AGING WELL: The Impact of Service Learning on Elders

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BACKGROUND

There has been a large focus on the high cost of health care for older adults and the number of health problems they have. Multiple methods have been used to help older adults cope with the psychosocial dimensions of aging, such as physical activity, proper nutrition, arts and crafts, also social activities.

One area that has been overlooked, is the impact service learning and charitable work has on older adults.

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Service learning benefits include:

- **Increased Participation**: Service learning can increase elders’ participation in their community and education.
- **Promotion of Physical Activity**: Service learning can promote physical activity and nutrition, leading to overall better health.
- **Social Interaction**: Engaging in service learning can increase social interaction and involvement, allowing elders to become an active citizen in the community.
- **Mental Health**: Service learning can improve mental health by reducing stress and anxiety.
- **Life Engagements**: Service learning can help elders stay engaged in life, leading to a more positive life outlook.

Service learning is critical in the well-being of elders and is a vital component to living a healthy and thriving life.

REFERENCES


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"Through Wise Eyes"

In the article, “Through Wise Eyes: Thriving Elder Women’s Perspectives on Thriving in Elderhood,” it focuses on a group of thirteen women who have found ways to enjoy their later years in life. Through out this study a general theme was discovered that vital involvement “in their lives and services to others” led the women to have a “loving life” attitude and age well (Stanford, 2006).

Evidence from this study supports the importance of service learning for elders, and how it enlivens their lives, allowing them to become an active citizen in the community. By researching the many benefits involved with elders engaging in their community, data shows that it allows them to be productive and creative. Also, when an elder can contribute to the things they enjoy, it will help them live a thriving life, and maintain better health.

ABSTRACT

Currently, the elderly population is receiving more attention due to the aging of the baby boomer population. Innovative ways of enhancing the elderly’s wellness have been introduced with research and services focusing on improving physical activity, nutrition, and increasing social interaction and involvement. A gap in service delivery for the elderly and thus absent from current research efforts is the impact of service learning and charitable work by elders. Data will be collected using survey methodology to determine the impact of this important and beneficial activity. The purpose is to determine the impact of these activities on the elderly’s wellness. By allowing them to be involved in their community, through this involvement it may lead them to have a more positive outlook on life, spark their interest in continuing to learn, and also reduce certain stressors that come with aging.

HYPOTHESIS

As service learning increases, wellness in older adults will increase as well.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data for this research will be collected using a survey methodology. By analyzing the information from multiple studies, it will show how the impact of service learning has positively affected older adults. In addition to the research, these findings will help advertise this new approach to enhancing an elder’s wellness. Hopefully, service learning and charitable work will become a more popular method among the older population.

The human contribution is the essential ingredient. It is only in the giving of oneself to others that we truly live. – Ethel Percy Andrus

BENEFITS OF “ACTIVE AGING”

- Active ageing can allow older adults to maintain their health and have a more positive outlook on the aging process.
- The effects of social relationships for older adults have proven to be a vital component to living a healthy and thriving life.
- One study shows how long-time social engagement for older males had a positive impact on their cognitive skills.
- As long as older adults stay active and engaged in their community, it will help them be physically and mentally healthy.
- Social participation through service learning and charitable work can lead to an increase in learning, maintaining competence, and enhancing an elders quality of life.