

New Insights into Active Aging: Analyzing UJACAS with the COM-B Framework to Understand Opportunity and Capability's Impact

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Background: Active Ageing (AA) refers to the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security in later life. The University of Jyväskylä Active Ageing Scale (UJACAS) is one of the few instruments that operationalizes AA across four dimensions: motivation (will to act), ability, opportunity to act, and activity frequency. However, questions remain regarding the conceptual role and measurement function of the “ability” and “opportunity” subscales.

Methods: This study examined the structure and interpretation of the UJACAS through two investigations. Study I proposed and evaluated an Italian translation of the scale and tested whether a change in the order of subscale administration influenced responses. Study II used a theory-driven canonical correlation modeling approach (COM-B-aligned) to assess the relationship between the UJACAS subscales “ability to act” and “opportunity to act” and external measures of disability (WHODAS 2.0) and environmental barriers (TESLA).

Results: The order of subscale administration had no significant impact on response patterns. However, strong multivariate associations emerged between the “ability” and “opportunity” subscales and external indicators of physical and environmental limitations. These findings suggest that these subscales function more as behavioral prerequisites than as intrinsic components of active ageing.

Conclusions: Findings support a conceptual refinement of the UJACAS, proposing that “ability” and “opportunity to act” be treated as contextual moderators of activity frequency rather than elements of the AA construct itself. This redefinition has implications for both measurement accuracy and implementation strategies targeting active ageing.

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