

Fear as a Predictor of Life Satisfaction for Retirees in Canada

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ABSTRACT

Laslett's theory of the Third Age regarding postretirement life satisfaction was tested from the social participation perspective in Canada by a quantitative method. Fears about growing old negatively significantly predicted both life and retirement satisfactions after adjusting for significant activity theory covariates. Canada's eminent poverty-preventing strategies supported retiree life satisfaction.

PROBLEM

In developed countries, most retirees with health, vigor, and positive attitudes experience some **fears related to their growing old** (Laslett, 1987, 1991). The question of how and in which ways these fears may interfere with postretirement life satisfaction, as well as which factors in the process of retirement life contribute to or diminish this satisfaction have not been clearly understood.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this survey was threefold, specifically to:

1. Test the Laslett theory of the Third Age by examining a set of covariates correlated to the two dependent variables (i.e., life satisfaction and overall retirement satisfaction);
2. Determine to what extent **fears about growing old** predicted the dependent variables after controlling for significant covariates; and
3. Establish whether a significant interaction effect between gender and postretirement work occurred on the dependent variables.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

1. Views toward retirees and retirement have been dichotomous.
 - a. In the United States, retirees had "roleless role" (Burgess, 1960, p.20). In activity theory for successful aging, retirement was a negative variable (George, 1978).
 - b. In the United Kingdom, Laslett (1987, 1991) posited that one's life comprised four stages (i.e., the First Age for learning, the Second Age for working, the Third Age for postretirement life fulfillment, and the Fourth Age for the final dependence and death) although the Third Age accompanied **fears about growing old**.
2. Once the Laslett (1987, 1991) theory globally prevailed, some researchers, including Sadler (2000, 2006) in the United States, conducted studies from only the positive aspects of the Third Age mostly by a qualitative method, ignoring the fears.
3. The Third Age also emerged in Japan in the 1960s (Laslett, 1987, 1991), but Weiss, Bass, Heimovitz, and Oka (2005) found well-being in only Japanese male retirees with a part-time job. This finding implied that gender difference and social participation might affect postretirement life satisfaction.
4. I examined retiree life/retirement satisfaction in Canada, which shared the same North American culture with the United States (Rokach, 2007).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1:** Which set of covariates (gender, current activity, reasons for retirement [job stress, pressure from employer, pursuing own interest, and circumstances], perceived social support, and postretirement part-time work) significantly predicted life/retirement satisfactions among Canadian retirees?
- RQ2:** To what extent did self-perceptions of **fears about growing old** predict life/retirement satisfactions after controlling for significant covariates?
- RQ3:** Was there a significant interaction effect of gender and postretirement working on life/retirement satisfactions among these retired Canadians?

PROCEDURES

- A self-administered survey by cross-sectional convenience sample at senior centers in Canada.
- A pilot study: the reliability and validity of Current Activities section of Floyd et al.'s (1992) Retirement Satisfaction Inventory; **Fears About Growing Old**, deprived from exemplifications of Laslett (1991) ⇒ an instrument for the first time in the world.
- Perfectly completed main survey ($n = 190$; no missing value).

DATA ANALYSIS

- Pearson's correlation and multiple regression; significance level: .05.
- Barrett and Murk's (2009) Life Satisfaction Index for the Third Age–Short Form to predict life satisfaction.
- Research Question 1: the stepwise method; Questions 2 and 3: the hierarchical method.
- Two dependent variables; the Research Question 1: all covariates; Question 2: the covariates significant in the previous analyses and the independent variable **fears about growing old**; Question 3: gender, postretirement work, and the interaction term thereof.

FINDINGS

1. **Fear** significantly predicted life satisfaction; covariates: current activity, job circumstance, postretirement work, and social support; $R^2 = .26$.
2. **Fear** significantly explained retirement satisfaction; covariates: current activity and social support; $R^2 = .14$.
3. Pearson correlations were found between life satisfaction and stress on job; retirement satisfaction and both being female and circumstance on job.
4. **The highest fear** was loss of family for males; having cancer, heart disease, and dementia for females. Loss of retirement income or earning power was **the lowest fear** among both genders.
5. No interaction effect was found.

LIMITATIONS

- No mailing survey involving all senior center members due to insufficient budget and Canada Post strike in 2011.
- No random sampling due to a senior center director decision not to share the member mailing list.

CONCLUSIONS

| Positive/Negative Factors for Life/Retirement Satisfaction | |
|--|--|
| Life | Postretirement work (+) Job stress (-) |
| Both life and retirement | Current activity (+) Social support (+) Job circumstance (-) Fears about growing old (-) |
| Retirement | Being female |

| Fears About Growing Old | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Highest | Loss of family for males; Mortal diseases for females |
| Lowest | Fear for poverty for both genders |

SOCIAL CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

| Necessities to increase retiree life satisfaction | |
|---|---|
| Retirees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports from friends, family, and significant others • current activities with friends and/or family • a volunteer job • a longer retiree life/role like females • less health fear of their own and family |
| Employers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gerontological counselor to solve job stress/circumstance • volunteer work offer to retirees |
| Other countries | Canada's three steady poverty preventive strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guaranteed financial life for the poor and females victimized work history • substantial public pension programs • publicly funded healthcare system |