

# Longevity is not an ingredient of successful aging as reported by community-dwelling older adults: A scoping review

## **KEY FINDINGS**

- ✓ Studies involving older adults from around the world identify multiple factors as central to successful aging.
- ✓ These factors do not include living longer, suggesting older adults see quality of life as more important than quantity.

## **BACKGROUND**

There is much debate in gerontology about how a person ages “successfully.” Rowe and Khan proposed it was a combination of being free of disease, functioning at a high physical and cognitive level, and engaging actively in life. Jeste and other scholars added a subjective component to the idea, proposing that it matters to consider how people feel about themselves and their lives as they age. According to the Baltes’ selective optimization with compensation (SOC) model, older adults carry on by optimizing their best selected resources to compensate for deteriorating physical and mental functions. However, some successful aging frameworks don’t line up with what older adults themselves report concerning what constitutes successful aging.

**The goal of this article was to explore older adults’ perspectives on what constitutes successful aging, to see if they view longevity as a part of aging successfully and to promote the development of a standardized conceptual model.**

## **HOW THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED**

This was a scoping review of studies of successful aging. It involved a search of five electronic databases (i.e., PubMed, Scopus, APA PsycInfo, CINAHL, and Web of Science) using the JBI methodological guidelines and the PRiSMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews). The search was guided by relatively broad research questions focusing on studies of older adults’ perspectives on successful aging and whether longevity was part of successful aging. Multiple factors may be related to successful aging, so this review included only studies in which participants provided their own ideas about aging and aging successfully. These included qualitative and mixed-methods studies using interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. Information from the studies was extracted and synthesized into domains. These data were then analyzed using a thematic approach suggested by Braun and Clarke, with the goal of creating a taxonomy to reflect the major domains of successful aging.

## **FINDINGS**

The electronic database searches revealed a total of 3,354 articles (with 4 additional from other sources), and the final selection including 18 articles after deleting duplicates or those did not fit the criteria. The studies

included men and women (9,360 in total) ranging in age from 60 to 107 years. The participants, all community-dwelling, were from 11 different countries.

Six significant domains emerged as key aspects of successful aging, as identified by older adults:

1. Psychological
2. Physical
3. Social
4. Environmental
5. Spiritual
6. Behavioral

Each domain consisted of subdomains. Physical activity, basic aspects of wellbeing, satisfaction with life, positive outlook, interpersonal relationship, participation in meaningful activities, and financial issues were emphasized as important factors of successful aging. The results reveal that older adults do not perceive longevity to be a major component of successful aging.

### **POLICY/PRACTICE ANALYSIS**

This study was based on what older adults themselves said about what matters for successful aging. Multiple domains were identified but psychological and social components were predominant. The results provide evidence to substantiate Baltes' SOC model, with older adults' appearing to adopt strategies reflected in the psychological, social and spiritual domains to help 'compensate' for

changes in their physical and environmental domains. The findings also showed that it was the quality of one's years that counted, not the quantity.

These findings could be used to develop more successful interventions and programs because they highlight the value of using older adults' own views of how to age successfully. Future longitudinal research is needed to better understand the change in individuals' views on successful aging and how this framework applies to real-world situations in which older adults are adapting as they age.

### **Original Article**

Bhattacharyya, K. K., Molinari, V., & Andel, R. (2022). Longevity is not an ingredient of successful aging as self-reported by community-dwelling older adults: A scoping review. *Aging & Mental Health*. 1–13. Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/13607863.2022.2033696

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