

Optimism as a Mediation between Self-Acceptance and Successful Aging for Elderly

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Abstract. Aging could not be avoided by individuals. Those who accepted aging happened to themselves would be successfully able to face it. On the other hand, those who could not accept aging, they would face obstacles in their lives. This study was aimed at measuring self-acceptance and successful aging by using optimism as a mediation. The subjects of this study were 54 elderly people who joined Islamic Religious activity in AR Hakim of Malang. The instrument used were Successful Aging Scale (SAS), The Sort Optimism Scale (TOS), Self-Acceptance Scale, while the data analysis used mediation regression Hayes SPSS 2.1. The result of this study showed that the mediator variable was available on the three criteria. The effect of self-acceptance in successful aging was not significant if there was optimism in analysis. Optimism affected successful aging with significance 0.0048.

Keywords: Optimism, successful aging, elderly

Introduction

Being old is a phase faced by individuals and they wish to have a long life. The older an individual is, the more unproductive he will be. The contribution given by an individual who is getting older is less appreciated by society because people tend to appreciate attractiveness, energy, and young age (Khairani, 2012). Society realizes that there is less appreciation for elderly. The thought that elderly is less productive makes people know about ageism (elderlyism) concept. In fact, every person absolutely will be aging, and this causes refusal to accept aging as a normal process (Crawley, 2005).

Aging can be seen by the loss of progressive physiological integrity which causes the function disruption of body (Zalukhu, Phyma, & Pinzon, 2016). Meanwhile, the research conducted by Campbell in 1981 by involving 184 elders, most of them are reported that they are unhappier than those who are younger. It is because they tend to think their children's problems. Mostly is about economy problem (Brown, Bowling, & Flynn, 2004).

It is important to give understanding to the elders about accepting their condition in order to achieve happiness in life. If an elder accepts her life, happy, and confidence, then it is called successful aging (Bülow & Söderqvist, 2014). Self-acceptance ability is affected by education. According to Vasile research (2010), the elders whose education is at university level will have critical and positive thought, compared to those whose education is at high school level (Vasile, 2013). Meanwhile, a research conducted by Gatz and Zarit (1999), there are several factors to achieve successful aging, such as satisfaction, harmony, self-acceptance, purpose, the ability to manage emotion, family, and environmental support (Brown et al., 2004)

One of the factors affected the elders to achieve successful aging is self-acceptance. They will feel less insecure if they can accept who they are. A study conducted by Bond and friends showed that an individual with self-acceptance appreciates anything happens in his life and maximizes his ability in working (Butler & Ciarrochi, 2007). Another research conducted by Petric showed that self-acceptance (Vasile, 2013) does not only affect work performance, but also the immunity of the body. Elders need to have strong immune system because they easily get sick (Petrie, Booth, & Pennebaker, 1998). Furthermore, optimism is an important factor that affects the physical condition of someone. It comes from the life experience of an individual. An elder who had lived longer definitely has many experiences in life, whether it is sad or happy. A research conducted by Bandura and friends in (1977) showed that optimistic and positive mind can increase immunity. A patient who has positive mind will recover sooner after surgery (Wengler & Rosén, 1995)..

A research conducted by Ferguson and friends in (2010) about optimism and well-being by social support and perceived control to 225 elders, showed that optimism is a strong predictor to determine welfare of the elders. It can foster a sense and confidence that they have control over their environment. Meanwhile, social support and perceived control as the mediation influence the elders to determine their purpose in life, so they can be still productive when they are getting old. Productive here does not refer to income, instead of the activities such as playing with grandchildren, getting involved in social activities, and so on (Ferguson & Goodwin, 2010).

Another research conducted by Bernard (2013) about self-acceptance as a mediator between aging and CBT Therapy to the elderly, it found that self-acceptance can be stronger when an individual has more capacity of love (to distinguish self-acceptance and self-love). The elders

often blame their selves when they remember about the things that make them disappointed. Their emotions are not stable when they are under pressure. This condition can cause stress and depression. In order to have self-acceptance, elders must not be stressful or depressed (Bernard, 2013). The description about elders has been discussed in the previous researches which gave an understanding that the mental of elders is fragile. They easily feel lonely and insecure if they have no self-acceptance. Definitely, this condition affects the mental health and the physic condition.

Review of Related Literature

Elderly will achieve successful aging if they have good self-acceptance. There are several aspects in accessing self-acceptance, they are *functional well*, means elders is good physically, cognitive, and psychologically. *Psychological well-being*, means elders feel happy, satisfy about life, and show no depression tendency. *Selection optimization compensation*, is a development process of elderly that refers to the process of regulating, pursuing, and maintaining private purposes. The last aspect is selection optimization compensation, is a universal process of development regulation which refers to the process of regulating, pursuing, and maintaining private purposes (Lerner, Easterbrooks, Weiner, & Wiley, 2003).

Optimism is one of the important factors for achieving *successful aging* and is one individual predictor experiencing *subjective well-being* (Ferguson & Goodwin, 2010). Optimism is often interpreted as the meaning when individuals expect beneficial results and positive experiences of life (Wengler & Rosén, 1995). Elders will still have the spirit of life and do positive things if they have an optimistic attitude. In addition, the elders will be able to deal with pressures that can lead to insecure in the elderly (Ferguson & Goodwin, 2010).

Theory to understand successful aging. It is called gerotranscendancy theory introduced by Lars Tornstam in 1989 and brought by Joan Ericson. This theory talks about human growth, including maturity, wisdom, identity, coping pattern and the things related to the satisfaction of life. According to gerotranscendancy theory, there are three dimensions that influence aging process to be successful, which are (1) social relation, (2) self-relation, (3) relation with universe (Tornstam, 2011).

Being successful is certainly an ideal for every elderly person, but to be a successful elderly person requires several things that must be fulfilled. One of them is the elders must be able to accept themselves both their advantages and disadvantages. If the elderly are able to accept themselves, they will avoid the feeling of insecure and feeling that they are worthless. Elderly people who are able to accept themselves will more easily form an optimistic attitude in themselves and will certainly have a clear purpose in life. Amid the limitations, the elders will still be able to be productive, for example participating in various social activities, continuing to get closer, and remaining enthusiastic in living their lives. So to reach

successful aging it will be easier if the elders have an optimistic attitude that is formed from within (Lerner et al., 2003).

Method

This research was quantitative research mediation with *optimism* as a mediator between *self-acceptance* and *successful aging*. The data was obtained by using the scale given to the elders. The researcher guided the elders to fill the scale because of the limitations of reading and understanding sentences of the elders. Data collection took longer because the researcher must ensure and pay attention to the elderly personally. After collecting the data, the researcher did *coding* and data input for the analysis. Before carrying out data analysis, the researcher applied the validity and reliability tests to ensure that the data obtained was valid and reliable. Next, the data were analyzed by using SPSS with regression and mediation tests to find the effect of *optimism* to *successful aging*.

After obtaining the data and completing the data input, the researcher tested the validity and reliability using SPSS to ensure that the data processed was valid and reliable. After all items were valid and reliable, the data normality test was applied to find if the data was normal and suitable for testing. Next was looked for the *true score* on the three variables so that the researcher knew and could equalize the values of the three variables that have different number of aspects. *True score* was also used to find the true value of the subject's answer. After obtaining the *true score*, a regression test on each relationship between variables was done. The relationship of variables tested by regression was the relationship between *self-acceptance* variables to *successful aging*, the relationship between *self-acceptance* variables to *optimism*, and the relationship between *self-acceptance* variables to *successful aging* when *optimism* was present. The final analysis was the mediation test using SPSS through the Hayes program. Mediation test was done on the relationship of the three variables to find how much direct or indirect *optimism* impacts on the *successful aging*. Participants of this study were elderly men and women. The ages range from 65-80 years. A total of 54 elderly people were in a recitation group.

This study applied three instruments, as follows: (1) *Successful aging Scale* (SAS) was developed by Gary T. Reker (2009) consisting of 14 items, (2) *The Sort Optimism Scale* (TOS) was developed by (Wimberly S. R, 2008) consisting of 10 items, (3) *Self Acceptance Scale* was developed by (Hernandez, 2014) consisting of 14 items.

Results

The first requirement of mediation test was that there was a signification between the X and Y variables. In this study, testing the relationship of *self-acceptance* variables to *successful aging* obtained 0.516 for c coefficient and 4.8 for the value of t_c , with a significance

of 0.000. It can be concluded that there is a significance between the relationships between *self-acceptance* variable to *successful aging* because the significance value was obtained < 0.05 . This can be interpreted that the first criteria is fulfilled.

The second requirement of mediation test was that there was a significance between the X and M variables. X and M variables in this study are *self-acceptance* to *optimism*. In this test, the results of a coefficient value was 0.065 and a value is 0.96 with a significance of $0.000 < 0.05$. It can be concluded that there was a significant influence between the relationship *self-acceptance* variable to *optimism*. Thus, the second condition was fulfilled.

Then, the third condition was there was a significance between the relationships M to Y variables and there was no significant between the X to Y variables. This is to find that there was an influence between *self-acceptance* to *successful aging*, but it had no effect when the M (*optimism*) variable was included in the test. The test obtained the results 0.326 for b coefficient value and '0.495 for c. Furthermore, the value of t_b is 1.486 and the value of t_c is 4.620 with a significance value of $0.143 > 0.05$. It can be interpreted that M (*optimism*) significantly affects Y (*successful aging*) and X (*self-acceptance*) did not affect Y (*successful aging*). Thus, it was concluded that the three conditions for mediation testing had been fulfilled.

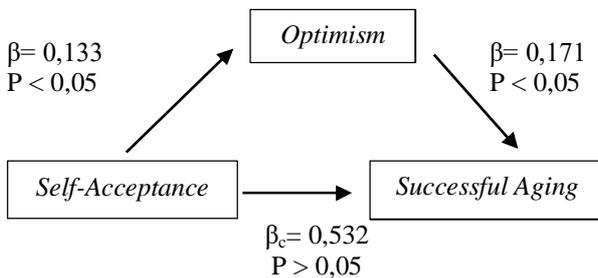


Figure 1. Test Results

From Figure 1, it is found that the effect of the total relationship between *self-acceptance* variable to *successful aging* is 0.55. While the direct effect of *self-acceptance* to *successful aging* (c') is 0.53, the indirect effect of *self-acceptance* to *successful aging* (path $a \times b$) is $0.13 \times 0.17 = 0.022$. The results of the SPSS test through the Hayes program obtained the results of the influence of M (*optimism*) to Y (*successful aging*) of 22% with a significance of 0.005. Because the three criteria for the existence of mediator variables are fulfilled, plus the effects of *self-acceptance* to *successful aging* becomes insignificant when *optimism* is included in the analysis. So, it is proven that *optimism* is a mediator of the relationship between *self-acceptance* to *successful aging*.

Discussion

Successful aging is often the goal of the elders. However, many elderly people have obstacles or

problems to reach *successful aging*. Some things are very necessary to facilitate the elders to reach successful aging. One of them is self-acceptance that should exist in the elderly. In this study, self-acceptance has proven to have an influence on successful aging. If the elders have self-acceptance, it will be easier to accept all the shortcomings, which of course will cause a variety of shortcomings, especially in the physical elderly. This can cause the elders to feel insecure or not accepted in their families. So, it will also reduce the performance of the elders. Therefore, self-acceptance has a significant influence on achieving successful aging.

The research conducted by Hsu (2006) regarding *successful aging* in elderly people in Taiwan states that most elders experience problems in economic or financial issues. Elders are often still thinking about their financial problems or their children because these children are still not able to be independent and often depend on parents for financial problems. (Hsu, 2007). However, this study did not involve other factors that might influence, for example the religiosity factors that exist in the elderly. Besides, elderly people who have high religiosity tend to have good self-acceptance (Asih et al., 2010). Another study also obtained results that there is an effect of self-acceptance to the optimism of the elderly.

Elderly who have good self-acceptance certainly have good optimism as well. Optimism in the elderly can increase positive thinking. So if the elderly performance have positive thoughts, it will impact on both their and health. Elders will avoid mental illness which will certainly impact on the physical elderly. In addition, optimism can also increase the happiness of the research conducted by Salimian and Hosainian (2012), which shows that a feeling of optimism and openness of mind to new experiences has enough power to make the elderly feel happy (Salimian & Hosainian, 2012).

Optimism also has an influence on achieving successful aging. This is because when the elderly have high optimism they will be able to think positively and be happier. So optimism will make the elderly easier to achieve successful aging.

Research conducted by Diponegoro (2015) shows that optimism has an important role in the life of the elderly and is one of the factors of successful aging (Diponegoro & Mulyono, 2016).

However, this study did not explain in detail the normality of research or research analysis of the data. So this study only gives a general overview of the results. Whereas when there is a self-acceptance variable, the effect of optimism to successful acceptance will be reduced. This is because both optimism and self-acceptance affect successful aging. So the value of the influence of optimism on self-acceptance will be lower when self-acceptance is present, while self-acceptance can affect successful aging. Yet when optimism is present, the effect of self-acceptance to successful aging also decreases.

Conclusions

Successful aging is often the main goal for the elderly, but sometimes the elderly pay less attention to various important things to have in order to achieve successful aging. One of the factors that influence is self-acceptance. Self-acceptance is proven to be able to create successful aging. Optimism as a variable mediator has also been shown to have an effect on achieving successful aging in the elderly. If the elderly have good optimism and self-acceptance, it will be easier to achieve a successful response.

The weakness of this study is that the subject was taken from a recitation group. So the next researcher is expected to make modifications to the spread of the subject more widely in order that the subject used can be diverse (heterogeneous). Subsequent research is also expected to increase the number of subjects in order to consider various possible factors that can affect successful aging.

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