

## **Assessment of Attitude towards Ageing and Well-being of Community Dwelling Older Persons**

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### **Abstract**

Old age is a critical period which requires special attention in adapting to the changes of life (Mao et al, 2019). Griffin (2016) has revealed the attitude to ageing can have a direct effect on health. Negative attitudes to ageing will affect both physical and cognitive health in later years. Well-being, physical and mental health are closely related, and this relation may become more vital at older ages as it may contribute to ageing well. The state of well-being is a multifaceted phenomenon that refers to an individual's subjective feelings and exploring perspectives of older adults on ageing well is developing to be an important area of research (Willen et al, 2018). The researcher has planned to assessment of attitude towards ageing and well-being of community dwelling 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. Standardized tools on attitude towards ageing and psychological well-being were used for the study. The major findings of the study revealed that 35 per cent of the respondents have high 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 majority of the respondents (59%) had moderate level of psychological well-being.

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

### **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 of 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 must have better understandings of the older persons especially in recent years because majority of the older persons are physically and psychologically healthy up to the age of 70 years and they are working even after 60 years and are reducing the economic burden and dependency. An attitude is "a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or

symbols (Hogg and Vanghan, 2005). When a person expresses socially acceptable attitudes, they will be rewarded and approved for their behaviour. Positive attitude helps a person to mediate between their own inner needs and the outside world. Older persons with positive beliefs about their ageing are less likely to develop functional disabilities. Negative attitudes about ageing and older people also have significant consequences for the physical and mental health of older adults. Older people who feel they are a burden perceive their lives to be less valuable, putting them at risk of depression and social isolation. Recently published research showed that older people, who hold negative views about their own ageing, do not recover as well from disability and live on average 7.5 years less than people with positive attitudes (Geneva news release 2016).

The state of well-being is a multifaceted phenomenon in the older population which generally involves happiness, self-contentment, satisfying social relationships, and autonomy (Smith et al, 2000). The sense of well-being refers to an individual's feelings, in this case, based on how older persons perceive the concept of well-being. Thus, the term 'subjective well-being' is frequently used (Spirduso et al 2005). Well-being is also subject to other persons' feelings about oneself whether that is positive or negative. Well-being is determined jointly by the interplay between individual characteristics and qualities of people's social environments (McNulty and Fincham, 2012). With advanced age, well-being might be adversely influenced by declining physical health and functioning due to age-related changes (Fusco et al 2012) older adults may consequently encounter more challenges in pursuing ageing well. They having positive mental attitudes towards aging and one's capabilities may contribute to healthier mental health, higher level of satisfaction, and lower levels of anxiety and depression among older adults (Bryant et al 2012).

Several studies have been investigated on attitude towards ageing and psychological well-being among the community dwelling older persons and other process had also been conducted. Smith et al (2022) have found the

associations between satisfaction with aging and health and well-being outcomes among older American adults. They have collected data from the health and retirement study, a national, diverse, and longitudinal sample of 13 752 American adults older than 50 years and were subsequently associated with 35 indicators of physical, behavioural, and psychosocial health and well-being in 2016 and 2018. The researchers used multiple linear and generalized linear regression models. Major findings of the study revealed that higher ageing satisfaction is associated with improved subsequent health and well-being.

Cadmus et al (2021) revealed that attitude towards ageing and perceived health status of community-dwelling older persons in a low resource setting: a rural-urban comparison. A descriptive cross-sectional study among older persons aged 60 years and above was done in a selected rural and an urban community in Oyo State, south-western Nigeria. The study participants were selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. A total of 1,180 participants (588 rural vs. 592 urban) were selected for the study. From the study it is evident that urban-dwelling participants had better attitude towards ageing process in all the domains than the rural-dwelling participants. Among the rural and urban-dwelling participants, good self-rated health was significantly associated with a positive attitude to ageing across the domains. It was concluded that the urban older persons had higher positivity towards ageing than their rural older counterparts.

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 towards ageing 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 towards 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.

**Mocket 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 towards ageing moderate this relationship. Specifically, feeling older will predict lower well-being among those with less favourable attitudes towards 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.

#### **Aim:**

The aim of the study is assessment of attitude towards ageing and well-being of community dwelling 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 assess the psychological well-being among the community dwelling older persons.
- 4) Estimation of association between the selected socio demographic variables and dimensions of attitude towards ageing and psychological well-being.

#### **Methodology**

In this study, the researcher has taken effort to investigate the attitude of older

persons towards ageing and has described the characteristics of the respondents along with three dimensions are physical change, psychological loss and psychological growth. The other key variable psychological well-being was studied with six dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. The universe of the present study comprised of older persons residing in rural and urban areas of Perambalur District, Tamilnadu. The researcher has selected 100 respondents (50 rural and 50 urban) using simple random sampling method and the sample size is 100. The researcher has used self prepared interview schedule to collect the socio demographic information's and standardized tools on attitude towards ageing developed by Laidlaw et al, in 2007 with three dimensions such as physical change, psychological loss and psychological growth. The scale consists of 24 items. Psychological well-being developed by Ryff 1989 was used to measure the psychological well-being and it has six dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. The scale consists of 42 items. Using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) analysis was done and various tests were applied to find the association and difference between variables.

#### **Results and Dimensions**

**Demographic details:** The results of the study have been discussed in detail and the age distribution of the respondents was understood as 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 gender 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.

### Conclusion

From the study it is evident that socio-economic conditions play a significant role in influencing the attitude towards ageing as well as well-being among the community dwelling older persons. Age, gender, dependents, assets have significant association on attitude towards ageing and it was found that older male have difficulty in coping with ageing as well as the health

conditions than their counterparts. Older women face lot of challenges and changes in family and social structure due to the loss of spouse. Well-being is an important concern for older adults and different strategies have to be followed to maintain sound mental health including being mentally engaged (reading, playing mental games), taking good foods for the brain like nuts and staying physically active. It is also important for the older persons to understand the ageing process and changes which occurs mentally, physically and socially for graceful ageing. Present study contributed a better insight concerning older adults' perspectives on ageing well. Enhancing physically active lifestyle, participation in social and must develop a positive attitude to accept themselves at all stages of life. Vital factors are to be considered in developing strategic health and rehabilitative plans for promoting ageing well among older adults. Every older person must maintain a positive attitude towards ageing and the positive attitude will delay the ageing process and in turn the psychological well-being can be promoted effectively.

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