



Journal Homepage: -www.journalijar.com

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/12712
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/12712>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

AGING ANXIETY: A STUDY OF FACTOR INFLUENCING ATTITUDES TO AGE AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN NIGERIA

Pauline¹, N. Ikwuegbu¹ and Daniel Omatalu²

1. Federal College of Education, Eha Amufu, Enugu State, Nigeria.
2. Department of Educational Psychology, Federal College of Education, Eha Amufu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 10 February 2021
Final Accepted: 16 March 2021
Published: April 2021

Key words: -

Religious Commitment, Attitude, Aging,
Civil Servants

Abstract

The present study aimed to examine religious commitment as a scarcely explored variable that could predict aging attitudes. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey. A total of one hundred and eighty-seven civil servants were randomly selected as the research participants. The respondents completed self-report measures of religious commitment scale and attitude to own's aging scale. A linear regression analysis was performed on the data, and the result revealed a significant association between religious commitment and attitude towards aging. It was indicating that religious commitment predicted attitude towards aging. The research finding, implications, and conclusions are discussed.

Copy Right, IJAR, 2021, All rights reserved.

Introduction: -

Aging is the biological process of transiting from young to old. It is a ubiquitous part of human life. Aging is characterized by varying changes in human existence. Perhaps, aging replicates all the changes taking place throughout life and, therefore, is considered a period of biological certainty beginning from conception and terminates at old age. Aging is associated with cultural, psychological, social, and even philosophical issues (Kyriazis, 2020). According to Flatt and Schmidt (2009), aging or senescence is an age-dependent decline in physiological function, demographically manifesting decreased survival and productiveness with increasing age. In an earlier study, Rose (1991) defined aging as a progressive decline in physiological functioning, leading to an age-dependent decrease in survival and reproduction rates. Aging is an inevitable and irreversible stage in life accompanied by a decrease in general body functions. Aging is a biological process typical to human organism accompanied by changes in social categorization from young to old (McConatha et al, 2003). For Cohen (2002), aging is considered in relation to the accompanying psycho-social and biological processes.

Although younger individuals tend to consider aging as a pathology, probably due to the practical health-related issues associated with the process of aging, for instance, Martens et al. (2004) reported that college students showed more death anxiety after they were shown pictures of older people. They sought to increase their social distance from them. Aging is simply a fact of life with common indicators such as the emergence of gray hair, bald-headedness in males, decreased vision, impaired hearing, and so on. Factors may increase the risk of diseases, such as the pancreas ages and stops secreting insulin leading to diabetes, stress leading to increased blood pressure, stroke, or a heart attack. Health compromising habits such as smoking and drinking also compound the risk. Previous studies (Faye, 2007; Barrientos, Gorman, & Heslop, 2003) suggest that illness and health declines are prevalent among older adults than the younger population.

Corresponding Author: - Pauline

Address: - Federal College of Education, Eha Amufu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Aging anxiety is associated with the fears relating to physical losses, including changes in the ability to attend to one's self, decline in health and functional capabilities (Chonody, 2019). Nevertheless, the anxieties associated with physical changes do include those alterations in physical appearance and sexual outcomes. Psychological anxieties relate to the fears of dependence, personal control, cognitive deterioration, and poor life satisfaction. Worries about social losses focus on relationships, including the number and quality of interactions with others, and fear of failure also incorporates economic issues or lack of employment (Chonody, 2019).

Research in aging (e.g., Chonody and Wang 2014) have found a relationship between belief in negative perception of older people as undeserving and incapacitating and anxiety about aging. For instance, Chonody and Teater (2016) reported that college student's negative beliefs about personal aging predicted the fear of looking old. Consequently, a positive relationship has been established between the anxieties about aging and insufficient knowledge about the aging process (Allan & Johnson 2008), including dissociation with the elderly persons in the society (Chonody et al. 2014). According to Levy (2018), the anxieties associated with aging can be alleviated using constructive enlightening of the aging process and contact experiences with the elderly persons. In Nigeria, civil servants mostly retire around 60 or 65 years or 35 years in active service. Whereas in some sectors, such as academics, retire beyond the age of 60 or 65 years. Civil servants are meant to retire, and the already retired civil servants in Nigeria are not promising. For instance, Tany, André, Mbah, and Tong (2018) reported that most Nigerian retirees find it very difficult to adapt to life after service. Most of them experience varying mental health-related challenges (Gureje, Kola, & Afolabi, 2007; Ojagbemi, & Gureje, 2019).

Non or irregular payment of pensions and other welfare packages (Odaman & Ibiezugbe 2014), inadequate health care services, decreased family support (Okoye, 2012), loneliness (Ejeh, Igbokwe & Onoja, 2020), and reduced social network (Ojembe, & Ebe, 2014) are among the perceived challenges that characterize retirement among Nigeria civil servants. Approaching retirement has been associated with anxiety and stress due to the perceived retirement doubts (Rotimi, 2005). The problems of retirement among retirees have generated many psychological and emotional feelings due to uncertainty, insecurity, and unpreparedness (Ejeh, Igbokwe & Onoja, 2020). Hence, further supporting the link between negative beliefs and fears about the aging process.

Religious commitment (RC) is among the variables linked to life satisfaction (Mahmood, Sara & Amin, Rizwana & Zahra, Anam, 2017; Fife, Adegoke, McCoy, & Brewer, 2011). Religious commitment is one of the important but barely explored variables in relation to attitude towards aging. Hence, justifying the current study. Previous studies (e.g., VanderWeele, 2017; George et al., 2002; Fry, 2000; Fabricatore et al., 2000) have looked into religiosity and spiritual commitments life satisfaction and subjective well-being, including its influence on coping across the lifespan. According to Iannello et al. (2019), religious commitment refers to the beliefs and practices of a particular religious worldview and community. RC relates to the extent to which individuals comply with their religion's demands and the level of the subjective beliefs in their path. Commitment to religion entails total acceptance and submission to the teachings and requirements of the religion. People committed to religion are expected to live and adhere to religious values, beliefs, and practices, such as perceiving aging as a blessing rather than punishment.

Attitude is a psychological concept denoting positive or negative subjective evaluation of any aspect of the socio-world. Attitudes are among those components of an individual's psychological makeup, making that person behave not passively or neutrally, but selectively and characteristically, especially concerning certain specific stimulus situations. Evidence shows that implicit attitudes may be even more strongly negative than explicit ones (Hess, 2006). Negative attitudes about aging are pervasive among young adults and are replicated in people's cognitive, affective, and behavioral patterns. Civil servants' negative attitudes towards aging are implicated in behavioral pattern, such as youth ideal and its association with beauty and vitality, social media compulsive behavior, and modifying age status in official records. These attitudes can affect a small number of people involved, but when we look at it on a larger scale, it affects our society. However, a positive attitude toward aging will lead to better adjustment in life. People hold different attitudes towards aging.

Present study

The link between Spirituality, religiosity, and subjective well-being has been debated, and research has implicated religiosity in positive well-being (Kim-Prieto & Miller, 2018) and life satisfaction (Yoon & Lee, 2004). Consequently, it is expected that individuals with a solid tie to religious commitment tend to positively appraise their life's outcome (Ramsay et al., 2019). Religious devotion is seen as an approach to attain purpose in life, mental health, physical well-being, and internal peace, which ultimately leads to happiness in life (Rizvi, Hossain, 2017)

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of religious commitment in predicting attitudes towards and aging of a sample of civil servants in Nigeria. The present study sought to explore religious commitment as a scarcely researched variable that could predict aging attitudes. It was hypothesized that religious commitment would be a significant predictor of attitude towards aging. While many research studies reviewed found that young people's attitudes towards aging are generally negative (e.g., Khan et al, 2012; Hess, 2006). We suggest that certain people's attitudes towards aging could be more favorable due to the degree of their commitment to religion and adherence to religious practices.

Method: -

Two hundred and fifty civil servants comprising 112 females and 138 males were drawn from the state civil service in the Enugu and Ebonyi states of Nigeria. Participants' age ranged between 35 and 60 years. Data on religious background showed that 233 of the participants were Christians, whereas 17 were Muslims. In all, 250 copies of the questionnaires were given to the participants who consented to partake in the study. However, only 187 copies were returned and adequately filled. Thus, they were used for the analysis.

Measures: -

The religious commitment was measured with the 10-item Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10) developed by Worthington et al. (2003). The instrument is a unidimensional scale designed to assess one's level of religious commitment. Typical items include: "My religious belief lies behind my whole approach to life" and "I enjoy participating in the activities of my religious affiliation." Participants responded by indicating the extent to which each statement was true of them in a 5-point Likert scale format ranging from "Not at all true of me" (1) to "Totally true of me" (5). Total score (obtained by adding each respondent's score in all the ten items) ranged between 10 and 50, with a higher score suggesting more religious commitment. We obtained an alpha reliability coefficient of .87 in the present study.

Attitude towards aging was measured with the Attitude towards Owns Aging (ATOAA) designed to assess people's evaluation of their aging. The scale is scored on a 4-point scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (4) strongly agree. In this study, a Cronbach's alpha = 0.78 was obtained. Higher scores indicate a more favorable perception of own aging.

Result: -

Linear regression was conducted to calculate the effect of religious commitment on attitude towards aging. The result showed that religious commitment predicted attitude towards aging at $F(1, 185) = 381.386, P < .05$, with an R^2 of .673. This indicates that religious commitment as a factor significantly predicted attitude towards aging among the samples, which means that the tension accruing from aging thought can be eased through religious commitment.

Table 1: -Table showing the result of the linear regression analysis to assess the predictive effect of religious commitment on aging attitude.

	B	Std. Error	β	R^2	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-.641	.067			-9.56	.000
Religious - Commitment	.806	.041	.821	.673	19.52	.000

a. Dependent Variable: attitude towards aging

Discussion: -

The current study aimed to study the influence of religious commitment on attitudes towards aging among civil servants in Nigeria. The linear regression analysis revealed that religious commitment significantly predicted attitude towards aging ($1, 185) = 381.386, P < .05$). The adjusted R^2 indicated that religious commitment accounted for 67.3% of the variation in attitude towards aging. Based on the result, our hypothesis that religious commitment will significantly predict attitude towards aging was confirmed. Thus, this finding is consistent with previous studies that have reported the predictive role of religious commitment in several domains. For instance, Behboodi et al. (2018) found that religious commitment has a significant effect on bodily pain, physical functioning, physical problems, and vitality. Others found a correlation between religious commitment and mental health (Judith, 2000),

well-being (Dar, 2019). Supposedly, religious commitment moderates an individual's cognitive, affective, and behavioral tendencies. Therefore, one can say that an individual's perception of own aging could be affected by the level of their commitment to religion, which means that people with a previously negative attitude towards aging could be motivated to change the attitude as their commitment to their faith increases. The probable reason for this change could be attributed to religious teachings relating to acceptance.

The implication of the study

The study's findings further implicated religious commitment as a rarely explored variable that could influence human behavior. The result implies that people who scored high in religious commitment are more efficient in coping with aging thought. Furthermore, it shows that religious commitment could be a veritable tool in managing the stress accompanying the negative opinions of getting older and the associated thoughts of retirement.

Conclusion: -

From this study, it was revealed that civil servants who scored high in religious commitment tend to be comfortable with the feelings of getting older and retiring from service. The study concludes that following the undesirable effects of negative attitudes towards aging, individuals must invest more attention to their respective faith teachings. Although, the study has its flaws. For example, generalization of the findings is a thing of concern regarding the respondents of the survey. However, the research suggests that prospective researchers expand the scope of samples, methodology, and variables.

Acknowledgment: -

The present study was funded by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TetFund)

Ethical consideration

The authors declare that the present study's procedures and methodology complied with the approved ethical standards relating to human participation in research.

Reference: -

1. Allan L.J., & Johnson J. A. (2008) Undergraduate attitudes toward the elderly: the role of knowledge, contact and aging anxiety. *Educ Gerontol* 35(1):1–14.
2. Bernard-Fisher, Judith (2000) "Religious Commitment as a Correlate of Mental Health and Life Satisfaction Among Black American Families". Dissertations.224. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/224>
3. Behboodi M., Zeinali F., Salmanian M., & Shamohammadi M. (2018). Religious Commitment and Quality of Life among a Sample of Iranian Undergraduate Students. *J Depress Anxiety Forecast*. 2018; 1(1): 1002
4. Chonody J.M. (2019) Anxiety About Aging. In: Gu D., Dupre M. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Gerontology and Population Aging*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69892-2_592-1
5. Chonody, J. M., & Teater, B. (2016) Why do I dread looking old? A test of social identity theory, terror management theory, and the double standard of aging. *Journal of Women Aging* 28(2):112–126.
6. Chonody JM, Wang D (2014) Ageism among social work faculty: impact of personal factors and other "isms." *Gerontol Geriatric Educ* 35(3):248–263
7. Dar K. A., & Iqbal, N. (2019). Religious Commitment and Well-Being in College Students: Examining Conditional Indirect Effects of Meaning in Life. *J Relig Health*.58(6):2288-2297. DOI: 10.1007/s10943-017-0538-2. PMID: 29288286.
8. Onu, D. U., Onyedibe, M. C., Ugwu, L. E., & Nche, G. C. (2019): Relationship between religious commitment and academic dishonesty: Is self-efficacy a factor? *Ethics & Behavior*, DOI: 10.1080/10508422.2019.1695618
9. Fife, J., Adegoke, A., McCoy, J., & Brewer, T. (2011). Religious commitment, social support, and life satisfaction among college students. *College Student Journal*, 45(2), 393+.
10. Flatt, T., & Schmidt, P. S. (2009). Integrating evolutionary and molecular genetics of aging. *Biochemical et Biophysica Acta*, 1790(10), 951–962. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbagen.2009.07.010>
11. Gureje O., Kola L., & Afolabi E. (2007). Epidemiology of major depressive disorder in elderly Nigerians in the Ibadan study of aging: a community-based survey. *Lancet*.370(9591):957–64. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(07\)61446-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)61446-9)
12. Hess, Thomas. (2006). Seventeen Attitudes toward Aging and Their Effects in Behavior. *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging*. 10.1016/B978-012101264-9/50020-3.

13. Khan, Abdul & Ong, E.K. & Wong, E.S.Y. (2012). The attitude towards aging among residents of an elderly care institution in Penang Malaysia. *International Journal of Collaborative Research on Internal Medicine and Public Health*. 4. 1069-1083.
14. Kyriazis, M. (2020). Aging Throughout History: The Evolution of Human Lifespan. *J Mol Evol* **188**, 57–65. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00239-019-09896-2>
15. Levy, S. (2018) Toward reducing ageism: PEACE (Positive Education about Aging and Contact Experiences) model. *The Gerontologist* 58(2):226–232.
16. McConatha J. T., Schnell F., Volkwein K., Riley L., & Leach E. (2003) Attitudes Towards Aging: A comparative analysis of Young Adults from The United States and Germany. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 51 (3), 206-17
17. Mahmood, S., Amin, R., & Zahra, A. (2017). Impact of Religious Commitment on Life Satisfaction among Adults Impact of Religious Commitment on Life Satisfaction among Adults. *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Research*. 18. 53-61.
18. Martens A, Greenberg J., & Schimel J. (2004) Ageism and death: effects of mortality salience and perceived similarity to elders on reactions to elderly people. *Personal Soc Psychol Bull* 30:1524–1536
19. Ojagbemi A, Gureje O. (2019). Social relationships and the association of lone lines with major depressive disorder in the Ibadan study of aging. *World Social Psychiatry*. 1:82–8. https://doi.org/10.4103/WSP.WSP_6_19.
20. Odaman M. O, Ibiezugbe M. I. (2014). Health seeking behavior among the elderly in Edo Central Nigeria. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*. 7(1):201–10.
21. Ojembe BU, Ebe KM. (2008). Describing reasons for loneliness among older people in Nigeria. *Journal of Gerontol Soc Work*. 2018;61(6):640–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01634372.1487495>
22. Okoye U. O. (2012). Family caregiving for aging parents in Nigeria: gender differences, cultural imperatives and the role of education. *Int J Education Aging*. 2(2):139–54.
23. Rizvi, M.A.K., Hossain, M.Z. (2017). Relationship Between Religious Belief and Happiness: A Systematic Literature Review. *J Relig Health* **56**, 1561–1582. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-016-0332-6>
24. Rotimi, O (2005). Cross ethnic study of the adjustment needs of retired Nigerian Federal Civil Servants. *The Counselors*, 21:172-183.
25. Veronica J. Ejeh, Charles C. Igbokwe & Helen N. Onoja (2020). Determination of Depression, Anxiety and Stress Among Retirees in Kogi State and Preventive Strategies. *International Journal of Education, Learning and Development* Vol.8, No.3, pp.62-74.