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Effect of regular physical activity on positive mental health: With reference to elderly females of Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to compare positive mental health of physically active and sedentary elderly females of Jammu and Kashmir. To conduct the study 250 physically active elderly women (Ave. age 64.11 YRS) and 250 elderly women with sedentary lifestyle (Ave. age 63.23 yrs.) were selected as sample. Physical activity comprise of regular walking, cycling, light exercise etc. Positive mental health of selected subjects was assessed by PMHI prepared by Agashe and Helode (1998). This inventory is based on dimensions such as self acceptance, ego strength and philosophy of life for overall assessment of positive mental health. Data analysis with the help of independent sample 't' test reveal that positive mental health of elderly females engaged in regular physical activity was found to be significantly higher as compared to elderly females with sedentary lifestyle. It was concluded that elderly females engaged in regular physical activity possesses more magnitude of positive mental health as compared to sedentary elderly females.

Keywords: Physical activity, positive mental health, geriatric females

1. Introduction

One of the interconnected concept of mental health is with quality of life. World Health Organization (2001) [10] defined mental health as fullness of physical, mental and social wellness of an individual and considered it as major element in general health of an individual. Researcher has further classified mental health problems in terms of anxiety, depression and emotional imbalance. Mental health encompasses self acceptance, personal development and growth, good adaptation to environmental circumstances, autonomy with ability to make cordial and fruitful relationship with others. Positive psychology is an integral part of psychological wellbeing and it is included in the mental health model as well. A definition put forth by Meninger (1930) [5] includes ability to control temper and aggression, observant intelligence and happy disposition. Since long mental health care remained focused on psychopathology but later on psychologist explored its positive aspects also. Jahoda (1958) significantly contributed to defining positive mental health. Jahoda incorporated six dimensions in model of positive mental health ranging from autonomy and self determination, environmental adjustment, rationality of personality to self actualization and satisfactory perception about reality. Strupp and Hadley (1977) [7] also visualized mental health in its positive standpoint. This model has considered self-acceptance, ego-strength and philosophy of human nature/life as a constituent of positive mental health.

The term mental health has been discussed in elderly population's perspective also. The reason being increased life expectancy with results in ever increasing population of elderly. In India the elderly population was 8.6% in 2011 which is expected to be 19% at the end of year 2050. Since elderly population is considered to be more affected by mental health, researchers have focussed their attention to this topic. Researchers like Prashantha *et al.* (2015) [6], Thilak *et al.* (2016) [8], Kartik Patil *et al.* (2016) [4] have addressed the issues related with mental health problems in elderly population. But these studies explored negative side of mental health. The factors that may be useful for management of positive mental health in elderly population has not been explored so far.

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One such therapy may be regular physical activity. In numerous studies a positive link was observed between regular physical activity and management of mental health issue (Gapler *et al.*, 2006, Tirumalesh and Chandraiah, 2017) [3, 19]. Hence to explore the possible role of regular physical activity on positive mental health of elderly females, the present study was planned with Jammu and Kashmir being chosen as study area.

1.1 Objectives

The objective of the present study was to assess the effect of regular physical activity on positive mental health of elderly females of Jammu and Kashmir.

1.2 Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that positive mental health of elderly females engaged in regular physical activity will be significantly superior as compared to elderly females with sedentary lifestyle.

2. Methodology

The following methodological steps were taken in order to conduct the present study.

2.1 Sample

To conduct the study 500 elderly females between 60 to 70 years of age were selected as sample. The selected sample were residents of Jammu and Kashmir. Out of these, 250

elderly females were engaged in regular physical activity such as walking, light exercise, yoga etc. while remaining 250 elderly females were living a sedentary life. Purposive sampling was used for selection of sample.

2.2 Tools

2.2.1 Positive mental health inventory

To assess mental health of elderly female subjects, Positive mental health inventory prepared by Agashe and Helode (1988) [1] was used. This inventory is made up of 36 statements. This inventory is highly reliable and valid.

2.3 Procedure

500 elderly female subjects between the age group of 60 and 70 years were selected purposively. 250 elderly females engaged in regular walking, cycling, light exercise for minimum of 35 min. duration were considered as physically active subjects while the group of 250 elderly females were living a sedentary life. After regular consideration of ethics, positive mental health inventory prepared by Agashe and Helode (1988) [1] was administered to each subject. Response on each statement was evaluated as per instructions provided in manual of the inventory. After scoring tabulation was carried out according to two study groups. For data analysis independent sample 't' test was used. Results are presented in table 1.

3. Result and Discussion

Table 1: Comparison of Positive Mental Health among Elderly Females on the basis of Regular Physical Activity

Variable	Status of Physical Activity				t	Level of Significance
	Regular (N=250)		Sedentary (N=250)			
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.		
Positive Mental Health	29.77	5.95	18.12	5.82	22.09	.01

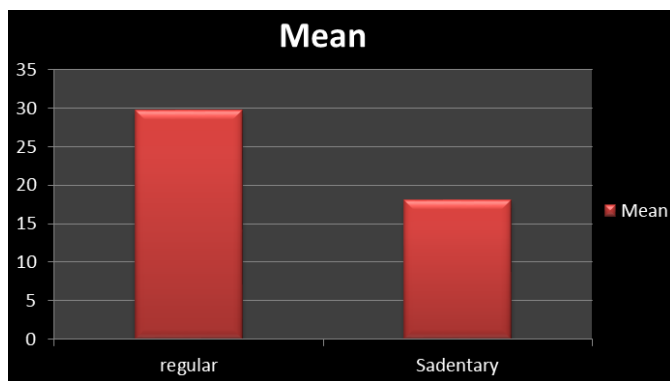


Fig 1: The regular and Sedentary

A perusal of entries reported in table 1 reveals statistically significant difference in positive mental health of elderly females on the basis of physical activity status. It was observed that positive mental health of elderly females engaged in regular physical activity was significantly superior as compared to elderly females with sedentary lifestyle. The calculated $t=22.09$ also proves their finding scientifically at .01 level of statistical significance.

Beyer *et al.* (2002) [2] in a study reported that regular participation in physical activity enhance the non-adrenaline levels which regulates mood and this positive mood changes are also seen in behaviour and thinking of an individual. After continued physical activity person accepts his/her weakness and becomes emotionally more stable. These reflect in positive mental health of an individual.

4. Conclusion

On the basis of results, it may be concluded that in contrast to sedentary lifestyle regular physical activity in the form of walking, cycling, light exercise and yoga is beneficial for positive mental health of elderly females.

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