



Playing the Kioku® Board Game Reduces Loneliness in Older Adults: A Pilot Study

Introduction: Playing together increases social connectedness and may be a tool to reduce loneliness. Nevertheless, research into the mental health benefits of board games is under-developed.

Objectives: To examine the effects of the Kioku® board game on wellbeing outcomes. We hypothesized that following a weekly intervention for 12 weeks, players will report decrease in loneliness and increase in wellbeing, as compared to non-players.

Methods: During the 2022 summer, participants in groups of 4-5 players, choose a cube-word and narrated a story. A convenience sample of 151 older adults (Mean age= 75.05+ 6.46 years) recruited from 3 community activity centers in Israel were assigned to an intervention (N=72) or a control group (N=79), awaiting future participation. Loneliness (UCLA loneliness scale) and Wellbeing (WHO-5 scale) were evaluated at baseline and at 12 weeks.

Results: A two-way repeated measures ANCOVA (Group x Time) controlling for age, country of origin and marital status, revealed significant interaction effects for loneliness, $F(1, 146) = 178.04, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.549$, and wellbeing, $F(1, 146) = 69.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.321$.

Loneliness decreased in the intervention group (mean differences of 0.62 points, $p < .001$), and increased in the control group (mean differences of 0.18 points, $p = .001$).

Wellbeing increased in the intervention group (mean differences of 0.79 points, $p < .001$) and decreased in the control group (mean differences of 0.20 points, $p < .001$).

Conclusions: Our findings support the effectiveness of non-competitive board games interventions for decreasing loneliness and promoting wellbeing in older adults who might still be coping with the effects of the COVID pandemic.

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