

Long Standing Occupation across the Lifespan: Predicting Successful Aging

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Introduction. This study used examined the relation of long-standing occupation to successful aging. Long-standing occupation was defined as engagement in a particular activity for a period of five years or more. Long-standing participation in a variety of occupations is viewed as a progression of occupational change across one's lifetime. This occupational engagement in activities has supported perpetual participation in life roles. Their continued occupational engagement probably embodied established routines that can promote health and function. This long-standing participation can contribute to function and successful aging.

Successful aging consists of over-lapping factors including health/well-being, function, and engagement. Successful aging is defined as continued good health and well-being together with high function and active engagement with life (Row & Kahn, 1999). Engagement with life is active involvement in leisure, social, and productive activities. Engagement in long-standing occupation provides seniors with a vehicle for staying active, activity demands that promote ongoing use of physical and cognitive capacities, and a means for staying socially connected.

Methods and Materials. Correlational research procedures were used to collect data on long-standing occupation and successful aging in a sample of 276 community-dwelling older adults. The Long-Standing Occupation Measure (LSOM, $r=.81$) was used to measure activity participation. The Successful Aging Profile (SAP, $r=.84$) was used to measure successful aging. Regression analyses were used to determine predictors of successful aging ($p < 0.05$).

Results. Findings indicated that long-standing occupation is a significant predictor of successful aging. Specifically, productive and social occupations were a significant predictor of successful aging. These findings indicated that long-standing occupations had a significant relation to successful aging.

Conclusion. This sample of older adults had participated in a variety of leisure, social, and productive occupations including volunteerism, hobbies, gardening, family activities, dancing, and other leisure activities across their lifetimes. These activities kept them socially connected and related to their overall successful aging.

Implications for Practice. Older adults have experienced a lifetime of meaningful occupation that may have contributed to their health, well-being, and successful aging. Their long standing occupational history should be incorporated in treatment and discharge planning.