Productive Engagements and Psychological Wellbeing of Older Adults; An Analysis of HRS Dataset

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Abstract : Background/Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine the associations between productive engagements and the psychological well-being of older adults in the U.S by analyzing cross-sectional data from a secondary dataset. Specifically, this paper analyzed the associations of 4 different types of productive engagements, including current work status, caregiving to the family members, volunteering and religious strengths with the psychological well-being as an outcome variable. Methods: Data and sample: The study used the data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS). The HRS is a nationally representative prospective longitudinal cohort study that has been conducting biennial surveys since 1992 to community-dwelling individuals 50 years of age or older on diverse issues. This analysis was based on the 2016 wave (cross-sectional) of the HRS dataset and the data collection period was April 2016 through August 2017. The samples were recruited from a multistage, national area-clustered probability sampling frame. Measures: Four different variables were considered as the predicting variables in this analysis. Firstly, current working status was a binary variable that measured by 0=Yes and 1= No. The second and third variables were respectively caregiving and volunteering, and both of them were measured by; 0=Regularly, 1= Irregularly. Finally, find in strength was measured by 0= Agree and 1= Disagree. Outcome (Wellbeing) variable was measured by 0= High level of well-being, 1= Low level of well-being. Control variables including age were measured in years, education in the categories of 0=Low level of education, 1= Higher level of education and sex r in the categories 0=male, 1= female. Analysis and Results: Besides the descriptive statistics, binary logistic regression analyses were applied to examine the association between independent and dependent variables. The results showed that among the four independent variables, three of them including working status (OR: .392, p<.001), volunteering (OR: .471, p<.003) and strengths in religion (OR .588, p<.003), were significantly associated with psychological well-being while controlling for age, gender and education factors. Also, no significant association was found between the caregiving engagement of older adults and their psychological well-being outcome. Conclusions and Implications: The findings of this study are mostly consistent with the previous studies except for the caregiving engagements and their impact on older adults' well-being outcomes. Therefore, the findings support the proactive initiatives from different micro to macro levels to facilitate opportunities for productive engagements for the older adults, and all of these may ultimately benefit their psychological well-being and life satisfaction in later life.