

Thantaphobia (Death anxiety) as related to related to religiosity : A case of elderly women

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ABSTRACT

Aging is a natural phenomenon that refers to changes, which occur during the life span and result in differences in structure and function between the youth and the elderly. Today ageing is concerned world over. Inadequate support from the care givers leads to lack of moral, emotional and physical support for elderly. Apart from decline in physical and mental functioning, various other problems like non-availability of social support, absence or passing away of one spouse, loneliness, depression, fear of death, low morale etc. are faced by them. Death anxiety (Thantaphobia) refers to fear and apprehension of one's own death. It is the neurotic fear of loss of the self, which, in intense state, parallels feelings of helplessness and depression. Religiosity means faith in a power beyond herself which is expressed in worship rendered for the service of the unseen power. Present study was conducted on 60 elderly women residing in Pathankot city of Punjab state. Selected elderly women were above 65 years of age, from Hindu families, retired from their job or business and living with their spouses. Further, they were not suffering from any deadly disease and had monthly income of Rs 10,000- 20,000. Standardized scales were used to assess death anxiety and religiosity of the respondents. Findings revealed a significant relationship between religiosity and death anxiety among the women. As the level of religiosity increases, death anxiety decreases.

KEY WORDS : Aging, Death anxiety, Thantaphobia, Religiosity

Princy and Kang, Tejpreet Kaur (2010). Thantaphobia (Death anxiety) as related to related to religiosity : A case of elderly women, *Adv. Res. J. Soc. Sci.*, 1 (2) : 140-144.

INTRODUCTION

Aging is a natural phenomenon that refers to changes, which occur during the life span and result in differences in structure and function between the youth and the elderly. Traditionally the term elderly has been referred to people who have attained certain age chronologically. Aging is an inevitable process in which physiological, emotional and mental changes are observed in declining form. It is also known as a closing period of life span. It is "moving away" from more desirable period. Kumar (1992) has stated that aging is a toilsome treadmill grinding to a tragic halt as the years pile up. It is a life spanning process of growth and development running from birth to death. It is generally associated with decline in the functional capacity of the organs of the body due to physiological transformation.

Though old age is the universal phenomenon with varying degrees of probability. It is overlooked as the fundamental aspects of social structures and social dynamics. A person's activities, attitude towards life, a

relationship to the family and the work, biological capacities and physical fitness are all conditioned by the position in the age structure of the particular society in which he lives. The term "old age" conjures up images of frustration and pity, sickness and poverty, despair and senility, warmth and responsibility. The relationship between aging and society's response are complex in the industrial society. Aging is more difficult in the rapidly changing materialistic society. The modernization plays a vital role in the aging process of an individual. The aged feels a sense of social isolation because of the disjunction from various bonds viz., work relationships, and diminish of relatives and friends, mobility of children to far off places for jobs. The situation of the elderly still worsens when there is physical incapacity and financial stringency (Sheela and Jayamala, 2008).

The general characteristics of old age are physical and physiological changes. It is common to associate old age with disability. Older people are heterogeneous *i.e.*,

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