

The Relationship Between Attitudes Towards Ageing And Psychological Well-Being In Older Adults

Dr.K.Maheswari* & R.Maheswari**

*Assistant Professor of Social Work, Bharathidasan
University,Tiruchirappalli, TamilNadu,
India.

** Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Social Work,
Government Arts & Science College,(Affiliated Bharathidasan
University, Trichy), Kurumbalur, Perambalur,

Abstract

Age is a key stage that calls for special care in adjusting to life's changes(Mao et al, 2019). According to Griffin (2016), one's perspective on aging can have a significant impact on one's health. Age-related negative attitudes will impact later years' physical and cognitive health. Physical and mental health is tightly tied to wellbeing, and as people age well, this relationship may become even more important. The study of older individuals' perspectives on ageing well is emerging as a crucial topic of research since the state of well-being is a complex phenomenon that refers to a person's subjective sentiments (Willen et al, 2018). The researcher has planned to study the attitude towards ageing and psychological well-being of the older persons residing in rural and urban areas of Perambalur district. Descriptive research design was used and 100 respondents were selected using simple random sampling method for this study. A standardized tool was used. The major findings of the study revealed that 35 per cent of the respondents have high level of attitude towards ageing and 48 per cent of the respondents had moderate attitude towards ageing, and more than half of the respondents (51%) had high autonomy, moderate level of environmental mastery, purpose in life and positive relation and nearly 59 per cent of the respondents had moderate level of psychological well-being.

Key Words: Old age, Attitude towards ageing, well-being, positive ageing.

INTRODUCTION

Old age is the closing period of the life span. It is a period when people 'move away' from previous more desirable periods or times of 'usefulness'. Old age is considered as a curse, being associated with deterioration of all physical, psychological factors, isolation from social, economic, and other activities. Socially, this stage was considered as the sum total of one's lived experiences. Hence, the society offered a space of respect to the old. In such a society, the aged were the repositories, transmitters, and sole authorities of wisdom and knowledge. All these provided a 'golden age' concept to this stage, old age. (Kumar et al 2015).

An attitude is an evaluation of an attitude object, ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive. Most contemporary perspectives on attitudes also permit that people can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object by simultaneously holding both positive and negative attitudes toward the same object. This has led to some discussion of whether individual can hold multiple attitudes toward the same object. (Wood, 2000).

Researchers need to understand older people better, especially in recent years, as the majority of older people are still in good physical and mental health up to the age of 70, continue to work past the age of 60, and lessen the financial burden and dependency. According to Hogg and Vanghan (2005), an attitude is "a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies toward socially significant things, groups, events, or symbols." People will be praised and rewarded for their actions when they display attitudes that are considered acceptable by society. A positive outlook enables one to arbitrate between one's inner demands and external circumstances. Functional deficits are less likely to emerge in older people who have optimistic aging beliefs.

The physical and emotional health of older folks is significantly impacted by negative attitudes toward aging and older people. Older adults who feel like a burden think their lives aren't worth much, which increases their risk of depression and

social isolation. Recent studies have shown that older persons who have negative attitudes about becoming older live, on average, 7.5 years fewer than those who have positive attitudes. They also recover from disabilities more slowly. (2016 Geneva press release). The elder population's state of well-being is a complex phenomenon that typically includes enjoyment, self-satisfaction, fulfilling social interactions, and autonomy (Smith et al., 2000). Based on how older people view the concept of well-being, the term "sense of well-being" here relates to a person's sentiments. As a result, the phrase "subjective well-being" is often employed (Spirduso et al. 2005). The way one is perceived by others—whether positively or negatively—has an impact on one's wellbeing. The interplay between personal traits and aspects of people's social settings determines their level of well-being. (2012) McNulty and Fincham, the decline in physical health and functioning that comes with advancing age may have a negative impact on well-being; as a result, older persons may face additional obstacles to aging well (Fusco et al. 2012). Positivity about aging and one's abilities may lead to better mental health, greater levels of contentment, and lower levels of depression.

Bedaso and Han (2021) examined the attitude toward aging as a potential mediator of the relationship between personality factors and mental health in terms of depression and life satisfaction among older adults. A cross-sectional study was conducted with 438 Ethiopian elderly individuals aged 60 to 69. The results of the regression-based path analysis showed that after adjusting for demographic data, the relationship between agreeableness and depression in older adults was partially mediated by attitude toward aging. Likewise, attitude toward physical change due to aging and psychological growth subscales jointly mediated the correlation between neuroticism and depression. Several studies have been investigated on attitude towards ageing and psychological well-being among the older persons and other process had also been conducted. Mock et al (2011) has revealed the ageing attitudes moderate the effect of subjective age on psychological well-being; Evidence from a 10-year longitudinal study. Older subjective age is often associated with lower psychological well-being among middle-aged and older adults. The researcher hypothesized that attitudes toward aging moderate this relationship. Specifically, feeling older will predict lower well-being among those with less favourable

attitudes toward ageing but not those with more favourable ageing attitudes. They tested with longitudinal data from the National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States—II assessing subjective age and psychological well-being over 10 years.

As hypothesized older subjective age predicted lower life satisfaction and higher negative affect when ageing attitudes were less favourable but not when ageing attitudes were more favourable. Low (2013) studied that attitudes to ageing mediate the relationship between the older people health and quality of life. It was from the secondary analysis of cross-sectional survey data collected in 20 countries taking part in the 2003. The study sample consisted of 4593 adults whom were, on average, 72.10 years of age and 42.8% were female. The researcher measured quality of life and health satisfaction. All three attitudes to aging partly mediated the relationship between health satisfaction and physical, psychological, social, environmental, and global quality of life. These partial mediations manifested in the same way across all 20 country samples, regardless of age or gender. Attitudes toward physical change were the strongest mediator of health satisfaction upon global and domain-specific quality of life, followed by psychosocial loss and psychosocial growth. From various studies it is understood that as age increases the older persons face several changes and challenges and they have moderate attitude towards ageing process and it is clear that positive attitude will make the ageing process easy and healthy.

Aim:

The aim of the study is to assess the attitude towards ageing and psychological well-being among older persons residing in Perambalur district.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the background characteristics of the respondents
2. To find out the attitude of older persons towards ageing.
3. To find out the psychological well-being among the

older persons.

4. Estimation of association between the selected socio demographic variables and dimensions of attitude towards ageing and psychological well-being.

Materials and Method

The researcher in this study made an effort to look into how older people view aging and described the respondents' features along with three dimensions: physical change, psychological loss, and psychological progress. Six characteristics, including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, healthy relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, were explored for the other important variable, psychological well-being. The senior population in Perambalur District, Tamil Nadu, both urban and rural, made up the study's target population. The sample size is 100, and the researcher chose 100 respondents (50 rural and 50 urban) using a basic random sampling approach. The researcher employed a self-made interview schedule to gather socio-demographic data as well as standardized measures on attitudes toward aging that Laidlaw et al. established in 2007 with three dimensions, including physical change, psychological loss, and psychological gain. There are 24 items on the scale. Ryff's psychological well-being scale, which has six aspects including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal progress, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, was used to measure psychological well-being in 1989. There are 42 items on the scale. Analysis and numerous tests were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine the association and difference between variables.

Results and Discussions

Demographic details

The results of the study has been discussed in detail and the age distribution of the respondents was found that less than half of the respondents (46%) were in the age group of 60-69 years whereas 35 per cent come under 70-79 years of age and only 19.9 per cent of the respondents were above 80 years. Majority of the respondents (76%) were female and 24 per cent of the respondents are male. Regarding marital status of the respondents, 37 per cent are married and living with spouse and more than half of the respondents (57%) are in

widowhood, 4 per cent of the respondents are living alone and 2 per cent of the respondents were unmarried. Educational qualification of the respondents showed that 20 per cent of the respondents have educated up to primary level, 11 per cent of the respondents have studied up to middle school, only 3 per cent of them completed secondary level and majority of the respondents (66%) were illiterate. Majority of the respondents (77%) follow Hindu religion and 18 per cent of them are Christians and remaining are Muslims. **Living arrangements:** Living arrangement is an important aspect in understanding the support system for elderly and it explains the status and dependency of the older persons. While regarding the living arrangements of the respondents, 46 per cent of them are living with children and spouse, nearly half of the respondents (47%) are residing with children and grandchildren and 4 per cent of them are alone and 3 per cent of the respondents are living with others. Equal number of the respondents (50%) is living in rural and urban areas of Perambalur district.

Economic Conditions: While considering the economic status of the respondents, nearly half of the respondents (49%) earn below Rs.2000 and 48 per cent of the respondents monthly income is between Rs. 2001 to Rs.12,000 and 3 per cent of the respondents monthly income is above 12,000. Regarding the present occupational status, 21 per cent of the respondents are pensioners and 34 per cent of them are doing agriculture and homemakers, and 29 per cent of the respondents have possessed other jobs like maids, daily wages, petty shop and business. Ownership of property describes a person's social status and decision making authority and regarding assets of the respondents, few members (6%) possessed movable property, whereas little more than half of the respondents (53%) owned immovable property and 39 per cent of the respondents do not have any property.

Health Status: With increasing number of older persons, promoting health and well-being becomes a priority for ageing well. Health status is an important indicator of well-being and also it predicts the attitude of the elderly towards ageing process. The presence of diseases and functional disability is unavoidable during old age and it is understood from the study that, 11 per cent of the respondents health status was worse and suffered from one or more acute or chronic diseases, whereas 29 per cent of the respondents

current health status was poor, and 42 per cent of them had better health condition and 18 per cent of them were healthy.

Findings Related to Attitude towards Ageing and Psychological Well-being

- There is a high significant association between the age of the respondents with regard to various dimensions of attitude towards ageing such as physical change, psychological loss and psychological growth.
- There is a high significant difference between the gender of the respondents with regard to various dimensions of attitude towards ageing such as psychological growth and overall score.
- There is a significant difference between the gender of the respondents and psychological loss dimensions.
- There is a no significant difference between the domicile of the respondents and attitude towards ageing.
- There is a high significant association between the number of dependents the respondents with regard to various dimensions of attitude towards ageing such as physical change.
- There is a significant difference among the marital status of the respondents with regard to physical change dimension of attitude towards ageing.
- There is a significant association between age of the respondents with regard to overall score of psychological well-being.
- There is a significant difference between the genders of the respondents with regard to various dimensions of psychological well-being such as self acceptance. However, there is no significant difference between autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation, purpose in life and overall score of psychological well-being.
- There is a significant association between the number of dependents of the respondents and autonomy dimensions.
- There is a significant difference between the assets of the respondents with regard to overall score of psychological well-being.

- There is a highly significant association between the family size of the respondents and various dimensions of psychological well-being and overall score of psychological well-being. However, there is a significant association between the family size of the respondents with regard to various dimensions of psychological well-being such as environmental mastery, positive relation.
- There is a significant difference among ownership of property and positive relation, purpose in life, self acceptance and overall score of the respondents and various dimensions of psychological well-being.

Compared to their male counterparts, older women are less likely to be educated and to have financial means. Additionally, compared to men, women typically have greater morbidities and impairments. Research reveals that men gain greater prestige as they age and are seen as more dignified than women, which may be one explanation. Similar to earlier studies, this one found those respondents who were married and cohabiting in both places scored higher on the characteristics of autonomy and self-acceptance. This finding might indicate that partners encourage and contribute to each other's psychological well-being via eliciting good emotions. Similarly, spouses can serve as a source of inspiration by encouraging their partners to adopt the behaviors that will improve their attitudes toward aging. Additionally, the partner's assistance both emotionally and practically may serve as a stress reducer and a direct source of joy. The way someone feels about becoming older certainly explains their daily activities and general wellbeing. The study's results revealed a favorable correlation between higher psychological health and more upbeat perceptions about one's own aging. These findings are in line with past studies that showed a strong relationship between increased well being and more positive aging perceptions. Alternately, there was a positive correlation between aging and unfavorable attitudes toward aging. This outcome confirmed the hypothesis put forth by Loi et al. that youth is associated with more optimistic attitudes on aging.

Conclusion

Older adults' mental health is a major problem, and various strategies for maintaining good mental health have been

detailed. These strategies include keeping the mind active (by reading or playing games that require mental activity), eating foods that are healthy for the brain, such almonds, and remaining physically active. The current study improved our understanding of older persons' opinions on healthy aging. Improving physically active lifestyle, engaging in social activities, and cultivating a good outlook to accept oneself at all stages of life helps in positive ageing. When creating strategic health and rehabilitation plans to support healthy aging in older persons, several variables must be taken into account. Every older person needs to keep a positive outlook on aging since it will slow down the aging process.

References

- Bedaso TS, Han B. Attitude toward Aging Mediates the Relationship between Personality and Mental Health in Older Adults. *Healthcare (Basel)*. 2021 May 17;9(5):594. doi: 10.3390/healthcare9050594. PMID: 34067910; PMCID: PMC8156287.
- Mao L, Mondal K, Manna M. A comparative study on quality of life of older adults. *Indian J Cont Nsg Edn*. 2019;20:73-7.
- Griffin attitude to ageing can have a direct effect on health, *Science Daily, Medical press*. Trinity College, Dublin (2016).
- Willen et al 2018, Perspectives of Older Adults on Aging Well: A Focus Group Study, Volume 2018 | Article ID 9858252 | 9 pages/ doi.org/10.1155/2018/9858252.
- Panday R, Kiran M, Srivastava P, Kumar S. A study on quality of life between elderly people living in old age home and within family setup. *Open J Psychiatry Allied Sci*. 2015;6:127-31. doi: 10.5958/2394-2061.2015.00010.5.
- Wood. W. (2000). Attitude change: Persuasion and social influence. *Annual Review of Psychology*. 51;539-570. Doi;10.1146/annurev.psych.51.1.539. PMID 10751980.

- Vaughan and Hogg, *Introduction to Social Psychology* (4th Edition). Frenches Forest, N.S.W: Pearson Education. Pp: 1-440. (2005).
- Discrimination and negative attitudes about ageing are bad for your health, Geneva Newsrelease sep 2016.
- U. Kunzmann, T. D. Little, and J. Smith, "Is age-related stability of subjective well-being a paradox? Cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence from the Berlin agingstudy," *Psychology and Aging*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 511–526, 2000.
- W. W. Spirduso, K. L. Francis, and P. G. Macrae, *Physical Dimensions of Aging*, HumanKinetics, Champaign, IL, USA, 2005.
- J. K. McNulty and F. D. Fincham, "Beyond positive psychology? Toward a contextual view of psychological processes and well-being," *American Psychologist*, vol. 67, no. 2, pp. 101–110, 2012.
- O. Fusco, A. Ferrini, M. Santoro, M. R. Lo Monaco, G. Gambassi, and M. Cesari, "Physical function and perceived quality of life in older persons," *Aging Clinical and Experimental Research*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 68–73, 2012.
- C. Bryant, B. Bei, K. Gilson, A. Komiti, H. Jackson, and F. Judd, "The relationship between attitudes to aging and physical and mental health in older adults," *international Psychogeriatrics*, vol. 24, no. 10, pp. 1674–1683, 2012.
- Steven E. Mock and Richard P. Eibach, "Ageing attitudes moderate the effect of subjective age on psychological well-being; Evidence from a 10 year longitudinal study." *Psychology and aging* 2011, Vol.26, No.4, 979-986.
- Low, Molzahn and Schopflocher, "Attitudes to ageing mediate the relationship between older peoples subjective health and quality of life in 20 countries." *Health Qual Life Outcomes*, Biomed Central the open access Publisher. Vol.11, pp 146, (2013).