

Stories, Symbolic Practices and Social Bonds: Community Practices as Protective Factors in Dementia

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Introduction

Collectivistic cultures have traditionally offered a protective social ecology for older adults by sustaining interdependence, role continuity, and meaningful social participation factors closely linked to cognitive reserve and dementia related outcomes. Within joint family systems, older adults remain actively engaged in daily household decision-making, community rituals, and intergenerational interactions, providing ongoing cognitive, emotional, and social stimulation while preserving a sense of purpose, identity, and belonging.

Community celebrations such as weddings and festivals further reinforce social inclusion with elders participating through music, dance, ritual practices, and leadership roles, thereby supporting memory, attention, motor coordination, and emotional regulation.

Protective Social & Narrative Ecology



Joint Family Systems & Rituals

Active engagement in household decisions and community rituals provides ongoing cognitive and emotional stimulation.



Intergenerational Storytelling

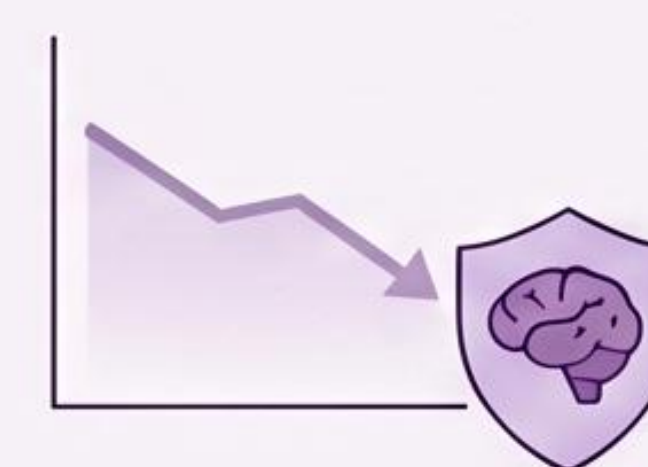
Sharing life stories facilitates autobiographical memory retrieval and executive engagement.



Community Celebrations

Participation in festivals through music and dance supports motor coordination and emotional regulation.

Clinical Impact & The Urban Shift



Reduced Functional Decline

Narrative engagement contributes to slower functional decline and reduced behavioral and psychological symptoms.



Urbanization as a Risk Factor

The transition to nuclear families increases social isolation, a well-established risk factor for dementia.

Conclusion

Examining the role of joint family living, community-based arts participation, and intergenerational storytelling advances culturally grounded perspectives on dementia prevention and psychosocial care, underscoring the importance of integrating indigenous social and cultural practices into models of cognitive health and psychosocial intervention.