

Background: Social connection is a basic human need and is important for quality of life and care for residents in long-term care (LTC) homes. Research has established associations between aspects of social connection (e.g., social engagement, social support and loneliness) and mental health outcomes (e.g., depression). Yet, despite living in a congregate setting, those in LTC homes often experience poor social connection. Social connection has unique considerations for LTC homes, including that most residents are living with cognitive impairment or dementia, which requires a customized measurement approach.

Research Objective: The social connection in long-term care home residents (SONNET) study aims to improve measurement of social connection in LTC homes by addressing three specific questions: (1) What existing measures assess social connection in LTC homes and what are their psychometric properties? (2) What do residents, families, staff and clinicians consider to be the important elements of social connection in LTC homes? (3) Can a new measure accurately assess social connection in LTC home residents?

Method: The three study questions will be addressed through: (1) A systematic review of existing measures, where measures will be characterized using content analysis and CONsensus-based Standards for the selection of health Measurement INSTRUMENTS (COSMIN) methods; (2) Qualitative interviews with residents, families, staff and clinicians to understand important aspects of social connection, and, (3) Development and testing of a new measure of social connection in Canada and the UK.

Preliminary results of the ongoing study: Previous research will be discussed, including a scoping review summarizing research evidence linking social connection to mental health outcomes as well as strategies to build and maintain social connection during the COVID-19 pandemic. The SONNET study update will include preliminary findings from the systematic review and qualitative interviews, as well as development of a conceptual model and key considerations for a new measure.

Conclusion: Social connection is an important concept in LTC homes. A robust measure of social connection, developed specifically for this setting, will enable researchers and care settings to test the effects of interventions and to report outcomes at the individual-, home- and system-level.

S3: Quality of Life and Psychological Strengths of Older People

Symposium Overview:

Background: Aging has traditionally been studied from loss, disease, and dependency, limiting the conceptualization of Quality of Life (QoL) to health. The population group of older people characterize by its heterogeneity in which many older adults experience gains and age with good physical, psychological and social conditions. Ignoring these aspects can lead to ageism. It is necessary to offer a change of perspective in which older adults' QoL is analyzed from a multidimensional perspective where not only losses are taken into account but also the strengths of the person and the satisfaction of their higher needs (self-fulfillment, control, autonomy and pleasure).

Research Objective: This symposium aims to develop an assessment to improve QoL in older people through the promotion of their strengths.

Method: Four studies from different Spanish and Portuguese universities were presented

Preliminary results on the ongoing study: Older people have psychological strengths that enhance QoL.

Conclusion: This symposium seeks to promote QoL in older people from a change of perspective based on strengths in a society for all ages, in line with the decade of healthy aging (2021-2030) approved by the World Health Assembly and the United Nations General Assembly. Aging implies a range of personal and material losses to which older people must

adapt to maintain adequate levels of QoL. The stress model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) states that the impact of stress on the person depends on the resources that they use to face the factors associated with stress. Previous research has supported the protective role of reminiscence, personal growth, digital skills, psychological well-being, acceptance, resilience, gratitude, and family functioning in QoL. Likewise, interventions focused on these variables have shown an increase in QoL. However, studies based on a strengths model are still very limited in older people.

Factors associated with older adults' quality of life

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Background: The COVID-19 situation could be considered as an uncontrollable stressful life event. It may exert an impact on their quality of life (QoL). Not only COVID related variables, sociodemographic characteristics, health and appraisal but also personal resources could have an impact on QoL.

Research Objective: This study aims to assess the association between QoL and sociodemographic characteristics (sex, age), levels of health (physical health, emotional distress, and psychological well-being), COVID-19 related variables

(having got infected, having lost a loved person, being hospitalized or having had a loved one hospitalized), appraisal (fear of COVID-19 outbreak), personal resources (family function, resilience, acceptance and gratitude).

Method: QoL was assessed in all participants using CASP-19. A regression model was tested. 361 older adults in Spain participated in this study. The average age was 68.44 (SD= 5.31) and 62.8% were women (N= 227) and 58.2% were married (N= 210).

Preliminary results on the ongoing study: The results suggest that the nature of the COVID-19 may not be as relevant for the older adults' QoL as their levels of health, personal resources for managing COVID related and emotional status. We found that the older adults QoL increased when increased the levels of health, acceptance, gratitude, personal growth, and purpose in life and when there were lower scores in anxiety and depression. This model explained 66.4% of variance. In contrast, COVID-19 variables or appraisal did not show any association with QoL.

Conclusion: A better understanding of the factors associated with QoL could help health professionals to develop interventions that enhance it. Efforts to address older adults' QoL focusing on older adults' personal resources, perceived health and emotional status should be considered.

Protective and Vulnerability Factors of Posttraumatic Growth in Older Adults during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background: The group population of older adults has suffered the highest number of deaths and impact on health associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Many older adults can perceive this pandemic as a traumatic experience. However, many older adults may have also experienced positive changes, defined as post-traumatic growth (PTG). Several factors may enhance or hinder this possibility of development.

Objective: This study aimed to analyze if the effects of COVID-19 affection (direct and indirect), anxiety and depression on PTG would be mediated by the protective variables life purpose and resilience.

Method: 359 older adults over 60 years old completed a web-based survey during the COVID-19 pandemic including sociodemographic data, direct/indirect affectation by COVID-19, anxiety, depression, resilience, life purpose and PTG.