ARAŞTIRMA-RESEARCH

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A STUDY ON THE LIFE SATISFACTION OF ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND NURSING HOMES

HUZUREVİNDE VE AİLE ORTAMINDA YAŞAYAN YAŞLILARIN YAŞAM DOYUMUNUN İNCELENMESİ

ÖZ

Bu çalışma huzurevinde ve aile ortamında yaşamanın, yaşlıların yaşam doyumuna olan etkisini incelemek amacıyla düzenlenmiş bir alan araştırmasıdır. Araştırma, Ocak 2001- Mayıs 2001 tarihleri arasında Bornova Eğitim ve Araştırma Sağlık Grup Başkanlığına bağlı 3 sağlık ocağı bölgesinde ve İzmir kentindeki 3 huzurevinde yaşayan yaşlılardan seçilmiş toplam 240 yaşlıdan oluşan örneklem ile yürütülmüştür. Araştırma Ege Üniversitesi Araştırma Fon Saymanlığı tarafından desteklenmiştir. Veriler sosyo-demografik veri formu ve yaşam doyumu ölçeği aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Bütün örneklem grubu için kadınların yaşam doyumu puan ortalaması 10.33 ± 3.50 bulunmuştur. Erkeklerin yaşam doyumu puan ortalaması ise 10.69 ±3.16 bulunmuştur. Huzurevinde yaşayan kadınlarla erkeklerin yaşam doyumu puan ortalaması arasındaki fark istatistiksel olarak anlamsız bulunmuştur(t= 0.510,p >0.05). Aile ortamında yaşayan kadınlarla erkeklerin yaşam doyumu puan ortalamaları arasındaki fark istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bulunmuştur (t=-2.128,p<0.05). Aile ortamında yaşayan kadın ve erkeklerin huzurevinde yaşayan kadın ve erkeklere göre yaşam doyumunun yüksek olduğu saptanmıştır(t= -7.526, p<0.01). Bu durumda, yaşlıların aile ortamında yaşamlarını sürdürmelerinin desteklenmesi, yaşlılara verilecek bakım hizmetlerinde "Evde Bakım" ve "Gündüz Bakımevleri" gibi örgütlenmelere öncelik verilmesi gerektiği düşünülmüştür.

Anahtar sözcükler: Huzurevi, Aile ortamı, Yaşam doyumu, Yaşlılık.

ABSTRACT

This is a field study designed to investigate the effect of living in a nursing home or a family setting on the life satisfaction of elderly individuals. This research was carried out through a sample of a total of 240 elderly individuals who were selected among senior citizens residing in 3 nursing homes within the city of Izmir and in the districts of 3 community clinics which are affiliated with Presidency of Training and Research Health Group of Bornova (Izmir, Turkey) between the dates of January 2001 – May 2001. The research was supported by Agean University Research Fund. Data were collected by the interview technique using a Socio-Demographic Data Form and a Life Satisfaction Scale. For the whole sampling group mean life satisfaction scores of women was 10.33 ± 3.50 and of men was 10.69 ± 3.16. The difference between mean life satisfaction scores of men and women living in nursing homes was found statistically insignificant (t = 0.510, p > 0,05). But, the difference between mean life satisfaction scores of men and women living in family environments was found statistically significant (t = 2.128, p < 0.05). It was determined that men and women living in family environment had higher life satisfaction compared to those living in nursing homes (t = - 7.526, p < 0.01). In this case, it was concluded that continuation of elderly individuals living in family environment should be encouraged and priority should be given to the those organizations, such as 'Care at home' and 'Daytime care homes' for the services to be delivered to the elderly.

Key Words: Nursing homes, Family environment, Life satisfaction, Elderly.

INTRODUCTION

Aging is presumed to be a process starting from infancy and continuing until death (1). On the other hand, being elderly is an unpreventable process that has biological, chronological and social aspects and problems (2,3). Generally, the age of 65 and above is considered the beginning of elderliness (4). Elderly individuals most often stop doing daily routines assuming that they are deprived of power. Because elderly individuals feel worthless and powerless, aging is considered as a significant obstacle before them in gaining satisfaction from life (5).

Life satisfaction is a situation or a consequence obtained through comparing someone's expectations (whatever desired) with possessions (whatever gained). When the life satisfaction is addressed, generally a satisfaction related to whole life experience is understood, rather than the satisfaction pertaining to a certain condition. Happiness refers to the well-being status from various aspects, such as moral (6). It was determined in Uysal' s research that 72 % of the working elderly individuals saw life in a more satisfied manner (7). Iwatsuba et al (8) studied the life satisfaction of retiree women and men living in Paris. As a result of the research it was seen that physical efficiency and inefficiency conditions of life satisfaction were associated with unemployment, familial factors, physical and emotional statuses (9). It is thought that elderly individuals who have higher life satisfaction demonstrate behaviours that protect and develop health more easily. But, it is not known who have the higher life satisfaction, the elderly individuals living in nursing homes or those living in family environments. This research is valuable in regards to reveal the influence of living in nursing home and family setting on elderly population's life satisfaction and to offer useful suggestions for the health and welfare of these two elderly groups.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The objective of the research was to investigate life satisfaction of the elderly individuals living in family environment and nursing homes. Besides, to study the correlation between life satisfaction and socio-demographic variables and to make recommendations for a healthier and more satisfied elderliness in the course of this interaction was aimed. The scope of the research consisted of a population affiliated with 22 community clinics and elderly individuals living in 10 nursing homes within Izmir. It was coordinated with 3 community clinics and 3 nursing homes, which were selected through the table of random numbers, by simple coincidental sampling method. In order for the results of the research to be reliable, working on a total of 240 samples was considered acceptable, 120 from nursing homes and 120 from family environment, with 95 % CI and 5 % condonable share of error. Elderly individuals were divided into age groups. How many elderly were to be included into which age group was determined through the stratified sampling method. In data collection; a 'Life Satisfaction Scale A (LSIA)' along with a socio-demographic data form consisted of 42 questions, which was prepared by the researcher for the samples, was used.

Life Satisfaction Index A (LSIA): Nevgarten and Havinghurst developed the 'Life Satisfaction Scale' consisting of 20 questions, in 1961 (10). In the statements 'Yes' and 'No' choices were used, the responses obtained were evaluated over '20 points'. 'For an

individual to receive a higher score was considered as a high life satisfaction' In the life satisfaction scale each choice represents '1' point, and some of the statements (3, 5, 7, 10, 14, 17, 18, 20) need be answered as 'no'.

Scale's Validity and Reliability: This scale, which has been used in USA since 1961, was adapted to the Turkish population by Karataş S (6). In the research whether the items of 'Life satisfaction scale' are suitable to measure of Turkish elderly individuals was tested by content validity based on 'consensus of expert opinions'. Subsequently, validity and reliability works carried out by applying it to a sampling containing total 240 individuals. Internal consistency coefficient of the 'Life satisfaction scale' KR-20 was found as 0.63. Two half-test reliability coefficients of the 'Life satisfaction scale' were; 0.5200 for the first half, 0.4865 for the second half. In the assessment of the data, a computer SPSS package program was used. Whether the mean scores of life satisfaction of women and men were affected by independent variables, such as age, marital status, level of education, occupation, level of income, gender of the children, spending of leisure times, daily activities of life were also studied. In statistical analysis multi directional ANOVA test and t test were used (11,12).

RESULTS

In this section, general demographic definition of elderly individuals living in nursing homes and family environment (see Table I) and values of their mean scores of life satisfaction by gender, were suggested (see figure 1). In addition, results of the ANOVA test related to life satisfaction scores, which were affected by important demographic characteristics, were also summarized (see Table II).

Table I: Distribution of Individuals Living in Family Environment and Nursing Homes According to Their Socio-Demographic Characteristics (Woman/Men)

With regards to demographic characteristics, the findings can be summarized as follows; except for the men living at home (84.1 %) the majority of them were widowers; level of education was low in both environments, illiteracy rate of women living at home was 50.9 %, vast majority of them was unemployed, housewifery of women was exceeding 70 % in both environments; the
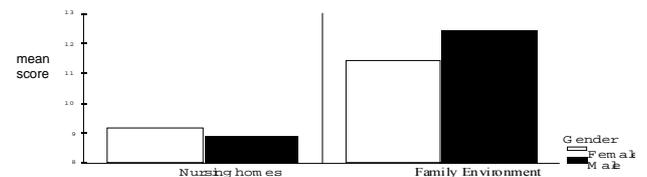

Figure 1: Distribution of Elderly Individuals' Mean Scores of Life Satisfaction According to Gender and The Place of Residence.

majority of the men living in nursing homes (52.3 %) were office workers, and the majority of men living in family were workers (seeTable I).

Graphic 1: Distribution of Elderly Individuals' Mean Scores of Life Satisfaction According to Gender and The Place of Residence.

Table I: Distribution of Individuals Living in Family Environment and Nursing Homes According to Their Socio-Demographic Characteristics (Woman/Men)

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Nursing Home Woman %	Men %	Family Environment Woman %	Men %
* Mean Age	75.52 ± ?	6.89	71.22 ± ?	5.37
*Marital Status				
Married	14.0	14.3	38.6	84.1
Widow / widower	64.9	36.5	61.4	14.3
* Level of Education				
Illiterate	35.1	14.3	50.9	20.6
Elementary school	29.8	33.3	31.6	46.0
*Employment Status				
Yes	3.5	11.1	0	12.7
No	96.5	88.9	100	87.3
* Occupations				
Office worker, tradesman, merchant, technical employee, teacher etc.	15.8	52.3	0	12.7
Qualified-unqualified worker and service personnel	1.8	28.6	15.8	63.5
Housewife	77.2	0	78.9	0

Table II: Distribution of mean scores of life satisfaction of both men and women living in nursing homes and family environment with regards to, being affected from demographic variables. (Woman / Men)

	In Nursing Homes Life Satisfaction Score X (Woman / Men)	In Family environment Life Satisfaction Score X (Woman / Men)
* Marital Status		(F=2.685, p<0.05)
* Education Status	(F=2.269, p<0.05)	
* Occupation	(F=2.595, p<0.05)	
* Sufficiency of income		(F=3.651, p<0.05)
* Gender of children		(F=2.826, p<0.05)
* Evaluating the leisure times	(F=2.447, p<0.05)	
* Daily living activities		
Tooth brushing		(F=3.345, p<0.05)
Fingernail cutting		(F=3.723, p<0.05)
To go to toilet	(F=3.089, p<0.05)	(F=3.853, p<0.05)
To wall around the house	(F=13,004,p<0.05)	

As shown in figure 1, mean scores of life satisfaction were higher in elderly individuals compared to those residing in nursing homes. This difference is at a significant level when distinction of gender is not made ($t = 7.526$, $p < 0.01$).

Table II: Distribution of mean scores of life satisfaction of both men and women living in nursing homes and family environment with regards to, being affected from demographic variables. (Woman / Men)

In Table II, the extent to which mean scores of life satisfaction of both men and women living in both environments were affected from demographic variables were compared. In nursing homes; a significant difference was found with regards to the level of education, occupation, spending the leisure time, going to the toilet and strolling around outside (all at < 0.05 level). In the family environment; significant differences were detected in marital status, in sufficiency of income, gender of children, tooth brushing, fingernail cutting, going to the toilet (all at < 0.05 level).

DISCUSSION

Mean age of elderly living in nursing homes and family environment is similar to other regions of Turkey (2). Men living in family environment were mainly married, whereas women in both environments were generally widows. This result could cause one to think that women in advanced ages can keep on living alone. Most of the elderly living either in nursing homes or family environment are illiterate. Most of the elderly living in both environments are retirees (seeTable I). When compared to Iwatsuba's findings (8) it was determined that although the majority of women living in Turkey were housewives, of the women living in Paris 40.8 % were employed and retired as qualified/unqualified employees and service personnel. Besides, in both countries most of the men were employed and retired as qualified/unqualified employees and service personnel. The distribution of elderly related to socio-demographic characteristics; verifies the characteristics reported by other researchers in Turkey (3,9).

Mean scores of life satisfaction of women and men living in both environments are approximately half of demanded mean scores (20.0) (see figure 1). Life satisfaction according to gender; Karataş (6) in his study carried out among elderly residing in nursing homes did not find a significant relationship between gender and life satisfaction. Those results resemble the results reached in this research. But Iwatsuba (8) in the study carried out with retired elderly individuals in Paris, found that life satisfaction of wo-

men was significantly lower than men's. In this research mean scores of life satisfaction of men and women living in family environment were higher than of those living in nursing homes. This may be due to elderly individuals' spending a life in a family environment altogether with wives/husbands, children and relatives in a happier manner.

In elderly individuals living in family a environment; it is thought that the significant relationship between marital status and life satisfaction is resulting from higher mean scores of life satisfaction of widowers and married women. Significant differences resulting from higher mean scores of life satisfaction of men who have sons and women who have son and daughter, men and women who independently cut their fingernails, go to the toilet, brush their teeth, whose incomes meet their expenses and who live in family environment, were observed. On the elderly individuals living in nursing homes a significant relationship was detected between their life satisfaction and level of education (see Table II). In Iwatsuba' s study (8) it was found that women who had higher education received higher mean scores of life satisfaction. In this research there is a significant difference resulting from women and men's higher mean scores of life satisfaction who were executive managers living in nursing homes. In Iwatsuba's study (8) mean scores of life satisfaction of women who were executive managers and business administrators were found high; that of the men who were office workers and service personnel were found low. In this research, there is a significant difference resulting from women and men's higher mean scores of life satisfaction, living in nursing homes and spending their leisure times by conducting physical activities. There is a connection between the activities performed in leisure times and life satisfaction in the study carried out by Iwatsuba (8) on retired elderly individuals in Paris. Scores increased as these types of activities increased. In the study conducted, there is a significant difference resulting from higher mean scores of life satisfaction of women and men who live in nursing homes, independently walk around outside, and go to the toilet (see Table II).

CONCLUSION

As a result of the research carried out, it was found that mean scores of life satisfaction of women and men who live in a family environment were higher than the mean scores of life satisfaction of women and men who live in nursing homes. Both socio-economical data and cultural structure and traditions in Turkey demonstrate that it is difficult for health care services to meet the needs of elderly individuals by establishing nursing homes, geriatrics hospitals or nursing homes, as happened in developed countries. Since, the number of organizations that will deliver care to the elderly individuals is insufficient in Turkey, this problem can be resolved through the practices of home care services, which were developed related to care delivery to elderly population, which has turned out to be an economical problem in advanced countries recently. Based on the results suggested, it was concluded that it would be more appropriate to give priority to the organizations, such as 'Home Care' and 'Daytime nursing facilities', in care services to be delivered to elderly individuals in Turkey.

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