Extended Abstract

An Attitude Scale toward Aging and Elderliness: A Validity and Reliability Study

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to conduct the validity and reliability analysis of the scale developed for measuring the attitudes of adults over 18 toward aging and elderliness. The scale is a five-point Likert-type and self-reporting scale. The sample group consists of 842 individuals, all of whom were selected impartially in the city of Istanbul in 2015. As a result of the factor analyses during the scale's validation, wherein experts were asked their opinions, the scale was identified to consist of 45 items and to contain four factors. The total factor loading has been determined as 57.84%; the factors' loading values range between 3.11% and 41.26%. According to the results of reliability analysis, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the whole scale was calculated as .97. The alpha values for the factors were confirmed to range from .90 to .93. As a result of item analysis, all obtained values for item-total and item-remainder correlations were determined to be significant \( p < .001 \). Meanwhile, in the discriminant analysis, all items and factors were found discriminative. Test-retest correlations were also found to be significant for the total score \( r = 0.89; p < .001 \). Finally, the scale was found to be usable as a valid and reliable scale for adults 18 and older.

Keywords

Aging • Elderliness • Attitude • Scale Developing • Validity • Reliability

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In terms of developmental psychology, life is a developmental process that moves forward sequentially and contains periods that are different from others in terms of the characteristics they carry. These periods, which differ from each other qualitatively in individuals’ developments, are called stages. However much stages are defined among certain ages, the most important determinant that separates one stage from another are the typical features specific to the stage in question (Aydin, 1997). These stages are childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, and, lastly, old age. In theoretical approaches such as Erikson’s and Havighurt’s theories, old age is used to identify those 65 years of age and older (Binbaşoğlu, 1995; Erden & Akman, 2000; Erşanlı, 2002).

Old age, like other stages of life, contain some typical developmental tasks specific to the self. For example, the developmental tasks of old age are expressed in the form of understanding and adapting to one’s diminishing cognitive and physical strength, adjusting to retirement and a diminished income, accepting and getting used to losses in the family, adopting and implementing the social role suitable to one’s age, and regulating one’s physical and social environments to one’s own comfort (Senemoğlu, 1997; Yeşilyapra, 2003).

Old age, which is handled and examined last within the developmental stages, is a period where one experiences many physiological, psychological, and social changes (Carl, Tyler, & Herold, 1992). Every life cycle is affected by the changes it contains, which can be predicted based on the experiences of the previous period. In other words, every life period is affected by the life events of all life periods that will impact a later period; these are in old age and are also affected by what has happened in previous periods. The quality of life in old age is directly related to previous experiences. Üncu (2003) pointed out many events that are experienced throughout the entire life cycle, in the period before old age, and in old age that have positive and negative effects on the behaviors of the elderly. Yet it is a period that is usually defined negatively because of some of the changes that aging coerces in a generally physical, social, and emotional sense. Counted among these changes are children leaving home, loss of being in the top position, encountering more frequent chronic discomforts, changing social roles, and so on. All of these negative changes place individuals within a process where maladjustments are psychologically experienced more intensely (Kerem, Meriç, Kırdı, & Cavlak, 2001).

This negativity is often encountered in the literature through axial descriptions. For example, Emirçoğlu (1995) defined aging through decline and backwards withdrawal. Biçer (1996), in evaluating life for all living things as a process of physiological change that results in death, explained aging as a progressive process of insufficiency
that takes place as the last period of life wherein the body is unable to cope with an increase of internal and external adverse factors, which eventually results in death. Bilginer, Tuncer, and Apan (1996) also emphasized that the period, in addition to physical and biological problems, contains impossible social problems that are hard to avoid. The backwards transformation is impossibly stretched with psychological and physiological forces, together with aging in accordance with these forces; preserving balance between one’s inner and outer environs becomes harder.

The fact that the elderly population is increasing day by day is remarkable. Carl et al. (1992) indicated that the world is observing a decrease in fertility rates in many places alongside a declining death rate; this witnessed change has emerged more clearly in developed countries where life expectancy is over 70 years old. According to Barker (1998) and Ebrahim (2002), the elderly population increase also happens more prominently in developing countries; Toprak, Soydal, and Bal (2002) predict that the 60 and older population will increase more than nine times quickly between 1998 and 2050. The increase in the elderly population, aside from the quantity (life span and observable/concrete illnesses), also carries the characteristics of elderly lives (quality of life) to an important point. Anymore, in addition to the long life span, the greater quality of life and factors that determine this have become important. Özdemir, Akdemir, and Akyar (2005) expressed that developments occurring in the health field, the importance given to health, the longevity of human life as a result of public policies set forth on this point, and the increase of the elderly population within the general population are also completely natural.

These above statements reveal the truth that old age is an important psychological field because of the changes it includes and the possible problems of adapting. When considering this field in the context of the elderly, while the elderly personally bear this real period of life, they bear the character of a significant period of life in terms of the families and societies that have elderly individuals. Moreover, the increasing elderly population reveals the fact that the issues of the elderly and/or of those who have elderly ones requires more rigorous consideration and reveals the need for further consideration in public policies. The internal need of the problem area is waiting for the development of solution-focused projects, planned investments, and discussions on conceptual and practical issues in this field. Protective influences (social support provisions) that both, according to many countries, address aging and the social problems connected to it as a new academic problem and that affect the appearance of aging can be said to transform aging to a less noticeable problem area than other developmental periods. However, before discussing either conceptual problems or solutions, how these issues will be revealed in concrete terms brings the problematics of measure to the agenda. Although it is possible to come across measuring tools in
developed countries that the elderly can use for the purpose of detecting the attitudes of different sections of society towards them or different characteristics of the elderly, as well as research performed on this subject, a limited number of measuring tools are found in Turkey.

For example, scales in Turkish translations are found like the Autonomy Evaluation Scale developed by Tuna and Çelik (2012) for assessing the functional independence of individuals 65 years and older; the European Attitudes to Aging Questionnaire (AAQ, or AYTA in Turkish), whose validity and reliability were performed by Eser et al. (2011), applied to older groups, and formed three sub-dimensions (psychosocial loss, bodily change, and psychosocial development); the Elderly Discrimination in University Students Attitude Scale, developed by Yılmaz and Terzioğlu (2011) in the direction of determining the attitudes of university students related to elderly discrimination; and the Kogan Attitude toward Old People Scale: Turkish Form, created with the purpose of measuring individuals’ attitudes towards the elderly, developed by Kogan in 1961, and adapted to Turkish by Kılıç and Adibelli (2011). A portion of these scales are directed at individuals 65 and older who have entered the elderly group to externalize themselves. In the Kogan Attitude toward Old People Scale, validity and reliability functions were performed over the perceptions of the non-elderly. The scale that is the topic in this article did not act just from individuals who had entered the elderly group while determining attitudes towards old age and aging; through this quality, it is similar in structure to Kogan’s scale. However, for the reasons of being an adaptation study of Kogan’s scale, the original scale being developed in 1961, and being developed in a different culture, Kogan’s scale can have different cultural elements that probably reflect onto the statements; this is thought to likely form a different factor structure. In this context, it is hoped that developing current, culturally sensitive, valid, and reliable measuring instruments that will facilitate obtaining information to give direction to policies and research related to elderliness will provide significant contributions to the literature.
Kaynaklar/References


