

Daily Life Experiences of Cognitive Changes in Community-Dwelling Older Adults with Subjective Cognitive Decline (SCD): A Qualitative Study

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Through qualitative interviews, participants with SCD provided nuanced insights that informed four key themes: (1) daily manifestations of cognitive changes, (2) active use of intentional strategies, (3) appraising the impact of cognitive changes, and (4) perceived risk and protective factors for cognitive function.

INTRODUCTION		RESULTS			CONCLUSIONS	
❖ Older adults with Subjective Cognitive Decline (SCD) experience cognitive changes in their daily lives and face elevated dementia risk. ❖ SCD offers a valuable window for preventive intervention before clinical impairment. ❖ Understanding how older adults interpret and respond to these changes in the context of daily life is essential for developing person-centered interventions and support. ❖ This study aims to explore the daily life experiences of community-dwelling older adults with SCD, including how they respond to self-perceived cognitive changes, the impact on daily functioning and well-being, and their perceived factors associated with cognitive performance.		Themes	Subthemes	Quotes		
		Daily Manifestations of Cognitive Changes	Forgetting appointments and planned daily tasks	“I got confused. I went to an appointment a month early” (69-year-old female).		
			Disrupted execution of daily activities	“I can't stay concentrated on certain things like I'll start a little laundry I'll put it in and then I'll turn around and go back into the kitchen... It's like I bounce around.” (62-year-old female).		
			Cognitive changes in social interaction	“I'll forget what I was going to say. Or a word... I can’t seem to grasp words that I’m trying to think of” (62-year-old female).		
		Active Use of Intentional Strategies	Internal strategies	“I try to correlate something important or someone important in my family with the name or the person that I'm trying to remember” (67-year-old female)		
			External strategies	“Sometimes, I have to make a list, and check things off and say, don’t forget you have to call the people about your ice machine... and I always put the medical appointments on the calendar” (76-year-old male)		
			Increased dependence on strategies over time	“I used to be able to hold my mother’s, my uncle’s, and my own doctor appointments in my head... I have to go to the calendar now” (67-year-old female).		
			Challenges in maintaining effective strategy use	“I try to put alarms on my phone. But then sometimes, by me not being tech savvy, I don’t do it right or I don’t remember what the alarm is for... I got to sit and try to figure out what that note means” (69-year-old female).		
		Appraising Impact of Cognitive Changes	Perceived impact on life	“They haven’t impacted me that much... I might forget why I went into a room, but then I almost immediately remember. It hasn’t impacted that much at this point” (76-year-old male)		
			Emotional responses to cognitive changes	“It's like...when you're having a conversation with somebody you've known for decades and you forget their name. You can't pull their name out to introduce them to somebody. It's really embarrassing. It's really bad” (65-year-old female).		
Emotional adaptation	“I try not to forget things, so that's about all I can do, and just go from there” (81-year-old male).					
Perceptions on the need for clinical assessments	“Not really [seeking help]... Most of my colleagues are experiencing memory loss. I think my wife does too” (76-year-old male). “Yeah, I really do have a little concern about that. I don't know whether or not it's just normal? Or is it something a little bit more than that?” (68-year-old female).					
Perceived Risk and Protective Factors for Cognitive Function	Aging and role transitions		“It’s been really gradual. My skills at certain things kind of diminished when I didn’t use them, but that’s probably what happens when you’re older” (76-year-old male).			
	Health and medical factors	“My pain level this morning was really bad... I wasn’t on top of my game” (62-year-old female)				
	Life stressors and overload	“It’s gotten worse since I’ve been dealing with the stress from my brother’s health” (68-year-old female).				
	Sleep and tiredness	“When I’m tired... the word’s not coming out of my brain” (65-year-old female).				
	Mental and social engagement	“I just think of playing games, word games and certain things like that. I think that helps” (77-year-old female). “Now that I'm not working, it's important for me to stay in contact with my neighbors” (74-year-old male).				
METHODS ➤ Design: Qualitative descriptive approach ➤ Participants: Older adults aged 50 or older, community-dwelling, English speaking, and meeting the criteria of SCD ○ SCD criteria: 1) self-reported cognitive decline; 2) no objective cognitive deficits (Montreal Cognitive Assessment [MoCA] scores within normal range); 3) no diagnosis of dementia; 4) no significant functional impairment (Functional Activity Questionnaire [FAQ] < 9). ○ Sample size was determined by when data saturation was reached. A total of 16 participants were included. ➤ One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted either in person or by Zoom/phone. ➤ Thematic analysis was used for data analysis.		ACKNOWLEDGMENT				
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