

Research Paper

Predicting the Perception of Aging Based on Optimism in the Elderly People



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ABSTRACT

Objectives Changes in aging period can have profound effects on the life and mental health of the elderly people. Optimism and perception of aging are among the factors associated with the psychological wellbeing of the elderly people. The present study aimed to predict the perception of aging based on optimism among the elderly people.

Methods & Materials This is a correlational study. The study population consisted of all elderly residents of Qom city in Iran in 2018. Of these, 270 were selected using a convenience sampling method. Data were collected using Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) and Aging Perception Questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed in SPSS v.21 software.

Results Participants 177 male (65%) and 93 female (34%) with a mean age of 74±6.05 years. There was a significant positive correlation between optimism and perception of aging in the elderly (P<0.01); optimism could predict and explain 56% of variations in the perception of aging (P<0.01).

Conclusion Optimism can predict the perception of aging in the elderly people; Therefore, it is suggested that mental health professionals and those working in the field of aging should use the results of this study to design psychological interventions and educational packages, and hold optimism skills training workshops to improve the optimism of older people.

Key words: Optimism, Perception of aging, Elderly

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Changes in old age can have profound effects on the life and mental health of the elderly people. Old age is the age of the perception of aging and coping with life circumstances [1]. Many factors have

been investigated as signs of successful aging, one of which is “perceived aging” [2]. Perception of aging as a predictor of functional disability, has correlation with mental health-related outcomes [3], and one of the important variables related to the perception of aging that may affect its formation is optimism, which as an educable paradigm helps people cope with difficult situations [4]. Given the changes in old age and preparing older people to cope successfully with these changes, research needs to identify factors that may

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Table 1. Summary of regression model

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard Error
1	0.749	0.562	0.560	5.071

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be contributing to the older person's attitude towards aging. In this regard, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether optimism is able to predict the perception of aging among the elderly people.

2. Materials and Methods

This is a correlational study conducted in 2018. The study population consisted of all elderly residents of Qom city in Iran who were attending neighborhood houses, Elderly Association, public parks, and areas around the Shrine of Fatima Masumeh. Samples were selected using a convenience sampling method, and the sample size was determined 270 using Cochran's formula. The inclusion criteria were: having age 60 and above, no history of asthma, no limb loss or use of assistive devices such as crutches and wheelchairs, no motor impairment and having an appropriate level of physical activity. Those who were unwillingness to continue participation were excluded from the study. Data were collected using a demographic form (age, gender, job and education), Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) and Aging Perception Questionnaire (APQ). After obtaining ethical approval from the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation sciences (Code: IR.USWR.REC.1395.32), they were completed through face-to-face interviewing participants. The collected data were analyzed in SPSS V. 21 software using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), and simultaneous regression analysis. The significance level was set at $P < 0.001$.

3. Results

Of 270 participants, 177 were male (65%) and 93 (34%) female. They had a mean age of 74 ± 6.05 years (age range 60-88 years); 81 were employed (30%) and 189 unemployed (70%). The normality assumptions for the two variables were investigated using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test whose results showed a normal distribution between data. Hence, parametric methods (concurrent regression) can be used. According to the regression model summary in Table 1, the optimism variable can predict about 56% of the variance of the criterion variable (perception of aging). Moreover, the regression coefficient predicts 0.74 of the criterion variable's share, which is significant at $P < 0.01$. That is, for one increase in the score of optimism,

the perception of aging will increase by 0.74 units. This relationship is direct and at moderate level.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that optimism as one of the important sources of mental health, can significantly predict the perception of aging; Therefore, psychological interventions such as optimism skills training workshops, optimism-centered group therapy and optimism based protocols are recommended for the elderly in preparation for effective old age and coping styles. Promoting optimism and positive thoughts is one of the important ways to deal with the harmful consequences of the perception of aging and old age. The power of optimism for prediction of the perception of aging was 56%, so, future studies are recommended to identify other factors affecting this relationship and conduct qualitative and interventional research to investigate the concepts of optimism and perception of aging and its influencing factors among elderly people.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

In this study, after receiving the code of ethics (IR.USWR.REC.1395.32) from University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences, data collection was started.

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Authors' contributions

All authors contributed equally to the writing of this study.

Conflicts of interest

According to the authors, there is no conflict of interest between them.