

## Prediction of psychological well-being based on attitude toward religion and death anxiety in the elderly men of Kermanshah's part-time elderly care center

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### Abstract

**Background and Objective:** Considering the vital importance of the elderly's well-being and the rapid growth of their populations, studying the role of various variables in the well-being of the elderly is necessary; therefore, the present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the relationship between psychological well-being and religiosity and death anxiety in the elderly.

**Method:** This research adopted a descriptive, correlational design. The statistical population of this study consisted of all elderly men in Kermanshah's part-time elderly care centers comprising 700 people in total. Out of this population, 200 individuals were selected by simple random sampling. The research instruments were Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire (Ryff, 1989), Muslim Attitudes toward Religion (Wilde and Joseph, 1997), and Death Anxiety Inventory (Templer, 1970). Entry criteria included: 1) a score of 22 at the cognitive state test, 2) a minimum age of 60 years, 3) a minimum of junior high school education, 4) enough monthly earnings. People who did not have these conditions were excluded. Pearson correlation coefficient and stepwise multiple regression were used for data analysis. All ethical issues were observed in the study and the researchers declared no conflict of interests.

**Results:** The findings showed that there was a significant, positive relationship between psychological well-being and religiosity ( $r=0.39$ ,  $P<0.001$ ) and a measurable, negative association between psychological well-being and death anxiety ( $r=-0.19$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). The results of stepwise regression analysis also showed that Islamic attitude, death anxiety, and Islamic rituals can significantly predict 22% of psychological well-being in elderly people ( $P<0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** Overall, psychological well-being can be increased in the elderly through increasing attention to the role of religiosity in life and the application of strategies that reduce the anxiety of death.

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### Summary

**Background and Objective:** The population of elderly in Iran is growing quickly (1). This growing population faces mental needs, the most important of which is psychological well-being. Seniors with a high psychological well-being will be able to overcome the difficulties and challenges they encounter in this period of their lives (2, 3).

Religiosity is one of the main parts of individuals' lives that can influence their psychological well-being (4, 5). Death anxiety is also one of the most important existential challenges of the elderly (6). Therefore, death anxiety can affect seniors' psychological well-being. In the domain of the role of religion on well-being, and also the relationship between death anxiety and well-being, contradictions exist in the available literature. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the relationship between seniors' religiosity

and death anxiety, on the one hand, and psychological well-being, on the other hand.

**Method:** This research adopted a descriptive, correlational design. The statistical population of this study consisted of all elderly men in Kermanshah's part-time elderly care centers comprising 700 people in total. Out of this population, 200 individuals were selected by simple random sampling. Entry criteria included: (1) a score of 22 at the cognitive state test, (2) a minimum age of 60 years, (3) a minimum of junior high school education, (4) enough monthly earnings. People who did not have these conditions were excluded. Pearson correlation coefficient and stepwise multiple regression were used for data analysis.

The following instruments were used for data collection:

**Mini-Mental State Examination:** This questionnaire is used in psychological examinations for detecting cognitive impairment. The maximum score is 30 and grades equal to or lower than 23 represent cognitive impairment (7).

**Ryff Scale Psychological Well-being:** The short version of the Ryff Scale Psychological Well-being (18 items) was used in this study (8, 9). The correlation of the short version and the main scale range from 0.70 to 0.89 (2). Also, in this research, Cronbach's alpha for the entire questionnaire was 0.87.

**Muslim Attitudes toward Religion Scale:** This scale, which comprises 14 items, measures Muslims' attitudes toward Islam. This version consists of three factors (10). The internal reliability of the questionnaire in Iran (calculated via Cronbach's alpha) was 0.93 (11). Also, the obtained Cronbach's alpha reliability index for the questionnaire was 0.87 in the current study.

**Templar Scale death anxiety:** This scale, which was developed by Templer (1970), is the most widely used instrument for measuring death anxiety (12). The validity and reliability of this questionnaire was examined in Iran, with coefficients of 0.62 and 0.73 for split-half reliability and internal consistency, respectively (13). In this research, the obtained Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was 0.69.

**Results:** The findings showed that there was a significant, positive relationship between psychological well-being and religiosity ( $r=0.39$ ,  $P<0.001$ ) and a measurable, negative association between psychological well-being and death anxiety ( $r=-0.19$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). The results of stepwise regression analysis also showed that Islamic attitude, death anxiety, and Islamic rituals can significantly predict 22% of psychological well-being in elderly people ( $P<0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** The results of this study showed that psychological well-being has a positive and significant relationship with religiosity, hence the first research hypothesis is approved. This finding is in line with the results of Tiwari et al. (14) and Ivztan et al. (15). They are however in contrast with Brown and Tierney's (16) and Francis et al.'s (17) findings. This variety of findings can be attributed to the idea that, on the one

hand, religiosity has no equal relationship with all aspects of mental health and well-being and, on the other hand, all aspects of religion have no equal relationship with a particular aspect of mental health and well-being (18). More specifically, a certain aspect of religiosity may have positive effect on a particular dimension of mental health. The same aspect may exercise no effect, or even a negative impact, on other dimensions of mental health and well-being (19).

To explain the findings of the present research, it is argued that religion changes people's lifestyle in a certain way, exercising a positive impact on health. Through the provision of a framework for describing and interpreting life experiences and thus providing a sense of coherence and existential connectivity, and through the experience of communicating with others, religion enters a larger support system that can contribute to psychological well-being (20).

Furthermore, the results showed that psychological well-being had a negative and significant relationship with death anxiety. This finding was in line with the results of McKenzie et al. (21) and Routledge et al. (22). Conversely, it was in contradiction with the results of the research projects conducted by Abdel-Khalek (23) and Urien and Kilbourne (24). In explaining this finding, it can be argued that, according to fear management theory, awareness of death creates high anxiety and reduces psychological adaptive performance, leading to psychological problems and negatively affecting well-being because death anxiety conflicts with the evolutionary motive for survival (25).

In general, the results of this study showed that there is a positive relationship between psychological well-being in the elderly and their religiosity. On the other hand, there is a negative association between seniors' psychological well-being and their death anxiety. According to the results of this study, religiosity has a greater effect on psychological well-being in comparison with death anxiety. Considering the cultural and religious context of the society, besides the importance of decreasing the anxiety of death, religious components can be used to promote well-being among the elderly. In general, the results of this study can be effective in increasing the well-being of the elderly.

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