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Challenging Activity Theory for Subjective Well-being

KEYWORDS: Activities, Well-being, Elderly, Socioeconomic Variables

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ABSTRACT *The new mantra of successful aging is 'stay active-stay healthy-stay happy', but how far this activity mantra as universally desirable condition work for all elderly population with their heterogynous demographic characteristics. Hence present study aims at exploring relationship of activities with subjective well-being with consideration to socioeconomic variables among elderly. The study was conducted on a sample of 250 elderly men aging 60 and above using random and snowball methods. Statistical analysis was done by correlation, partial correlation and hierarchical regression analysis. Results suggested that activities, education and income do appear to show protecting and benefiting effects on SWB however satisfaction abilities to perform those activities are more important than activities themselves. Similarly, none of the findings were found to be applicable to all age group neither education and income always have benefiting effect. Implication of findings are discussed.*

Introduction

The concept of ''good'' old age is changing. This changed idea of old age is gradually becoming more connected to the need to stay young, both in the sense of activity (Katz, 2000) and physical appearance (Biggs, 2002; Coupland, 2007). As Katz (2000) points out, nowadays activity represents an idealized image of ageing. According to Katz, activity is becoming the key conceptual framework in the current perception of ageing. Furthermore, it also entails an ethical dimension, as it clearly defines activity as a universally desirable condition.

Theories Related To Activity

The shifting meanings of successful aging have paralleled changes in prevailing theories of social and psychological aspects of aging.

1. **Disengagement Theory:** One of the first theories of aging, Cumming and Henry's "disengagement theory" (1961), proposed that in the normal course of aging, people gradually withdrew or disengaged from social roles as a natural response to lessened capabilities and diminished interest, and to societal disincentives for participation.
2. **Activity Theory:** A second major theory of aging, referred to as "activity theory", proposed that people age most successfully when they participate in a full round of daily activities, that is, keep busy (Lemon, Bengtson & Peterson, 1972).
3. **Continuity Theory:** A third theory of aging which has been viewed with much favor in recent years is called "continuity theory" (Atchley, 1972). This theory proposes that the people who age most successfully are those who carry forward the habits, preferences, lifestyles and relationships from midlife into late life.

Activities and Well-being

Early gerontology researchers maintained that activity was related to the wellbeing of older people (Havighurst, Neugarten & Tobin, 1964; Maddox, 1963). According to WHO (2002) participation in light and moderate physical activities may delay the functional decline. Thus, an active life improves mental health and contributes towards managing disorders like depression and dementia. Physically active lifestyles have been related to life satisfaction (Kelly, 1993). Similarly, life task participation have also been linked to better indicators of psychological adjustment such as greater life satisfaction and positive affect, lower levels of stress and lower scores in depressive symptoms (Park, 2009).

Socioeconomic factors

Socioeconomic factors, especially, education and income has been studied in relation to elderly well-being, health status and functional limitation. In a number of studies, it has been found that rich people are, on average, slightly happier than poor people (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). Though very few studies are available which studies the role of education and income on how it influence elderly perception in their day to day life.

Age

It is useful to consider old age as involving not one but several life phases. As the life expectancy is increasing and elderly are living longer than any previous cohort, they are living almost 20 years even after the retirement. Proposals have been made from fields of demography, bio-demography and gerontology to distinguish between the *young old*, the *old*, and the *oldest old* (Neugarten, 1974; Suzman, Willis, & Manton, 1992).

Statement of purpose

The changing situations worldwide and in India have created a number of problems for elderly that range from absence of ensured and sufficient income to support themselves and their dependents to ill health, absence of social security, loss of social role and recognition and to the non-availability of opportunities for creative use of free time. With this the changing perception for successful aging give the new mantra of 'stay active-stay healthy-stay happy', but how far this activity mantra as universally desirable condition work for all elderly population with their heterogynous demographic characteristics. Hence present study aims at exploring ***relationship of activities with subjective well-being with consideration to socioeconomic variables among elderly.***

Hypothesis: According to the literature reviewed following hypotheses were formed:

- Activities will be positively correlated and predict Subjective Well-being indicators: positive correlation and prediction of happiness, life satisfaction past, present, future and negatively correlation and prediction of depression.
- Education and income will positively contribute to association between activities and subjective well-being: Higher education and income levels will increase the strength between activities and subjective well-being indicators.

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Methodology

Sample: The present study was conducted on a sample of 250 elderly men aging 60 and above from eastern Uttar Pradesh drawn by using random and snowball sampling methods.

Table 1. Sample Distribution and Mean Age by Age Groups

Age Groups	Young Old (60-64 yrs)	Middle Old (65-69 yrs)	Old-Old (70 yrs and above)
N	81	80	89
Mean Age	62.11	66.98	74.20

Table 2. Variables under study and Measure:

Variables	Indicators and abbreviation used	Type and Measure
Age	-	Demographic Variable, Interview Schedule
Education	-	Socioeconomic Variable, Interview Schedule
Income	-	Socioeconomic Variable, Interview Schedule
Activities	Household activities within home ***(HHA within home)***, Household activities outside home ***(HHA outside home)***, Entertainment activities within home ***(EA within home)***, Entertainment activities outside home ***(EA outside home)***, Physical activities, Social activities, Cognitive activities, Satisfaction with routine work ability ***(Satisfaction with RWA)***, Satisfaction with mental ability ***(Satisfaction with MA)***, and Satisfaction with social contacts ***(Satisfaction with SC)***	Predictor Variable, Interview Schedule base on Harlow and Canter Activity Schedule (1996)
Subjective Well-being (SWB)	Life Satisfaction: Past, Present, Future	Criterion Variable, Temporal Satisfaction with Life Scale developed by Pavot, Diener and Suh (1999)
	Happiness	Criterion Variable, General Happiness Scale developed by Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999)
	Depression	Criterion Variable, Indian adaptation of Geriatric Depression Scale by Ganguli, Dube, Johnston, Pandav, Chandra and Dadge, (1999)

statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was done by using SPSS software, separately for three age groups. Correlation was done to know the association of criterion variable with predictor variable and partial correlation was done to know the influence of education and income in association. The multiple regression analysis for prediction of SWB by activities with hierarchically controlling effect of age, education and income was done.

Result and Discussion

Analysis of data confirmed that hypothesized associations and predictions suggesting that activities, higher education and income do function as protecting or benefiting factors for maintaining or increasing SWB.

Supporting the hypothesis 1, positive correlations were found for HHA within home with life satisfaction present in 60-64 and 70**+** yrs, with life satisfaction future in 70+ yrs, HHA outside home with life satisfaction present in 60-64 yrs; EA within home with life satisfaction present in 65-69 yrs; EA outside home with happiness in 65-69 yrs, cognitive activities with happiness in 70+ yrs, satisfaction with RWA with happiness in all age groups, with life satisfaction past in 70+ yrs, life satisfaction present and future in 65-69 yrs, satisfaction with MA with happiness in all age groups, with life satisfaction past, present and future in 70+ yrs; satisfaction with SC with happiness in 70+ yrs, whereas negative correlation with depression were there with HHA within home, with physical activity, with satisfaction with RWA, satisfaction with MA and satisfaction with SC in 70+ yrs and in 65-69 yrs with satisfaction with RWA and satisfaction with MA.

Regression analysis supported the hypothesis and positive predictions were found in 60-64 yrs by HHA outside home for life satisfaction present, by satisfaction with SC for life satisfaction future and by Satisfaction with MA for happiness. In 65-69 yrs satisfaction with RWA was positively predicted life satisfaction future and happiness and negatively predicted

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depression and in 70+ yrs satisfaction with MA positively predicted life satisfaction past and happiness, HHA within home positively predicted life satisfaction future, and satisfaction with SC negatively predicted depression.

It was found that (hypothesis 2) education and income strength the positive correlation between HHA outside home, EA within home, satisfaction with RWA and satisfaction with MA with life satisfaction present in 65-69 yrs and strengthen negative correlation between physical activities; satisfaction with RWA and satisfaction with MA with depression in 65-69 yrs. Also it strengthen the positive correlation between satisfaction with MA with life satisfaction future in 70+ yrs and negative correlation between satisfaction with SC with depression in 60-64 yrs.

It was also found that education and income has protecting influence in certain association and partialling out their effect create significant negative correlation between activities and SWB. As partialling out education and income significantly strength the positive correlation between EA within home and social activities with depression in 65-69 yrs.

Table 3 Partial Correlation of Various Activities with Criterion Variables for Various Age Groups

		Criterion Variables														
	Age Groups	Happiness			Life Satisfaction: Past			Life Satisfaction: Present			Life Satisfaction: Future			Depression		
		R	P_E	P_{EI}	R	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}
Household Activities Within Home	60-64 yrs	-0.11	-0.12	-0.15	0.16	0.14	0.13	0.31**	0.30**	0.28**	0.14	0.17	0.21	0.00	0.07	0.01
	65-69 yrs	0.00	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.04	-0.04	-0.11	-0.15	-0.15	0.02	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.11	0.07
	70+ yrs	0.11	0.12	0.04	0.12	0.1	0.03	0.19	0.24*	0.2	0.25*	0.31**	0.24*	-0.20	-0.21*	-0.17
Household Activities Outside Home	60-64 yrs	0.16	0.16	0.13	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.22*	0.22*	0.2	0.09	0.09	0.1	-0.10	-0.12	-0.12
	65-69 yrs	-0.07	-0.06	-0.04	-0.01	-0.01	-0.04	-0.16	-0.13	-0.15	0.08	0.04	0.03	0.09	0.05	0
	70+ yrs	0.10	0.11	0.07	-0.05	-0.12	-0.16	-0.13	-0.12	-0.14	0.00	-0.01	-0.04	-0.12	-0.15	-0.14
Entertainment Activities Within Home	60-64 yrs	0.06	0.06	0.06	-0.06	-0.05	-0.04	-0.09	-0.08	-0.08	0.00	-0.02	-0.03	-0.05	-0.07	-0.06
	65-69 yrs	0.12	0.06	0.03	-0.07	-0.1	-0.08	0.23*	0.15	0.17	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.11	0.29**	0.31**
	70+ yrs	0.15	0.16	0.18	-0.05	-0.09	-0.07	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.07	0.05	0.08	-0.07	-0.09	-0.11
Entertainment Activities Outside Home	60-64 yrs	0.16	0.17	0.14	-0.22*	-0.21	-0.21	-0.33**	-0.32**	-0.33**	-0.25*	-0.28**	-0.28**	0.00	-0.04	-0.07
	65-69 yrs	0.24*	0.25*	0.24*	-0.06	-0.07	-0.06	-0.04	-0.02	-0.01	0.11	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.1	0.13
	70+ yrs	0.18	0.18	0.19	-0.06	-0.07	-0.09	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07	0.08	0.11	0.11	-0.06	-0.04	-0.05

'r':Direct Correlation; P_E: Partial Correlation Controlling for Education, P_{EI} : Partial Correlation Controlling for both Education & Income

** p < .05, ** p< .01*

Table 4 Partial Correlations of Various Activities with Criterion Variables for Various Age Groups

		Criterion Variables														
	Age Groups	Happiness			Life Satisfaction: Past			Life Satisfaction: Present			Life Satisfaction: Future			Depression		
		R	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}
Physical Activities	60-64 yrs	-0.12	-0.12	-0.13	-0.21*	-0.21	-0.2	-0.24*	-0.24*	-0.23*	-0.13	-0.14	-0.16	-0.02	-0.03	0.01
	65-69 yrs	-0.19	-0.16	-0.19	0.07	0.08	0.1	0.11	0.15	0.16	0.19	0.21	0.22	0.25*	0.24*	0.25*
	70+ yrs	-0.02	0	0.02	0.12	0.15	0.16	-0.04	-0.01	0	0.03	0.06	0.07	-0.21*	-0.2	-0.2

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Social Activities	60-64 yrs	0.20	0.2	0.2	-0.18	-0.18	-0.17	-0.17	-0.16	-0.16	-0.12	-0.13	-0.14	-0.11	-0.14	-0.13
	65-69 yrs	0.12	0.12	0.1	-0.09	-0.09	-0.07	-0.06	-0.07	-0.06	-0.07	-0.08	-0.07	0.21	0.23*	0.26*
	70+ yrs	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.10	0.12	0.11	-0.08	-0.06	-0.06	-0.04	0.01	0	-0.14	-0.14	-0.15
Cognitive Activities	60-64 yrs	0.10	0.11	0.12	0.07	0.1	0.11	0.08	0.12	0.13	0.13	0.1	0.09	0.08	0.01	0.04
	65-69 yrs	0.20	0.16	0.16	-0.13	-0.15	-0.14	0.17	0.11	0.11	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.02	0.13	0.17
	70+ yrs	0.23*	0.27**	0.24*	0.03	0.01	-0.01	-0.03	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.04	-0.15	-0.16	-0.16

'r':Direct Correlation; P_E: Partial Correlation Controlling for Education, P_{EI} : Partial Correlation Controlling for both Education & Income

* p < .05, ** p< .01

Table 5 Partial Correlation of Satisfaction with Activities with Criterion Variables for Various Age Groups

		Criterion Variables														
	Age Groups	Happiness			Life Satisfaction: Past			Life Satisfaction: Present			Life Satisfaction: Future			Depression		
		R	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}	r	P_E	P_{EI}
Satisfied with Routine-work Ability	60-64 yrs	0.50**	0.52**	0.50**	-0.20	-0.19	-0.17	-0.14	-0.13	-0.14	-0.05	-0.08	-0.09	-0.13	-0.2	-0.18
	65-69 yrs	0.55**	0.54**	0.55**	0.01	0	0.03	0.23*	0.09	0.11	0.21	0.30**	0.34**	-0.28**	-0.08	0.01
	70+ yrs	0.39**	0.41**	0.29*	0.33**	0.37**	0.32**	0.18	0.22*	0.16	0.19	0.2	0.13	-0.23*	-0.23*	-0.2
Satisfied with Mental Ability	60-64 yrs	0.50**	0.52**	0.50**	-0.30**	-0.29**	-0.27	-0.29**	-0.28**	-0.29**	-0.19	-0.22*	-0.24*	0.00	-0.07	-0.03
	65-69 yrs	0.42**	0.39**	0.40*	0.07	0.07	0.09	0.22*	0.11	0.12	0.04	0.08	0.09	-0.28**	-0.13	-0.06
	70+ yrs	0.51**	0.53**	0.44**	0.38**	0.42**	0.39**	0.23*	0.27*	0.22*	0.21*	0.24*	0.18	-0.27**	-0.29*	-0.27*
Satisfaction with social contacts	60-64 yrs	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.04	0.01	0.05	0.05	0.02	0.09	0.20	0.25*	0.22	-0.24*	-0.17	-0.09
	65-69 yrs	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.10	0.1	0.11	0.18	0.18	0.2	-0.10	-0.11	-0.1	-0.07	-0.07	-0.11
	70+ yrs	0.28**	0.29**	0.26*	-0.03	-0.06	-0.11	0.05	0.08	0.04	0.01	0.01	-0.05	-0.31**	-0.33**	-0.30**

'r':Direct Correlation; P_E: Partial Correlation Controlling for Education, P_{EI} : Partial Correlation Controlling for both Education & Income

* p < .05, ** p< .01

Table 6 Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for Criterion Variables

	Age Groups	Predictor Variables	R	R^2	Ad-justed R^2	R^2 Change	F Change	β	t-Value
Life Satisfaction: Past	60-64	Satisfaction with Mental Ability	.41	.17	.12	.05	4.80*	-.24	2.19*
	65-69	No Variable Entered							
	70 +	Satisfaction with Mental Abilities	0.50	0.25	0.21	0.13	13.28**	.38	3.64**
Life Satisfaction: Present	60-64	Entertainment Activity Outside Home	.38	.14	.10	.09	7.50	-.32	2.74**
		Satisfaction with Mental Abilities	.44	.20	.14	.05	4.87	-.24	2.21*
		Household Activity outside Home	.51	.26	.20	.06	5.94	.26	2.44*
	65-69	No Variable Entered							
	70 +	No Variable Entered							

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Life Satisfaction: Future	60-64	Satisfaction with Mental Abilities	.33	.11	.06	.05	4.05*	-.23	2.01*
		Satisfaction with Social Contact	.40	.16	.10	.05	4.01*	.24	2.00*
	65-69	Satisfaction with Routine-Work Abilities	.38	.15	.10	.11	9.44**	.35	3.07**
	70 +	Household Activity within Home	.39	.15	.11	.05	4.73*	.25	2.18*
Happiness	60-64	Satisfaction with Mental Ability Abilities	.53	.29	.25	.25	25.34**	.51	5.03**
	65-69	Satisfaction with Routine-work Abilities	.57	.33	.29	.30	31.57**	.56	5.62**
		Physical Activities	.68	.46	.42	.13	16.88**	-.39	4.12**
	70 +	Satisfaction with Mental Abilities	.51	.26	.22	.18	18.67**	.45	4.32**
Depression	60-64	No Variable Entered							
	65-69	Social Activity	.48	.23	.19	.05	4.62*	.23	2.15*
		Satisfied with Mental Ability	.52	.27	.22	.05	4.33*	-.23	2.08*
	70 +	Satisfaction with Social Contacts	.32	.10	.06	.09	7.87**	-.31	2.81**

* p < .0 *p<.05, ** p< .01, C.V. (Controlled Variables): Age, Education, Income

However, this is not the complete picture, contrary to hypothesis 1, EA within home were positively correlated to depression in 65-69 yrs, EA outside home were negatively correlated with life satisfaction past, present and future in 60-64 yrs, physical activities were negatively correlated with life satisfaction past and present in 60-64 yrs and positively correlated with depression in 65-69 yrs, social activities were also positively correlated with depression in 65-69 yrs, satisfaction with MA were negatively correlated with life satisfaction past, present and future in 60-64 yrs. Whereas, satisfaction with MA negatively predicted life satisfaction past, present and future and EA outside home negatively predicted life satisfaction present in 60-64 yrs. Physical activities negatively predicted happiness and social activities positively predicted depression in 65-69 yrs.

Contrary to hypothesis 2, in some associations education and income were showing two kind of influences. Presence of their influence make EA outside home and physical activities significantly negatively correlated with life satisfaction present in 60-64 yrs and partialling out these make the association insignificant suggesting that indulgence in entertainment activities outside home and physical activities for highly educated and high income elderly in initial old age create negative influence on their satisfaction with present life. Education was found to negatively influencing expected relationship between activities and SWB as partialling out education made HHA within home with life satisfaction present and future and satisfaction with RWA with life satisfaction present significantly positive, whereas, HHA within home with depression significantly negative in 70 and above age group.

Major Findings and Conclusion

Some findings were prominently evident as it appears that education and income basically have their protective effect on life satisfaction and depression in 65-69 age group whereas the negative role in same in 60-64 and 70 and above age group.

Actually performing the activities do not go well with SWB among elderly however satisfaction with one's ability to perform all those task have positive effect. HHA and EA were generally related to life satisfaction in 60-65 age and 65-69 age group and also significantly predicted it. Satisfaction with RWA and satisfaction with MA significantly positively correlated and predicted happiness in all groups. In 70 and above age group HHA within home, physical activities and satisfaction with RWA, MA and SC were significantly negatively correlated with depression though only satisfaction with social contact significantly predicted it.

Satisfaction with mental abilities appear to have a very important role as in initial old age, it negatively influence life satisfaction probably due to the realization that though they are able to perform mental activities they are forced to retire from active work life and in late in old age being able to still be satisfied with mental abilities have protective effect on life satisfaction, happiness and depression.

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