

The impact of the empowerment approach on seniors' psychological capital, satisfaction, resilience, and meaning in life

Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of an empowerment program on psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and the meaning of life of seniors living in 2020 in Tehran. 40 seniors were selected and randomly assigned to case and control groups. The samples answered 4 questionnaires: psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and meaning of life. Then empowerment intervention was performed for 40 days and 3 hours a day for case group. Empowerment interventions include healthy lifestyles, rehabilitation services, support services, cultural, sports, arts, tourism, and leisure services. Data were analysed using the multivariate analysis of covariance. The results of the study showed that the empowerment program caused a significant increase ($p < 0.001$) in psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and meaning of life in the post-test stage, which confirmed the four hypotheses. As a result, it can be concluded that an empowerment program is a good intervention to increase psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and meaning of life of seniors and can be used in treatment clinics.

Keywords: Resilience, Empowerment, Psychological capital, Happiness, Meaning of life

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Introduction

The World Health Organization defines aging as crossing the age of 60, which is part of the natural process of human life and cannot be stopped (Van Gaans & Dent, 2018). This stage is actually a period in which a person, with an accumulation of wisdom, can pass on his experiences to the next generations (Nusbaum & Rosenfeld, 2005). The aging process practically includes three interconnected processes: physical aging, psychological aging, and social aging. A combination of these three processes makes up the aging process. Because old age is associated with shortcomings or deficiencies, and according to available statistics, we are facing an increasing trend of aging in the world and Iran, it is necessary to pay attention to mental health, social, and physical needs and their dimensions. Various studies have shown that if positive aspects of this stage can be emphasized and negative aspects reduced instead, aging will become a desirable period (Wilhelmson et al., 2011). In recent years, various studies have been conducted to better understand aging and help the elderly and prevent the difficulties of this period. The purpose of most of these studies has been to increase the health and well-being of the elderly population and to provide methods of preparation for old age (Robertson et al., 2022). On the other hand, with the increase in life expectancy in the world, the issue of maintaining the quality of life in old age has become important (Stephens and Allen, 2022). Given the importance of the ability of the elderly to go through this period, as well as maintain their autonomy and health, methods and approaches to empower the elderly are very important. Therefore, self-help methods, which are increasingly recognized as an effective way to provide psychological interventions, and for the treatment and

prevention of mental health conditions, seem valuable, necessary, and necessary for this group.

They define empowerment more generally as an increase in intrinsic work motivation that manifests itself in four cognitions: significance, competence, autonomy, and effectiveness, and reflects one's orientation to work role (Rezaei et al., 2021). Empowering older people has various meanings, including mastering one's behavior, improving strengths and overcoming weaknesses, recognizing one's attributes, becoming aware of one's talents and limitations, improving one's ability to cope with problems, to inner satisfaction, happiness, and improving the quality of life (Lenaghan, 2019).

Happiness, as one of the dependent variables in the present study, is defined as the superiority of positive mood as well as overall satisfaction with life. Studies have shown that happiness has a positive protective effect against people's negative thoughts (Pourdavaran et al., 2020). Happier people are more inclined to experience positive affect in their daily lives, and also they tend to make the best of these events instead of seeing negatively what is happening around them (Gardiner, et al., 2022). Happiness is influenced by many factors, including various dimensions of personality, financial status, family life, physical health, employment, coping strategies, self-efficacy, and psychological capital (Steptoe, 2019).

Psychological capital is a positive psychological state and a realistic and flexible attitude towards life, which is composed of four constructs: Hope, Optimism, Resilience, and Self-Efficacy, each of which is considered a positive psychological capacity that can grow depending on the state of being (Asbari, et al., 2021). Hope is one's ability to set goals, visualize the

necessary paths to achieve goals, and have the necessary motivation to achieve those goals. Optimism refers to positive causal attributions and is a way in which people explain positive and negative events and expect a positive outcome. The self-efficacy component refers to the confidence people have in their abilities to accomplish a particular task, and resilience is a person's ability to respond and even thrive in positive or negative stressful situations (Buchka, et al., 2021). The resilience approach has changed the way we work in many areas related to promoting resilience in people at risk, in conceptualizing and modeling actions, and methods of working with the seniors to coordinate them by emphasizing their adaptability and positive strengths that represent a resilience-based approach (Masten, 2014). Studies have shown that resilience is the existence of positive adaptation in response to adverse life conditions. Accordingly, resilient people do not experience negative feelings when faced with life's adversities (Kasikci and Peker, 2022). According to the empowerment approach, the attempt to be aware of the relevant and influential factors in elderly resilience will help researchers to advance their goal of minimizing the damage caused by stress, Increase resilience, along with a sense of satisfaction, happiness and meaning in life.

On the other hand, the meaning of life can be found through experience, creative thinking, and acceptance of suffering, especially in critical life situations (Schnell, T, 2020). Meaning should be given to life in a way that one achieves an image of the ultimate goal of life so that all life becomes meaningful in the light of it. Little evidence has been reported, especially in the elderly Iranian population, about the effectiveness of empowerment programs on psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and the meaning of life. For this reason, and considering that importance of the empowerment program for the elderly population, the purpose of this study investigate the effect of the empowerment program on the psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and meaning of life of seniors in Tehran.

Materials and Methods

In the present quasi-experimental study, the statistical population includes all the seniors living in Tehran in 2020. Samples of 40 people were selected by the convenient sampling method and randomly assigned to the case (n = 20) and control (n = 20) groups. Inclusion criteria were age between 60 and 75 years, residence in Tehran, the absence of neurological disorders (stroke), no cognitive disorders and dementia, and the absence of psychiatric diseases and severe visual and auditory impairment. Incomplete questionnaires were excluded from the study. An empowerment program was performed on the case group. The two groups were evaluated in two stages pre-test and post-test using the following questionnaires.

Psychological capital questionnaire (PCQ) of Luthans:

Psychological capital was measured using the PCQ of Luthans (2000), which uses the standardized values that have been widely used for constructs that measure hope, resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy, followed by confirming the validity and reliability of these subscales. This questionnaire consists of 24 questions, each subscale consists of six items, and the subject answers each item on a 6-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). To obtain the psychological capital score, the score of each subscale is first obtained separately, and then their sum is considered as the total psychological capital score. The Chi-square ratio of this test is equal to 24.6.

Connor-Davidson resilience scale: This scale was developed by Connor and Davidson (2003) with 25 items scored on a Likert scale ranging from not true at all or zero to true nearly all of the time or four. The maximum and minimum scores are 100 and zero, respectively. Its cut-off point for ordinary people is 80.4. The psychometric properties of this scale were evaluated in six groups: the general population, primary care patients, psychiatric outpatients, patients with generalized anxiety disorder, and two groups of patients with post-traumatic stress disorder. The authors of this scale believe that this questionnaire is well able to distinguish resilient from non-resilient people in clinical and non-clinical groups and can be used in research and clinical situations.

Oxford happiness inventory: The revised inventory of Argyle (2001) has 29 four-choice propositions from zero (at all) to three (high), the sum of which indicates the total score of the scale, ranging from zero to 87. This inventory has been reported valid and reliable in measuring happiness. In various studies, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.87-0.92 and retest coefficients of 0.53-0.91 have been reported at different time intervals.

Meaning of life essay: This questionnaire was developed by Frankl (2009) and has 50 7-point questions. Scores for questions 1, 5, 9, 10, 12, 19, 21, 22, 27, 29, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, and 47 range from 7 (completely agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Other questions are scored inversely. The minimum and maximum scores for this questionnaire are 50 and 350 points, respectively. The average score of the subjects to 50 questions is a criterion for recognizing meaning in life, with values less and higher than the average indicating meaninglessness and meaning in life, respectively.

Empowerment program:

To implement the intervention, the 40-day empowerment program introduced by Mobaraki (2013) was used. Meetings were held for 3 hours daily at the Daily Rehabilitation Center for the Elderly. Empowerment services included: healthy lifestyles, rehabilitation services, support services, cultural, sports, arts, tourism, and leisure services. Part of the program

was healthy lifestyle classes and general exercise routines, and another part of the service was based on needs assessment and diagnosis by a team of psychologists and is provided to seniors in need. This program has been prepared by the designers and experts of the Welfare Office for the Elderly (Mobaraki, et al., 2013).

In this study, the normal distribution of data was determined by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Table 1). The table also shows the variables for descriptive and inferential analyses,

Table 1: Normal distribution of variables

Variable	K-S test			Shapiro-Wilk test		
	Value	Df	Sig.	Value	df	Sig.
Psychological capital	.103	40	.200*	.923	40	.009
Happiness	.105	40	.073	.976	40	.556
Resilience	.133	40	.073	.976	40	.556
Meaning of life	.126	40	.113	.966	40	.265

According to Table 1, all dependent variables have a normal distribution and are not significantly different from the normal

Table 2: Descriptive parameters of variables by senior groups (n = 40)

Variable	Time	N	Control group		Case group	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Psychological capital	Pretest	20	113.35	18.09	118.5	11.15
	Posttest	20	112.20	10.21	136.2	10.92
Happiness	Pretest	20	43.25	13.4	43.65	7.74
	Posttest	20	44.55	11.06	57.45	6.09
Resilience	Pretest	20	28.25	3.82	28.55	3.84
	Posttest	20	29.70	2.92	37.85	6.9
Meaning of life	Pretest	20	158.1	4.52	156.75	7.14
	Posttest	20	165.3	11.18	186.55	8.80

In Table 2, descriptive findings show that the mean of dependent variables (psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and meaning of life) increased in the case group from pre-test to post-test, but the mean of the control group did not vary considerably. These differences from pretest to posttest were compared using MANCOVA as follows.

The hypotheses regarding the effect of empowerment programs on increasing psychological capital and happiness, resilience, and meaning of life of seniors were examined using MANCOVA as these parameters are theoretically and experimentally interdependent. All three assumptions of homogeneity or uniformity of the regression slope, homogeneity of the covariance matrix, and Bartlett sphericity were tested before using MANCOVA. The assumptions were also tested before presenting the MANCOVA results.

Based on F-values of covariance ($F = 3.22, p < 0.06$), it can be concluded that the regression slope or the correlation between

Table 3: Intergroup comparison of variables between pretest and posttest

which were used to analyze the hypotheses using the multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA).

Results

Demographic characteristics of the participants in this study showed that 65% of the participants were female and 35% were male. Also, the mean age of participants in this study was 64.7 years. Table 1 examines the normality distribution of variables.

curve. As a result, the analysis of data related to hypotheses does not have the problem of non-normal data.

the dependent variables is equal in the pre-test and post-test of the two groups, and a non-significant value indicates the homogeneity of slopes. In examining the hypothesis of no interaction or difference between dependent variables of the groups with the control variable or the pre-test, it was found that the coefficient of non-determination or F Wilks' Lambda = 19.82 (Value = 0.719, d.f1 = 4, and d.f2 = 35) was not significant ($p < 0.058$). Accordingly, the assumption of no interaction or contrast between linear composition and dependent variables is true and MANCOVA can be used. The results of the Mbox test to examine the equality of the covariance matrix of dependent variables between groups showed that ($p < 0.137, Mbox = 36.46$) the covariance matrix of dependent variables was equal in the two groups. Thus, MANCOVA can be used. Table 3 reports the results of MANCOVA.

Source of variance	Dependent variable	Mean square sum	df	Mean square	F	α	Effect size
Effect of intervention	Psychological capital	4678.344	1	4678.344	46.46	.000	.57
	Happiness	1861.308	1	1861.308	26.75	.000	.44
	Resilience	739.728	1	739.728	33.17	.000	.49
	Meaning of life	1437.364	1	1437.364	15.08	.000	.31
Effect of pretest	Psychological capital	40.909	1	40.909	.406	.528	.01
	Happiness	159.893	1	159.893	1.58	.21	.04
	Resilience	79.971	1	79.971	.794	.37	.02
	Meaning of life	2.751	1	2.751	.027	.87	.00
Effect of error	Psychological capital	3423.68	34	100.697			
	Happiness	2365.49	34	69.574			
	Resilience	761.760	34	22.405			
	Meaning of life	3238.75	34	95.257			
Total effect	Psychological capital	627036.	40				
	Happiness	108734.	40				
	Resilience	47387.0	40				
	Meaning of life	1314471	40				

According to the first row of Table 3, the intervention or empowerment program had a significant effect on psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and meaning of life. The second row reports the effect of the pre-test of variables on the post-test of the same variables, indicating that the effect of the pre-test on any of the variables was not significant. This means that the changes in the mean of the post-test of variables are the result of intervention rather than the difference in the pre-test. Based on the effect sizes of intervention on each of the variables seen in the last column, the greatest effect of empowerment is on psychological capital, followed by resilience, happiness, and meaning of life, respectively. However, the significance of all coefficients confirms the hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of empowerment programs on psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and meaning of life.

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of an empowerment program on psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and the meaning of life of seniors in Tehran. The results showed that empowerment was effective in all four variables.

Various studies have also shown that empowerment expands the inner capacity to accept health responsibility and the main purpose of empowerment is to create a tendency to change in people. Empowerment goes beyond health behaviors and

creates the potential to develop health and overall well-being in individuals and communities. Empowerment is an intervention or strategy to help people change their behavior to adhere to a treatment plan (Galiè and Farnworth, 2019). The findings of this study are consistent with the results of Rezaei et al. (2021) who found that Elderly empowerment can be used as an effective method to improve attention, concentration, and cognitive effort in the elderly. In a study conducted by Nasiripour, et al., (2011), patients, who underwent an empowerment course, reported a "sense of competence", "meaning", a "sense of autonomy", and a "sense of effectiveness", and "overall ability". Empowerment programs are one of the necessary programs for the elderly, because the elderly are one of the vulnerable groups, and due to the reduction of their abilities, the implementation of empowerment programs helps to increase physical ability and also reduce their health and hospital costs (Lenaghan, 2019). Due to the increasing population of seniors, it is difficult for healthcare providers to meet the healthcare needs of seniors. Despite public and cultural growth and development in Iran, and effective measures, such as the formation of the "National Council of the Elderly", implementation of the "Elderly Empowerment Plan", and celebration of "Retirement Day" taken to improve the condition of seniors, these measures are not enough to improve the situation of seniors (Anon., 2008). Rather, we must make people capable to empower them

(Berger and Neuhaus, 2021). However, health services in Iran are provided based on a professional model with a patriarchal approach. In this situation, patients are considered idle when it comes to their care. However, in the modern world, health care reform emphasizes transferring responsibility for care from health care providers to patients themselves; one of the solutions that can be effective is the empowerment approach. The empowerment of older people is a two-way process in which the human condition and the possibilities of the environment are constantly and innovatively changing (van Corven, et al., 2021). Researchers believe that empowerment is a multidimensional concept that cannot be explained by a single term (Rodríguez Guerrero, et al., 2021).

In general, recent studies in this field have addressed the effect of happiness on various aspects of physical and mental health. In a study, authors examined the relationship between happiness and some components of mental well-being, such as life satisfaction, self-esteem, and humor, and found that happiness was positively associated with levels of life satisfaction, self-esteem, and humor (AsudeMalkoça, 2011). Explaining the effectiveness of empowerment in happiness, it can be claimed that happiness and life satisfaction are two positive emotional aspects that are highly influenced by lifestyle and physical and mental development, especially in seniors who are still financially and emotionally dependent on their families. Since these positive aspects constitute a part of mental health, in this field of psychology, elderly caregivers are always trying to identify positive psychological aspects of seniors - especially those who are at risk of psychological damage - to strengthen, grow, excel, and make the therapies they use stronger and more effective.

Regarding the effectiveness of empowerment, it can be claimed that psychological empowerment and psychological well-being are variables that have a significant effect on the feeling of satisfaction and success in seniors. Efficiency and effectiveness in daily tasks create the desired performance. Therefore, seniors must focus on the factors that provide the desired performance to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in life, and ultimately, improve their performance. However, empowerment is a new and effective technique to improve life skills by utilizing the power of people. Through knowledge, experience, and their position, seniors have the power that lies within them, and in fact, empowerment is the release of that power. This technique provides potential capacities to exploit the source of human ability and proposes a balanced approach in a healthy environment (Khanalizadeh, 2010).

The empowerment program as a new approach to intrinsic psychological motivation means releasing people's inner forces, creating the context and developing opportunities for people's talents, skills and competencies of people. Empowerment begins with a change in people's beliefs,

thoughts, and attitudes, i.e., they must come to believe that they have the ability and competence to live a good life successfully. In addition, they should feel free and independent, believe that they can influence and control the outcomes of their lives, feel that they have meaningful and worthwhile life goals, and believe that they will be treated honestly and fairly (Estebansari, et al., 2018).

The feeling of empowerment is a relatively new subject that has a significant impact on people's performance; if older people feel empowered, it will bring many benefits such as creativity, flexibility, high-quality performance, problem-solving, life satisfaction, health, and mental health. In addition, people are capable, self-controlled, and self-regulating. They take responsibility easily, have a positive view of themselves, others, and the environment, are optimistic about life and see others as partners. When a conflict or problem occurs in different situations in life, they look for a solution instead of being indifferent and blaming others. They can be criticized and are constantly learning (Ghorbanizadeh & Khaleghinia, 2010).

Conclusion

The findings of the present study showed that the empowerment program was able to significantly improve the psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and meaning of life in the elderly after the intervention compared to before the intervention. This result indicates the effective use of empowerment interventions in the elderly. Since the principled implementation of the empowerment program can lead to the improvement and promotion of psychological capital, happiness, resilience, and meaning of life, this approach can be a good solution in care programs, and based on it, the variables can be improved in the older population.

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Conflicts of interest

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Ethics statement

We declare that neither the article nor its main contents or tables have been or will be published or submitted for publication elsewhere. The manuscript is an original work of the author. All data, tables, figures, etc. used in the manuscript were prepared by the authors in the original, otherwise the sources are cited and reprint permission is included. The manuscript was read and approved by all authors. Authorship is granted only to those who significantly contributed to the research and preparation of this manuscript

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