Investigating the Role of Perception of Aging and Associated Factors in Death Anxiety among the Elderly

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Abstract

Background & objectives: The world's growing elderly population highlights the necessity of further attention to the psychological problems of the elderly, such as death anxiety. Analysis of elderly's perception of aging and associated factors can contribute to prediction of their future physical and mental health condition. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship of perception of aging and a group of demographic factors with death anxiety in the elderly living in Gonabad, Iran.**Method**: This analytical descriptive study was conducted on 330 elderly residents of Gonabad, who were selected by stratified random sampling. Research tools were a standard demographic questionnaire, Barker's Brief Aging Perceptions Questionnaire (B-APQ), and Collett-Lester Fear of Death Scale (CL-FODS). Data were collected by interview of respondents at their home. Data analysis was carried out in SPSS16 using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Pearson test, independent t-test, and linear regression.**Results**: Respondents had a mean age of 73.97 ± 7.68 years, and 42.4% of respondents were men and 57.6% were women. The total B-APQ score was 63.18 ± 8.75, with the highest score (17.10 ± 4.70) associated with negative consequences and control. The total CL-FODS score was 128 ± 14.80, with the highest score (35.13 ± 4.06) pertaining to the sub-scale fear of other people's death. Regression results indicated that the death anxiety score was predictable according to the age and all dimensions of perception of aging, except for the consequences and negative control dimension.**Conclusion**: Age and the perception of aging are good predictors of death anxiety. The authors recommend further research on the determinants of death anxiety in the elderly and development of a comprehensive care plan to reduce this anxiety among Iranian elderly.

Keywords: perception of aging, death anxiety, elderly