Older adults are vulnerable to declines in fluid cognitive abilities, like working memory, episodic memory, and verbal fluency (Salinska & Salinska, 2014). Prior research provides evidence that reading is a skill that provides beneficial effects that support cognition relative to growth in crystallized abilities, such as vocabulary and declarative knowledge (Stanojevic, West, & Harrison, 1995). Reading can also exercise fluid abilities needed for creating mental representation of text.

METHOD

Participants (N = 71, 63% female) were healthy community-dwelling older adults, between ages 60 and 79 residing in Champaign County. MoCA scores ranged from 13-26. Participants were contrasted against a literacy intervention and an active puzzle control group, with average ages 60-79 residing in Champaign County. MoCA scores ranged from 13-26. The cognitive battery measured reading-related fluid abilities, representing working memory, episodic memory, and verbal fluency (see Table 1).

RESULTS

Print exposure had a relationship with self-reported time spent reading (r = .26, p < .05), but not with time spent with puzzles (r = .09, p > .05), which suggests criterion-related validity.

CONCLUSIONS

Print exposure appeared to represent a valid measure of older adults’ reading engagement. Long-term reading engagement may have cognitive benefits beyond crystallized ability in later life.

REFERENCES


AUTHOR NOTES

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