

How older people see themselves: perspectives about ageing

Vítor Pinheira ^{1,2}

¹ Physiotherapist, Polytechnic Institute of Castelo Branco, College of Health Dr. Lopes Dias, Castelo Branco, Portugal
² Phd Student in Gerontology – UNIFAI – ICBAS – University of Porto, Portugal

Key Words: Ageing; Self-perceptions; sociodemographic conditions

Contact: vpinheira@pcb.pt

INTRODUCTION

Ageing is an individual development process characterized by large variability between individuals. However, the aging stereotypes has usually an negative signal and may influence the way how older people see themselves. The proverbs, as a result of the popular sense, usually reflect this ageism vision. The way as individuals do the interpretation of proverbs may reflect the environment and the capacity to have an personal view of age.

OBJECTIVES

Evaluate the elderly's perspective about ageing and assess the relationship with sociodemographic conditions, social support, health conditions and functional status. Compare this perspective between the youngest group (<70 years), middle group (70-79) and the older group (>80).

METHODS

Descriptive, cross-sectional and correlational study. Sample of 102 subjects, predominantly female (59.2%) with mean age of 73.33 ± 9.24 years. The subjects interpret several proverbs related with ageing through interview. Data collection includes sociodemographic and health conditions, BARTHEL Index (functionality) and an Satisfaction with Social Support Scale. The Mini-Mental State Examination (cognition state) was used has to evaluate cognitive state and the capacity to participate in the study.

DISCUSSION

Sample was organized in three groups. Youngest group (n=40; age 59-69) have a most positive perspective about ageing, better health conditions and functionality than other groups aged between 70-79 years (n=33) and 80 or more years (=29).

The number of diseases, consumption of drugs or medical services and several sociodemographic conditions are related with negative perspectives about ageing. Education (number of years), social activities and Social Satisfaction Support are related with positive perspectives about ageing.

Age (years)	N		Education (Years)	Social Activities (Number)	Medical visits (last 6 months)	Medication (drugs/day)	Self-reported diseases	Bartel Index	Social Support Satisfaction Scale	MMSE
< 70	40	Mean	6,00	6,73	2,65	2,90	1,68	96,25	57,88	27,80
		Std.Dev.	3,658	3,559	2,095	2,048	1,207	15,963	9,685	3,322
70 - 79	33	Mean	2,91	4,90	3,88	4,09	2,52	93,94	58,97	25,48
		Std.Dev.	2,263	3,691	4,037	2,213	1,363	12,855	10,513	3,768
> 80	29	Mean	4,05	3,54	2,86	4,00	1,48	85,52	56,34	24,14
		Std.Dev.	3,351	3,162	2,475	2,841	1,087	19,149	10,721	3,833

Medication (number of drugs/day) revealed a high correlation (significant at the 0.01 level) with functionality, cognitive state, medical visits, self-reported diseases and education.

REFERENCES

- Knight, T.; Ricciardelli, A. Successful. (2003). Successful aging: perceptions of adults aged between 70 and 101 years. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 56 (3):223-246.
- Schafer, M.; Shippee, T. (2010). Age Identity, Gender, and Perceptions of Decline: Does Feeling Older Lead to Pessimistic Dispositions About Cognitive Aging?. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 65B (1): 91-96.
- Levy, B.; Slade, M.; Kunkel, S.; Kasl, S. (2002). Longevity increased by positive self-perceptions of aging. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83(2): 261-270.
- Duay, L.; Bryan, V. (2006). Senior Adults' Perceptions of Successful Aging. *Educational Gerontology*, 32 (6): 423-445.

CONCLUSION

The elderly perspectives about ageing appear be modulated by age and is related with demographic, social conditions, and health related questions. Subjects married or with family, with more education, with low levels of health consumption services and products and autonomous have a more positive view of age and ageing process.