

The relationship between self-actualization and life expectancy in the elderly in Tehran city

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Abstract

Given that the elderly population is increasing in recent years in Iran, studying their life expectancy and its related factors is necessary. The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between self-actualization and life expectancy in the elderly of Tehran city. This descriptive-correlational study was conducted on 200 nursing home resident and non-resident elderly in Tehran during 2017. The participant were selected using the convenience sampling method. Maslow self-actualization and Miller life expectancy questionnaires were used for collecting data. Then, the data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and regression analysis by the SPSS software (version 20). Results of this study showed that there was a significantly positive relationship between self-actualization and life expectancy among the elderly living in Tehran city, Iran ($P < 0.05$). The results also revealed that the effect of self-actualization on life expectancy in the non-resident elderly was more than in nursing home residents ($P < 0.05$). Findings of this study suggest that providing suitable grounds for creating and promotion of self-actualization in the elderly can enhance their life expectancy.

Keywords: Self-actualization, Life expectancy, Elderly

Introduction

The aging process may be understood as a set of unfavorable structural and functional alterations of the organism, which progressively accumulate, specifically due to advancing age. These modifications interfere with the performance of motor skills, making difficult the individual's adaptation to the environment, initiating changes of both a social and psychological nature (1). Since the late twentieth century with the development of medical knowledge and control of infectious diseases and reducing newborns deaths and reducing of fertility level and economic, political, social, welfare changes and advances in technology and nutrition and the growth of health care and therapeutic and diagnostic technologies life expectancy and the elderly population has been

increasing (2). Today approximately 31 countries of the world have each one more than two millions elderly above 60 years old that the number of these countries is increasing day by day. The rate of growth of the elderly population in developing countries is very high. Also in Iran, the proportion of the elderly population is growing quickly due to decrease rate of birth and to increase life expectancy (3). So the researchers have focused on the role of hope as a positive factor in life Critical and threatening conditions. Snyder believes that hope is the combination of multidimensional components of cognitive structures, and it focuses on the future and to reach the targets (4). Hope is a positive feature that is introduced by Snyder (1999), and its concept is very close to positive Psychology. High level of hope related with Psychological well-being, coping with stress, emotional disturbance adjustment, Self-esteem, social competence, Self-efficacy and academic achievement (5). Clinically, the hope is a factor that it has therapeutic value in the domain of coping with chronic pains or threatening events of life and hope facilitates coping process, and it improves treatment and enhances the quality of life (6). The researchers have shown that adolescents and adults with high levels of hope have better performance in the fields related to school, sports, maintaining health, problem solving and psychological well-being (7). Correlational findings indicate that a higher hopeful thinking in person is positively associated with perceived competence and self-esteem, and negatively associated with symptoms of depression (8). Regarding views about the future, those with high hope typically are more optimistic; they focus on success rather than failure when pursuing goals (8); they develop many life goals; and they perceive themselves as being capable of solving problems that may arise (8). The desire to grow and expand all the potentials from the biological abilities to the most complex psychological aspects, is the concept that Rogers called it "self-actualization" (9). Maslow's definition of self-actualization is "the human tendency to actualize