

P1092 Positive Psychology and Successful Aging: A Good Pair?

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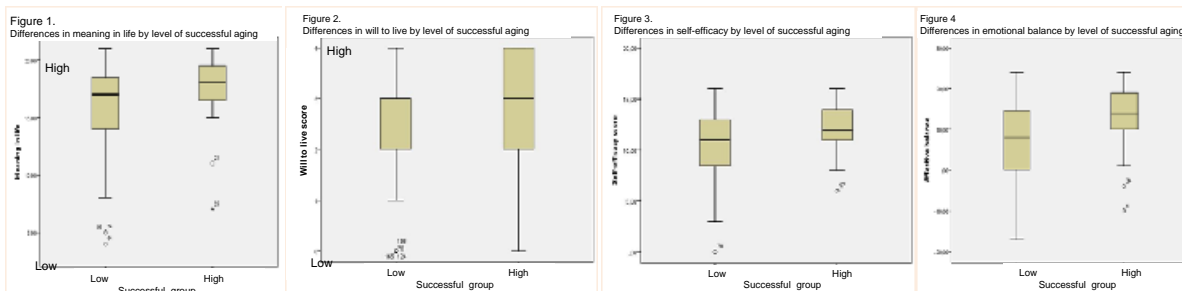
During the last decade, there has been a clear interest in developing a definition of successful aging that includes the perspective of older adults. In addition, there is a growing trend in the study of psychological variables that contribute to successful aging, especially related to the emerging field of positive psychology dedicated to the scientific study of what makes the life worth living. This study aims to analyze the relationship of psychological dimensions based on positive psychology and successful aging.

150 participants completed a battery of instruments that assess different dimensions of positive psychology potentially related to successful aging. They were also asked if they believed they had reached 15 criteria for successful aging, previously identified as important for older people, which involve beliefs about the physical, functional, social and psychological health (Fdez-Ballesteros, et al, 2012 ; Phelan et al, 2004; see Table 1). The average age of the sample was 72 years (SD = 6.3, range = 60-90), and 80% were women. The sample is divided based on the median score in the previous questionnaire in order to obtain two groups with different levels of successful aging.

Table 1 Successful Aging Attributes (Phelan et al., 2004)

Remaining in good health until close to death	Being able to take care of myself
Feeling satisfied with my life the majority of the time	Feeling that I have been able to influence others' lives in positive ways
Having friends and family who are there for me	Feeling good about myself
Staying involved with the world and people around me	Being able to cope with the challenges of my later years
Being able to make choices about things that affect how I age	Remaining free of chronic disease.
Being able to meet all of my needs and some of my wants.	Keeping mentally well
Not feeling lonely or isolated.	Keeping physically well
Being able to act according to my own inner standards and values	

On the average, participants reported having achieved 10 of the 15 criteria of successful aging. Statistic significant differences between high and low successful aging groups were found in **life satisfaction** ($t=3,8$, $p<001$; $d=0,68$, $CI=0,30-0,96$), **happiness** ($t=3,5$, $p<001$; $d=0,57$, $CI=0,24-0,65$), **meaning in life** ($t=2,8$, $p<007$; $d=0,54$, $CI=0,15-0,76$) (figure 1), **psychological flourishing** ($t=2,3$, $p=0,02$; $d=0,41$, $CI=0,1-0,73$) **will to live** ($t=2,7$, $p<008$; $d=0,5$, $CI=0,15-0,8$) (figure 2), **self-efficacy** ($t=3,3$, $p<001$; $d=0,55$, $CI=0,22-0,87$) (figure 3), **gratitude** ($t=2,28$, $p<05$; $d=0,5$, $CI=0,1-0,66$), **resilience** ($t=3,7$, $p<001$; $d=0,62$, $CI=0,28-0,82$), **optimism** ($t=1,9$, $p<05$; $d=0,43$, $CI=0,1-0,7$), **time perspective** ($t=2,7$, $p<008$; $d=0,63$, $CI=0,29-0,95$) and **affect balance** ($t=3,6$, $p<001$; $d=0,67$, $CI=0,35-1,01$) (figure 4). Differences did not exist for age or gender. Thus, participants who achieved more successful aging criteria were those with higher satisfaction with life as a whole, happiness, optimistic self-beliefs, used to address a variety of demands in life and with the ability to recover from stress and adapt to stressful circumstances. Moreover, they also have higher levels of motivation to discover the meaning of life, will to live, and widespread expectancies that good things will happen, as well as emotional balance dominated by positive emotions and a perception of faster time. Finally, the group with high levels of successful aging consisted of people experiencing gratitude or appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to oneself while living within an optimum range of human functioning, one that integrates goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience.



The positive psychology focuses on how to help human beings to prosper and lead healthy, happy lives as much as possible. It promotes the scientific study of optimal human functioning that is aimed to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive. The results of this study expand the study of the positive psychology towards successful aging, including the perspective of what older people consider successful aging. It is intended to contribute to knowledge about some dimensions of the positive psychology that discriminate different levels of successful aging that can be promoted during the course of the life.