



Research Paper

A Review of the Literature: Concept of wellbeing, Religious practices and Mental Health in Old age.

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Abstract:

Greater involvement in religious practices has been found to correlate to better health-related status in the old age. Religion and spirituality help old age people to combat the feeling of helplessness as well as promote successful healthy aging with hope, confidence, and positive attitude. Religious practices and psychological wellbeing seem to help individuals to cope with aging-related syndromes, stress and help them build up in themselves as a resource for resilience, boosting their wellbeing.

Keywords: Wellbeing, Religion, practice, spirituality, mental health, old age.

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I. Introduction

What is aging? From the biological point, aging refers to the disintegration of cells over time that may lead to severe diseases, an unproductive state, or even death. Socially, it is associated with various changes and transitions in life such as from a manager to a retired hand, or settlement to a new place, and getting acquainted with new peers and circles. Economically, aging refers to being a pensioner from an employee, which brings about serious socio-economic changes. Though physiological changes may occur due to biological changes, socio-economic changes are purely dependent on society, family, friends and work place. Psychologically, aging is a multi-factorial process.

The world's population is growing rapidly. By the year 2050, the world's old age population is calculated to be at 22% (1). In fact, this is an unexpected increase in older adults. Studies show that aging carries with it a risk of tolerating losses, physical and mental health problems, and cases of disability. Older people are prone to many mental health problems. Older people lose loved ones in death, relatives, children, and close friends, neighbors because of illness, divorce, death, migration, and retirement. It is the stage in life where people experience various common problems such as physical helplessness, economic insecurity, loneliness, increased frequency of physical disorders, lack of social support and cognitive issues etc., which directly affect mental health and mental well-being.(2)

With the extraordinary increase in the number of oldest adults, several studies have focused on various factors related with life span, physical health, social influences, life style and geographic factors.(3) Little attention has been paid to spirituality and mental health. However, globally, most of the research on aging is primarily confined to socio demographic variables. As a result, problems related to the mental health, psychological wellbeing, and the role of spirituality remains untouched by the researchers. There are evidences that indicate that religion and spirituality have the ability to promote or damage mental health in Old age.(4). This review study aims to find the multidimensional concept of aging in relation to religious practices and the concept of well being.

Material Search strategy and selection criteria

For this review, the author searched the pub med database (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/>) to find all published studies describing wellbeing, mental health , and religious practices in old age cohorts. I used various combinations of search terms such as “spirituality,” “religious practices,” “aging,” “age related disease,” “geriatrics syndromes,” “spirituality struggle,” “well being,” “psychosomatic diseases,” “psychological issues,” “disability,” “psychological aspects” “multi

dimensional concept of aging” and “religious practices in old age”. The literature search covered articles published from 2005 to 2022 in English.

II. Results

Concept of religious practices and psychological wellbeing in old age.

Religion, spirituality and mental health have the same roots in the conceptual framework of the relationship between humans, nature, and God. Religion is referred to as a personal or institutional system of organized beliefs, practices, customs, or ways of worship; in contrast, spirituality often denotes a feeling of connection with supernatural forces (5). These beliefs and practices have an impact on how individuals, especially older groups, respond to important life events such as the untimely death of their partners, old age, and the migration of their children to another nation.

Involvement in religious and spiritual practices has been found to be more associated with old age (6). Spirituality in old age is a reflection of the good and bad experiences they have in their lives. (7). The concept of spirituality in old age and its relationship to health and well-being should be more evidently understood.

Psychological wellbeing may be defined as the state of proper positive functioning of psychological system. Positive functioning comprises the following dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Each dimension of psychological wellbeing contributes to mental health. Yoon & Lee (2007) conducted a study on the psychological wellbeing among rural elderly (8). Results showed significant association between the social support and psychological wellbeing of the elderly. Wong, Yoo & Stewart (2007) revealed that more social support significantly contributed to better overall psychological wellbeing of the elderly (9).

Aging is seen as a period of life associated with beliefs and spirituality. Religious practices seem to help people deal with age-related illnesses and help them to develop psychological support for themselves (10). Religion and medicine are closely related to each other since records are available. Across history, priests and religious leaders have frequently acted as physicians, and various religious institutions have established hospitals to care of the elderly (11). The trust that the elderly had in these priests are specifically seen in Indian literatures and heritage. Old age in the past had been considered as a period of decline in life where he was considered useless to the society. However, recently, the view has been changed. Now, they are better considered to be valuable to the society sharing years of their life experiences. Beliefs and practices are found worldwide among the older people. Older ones often need spiritual help and support when life's pressures seem overwhelming. Various studies have clearly demonstrated the profound connection between religion, spirituality, and health (12). Spiritual health also plays a vital role in coping with stress and maintaining good health in later life (13). Prayer times are found to reduce the progression of the disease. Social prayer times keep people connected with their social peers, and this support prevents sadness, anxiety, depression and hostility up to a certain extent (14).

Religious practices and Quality of Life.

Multiple researches have demonstrated a positive association between spirituality and QOL(15) .A study that was carried out among the elderly patients found that spiritual life is related to greater longevity, low anxiety, increased self-esteem, and increased marriage satisfaction (16) . Religiosity and spirituality enhance life satisfaction possibly through positive psychosocial and physiological mechanisms (17). Spirituality turns to be an important component, responsible for improving QOL, and a resource in ill patients; thus, it was associated with better mental and physical health (18).

III. Discussion:

The Multidimensional aspects of Successful aging.

Successful aging has become an important aspect to describe the concept of aging in any community. It is a multidimensional concept that focuses on how well the elderly population spends their life. The various attributes that comprise successful aging include the physical and biological, psychological, social, economic, and spiritual factors. A harmonious interaction of all these factors contributes in many ways to the individual himself and his family.

The various health issues that may crop up during the old age include cognitive decline, respiratory problems, dementia, heart diseases, osteoporosis, urinary incontinence, balancing issues, Alzheimer’s disease, bacterial infections in gums and teeth, Diabetes, vision or hearing loss, the threat of cancer, and pain in various parts of the body such as back and neck. Even though biological aging rests upon genetic factors mostly, the other components such as psychological, social, and economic factors can be controlled with constant early aging care activities and measures to achieve a successful, comfortable, satisfying old age.

One of the most important factors toward successful aging is to adopt healthy aging practices in the early aging days. A healthy diet is one of such crucial aspects. Following a well-charted diet with assistance

from a health professional and engaging in regular physical activities can promote physical well-being in old age. Maintaining a healthy family relationship is equally important. Closely bound family relationships are the power boosters in old age. Feeling of oneness and having a respected position in your own family contributes much to the psychological wellness in advanced years. Improving the physical and mental capacity in old age can better make a person independent. Getting abstained from alcoholism and other illicit drugs, engaging in socially committed welfare activities, and volunteering in social service, religious activities can promote healthy living and gain a respected position in society.

IV. Conclusion

Greater involvement in religious practices has been found to correlate to better health-related status in the old age. Religion and spirituality help old age people to combat the feeling of helplessness as well as promote successful healthy aging with hope, confidence, and positive attitude. Religious practices and psychological wellbeing seem to help individuals to cope with aging-related syndromes, stress and help them build up in themselves as a resource for resilience, boosting their wellbeing.

Ethical Disclosures

The authors declare that no experiments have been performed on humans or animals for this review.

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