Neuropsychological Predictors of Self-rated Physical and Mental Health Among Community-dwelling Older Adults

Ashley L. Fischer, Sophie E. Yeung, & Wendy J.L. Thornton
Department of Psychology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. Canada

Self-rated Health, Aging & Cognition

- Two major domains:
  - Physical (SRPH).
  - Mental (SRMH).
- Closely associated with morbidity and mortality.
- Sensitive to variation in objective medical health.
- ↓ SRH shown to exist in absence of objective medical problems.
- Late-life changes in cognition associated with:
  - Increasing age.
  - Declining medical health.
- Less research addressing:
  (a) Differences in SRPH & SRMH
  (b) Direction of relationship with age and cognition.

Research Question

Do contributions of age and cognitive ability differ between SRPH and SRMH in a sample of older adults?

Method

Participants

- n = 97 older adult volunteers from the greater Vancouver area.
  - Inclusion: English fluency, adequate vision and hearing, ≥ grade 6 education
  - Exclusion: Psychotic illness, significant head injury, concurrent medical or neurological illness affecting cognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years) range:</th>
<th>65.90 (8.28)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51-91</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (% female)</td>
<td>14.67 (2.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>28.75 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMSE</td>
<td>7.37 (7.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAQ</td>
<td>54.43 (12.22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Select Demographic Characteristics

*Values are presented as M (SD).

SF-36v2 Health Survey

- Two domains:
  - SRPH (Summary Physical Composite).
  - SRMH (Summary Mental Composite).
- High internal consistency:
  - Older adults (SRPH: α = .95; SRMH: α = .92).

Analyses

- Excluded demographic and cognitive variables not significantly associated with each DV.
- Composite of cognitive measures correlated with SRH (p ≤ .05).

Executive Function:

- Color Word C3 raw + Trails C4 raw + VF Letters + Coding

Conclusions & Implications

(1) Physical health perceptions decline with age.
(2) Mental health perceptions improve with age.

- ↓ SRPH may reflect differences in objective health factors.
- ↑ SRMH agrees with theories on ↑ late-life emotional satisfaction.
- Executive function and speed may be important in SRMH.
- Important to examine SRH factors separately in older adults.

Select References


Acknowledgements

Research supported by a CGS-M from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to A. L. Fischer and a SSHRC Standard Research Grant to W. J. L. Thornton. S. E. Yeung is supported by a SSHRC CGS.D.

We are grateful to the staff and participants of the SFU Cognitive Aging Laboratory.