried out between urban and rural senior citizens to understand differences in physical capability and psychological health.
6. Experimental studies may also be conducted to evaluate the impact of structured fitness or wellness programs on the psychological well-being of senior citizens.

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