LONELINESS AND ISOLATION IN THE ELDERLY

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RESUMEN

Introducción. Durante la etapa del envejecimiento pueden suceder una serie de cambios y pérdidas que facilitan la aparición del sentimiento de soledad. La soledad se ha conceptualizado como el aislamiento social percibido y se le ha descrito como una condición que puede llegar a ser grave (Cacioppo y Cacioppo, 2012; Weiss. 1973). Esta experiencia subjetiva de soledad es un predictor de las disminuciones en la salud mental (Russell et. al, (1997).

Objetivo. Evaluar el bienestar mental, la soledad y el apoyo social en una muestra de personas mayores de 50 años en la ciudad de Castellón.

Método. El estudio base del cuál se han extraído los datos, utilizó como metodología una encuesta transversal, dónde se recogió la información a través de una encuesta telefónica, a una muestra de 243 personas (132 mujeres, 108 hombres y 3 se definieron de otro género) con un rango de edad de 50 a 99 años.

Se elaboró un cuestionario de 30 ítems. Para la medición de la variables bienestar mental se utilizó la escala WHO-5; para la evaluación de soledad la escala UCLA y para la percepción del apoyo social, la escala LSNS-6 de Lubben.

El procedimiento utilizado para la selección de la muestra fue el de muestreo por cuotas de edad y género.

Resultados. La correlación de Pearson realizada entre los constructos soledad, bienestar mental y apoyo social obtenida mediante los resultados en las escalas WHO-5, UCLA y LSNS-6, respectivamente, expuso lo siguiente:
- ➔ r= - 0.41** para la relación soledad-bienestar mental.
- ➔ r= 0.351** para la relación bienestar mental-apoyo social.

Conclusión. En línea con estudios previos, los resultados muestran una correlación negativa entre soledad-bienestar mental, lo cuál indica, que la presencia de sentimientos de soledad supone un menor bienestar mental (López et al., 2022). Por otro lado, la correlación entre bienestar mental-apoyo social muestra que ambas variables mantienen una relación positiva. De manera que, la percepción de apoyo social supone la presencia de un correcto bienestar mental, tal y como afirma la OMS.

Palabras clave: Soledad, bienestar mental, apoyo social, personas mayores, salud mental.

ABSTRACT

Introduction. During the aging stage, a number of changes and losses can occur that facilitate the emergence of feelings of loneliness. Loneliness has been conceptualized as perceived social isolation and has been described as a condition that can become severe (Cacioppo and Cacioppo, 2012; Weiss. 1973). This subjective experience of loneliness is a predictor of declines in mental health (Russell et. al, (1997).

Objectives. To evaluate mental well-being, loneliness and social support in a sample of people over 50 years of age in the city of Castellón.

Method. The base study from which the data was extracted used a cross-sectional survey methodology, where information was collected through a telephonic survey of a sample of 243 people (132 women, 108 men and 3 were defined as other genders) with an age range of 50 to 99 years.

A 30-item questionnaire was developed. The WHO-5 scale was used to measure mental well-being; the UCLA scale was used to measure loneliness and the LSNS-6 Lubben scale was used to measure social support.

The procedure used for sample selection was age and gender quota sampling.

Results. Pearson's correlation between the constructs loneliness, mental well-being and social support obtained by the results on the WHO-5, UCLA and LSNS-6 scales, respectively, showed the following:
  - ➔ r= - 0.41** for the loneliness-mental well-being relationship.
  - ➔ r= 0.351** for the mental well-being-social support relationship.

Conclusion. In line with previous studies, the results show a negative correlation between loneliness-mental well-being, which indicates that the presence of feelings of loneliness leads to lower mental well-being (López et al., 2022). On the other hand, the correlation between mental well-being and social support shows that both variables have a positive relationship. Thus, the perception of social support implies the presence of a correct mental well-being, as stated by the WHO.

Key words. Loneliness, mental wellbeing, social support, older people, mental health.

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LONELINESS AND ISOLATION IN THE ELDERLY

UNIVERSITAT JAUME I

INTRODUCTION

The feeling of loneliness has a particularly high incidence among older people and has therefore become a relevant and emerging problem in today's society. During the aging stage, a number of changes and losses can occur that facilitate the emergence of feelings of loneliness. Loneliness has been conceptualized as perceived social isolation and has been described as a condition that can become severe (Cacioppo and Cacioppo, 2012; Weiss. 1973). This subjective experience of loneliness is a predictor of declines in mental health (Russell et. al, 1997).

Objectives: To evaluate mental well-being, loneliness and social support in a sample of people over 50 years of age in the city of Castellón.

Hypothesis:
1) There is a negative relationship between loneliness and mental well-being.
2) There is a positive relationship between social support and mental well-being.

METHOD

Participants

Castellón de la Plana´s older adults (+50) representative sample.

N = 243, (44% males, 54% females, 1% other; mean age = 65,5, SD = 11,30).

Instruments

A 30-item questionnaire was developed:
WHO-5 scale for measuring mental well-being.
UCLA scale to measure loneliness
Lubben's LSNS-6 scale for social support

Procedure

Sampling by age and gender quotas.
Cross-sectional telephone interview, using the CATI (*Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing*) technique.

Analysis

Pearson's correlation for the study of relationships:
➢ Loneliness-mental well-being
➢ Mental well-being-social support

The data were obtained with the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) in its 28th version.

RESULTS

Pearson's correlation between the constructs loneliness, mental well-being and social support obtained by the results on the WHO-5, UCLA and LSNS-6 scales, respectively, showed the following:
•r= - 0.41** for the loneliness-mental well-being relationship.
•r= 0.351** for the mental well-being-social support relationship.

Table 1. *Pearson's correlation*

	WHO-5	UCLA	LUBBEN
WHO-5	-	-	-
UCLA	- 0,41**	-	-
LUBBEN	0,35**	- 0,39**	-

** P≤0.01

CONCLUSION

HYPOTHESIS 1: Pearson's correlation obtained a negative and statistically significant correlation between the two constructs, so that the hypothesis was accepted. This indicates that the presence of feelings of loneliness means less mental well-being for the person who suffers it.

HYPOTHESIS 2: After applying Pearson's correlation, a statistically significant positive correlation was obtained between both variables, so this hypothesis was also accepted. Indicating that the perception of social support implies the presence of a correct mental well-being.

These results highlight the importance of creating programmes aimed at fostering the development of social relations, while at the same time encouraging them to spend their free time in a creative and educational way, thus improving their quality of life.

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