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ANXIETY AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN OLDER ADULTS: THE ROLE OF SATISFACTION WITH OPEN ELDERLY CARE CENTERS

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Abstract:
The growing global population of older adults has led to increased research on psychiatric conditions in later life. Anxiety and depression are frequent in this population but are often underdiagnosed due to their overlap with physical illnesses. Most existing research indicates a negative relationship between psychological distress and quality of life in the elderly. This study aimed to examine the relationship between anxiety, satisfaction with Open Elderly Care Centers, and quality of life, while also exploring the role of gender. A cross-sectional design was used with a sample of 349 older adults attending Open Elderly Care Centers in Greece. Participants completed the Geriatric Anxiety Scale (GAS), the OPQOL-35 quality of life questionnaire, and a demographic survey. Correlational analysis and independent tests were conducted. Higher levels of anxiety were significantly associated with lower quality of life ($r = -0.21$, $p < 0.001$), with a stronger effect among men ($r = -0.44$). Women reported higher anxiety scores but also slightly higher quality of life. Satisfaction with care services showed no significant correlation with quality of life, and gender had no moderating effect on this relationship. The findings confirm a negative link between anxiety and quality of life in older adults, supporting previous literature. The lack of association between satisfaction with care and

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quality of life highlights the complexity of these relationships. Gender differences in emotional response may merit further exploration.

Keywords: anxiety; satisfaction; Open Care Centers for the Elderly; quality of life; aging; gender differences

1. Introduction

Population aging is a global demographic trend with significant implications for public health systems, economic development, and social cohesion. The population aged 60 years and over is growing faster than all younger age groups, primarily due to increased life expectancy and declining fertility rates (World Health Organization, 2023). Older adults are at elevated risk of developing mental health conditions, particularly depression and anxiety, which are among the most prevalent disorders in this age group (Santini *et al.*, 2020). These disorders are often underdiagnosed or misattributed to aging processes or physical illness, leading to unmet care needs and poorer health outcomes (Brett, C. E., Gow, A. J., Corley, J., Pattie, A., Starr, J., & Deary, I. J. (2022)). Psychological well-being is closely linked to perceived quality of life among older adults. Studies have consistently shown that mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety can significantly reduce life satisfaction, limit autonomy, and diminish physical and social functioning (Beutel, M. E., Jünger, C., Klein, E. M., Brähler, E., Michal, M., & Tibubos, A. N. (2021)). Although depression in late life has been more widely studied, anxiety remains comparatively under-researched, despite its high prevalence and impact (Brett, C. E., Gow, A. J., Corley, J., Pattie, A., Starr, J., & Deary, I. J. (2022)). In Greece, Open Elderly Care Centers (KAPI) represent key community-based services that promote active aging and psychosocial well-being. These centers offer a range of non-medical services, including social activities, informal health education, and opportunities for peer support (Tinios, P., Daskalopoulou, D., & Triantafyllidou, A. (2021); Ding, S., *et al.* (2022)). Understanding how anxiety and satisfaction with community-based services relate to quality of life is crucial for shaping responsive policies and care models. Gender differences may also play a role, as older men and women often differ in help-seeking behavior, symptom expression, and service utilization (Wang, Y., Wang, D., Han, B., & Xu, L. (2023)). This study explores the relationship between anxiety levels and quality of life in older adults attending Open Elderly Care Centers in Greece, considering their satisfaction with the services offered. It also investigates whether these associations differ by gender.

2. Materials and Methods

A total of 349 individuals aged 65 years and older participated in this study. Inclusion criteria were: (1) age ≥65 years, (2) regular participation in Open Elderly Care Center activities for at least 6 months, and (3) ability to complete the questionnaires

independently or with minimal assistance. Participants with diagnosed cognitive impairment or serious physical illness were excluded. The Geriatric Anxiety Inventory (GAI) was used: A 20-item dichotomous scale that measures anxiety symptoms in older adults. The Greek version showed good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.80$). Quality of Life Questionnaire: Measured using the OPQOL-35 questionnaire. Higher scores indicate a better quality of life. and the Satisfaction with Open Elderly Care Centers scale: A 5-point Likert scale developed by the researcher that assesses satisfaction with services, social activities and staff support. Regarding Demographic Data, Gender, age, marital status, education and health status were reported.

2.1 Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS v27. Descriptive statistics were computed. Pearson correlations tested associations between anxiety, satisfaction, and quality of life. Independent samples tests examined gender differences. Regression models control demographic variables.

3. Results

Descriptive analyses indicated gender differences in both anxiety and quality of life scores. As shown in Table 1, women reported higher mean anxiety levels (M = 30.22, SD = 11.93) compared to men (M = 24.19, SD = 9.33). Interestingly, women also demonstrated slightly higher quality of life scores (M = 107.71, SD = 7.82) than men (M = 102.99, SD = 9.12). Pearson correlation analyses revealed a significant negative association between anxiety (GAS) and quality of life (OPQOL) across the total sample ($r = -0.21$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher anxiety levels were related to lower quality of life (Table 2, Figure 1). When examined separately by gender, this association was stronger among men ($r = -0.44$, $p < 0.001$) compared to women ($r = -0.21$, $p = 0.003$), suggesting that anxiety may have a more pronounced impact on men's perceived quality of life.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics by Gender

Gender	GAS Mean (SD)	OPQOL Mean (SD)	N	OPQOL Range
Men	24.19 (±9.33)	102.99 (±9.12)	165	83–124
Women	30.22 (±11.93)	107.71 (±7.82)	184	91–126

Women reported higher anxiety scores than men, but also slightly higher quality of life.

Table 2: Pearson Correlations Between GAS and OPQOL

Group	r (GAS–OPQOL)	p-value
All participants	–0.21	<0.001
Men	–0.44	<0.001
Women	–0.21	0.003

Higher anxiety scores were significantly associated with lower quality of life across all participants, with the strongest correlation among men.

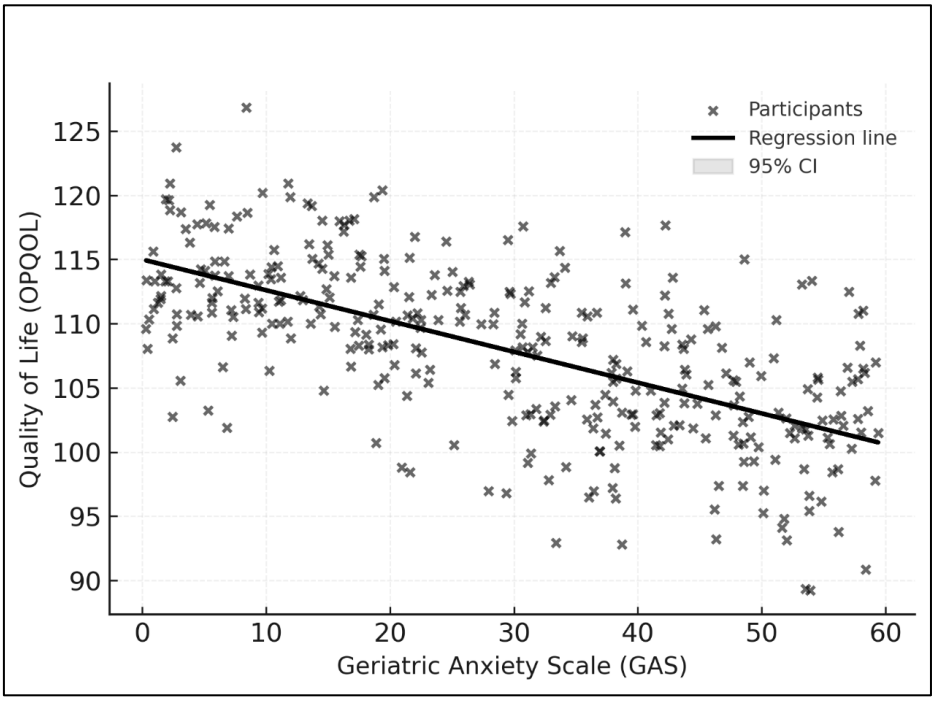

Figure 1: Scatterplot of GAS and OPQOL Scores ($r = -0.21$, $p < 0.001$)

4. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the complex relationship between anxiety and quality of life among older adults attending Open Elderly Care Centers (KAPI) in Greece. Consistent with previous research, higher anxiety levels were significantly associated with lower quality of life, confirming the negative psychological burden of anxiety in late life (Beutel *et al.*, 2021; Santini *et al.*, 2020). Interestingly, although women in the present sample reported higher anxiety scores, they also demonstrated a slightly higher quality of life compared to men. This apparent paradox has been observed in other studies, where women tend to express emotional distress more openly but also maintain stronger social networks and coping mechanisms that buffer against reduced well-being (Brett *et al.*, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2023). The stronger inverse correlation between anxiety and quality of life among men suggests that male participants may experience the emotional and functional consequences of anxiety more acutely. Similar gender-based differences have been reported in international literature, indicating that older men often underutilize mental health services and are less likely to seek psychosocial support (Reynolds *et al.*, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2023). This may contribute to greater isolation and more profound effects of anxiety on their perceived life satisfaction (López *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, the role of community-based services such as KAPI appears to be particularly relevant. According to the Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021–2030 framework (World Health Organization, 2021), active aging and social participation are essential for maintaining

psychological resilience and life satisfaction in older adults. KAPI structures in Greece provide accessible opportunities for social interaction, informal education, and engagement, which are key protective factors against anxiety and social disconnectedness (Tinios *et al.*, 2021). Strengthening these community-based models may help reduce mental health disparities and improve the overall well-being of older adults, particularly those with limited access to formal healthcare systems (Dangerfield *et al.*, 2023). Future research should continue exploring the interaction between gender, anxiety, and quality of life, incorporating longitudinal designs and additional psychosocial variables such as social support, loneliness, and perceived health. Culturally sensitive interventions tailored to men's help-seeking behaviors and women's caregiving roles could enhance the effectiveness of mental health promotion in community settings.

5. Conclusion

Anxiety emerged as a key psychological factor negatively associated with quality of life among older adults, with the effect being particularly pronounced in men. This aligns with recent findings suggesting that anxiety significantly undermines emotional well-being, social functioning, and perceived health in late life (Beutel *et al.*, 2021; Brett *et al.*, 2022). Gender differences observed in the present study reinforce the need for targeted, gender-sensitive interventions, as older men may be less likely to express distress or access psychosocial support services (Wang *et al.*, 2023).

Integrating routine psychological screening into community-based programs, such as the Open Elderly Care Centers (KAPI), could facilitate early detection and timely management of anxiety symptoms. These structures already play a vital role in promoting active and healthy aging and represent an ideal setting for implementing preventive and therapeutic mental health initiatives (Tinios *et al.*, 2021; World Health Organization, 2021). Enhancing the mental health support component within these centers may substantially improve the overall quality of life of Greece's aging population, consistent with the priorities of the Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021–2030 (World Health Organization, 2021).

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the Administrative Board of the Department of Education and Social Work, University of Patras, Greece. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Funding Statement

None.

Data Availability

Available upon reasonable request.

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Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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