

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTELLIGENCE AND WISDOM OF OLDER ADULTS

G. SWARUPA RANI¹ & M. SARADA DEVI²

¹Research Scholar, Department of HDFS, C. H. Sc, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

²Professor and Head, Department of HDFS, C. H. Sc, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to find out the relationship between intelligence and wisdom among older adults. The current article reflects the relationship between intelligence and wisdom in terms of studying the mean differences in wisdom according to the intelligence level and also studying the type of relationship exists between these two. A sample of 180 older adults were selected for the study. To measure the intelligence, short form of Wechsler's (2011) intelligence scale was modified and used. To measure the wisdom older adults, a scale was developed called self-measured wisdom scale. The results of the study indicated that, significant chi-square value was observed for age group indicates a significant differences noticed in age groups and intelligence level of older adults. A significant mean differences seen in wisdom along in relation to intelligence score, however intelligence was found to be positively and significantly related with wisdom and along with its components. Hence it was found from the study that intelligence was considered to be an important aspect and which plays a vital role in making the people wise.

KEYWORDS: Intelligence, Wisdom, Older Adults, Senior Citizens

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally research on aging has focused on the cognitive aspects of age-related changes, a “phenomenon of decline”. Old age is associated with declines in many aspects of cognition, as well as with a variety of detrimental stereotypes of incompetence but there is an aspect to it that “holds more promise than present reality may reveal”: wisdom (Baltes and Staudinger, 2000).

The concept of wisdom has its roots in religion and philosophy (Baltes and Smith, 2008). Wisdom is a complex, multi-faceted construct, there is no consensus on its definition and several rating scales for assessing wisdom.

There are several major definitions of wisdom. The Berlin Wisdom Paradigm (Baltes & Smith, 1990) defined wisdom as expert knowledge in the fundamental pragmatics of life that permits exceptional insight, judgment, and advice about complex and uncertain matters and expertise in the conduct and meaning of life.

The slight overlap between wisdom and intelligence is consistent with most expert and lay definitions of wisdom (e.g., Sternberg & Jordan, 2005). A critical element of wisdom is the desire for learning and in-depth knowledge (Ardelt, 2000; Blanchard-Fields & Norris, 1995; Sternberg, 1990), which requires a certain basic level of intelligence. As noted by one of the respondents, intelligence is necessary but not sufficient for wisdom; Wisdom is often defined as judicious application of knowledge or intelligence (Staudinger, Lopez, & Baltes, 1997).

A study conducted by Sternberg & Jordan (2005) found that superior reasoning may in fact be related to well-being, but that this is true for pragmatic (as opposed to abstract) reasoning. By pragmatic reasoning we mean

reasoning that is influenced by life experiences and situated in a social context. Such reasoning strategies have been described as “wise” by both philosophers and psychologists.

Although wisdom has been defined in many ways, there is some consensus that wisdom involves the use of certain types of pragmatic reasoning that are prosocial, and which helps to navigate important challenges in social life.

According to Sternberg (2005), wisdom may develop along several possible pathways that follow similar trajectories to crystallized and/or fluid intelligence. One of these models follows a combined crystallized/fluid intelligence pathway. According to this model, crystallized intelligence increases with age to later adulthood after which it levels off until a few years before death. In contrast, fluid intelligence reaches its peak in young adulthood and, thereafter, declines with age, precipitously so near the end of life.

Wisdom, then, increases with lived experiences, much like crystallized intelligence, but then at some point in early late life, limitations in cognitive, physical, and social resources contribute to a decline in wisdom. In this study we addressed the two aspects between intelligence and wisdom such as a) role of intelligence on wisdom by studying the mean scores of wisdom in relation to intelligence level, b) relationship between intelligence and wisdom among older adults. The following methodology was adopted to study the relationship between wisdom and intelligence.

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Sampling Criteria

Educated older adults belonging to the age group of 61-75 years were selected for the study.

Technique for Sample Selection

Purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study (since persons who educated and willing to fill the questionnaire were included for the study).

Size of the sample

Older adults about 180 members were selected for the study.

MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Modified Wechsler’s Short form of Intelligence test

To find out the association between intelligence and wisdom, the investigator has modified the short form of Wechsler’s (2011) intelligence scale was used.

Scale on Wisdom

To measure the wisdom among older adults, a scale was developed by the investigator and standardized. The Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was 0.81.

PROCEDURE

The older adults belonging to the age range of 61-75 years were purposively selected from the Hyderabad city to conduct the study. The collected data was coded and analyzed using Chi-square, ANOVA and Pearson correlation to identify the wisdom levels among retired professionals.

RESULTS

Table 1: Intelligence of Older Adults Based on age Group (N=180)

S.No	Category	Intelligence category			Total=180	Chi square	Prob
		High IQ	Moderate IQ	Low IQ			
Age group							
1	61-65 years	26(53%)	22(45%)	1(2%)	49(27%)	14.26**	0.0051
2	66-70 years	40(34%)	74(63%)	4(3%)	118(66%)		
3	71- 75 years	1(8%)	10(77%)	2(15%)	13(7%)		
	Total=180	67(37%)	106(59%)	7(4%)	180(100%)		

*Significance at (P<0.05), **Significance at (P<0.05), NS- Not Significant

The above table depicts the intelligence level and its association with age group of older adults. A significant chi-square value was observed for age group indicates a significant differences noticed in age groups and intelligence level of older adults.

High IQ levels were observed among (53%) of 61-65 years old and also (45%) of 66-70 years old. It means high IQ levels were observed more among 1st and 2nd age group sample. Moderate IQ levels were found more among (77%) of 71-75 years old. Similarly low IQ levels were also found among 71-75 years old (15%).

The results indicate that IQ was decreasing with increase of age, this could be attributed very few respondents form 71-75 years age group. The main reason for this finding was majority of the sample were between 61-66 years and this particular age group of sample were very active in solving the questions, had good mental health status and high educational background which helped them to gain high and moderate IQ scores.

Table 2: Distribution of mean differences in wisdom based on intelligence of older adults (N=180)

S.No	Dimension	Intelligence	Means	SD	F value	Pr>F
1	Self-knowledge	High	40.66a	3.72	24.77**	<0.0001
		Moderate	37.06c	3.81		
		Low	33.71b	0.76		
2	Life knowledge	High	41.21a	2.82	16.41**	<0.0001
		Moderate	39.09c	3.31		
		Low	35.43b	2.88		
3	Life skills	High	40.93a	2.44	22.66**	<0.0001
		Moderate	38.49c	3.11		
		Low	35.14b	2.19		
4	Judgement	High	43.18a	1.88	15.88**	<0.0001
		Moderate	41.73c	2.29		
		Low	39.14b	3.39		
5	Emotional maturity	High	41.46a	2.49	32.74**	<0.0001
		Moderate	38.65c	2.76		
		Low	35.29b	2.06		
6	Reflection	High	35.45a	2.66		

		Moderate	35.59a	2.19	0.08NS	0.9213
		Low	35.43a	3.31		
7	Interpersonal understanding- Altruism	High	35.67a	3.44	17.38**	<0.0001
		Moderate	33.04b	2.98		
		Low	31.14b	2.19		
8	Interpersonal understanding- Inspirational engagement	High	34.61a	3.19	24.84**	<0.0001
		Moderate	31.24c	3.6		
		Low	28.43b	2.76		
9	Wisdom	High	313.16a	13.73	46.27**	<0.0001
		Moderate	294.88c	14.72		
		Low	273.71b	14.8		

*Significance at (P<0.05), **Significance at (P<0.05), NS- Not Significant

The results of the table-2 shows the differences in mean scores of wisdom with reference the score categories of intelligence.

The significant mean differences seen in wisdom along with its dimensions such as self-knowledge, life-knowledge, life skills, judgement, emotional maturity altruism and inspirational engagements with reference to the score levels of intelligence. The high mean score was observed on wisdom and its dimensions on high score of intelligence and low mean score was seen on low score of intelligence.

It means the older adults who had high IQ also had high mean score on above stated dimensions followed by moderate and low IQ. It indicates high intelligence was resulted in increased performance on wisdom's dimensions. Because the older adults especially in 61-65 years and 66-70 years age group are kept their minds active and fit, continue to learn and grow, this might helped them to gain high score on intelligence further it has assisted them to acquire higher mean score on all the aspects of wisdom.

Sternberg, (2000) in his study also found that intelligence and creativity are the basis for wisdom. Similarly, Kramer (200) representing the neo-Piagetian view of reasoning formulated a set of cognitive schemas they believed to be involved in wise thinking, including: acknowledgment of others' points of view, appreciation of contexts broader than the issue at hand, sensitivity to the possibility of change in social relations, acknowledgment of the likelihood of multiple outcomes of a conflict, concern with conflict resolution, and preference for compromise of opposing viewpoints.

Table 3: Intelligence Relationship with Dimensions of Wisdom

S.No	Dimensions of wisdom	Intelligence	
		Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Self-knowledge	.591**	0.000
2	life knowledge	.490**	0.000
3	Life skills	.551**	0.000
4	Judgement	.445**	0.000
5	Emotional maturity	.566**	0.000
6	Reflection	0.017	0.82
7(a)	Altruism	.534**	0.000
7(b)	Inspirational engagements	.517**	0.000
8	Wisdom	.710**	0.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Intelligence was found to be positive, highly and significantly related to wisdom and its dimensions namely self-knowledge, life-knowledge, life-skills, judgement, emotional maturity, altruism and inspirational engagements at 1% level of significance. It means with increase in intelligence there was increase in wisdom by improving skills on all the aspects of wisdom.

It indicates intelligence was found to be the strong element which increases wisdom. The component of wisdom combines cognitive, affective (emotional) and reflective (insightful) areas. The important aspect in wisdom is that, the individuals who are wiser must show the curiosity to learn new things and one should also have abstract reasoning abilities, here the intelligence has a key role increasing the wise reasoning abilities.

This finding was in line with the study of Ardelt (2000) who found that a critical element of wisdom is the desire for learning and having an in-depth knowledge, which requires a certain level of intelligence. Further the results also suggests that intelligence is necessary but intelligence alone is not sufficient for wisdom.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, both wisdom and intelligence are overlapping constructs, however the findings suggests that, intelligence is an important element which is positively influences wisdom because the findings suggest that higher the IQ levels, higher the mean score on wisdom. The high mean score indicate high wisdom. But to become wise intelligence alone is not sufficient because wisdom requires a proficiency and outstanding performance in many areas for that certain level of intelligence is required. Finally wisdom has been considered an optimal outcome of human development and is a useful construct which has important implications for individuals, the healthcare system, and society at large.

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