

Creativity and Cognitive Health: Divergent Thinking in the Context of Successful Aging

Saturday, September 13, 2025 2:10 PM (20 minutes)

Introduction. The global increase in life expectancy has led to a steady growth in the elderly population. Psychological well-being has been identified as a key factor in promoting healthy aging, as it contributes to the prevention of chronic diseases and supports longevity. Consequently, scientific research has increasingly focused on identifying protective factors that enhance psychological health in older adults. Among the most studied environments are the Blue Zones (BZ)—geographic areas where individuals live significantly longer and healthier lives, characterized by low levels of depression and high psychological well-being.

Recent studies have begun to explore the potential protective role of divergent thinking (DT)—the ability to produce multiple, original solutions to open-ended problems—in aging, including BZ populations. This study aims to investigate the relationship between figural DT, cognitive functioning, and depressive symptoms, and to assess whether DT may serve as a protective factor associated with psychological health in older adults.

Methods. We recruited a sample of 74 older adults (Mage = 74.73; SD = 8.31) residing in a Sardinian BZ near the Barbagia region. Participants completed a cognitive assessment battery and DT tasks, and their depressive symptoms were also evaluated.

Results and conclusions. Better cognitive performance was associated with lower levels of depression, with DT functioning as a mediating variable. These findings suggest that DT may help buffer the negative effects of aging on mental health by enhancing creativity and resilience. Future research should examine interventions aimed at strengthening DT as a means of supporting well-being in aging populations.

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Session Classification: Lunch and poster 3

Track Classification: Life cycle (e.g., development and aging)