The Relationship Between Executive Function, Hope, and Depression in Older Adults

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Date of Award
Summer 2018

Degree Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
PhD Counseling Psychology

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Professional Psychology and Family Therapy

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Keywords
older adults, positive neuropsychology, counseling psychology, hope, executive function, depression

Abstract
According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, by 2030, the population of individuals 65 years of age or older is expected to be close to 70 million people, or 20% of the country’s population. This creates a substantial demand as well as opportunity for prevention on medical and health care providers, because individuals in this population are at an increased risk of significant changes in cognitive and mental health. Decline in executive functioning skills is one of the most prevalent changes to affect older adults. Furthermore, depression is strongly associated with impairment in executive functioning, and both have a significant impact on daily living skills. However, research suggests that hope may moderate the effects of declining executive function and depression in older adults. Therefore, providing research that is grounded within a positive neuropsychological framework, will be significant to this population because it may provide evidence for a protecting mechanism against age related emotional distress and cognitive decline. The primary aim of the study was to examine the relationship between executive function and depression within a positive neuropsychological framework. Secondly, the study proposed that hope would serve as a moderating variable between these variables. Overall, this study found evidence that hope is strongly related to executive functioning and depression, such that hope may in fact act as a buffer against depression when an individual is facing deficits in executive functioning. These findings provide support for the continued study and application of counseling and positive psychology to the field of neuropsychology. This study also further provided support for increased need for the treatment of the aging population through a positive neuropsychological framework.

Recommended Citation
Fallucca, Brittney, "The Relationship Between Executive Function, Hope, and Depression in Older Adults" (2018). Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs). 2568.
https://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/2568
Executive functions are skills that enable you to do things such as pay attention, remember information, and multitask. Executive dysfunction can describe difficulties in any of these abilities or behaviors. It can be a symptom of another condition or result from an event like a traumatic brain injury. These skills start developing around 2 years old and are fully formed by the age of 30. Executive dysfunction can describe difficulties in any of these abilities or behaviors. It can be a symptom of another condition or result from an event such as a traumatic brain injury. Sometimes executive dysfunction is called executive function disorder (EFD). EFD is not clinically recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) used by mental health clinicians. The relationship between executive functioning (EF) and depression, both in terms of the etiology of the disorder and the efficacy of treatment, has been a topic of growing interest to researchers. In the current study, we sought to explore the relationship between depressive symptomatology and dysexecutive symptoms in college-aged young adults. The findings suggested that, similar to older adults, executive dysfunction may play a large role in everyday difficulties that young adults with depression may experience. While past research using the DEX and CES-D in older adults has suggested a relationship between these two measures, the current study suggested that the DEX and CES-D may also be used to measure this relationship in younger adults.