INFLUENCE OF MARITAL STATUS AND LIVING ARRANGEMENT ON DAILY FUNCTIONING LEVELS FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE SENIORWISE (WISDOM IS SIMPLY EXPLORATION) STUDY

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Purpose: As people age, complaints of memory loss also increase. More knowledge regarding what affects memory and cognition is needed to improve the quality of life for the growing population of ageing individuals (greater than 65 years of age). Social relationships have been associated with physical, mental, and behavioral health benefits. Social relationships may also influence cognitive functioning. The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between marital status and living arrangement (i.e. social relationships) and patterns of daily functioning between males and females using the data from the SeniorWISE (Wisdom is Simply Exploration) Study. Gender was included as an independent variable because studies have found men and women benefit differently depending on the type of social relationship. This study answered the following questions: 1) Is there a significant difference in Daily Functioning Levels (DAFS score) between older adults based on marital status? 2) Is there a significant difference in Daily Functioning Levels (DAFS score) between older adults based on living arrangement? 3) Is there a significant difference in Daily Functioning Levels (DAFS score) between older adults based on gender?

Methods: This is a descriptive, correlational, secondary analysis of the Time I pre-intervention data from the SeniorWISE (Wisdom is Simply Exploration) Study, an intervention study on memory self-efficacy and everyday memory performance. The sample (n=265) was tri-ethnic (72% non-Hispanic White, 17% Hispanic, and 11% African American), female dominated (77%), and had an average age of 75 years old (SD = 5.96). Demographic data, including gender, marital status, and living arrangement, were self-reported. Instrumental activities of daily living levels were measured using the Direct Assessment of Functional Status (DAFS). A series of independent samples t-tests were conducted for analysis

Findings: There was a significant difference in DAFS scores between participants who lived alone (M=82.61, SD=5.037) versus lived with someone (M=81.09, SD=5.66) (t(212.16)=2.24, p=.03). There was not a significant difference between non-married (M=81.98, SD=5.52) and married participants (M=81.96, SD=5.01) (t(261)=.02, p=.98) or between females (M=82.13, SD=5.43) and males (M=81.50, SD=5.05) (t(263)=.81, p=.42).

Conclusions: The results indicated that only living arrangement had a significant effect on daily functioning levels. Possible explanations could be living alone or not being married fosters independence. These participants have to perform daily tasks on their own instead of being able to rely on others for help. However, further research including qualitative measures on each variable could provide better insight regarding these associations.

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