Impact of Self-Efficacy on the Resolution of Psychological Issues and Enhancement of Well-Being in the Elderly Po Applied & Educational Psychologypulation

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Abstract: As population aging grows rapidly, it has become a pressing global concern. The challenges posed by aging population extend beyond economic and social realms to include the psychological well-being and well-being of the elderly, which are crucial to their living quality, overall health, and social harmony. This study examines the role of self-efficacy in mitigating common psychological problems among the elderly, such as loneliness, anxiety, and depression, and its contribution to enhancing their well-being. The findings highlight significant gender differences in caregiving preferences and their impact on self-efficacy and happiness levels. High self-efficacy in the elderly is associated with resilience, proactive problem-solving, emotional regulation, and maintaining social connections. It empowers individuals to adopt healthier coping strategies, reducing stress and the risk of psychological disorders while promoting a sense of control and optimism. Furthermore, self-efficacy facilitates better chronic disease management, greater adaptability to life changes, and improved engagement in meaningful activities. This paper concludes that enhancing self-efficacy is a pivotal approach to addressing psychological challenges and improving the well-being of the elderly. Policy recommendations include fostering supportive environments, providing resources for skill development, and encouraging active social participation among the elderly to promote their psychological and emotional health. The findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions to enhance self-efficacy as a means to improve the living quality in the aging population.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Social Context of Aging

In the current social context, the issue of population aging is becoming increasingly severe. For example, China has already entered a stage of rapid aging, with the number of people aged 80 and above expected to reach approximately 210 million by the middle of this century. Furthermore, the population aged 60 and above is already close to 300 million, and this figure is projected to exceed 400 million around 2035. Ageing will bring challenges include low fertility rates, reduced labor force,

smaller family sizes, and an increasing proportion of empty nest elderly.

1.2. The Importance of Psychological Issues Among the Elderly

Numerous studies have found that psychological well-being to be a significant factor affecting the intellectual development of the elderly. The importance of psychological issues among the elderly cannot be overlooked. As age increases, the elderly face a variety of physiological and psychological challenges like loneliness, anxiety, and depression. These psychological issues will affect the living quality or even negatively impact their physical health.[1]

Firstly, the psychological well-being of the elderly is directly related to their sense of well-being and living quality. Research indicates that psychological well-being is an essential component of overall health, affecting the happiness and well-being of the elderly, as well as the harmonious development of families and society. Secondly, psychological issues among the elderly can also affect their physical health. Studies have shown that when under significant psychological stress, the elderly may suffer from psychological disorders, potentially leading to a decline in immune function. Moreover, depressive symptoms in the elderly can intensify with worsening health conditions, particularly among those who require daily care.Therefore, it is evident how crucial psychological issues are for the elderly.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition and Connotations of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy (SE) is a psychological term originally introduced by psychologist Albert Bandura in 1977. It refers to individuals' belief or judgment in their ability to complete specific tasks or achieve goals. Such belief influences an individual's behavioral choices, motivation, level of effort and persistence in the face of difficulties. According to Bandura's theory, self-efficacy can be formed through four primary pathways: enactive mastery, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and perceived physiological states. These pathways can enhance an individual's self-efficacy and affect their behavior and performance by altering their assessment of their own capabilities. [2]

Self-efficacy significantly impacts an individual's behavioral choices, motivational efforts, cognitive processes, and emotional processes. It influences not only how individuals perceive themselves and others but also determines their coping strategies and duration when facing difficulties and challenges. In the fields of education, career development and health management, enhancing individuals' self-efficacy is seen as an effective way to improve their performance and adaptability. Research on self-efficacy has become a hot topic in psychology and education, involving various aspects of individual learning ability, personality development, and psychological well-being. Future research needs to further explore the specific mechanisms of self-efficacy and how to effectively cultivate and enhance individual self-efficacy[3].

2.2. Self-Efficacy and Psychological Well-being

Several studies have confirmed the close relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being. For example, the elderly's self-efficacy has a significant negative correlation with their psychological well-being, i.e., the higher the self-efficacy, the better the psychological well-being. Additionally, the amount of physical exercise has a significant positive effect on the relationship between self-efficacy and psychological well-being, which suggests that self-efficacy can be improved by increasing physical exercise, thereby improving psychological well-being. Emotional regulation also has a significant negative effect on the relationship between self-efficacy and

psychological well-being, suggesting that increased emotional regulation can help improve psychological well-being.

2.3. Methods of Measuring Self-Efficacy

In examining the issues of self-efficacy and well-being indices among the elderly, this study comprehensively applied multiple research methods, including interviews, questionnaires, and surveys, aiming to encompass a diverse range of elderly populations.

(1) Interview Method

The interview method, as the name suggests, primarily involves "conversation and inquiry". The investigation is conducted mainly through casual chatting, which can help alleviate the interviewees' nervousness and elicit more authentic responses. In the context of examining the self-efficacy and happiness indices of the elderly, the study specifically targeted elderly residents of nursing homes as interview subjects. The researcher, in the role of a volunteer, entered the nursing homes to gain firsthand experience of the actual conditions there. Through interviews, engaging in conversations with the elderly residents, the researcher obtained genuine insights from the interviewees[4].

(2) Questionnaire Method

By reviewing relevant literature, this study gained insights into studies concerning the happiness and self-efficacy of the elderly and designed a survey questionnaire accordingly. Considering the actual circumstances of the interviewees, this study administered the questionnaire through the method of interviews.

(3) Survey Method

During the process of visiting and surveying elderly individuals in the community, this study aims to explore the differences and commonalities between elderly people who opt for home-based care and those who choose nursing home care. The survey findings reveal that in the elderly population, the majority of men tend to prefer home-based care, while women are more likely to select nursing homes as their preferred method of elderly care. Feedback from the respondents indicates that most women believe that their sense of self-efficacy is primarily demonstrated through their service to the family, which includes taking care of their children's children and their spouse's daily needs. They often lack personal time and opportunities to pursue their own interests, resulting in a relatively lower sense of self-efficacy. In contrast, the happiness index of the male population is higher, as they can fulfill their needs for daily sustenance and emotional value at home, making nursing homes not their first choice for elderly care.

3. Current Status of Addressing Psychological Issues in the Elderly

3.1. Common Psychological Issues Among the Elderly

Entering old age, in addition to physical decline, negative psychological states in the elderly are also a major cause of age-related diseases. Research indicates that common psychological issues in old age manifest in the following areas:

(1) Dusk Syndrome: A negative and dismissive attitude towards people and events, often stemming from the loss of a spouse, children leaving home for work, personal aging and frailty, or illness. This can be expressed as a loss of joy in life, a loss of confidence in the future, and even pessimism about life prospects..

(2) Sense of Uselessness: Difficulty adapting to the idleness after retirement, feeling like a burden to the family and society, and undervaluing oneself.

(3) Insecurity: Some elderly individuals develop an aversion and prejudice towards the outside world, leading to self-isolation and minimal social interaction. This also results in feelings of

loneliness and helplessness, and a fear of the outside world.

3.2. Impact of Psychological Issues on the Living Quality for the Elderly

The impact of psychological issues on the living quality for the elderly is multifaceted, including but not limited to loneliness, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, social isolation, memory decline, and cognitive function deterioration[5].

Through my research in nursing homes, I've discovered a positive correlation between psychological issues and the living quality among the elderly. The field investigations revealed that the vast majority of elderly people face psychological challenges, such as a pervasive negativity when confronted with problems. For those elderly individuals under professional care, their sense of self-efficacy and happiness index are not high. In contrast, the majority of self-reliant elderly report a high level of loneliness.

4. The Role of Self-Efficacy in Addressing Psychological Issues and Enhancing Well-Being Among the Elderly

4.1. Self-Efficacy Can Enhance Psychological Resilience

Self-efficacy can bolster psychological resilience of the elderly facing declines in physical function, changes in social roles, and loneliness. This manifests in several ways:

(1) Strengthening self-belief and fostering a positive attitude

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's own capabilities. This belief helps the elderly to view difficulties more optimistically and to trust in their ability to overcome these difficulties. When the elderly recognize that they can change the circumstances through their effort, they are more likely to exhibit psychological resilience and not give up easily in the face of setbacks. The elderly with high self-efficacy are more inclined to believe they can actively tackle these challenges, thereby reducing psychological stress.

(2) Promoting positive coping strategies

The elderly with high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt constructive methods to deal with stress, such as analyzing problems, seeking support, and taking actions, rather than avoiding or reacting negatively. This positive approach directly contributes to enhanced psychological resilience.

(3) Reducing stress and anxiety

High self-efficacy can diminish fear of challenges and stress responses. When the elderly believe they are capable of dealing with issues, their perception of potential threats is diminished, which in turn reduces stress levels and makes it easier to regain psychological balance.

Through the above pathways, self-efficacy enhances the adaptive capacity of the elderly to face adversity, and helps them to cope with challenges in a healthier and more positive way, thereby significantly enhancing psychological resilience[6].

4.2. Self-Efficacy Can Help Adopt Positive Coping Strategies

(1) Proactively Solving Problems

The elderly with high self-efficacy believe in their abilities and are more inclined to take initiative when faced with problems. They actively seek solutions rather than passively waiting or avoiding them. This might include analyzing the root cause of the issue and devising feasible solutions, or seeking professional help such as consulting doctors, psychologists, or legal advisors. For instance, an elderly person with a chronic disease might actively learn about their condition and manage it according to medical advice, rather than ignoring the illness or relying entirely on others.

(2) Seeking Social Support

The elderly with high self-efficacy are more likely to seek help from family, friends, or the community for emotional support, advice, and practical help through interaction. The social support can effectively alleviate psychological stress. They might communicate and share their feelings with loved ones or actively participate in social activities such as interest groups or volunteer work. For example, an elderly person living alone who feels lonely might join community events to make friends instead of suppressing their feelings of isolation.

(3) Adopting Healthy Emotional Regulation Strategies

The elderly with high self-efficacy are skilled at regulating negative emotions, viewing difficulties rationally, and avoiding further problems caused by emotional outbursts. They might use relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or meditation to relieve stress, or engage in activities like reading, gardening, or exercising to shift their focus and regulate emotions. For instance, when facing the reality that their children are too busy with work to visit often, they might reminisce about happy family times to comfort themselves, rather than feeling neglected[7].

In summary, the elderly with high self-efficacy cope with living problems through proactive, rational and healthy ways. These positive strategies not only effectively relieve stress, but also enhance their living quality and sense of well-being, while setting a good example for others to follow.

4.3. Self-Efficacy Can Enhance Psychological Well-Being

High self-efficacy can reduce the risk of depression and anxiety among the elderly, as they are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors such as participating in social activities, exercising, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on the psychological well-being of the elderly. Here's analysis of its effects from several key aspects:

(1) Reducing Anxiety and Depression

High self-efficacy can effectively lower the likelihood of anxiety and depression in the elderly because they are more inclined to believe they can manage living challenges. This is demonstrated by:

- Enhancing a sense of control. The elderly feel capable of dealing with living problems, reducing feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

- Reducing stress responses. The elderly with high self-efficacy have a more positive perception of stress, more readily viewing challenges as solvable issues rather than unbearable burdens.

(2) Improving Life Satisfaction

Self-efficacy can help the elderly face life with a positive attitude, thereby increasing life satisfaction and happiness. This is demonstrated by:

- Setting and achieving goals. By accomplishing realistic goals, the elderly can experience a sense of achievement and contentment.

- Enhancing a sense of meaning. High self-efficacy allows the elderly to more easily find meaning in life, maintaining passion for life even in the face of aging.

(3) Promoting Healthy Behaviors

Self-efficacy can significantly improve health behaviors among the elderly, such as adhering to exercise, eating healthily, and following medical advice. These improvements in behavior can further enhance psychological well-being. This is demonstrated by[8]:

- Behavioral control. Self-efficacy gives the elderly more confidence to maintain health-promoting habits.

- Physical health improving psychological well-being: Good physical health can reduce anxiety about illness and increase a sense of well-being among the elderly.

In summary, self-efficacy has an integrative effect on improving the psychological well-being of

the elderly, including enhancing self-confidence, promoting healthy behaviors, and alleviating stress and loneliness. By enhancing self-efficacy, the elderly are able to face living challenges more positively, thus realizing better psychological well-being and living quality.

4.4. Enhancing Social Interaction

The elderly with high self-efficacy are more likely to actively engage in social activities or seek social support. This not only helps to improve their emotional state, but also mitigates the negative impacts of loneliness and social isolation. Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in enhancing social interaction among the elderly, as it boosts their confidence, motivation, and ability in social interactions, thereby improving their psychological well-being and quality of life. The mechanisms of its effects are analyzed from multiple perspectives:

(1) Enhancing Social Confidence

The elderly with high self-efficacy have greater confidence in participating in social interactions, believing that they can achieve positive outcomes in their dealings with others, such as forming friendships or receiving support. This confidence helps to dispel their worries about social failure or rejection. They are more likely to actively join community activities, interest groups, or volunteer services, and are more willing to communicate and interact with family, friends, or neighbors.

(2) Stimulating Proactivity

The elderly with high self-efficacy are more inclined to actively seek social interaction rather than waiting for others to initiate communication. This proactivity helps them escape loneliness and social isolation. They are more likely to proactively reconnect with old friends, reestablishing past social connections, and actively participate in new activities to meet more people.

(3) Facilitating the Resolution of Social Difficulties

The elderly with high self-efficacy are more capable of addressing social obstacles, such as overcoming generational differences in communication or dealing with conflicts. They are more likely to adapt to modern social methods by learning new skills (such as using social media) and employ positive communication strategies to resolve misunderstandings or conflicts[9].

In summary, enhancing self-efficacy of the elderly can help them overcome their fear or negative attitudes towards socialization and actively establish and maintain social connections. Such enhancement helps to improve elderly people's psychological well-being and enhances their life satisfaction and sense of belonging, thus realizing a better living quality in their old age.

4.5. Enhancing Disease Management

For the elderly with chronic diseases, self-efficacy is a key to effective disease management. For instance, elderly individuals with high self-efficacy have greater confidence in managing chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, adhering to treatment plans, and thus avoiding psychological stress caused by health issues. By bolstering the elderly's confidence in their own abilities, it can help them adopt positive health behaviors, improve disease management outcomes, and thereby enhance their living quality. Here's how self-efficacy can promote disease management among the elderly:

(1) Strengthening the Execution of Health Behaviors

The elderly with high self-efficacy are more confident in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, such as taking medication on time, exercising regularly, and eating a balanced diet. These behaviors are crucial for the effective management of chronic diseases. This is demonstrated by:

- Action Planning: Increased self-confidence enables the elderly to create and execute health management plans.

- Behavioral Persistence: Even when faced with difficulties, they are more likely to maintain

healthy habits.

(2) Enhancing Disease Self-Monitoring Skills

The elderly with high self-efficacy are more willing to actively monitor their health status and adjust their behaviors based on the data. This is particularly important for managing chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. This is demonstrated by:

- Self-Observation: The elderly are more proactive in recording symptoms or monitoring health indicators.

- Response Adjustment: Based on the results of their observations, they take corresponding adjustment measures.

(3) Facilitating Collaboration with Medical Resources

The elderly with high self-efficacy are more inclined to collaborate with medical professionals, actively participating in discussions and decisions regarding treatment plans, thereby optimizing medical outcomes. This is demonstrated by:

- Seeking Help Proactively: The elderly are more likely to consult with doctors and follow their advice.

- Clear Communication of Needs: The elderly with high self-efficacy are better at expressing their health issues and needs.

Overall, enhancing the self-efficacy of the elderly can effectively help them manage their illnesses and improve their living quality. This is not only reflected in the improvement of physical health, but also in the relief of psychological stress and the enhancement of social adaptability. A systematic support system (including health education, family support and medical collaboration) can maximize the facilitating effect of self-efficacy on disease management.

5. Conclusion

This study explores the mechanisms by which self-efficacy affects the psychological issue and well-being of the elderly. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully accomplish a specific task, and it plays a significant role in the psychological well-being, social participation, and living quality of the elderly. By reviewing existing literature, this study analyzes how self-efficacy can promote well-being of the elderly by enhancing their sense of control over life, positive emotional experiences, and coping abilities. Furthermore, this study finds that self-efficacy not only directly increases well-being but also indirectly through mediating factors such as social support, resilience, and setting goals.

Overall, self-efficacy plays a central role in addressing psychological issues among the elderly, and its enhancement can significantly improve their psychological health and quality of life, thereby enhancing their sense of well-being.

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