



A Multidimensional Concept of Successful Aging among Three Generations in Pakistan: An Exploratory Research

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Abstract

This study has examined the subjective views of successful aging in intergenerational families (older adults, middle adults, adolescents). In this work, we have tried to explain the phenomenon of successful aging in a culturally specific way. This research draws on qualitative data collected through twenty interviews with grandparents, mother, father, and grandchild residing in five intergenerational families in Pakistan. Separate themes emerged in all the three generations, including subjective health criteria, social relations, inner standards, and religious aspect for grandparents; subjective health criteria, social relations, inner standards, and financial independence for parents; and subjective health criteria, social relations, autonomy, and academic aspect for grandchildren. These themes suggest a need to refine the concept of successful aging in Pakistan. The current study adds to the literature of successful aging in cross-cultural studies.

Keywords: successful aging, inter-generational families, family ties, Pakistan

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Introduction

A fundamental desire of today's world is to 'age well,' which is why the prime focus of aging research has shifted from disengagement to remaining productive and engaged (Zaidi & Howse, 2017). Several concepts related to aging such as 'Successful Aging' (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Rowe & Kahn, 1987), 'Productive Aging' (Butler & Gleason, 1985), 'Active Aging' (WHO, 2002), and 'Healthy Aging' (WHO, 1990) have been introduced and flourished in the past few decades. Healthy aging (WHO, 1990) is a concept that revolves around health, whereas the concept of productive aging (Butler & Gleason, 1985) focuses on productivity. On the other hand, active aging and successful aging (SA) are overlapping concepts because they focus both on health and active engagement (Lopez-Lopes & Sanchez, 2019). We have chosen SA as our guiding paradigm in the current study because of its holistic and multidimensional nature.

The life course approach of successful aging recognizes development as an accumulation of life experiences unfolding over time, having different life events, interacting with different social policies and institutions. That is why the predictors of aging outcomes are known to be fluid in nature, and researchers focus on them over place and time (Cooney & Curl, 2017). Past literature has focused on longitudinal methods to explore the meaning of SA. Still, we have focused on the cross-sectional method to assess the concepts of SA in adolescents, adults, and old age individuals as successful aging is not old-age specific but a life course perspective (Moffitt, Belsky, Danese, Poulton, & Caspi, 2017). This work elaborates on the meaning of 'successful aging' by digging into the perception of intergenerational families (grandparents, parents, and grandchildren) living in Pakistan.

In the last four decades, psychologists and clinicians have been trying to explain the concept of successful aging, and the primary focus has remained on the biomedical explanation of this concept. The majority of the definitions focused on the absence of disease and ailments and forget to add the significant psychosocial component (Depp & Jeste, 2006). The model of Rowe and Kahn (1997) focused on the idea of shifting the debate from a decline in health to the process of aging itself. The model emphasized the biopsychosocial approach by explaining the concept of SA as the absence of chronic ailments, the presence of physical and cognitive functioning, and engagement in social activities. However, the model was criticized (Strawbridge, Wallhagen, & Cohen, 2002) as little attention was given to subjective perceptions and socio-psychological aspects (Bülow & Söderqvist, 2014). The process of SA is a broader term that includes other variables based on the paradigmatic principles mentioned by Elder, Johnson, and Crosnoe (2003). These principles have explained the concept of aging as a lifelong process that is contextually embedded in place and time and is molded by social circumstances and personal choices and the importance of 'linked lives' that emphasize the effect of significant others in one's life. Based on this notion, we examine how intergenerational families in Pakistan view 'successful aging' and how they experience aging in families at their specific age. This subjective dimension is evident in the aging literature from the non-Western perspective, where family relations, collectivism, and interdependence are more valuable than individual functioning (Gureje, 2014; Lamb, 2014).

According to Beyene, Becker, and Mayen (2002), older Latino individuals residing in the United States undergo aging positively, and their experiences are predominately linked with family ties and accomplishment of family expectations that are firmly embedded in the culture. Similarly,

Latino older adults who were not disease-free were found to be satisfied with their lives as they were accepting their aging and were satisfied with the changes in their lives. Thus spirituality, having a relationship with divine being, recognition, appreciation, and feeling contented were found significant for their SA (Hilton et al. 2012). Cross-cultural studies have found that for Bangalis, aging is a process of moving forward while acknowledging the essential transience of one's existence; and believing that being older means soon leaving the world; so through several practices, they prepare themselves for this departure with no regrets (Lamb, 2010). Similarly, in India, having strong ties with family members and strong intergenerational bonds motivate all family members to provide unconditional care for each other, especially the older ones (Brijnath, 2014). Older adults who live with their families in China and receive higher filial support show a positive attitude towards their life (Laidlaw, Wang, Coelho & Power, 2010). Intergenerational families are pretty common in non-western societies like Pakistan, where youngsters do not face financial issues and receive sufficient social support from family members compared to those who live separated from their families (Aneesa, Najma, & Noreen, 2013). When adolescents have strong ties with their family members, this improves their emotional expressivity (Rashid & Mustafa, 2016) and well-being. A study by Qidwai, Khushk, Allauddin, and Nanji (2017) in Pakistan has concluded that grandparents in intergenerational families have more decision making power compared to those elderly who live alone (Prince, Harwood, Blizard, Thoman, & Mann, 1997), thus contributing positively to grandparents' growth and well-being. Although there are generational gaps between the first and third generation, these gaps sometimes result in the difference of opinion and arguments (Antonucci, Birditt & Sherman, 2011). However, in Asian families, older adults are looked upon as a significant source of guidance and inspiration (Chou & Chi, 2003).

So, this 'linked life' paradigmatic life course perspective made us study successful aging in intergenerational families to explore their perceptions. The life course perspective helps recognize SA not only as a biological and socio-psychological concept, but relatively a cultural concept with the ability to adapt to a new and unique phenomenon (Bulow & Soderqvist, 2014). It also acknowledges that aging is not bound by time and place as each age group experiences aging in their terms; and are influenced by their early experiences and support of significant others (Moffitt et al., 2017). Prior research on SA has focused on older adults while ignoring other age groups and their perceptions related to SA. Although aging was considered a concept specific to the old age population, the specificity has shifted with the introduction of life course theory (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003). Another rationale behind generalizing the concept of successful aging to other ages is that the life expectancy has decreased over the years in Pakistan (as mentioned in Shahbaz et al., 2016). It keeps on declining in developing countries (UNDP, 2019). Therefore, there is a need to redefine the concept of SA by keeping it unique to a certain age. In this work, we have explored the perception of SA in intergenerational families from their age-specific point of view. This article provides new insights and subjective understanding of SA but also helps in giving researchers a new and unique approach related to the concept of successful aging.

Method

This research is based upon an interpretive paradigm, trying to make sense of a successful

aging concept in terms of culturally and age-specified meaning given by different age groups in an explorative approach based upon interviews. (The Board of Scientific and Research of Quaid-e-Azam University, Pakistan, approved the study). The study was carried out qualitatively between August 2019 to October 2019, where five families, each comprising a grandparent, mother, father, and a grandchild, were interviewed separately. We opted for interviews to provide in-depth and individual-specific knowledge about the phenomenon (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2010).

Participants were recruited by personal contacts and snowball sampling techniques. Five families were recruited in the study, each comprising a grandparent, mother, father, and a grandchild residing together. A total of twenty semistructured interviews were conducted, followed by an interview schedule to avoid off-topic discussions. All grandparents were Punjabi speaking except two, and all other participants of the study were Urdu speaking.

A similar interview schedule was used with all participants, focusing on explaining their subjective views on the concept of SA. Participants were asked three main questions to describe their perception of successful aging using two major open-ended questions: (i) what do you mean by successful aging, and (ii) what are the factors that need to age successfully in your age?

The term 'successful aging' is confusing in its literal meaning, so it was difficult to translate it to exact Urdu during research and make people understand it. Therefore, I had to explain the whole meaning of this concept. I started an interview with a general and broad question, 'please explain what you think about aging?' and 'how satisfied are you with your current stage of life?' I also explained the definition of successful aging to my participants that were the main focus of my study: *'A state in which a person can invoke adaptive social and psychological mechanisms to compensate for psychological limitations in life, and a sense of personal fulfillment even in the context of illness and disability to achieve a sense of well-being, high self-assessed quality of life'* (Young et al., 2009). I used prompting questions with my adolescent participants like 'what do they expect from their grandparents/parents at their age?'

The interview was conducted at the home of the participants, and the meaning of some of the questions was explained to the participants. Verbal consent was obtained, and a rapport was built to ensure comfortability. As Urdu is my mother tongue, and I am a native Pakistani, most of the time, the conversation turned out to be relatively informal, and participants started giving examples. The average duration of the interviews was between twenty to thirty minutes. All interviews were audiotaped, and subsequently, they were transcribed. The three transcripts that were in the Punjabi language were translated to Urdu by bilinguals. Field notes were also taken about behavior and settings that were later used to analyze and interpret participants' responses.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of qualitative interviews was done by using Braun and Clarke (2006) framework with distinct but interconnected six-phased steps, including (i) gaining familiarity with the collected data, (ii) generating initial codes, (iii) searching for themes, (iv) reviewing the developed themes, (v) defining developed themes and refining them (vi) writing-up while interpreting and explaining the established themes. The data was coded using inductive codes.

Results

The interviews were obtained from three generations, including grandparents, parents (mother & father), and grandchildren. Therefore the interviews obtained from all three generations were analyzed separately. Four distinct themes emerged in all three generations; Grandparents: *the subjective notion of success* (feeling young and psychological health), *social relations* (relations with family & others), *religious aspects* (haqooqullah, haqooqul-ibad, and preparation for death), and *inner standards* (virtues and subjective values); Parents: *the subjective notion of success* (feeling young and psychological health), *social relations* (relations with family), *financial security* and *inner standards* (virtues and subjective values); and in Grandchildren: *the subjective notion of success* (physical and psychological health), *social relations* (relations with family and friends), *independence* (enjoyment and choices), and *academic success* (achievement and competence).

Successful Aging in Grandparents (*old age*)

Subjective Success

One of the major themes that have emerged from the interviews was having an awareness of their age in all participants, as all of them were of the view that they have spent their span of life and knew that they were old enough. Two of them were unaware of their exact age, whereas all others had an average of 72 years of age. Most of them mentioned that they are soon going to die and have few medical conditions. All of them considered these physical and physiological changes normal and told that they were seeking medical treatment. Therefore, upon asking about their views about successful aging, most of them believed that it is accepting all these physical and physiological changes for them.

Aging is a part of life; we all have to grow old. Many diseases are associated with this age, like diabetes and hypertension, but it is a part of life. If you accept this reality, then life will become easier (70 years, female).

Some of them believed that functional independence is critical. However, they have different diseases, yet they can do simple house chores, walk independently, and take care of themselves on their own.

I am thankful to Allah that I can walk and do my simple tasks. Although my daughter-in-law and grandchildren provide me with food and do all tasks out of love, yet I am capable of walking without any support (73 years, male).

Some of them also added that they do not like to bother their daughters-in-law for little assistance and work independently. Some of the old females also had their spouses alive, so they said that they try to do their husbands' tasks independently. Thanking Allah for their health was

found significant in all participants. Almost all older people knew that being old is linked to being dependent, so they reported that they pray that Allah keeps them functional.

I pray that may Allah keep me functional, and I do not get depending upon my children (age unknown, female).

Most of the grandparents reported that they feel young when they are around their grandchildren. However, some of the complaints are that their young grandchildren have a minimum time for them because of their mobiles, but their grandchildren who are not school going are a constant source of joy.

I feel energetic when my little Y plays with me. He does not go to school and loves playing cricket all the time; I play with him and forget that I have any disease (75 years, male).

Social Relations

In old age, Pakistani grandparents are expected to spend most of their time with their extended families, although they participate in family functions. Some active older people visit their close ones and neighbors, but most of them spend their time at home with their immediate family members. They reported that they receive immense respect from their families, and my joint and extended family provide us love and respect by inviting us to their relevant family activities.

Interviews have revealed that family ties are essential for grandparents, and they love spending their time with their children and grandchildren. Most of the females mentioned that spending time with their loved ones is crucial as it allows them to share their experiences with them.

I feel happy when my granddaughter asks my opinion on her relationship issues, I guide her (age unknown, female).

My children and grandchildren spend time with me, and I told them what is right and what is wrong (73 years, male).

Two of the males reported that they go to the mosque for their prayers, and they meet their friends there, and it is of considerable significance for them to have a good time with others. Social engagement was found a critical subtheme in the interviews that were found an essential component of successful aging.

I go to the mosque for my prayers and meet my neighbors and some friends there. We share our issues and spend time talking about politics and current situations (75 years, male).

Therefore, spending time with their family members and the social circle was necessary; some of them also reported contacting their children living abroad with video. However, some of them complain that with each passing year, things are getting a change, their grandchildren have kept themselves busy with computers and mobiles; they have their activities and lifestyles. The respect that they used to give to their parents and grandparents is missing nowadays. Some reported that cultural values have changed over time now, mothers run after their children for everything, and life has become complicated now.

Life is so complex these days, we used to respect our elders, but now children are busy with their lives. Our time was good; people were free and available for each other (70 years, female).

Being available for each other was found a vital subtheme. Some participants also highlighted the importance of spending time with each other and listening to one another's problems.

I want my all daughters-in-law to live with each other peacefully so that everybody says that this family has such peace and unity, and this is everything for me at this age (age unknown, female).

Religious Aspects

One of the significant themes observed in the interviews was the importance of religion in the lives of older adults. All old age participants were well aware of their old age and reported that we have to prepare for the upcoming life in our age.

One has to remember Allah at this old age, and keep on doing good deeds for the next life (73 years, female).

It seems that being religious and having a strong relationship with the creator is vital in their lives. Many of them have reported that the real success for their age fellows is having a strong relationship with Allah, going for pilgrimage, giving charity, offering all prayers, and fasting during the month of Ramadan.

Performing Hajj is very important, as according to me, if one has not seen the house of Allah, then everything goes in vain. If a person can offer prayers and give charity, then this is the real life and success (70 years, female).

For some participants, having a long-lasting relation with Allah is a significant part of successful aging. Remembering Him the time, especially at this time of their life, is an essential

component. Some participants reported that helping the poor and providing charity to relatives is a necessary task of their life. They help the needy and ask their family members to help others to make Allah happy and have a happy life. While explaining the importance of helping other people, a few participants also complained that they used to help each other in the early times, but now people are more concerned about them only.

In our times, a daughter of one person was considered the daughter of every person, we used to love each other and everybody was available for help, but now no one has time to listen to the other's worries. People have rights on us (age unknown, male).

Inner Standards

Old age people have their internal standards of morality, as this was another central theme that emerged from the interviews. Many of them were of the view that having a firm conviction of right and wrong is essential.

One has to earn through fair means and avoid corruption, as money earned through illegal ways has a negative influence on children (age unknown, female).

All participants reported the importance of virtue in one's life. They stated that being grateful, facing the difficulties of living with patience, and having tolerance are essential virtues for successful aging. Many reported that if one has to lead a happy and satisfying life, one has to be grateful for the creator and the creation.

The best way to have a good and successful life is to face the hardships of life with courage and tolerance, without complaining (70 years, female).

All participants also highlighted the importance of hard work.

If you want to have a satisfying life, then you have to work hard; I keep on saying to my children and grandchildren that nothing is impossible in this world if you work hard (73 years, female).

Most participants mentioned that having a positive attitude towards life is integral to successful aging as being disappointed by life or creator both cause discomfort.

Successful aging in parents (middle adults)

Subjective Success

Two subthemes emerged in the theme of subjective success, namely, physical health and

psychological health. The interviews revealed that middle adults in this age range have a clear view of their physical strengths and abilities. They view that at their age, they need physical strength to carry out their responsibilities and psychological health.

We have many responsibilities that are specific to our age. We have to take care of our children and elders, and for this, physical strength is necessary, although I have hypertension, I know this is my obligation (48 years, female).

I work all the day, even if I am unable to perform daily activities due to pain in the knees because I think it is all in your head, if you feel you are fine then you can do everything (45 years, female).

Most of the participants reported that facing everything with endurance is necessary for successful aging, and performing all your responsibilities actively leads to satisfaction.

I feel contented in performing my responsibilities as a father and son (51 years, male).

Social Relations

The interviews revealed that participants of this age group consider it their duty to keep uniting the family. They found it is essential to spend time with their children and parents. Participants also mentioned that they participate in family functions and activities. Some males reported that they have to spare time for their friends at this age, as most of their time is spent at their jobs and with their families. The females reported that they do not meet with their friends as at this age, everybody is busy in their lives, but they spare time with their families and relatives.

I help my relatives in shopping, whenever they needed; but most of my time is spent with my family, as it is difficult for my family to manage things without me (45 years, female).

The primary thing observed in this theme was that the middle age group found less time for their friends and social activities; instead, they perceived their family engagement as their duty and obligation. Most males reported that spending time with their parents is an essential part of their routine.

Whenever I come back from work, I sit with my mother and listen to her (53 years, male).

My family is my world, I cook for them, I do everything for them that they needed, and the thought that who else will do this for them, keeps me going (46 years, female).

Some of the daughters-in-law also complain about the attitude of their in-laws that they have left everything for their in-laws and have spent all of their life serving them but did not find any appreciation, and now they want their children to be successful in academics and life.

I have spent my life in this house working for everybody, but did not get any benefit, and now my only dream is to see my children happy and successful in life (45 years, female).

Financial Well-being

Another central theme that emerged from the interviews conducted with fathers revealed the importance of finances. Most of the males reported that they had worked hard their whole life to provide their families with the best. They reported that to have successful aging at their particular age needs financial well-being and money.

Having enough money to provide your children with the best education, and to fulfill the demands of your family is exclusive to our age (55 years, male).

Most of them also mentioned the current economic condition of Pakistan and the effect of inflation on their work and business. Some of them reported that money is necessary for today's age and is necessary to maintain a healthy lifestyle. It was found that being the head of the family, they were more concerned with financial well-being as they were having dual responsibilities, i-e for their children and their parents. Most of them mentioned that they must fulfill the needs and demands of their families, and for that, they have to work hard and make money. Most of the parents linked their children's success to their successful aging and reported that they try to provide each and everything they demand so that they get proper education and get succeeded in life.

I tried to give everything to my children that I was deprived of during my childhood so that they do not get any deficiency and get succeeded in their lives (53 years, male).

Most of the participants also highlighted the current status of inflation in Pakistan and how they are suffering due to the economy. In Pakistan, it is a custom that the whole family depends on the head of the family for feeding and other related purposes. Although other family members might have jobs, they are not responsible for the family's financial expenses, as it is the duty of the head of the family.

Inner Standards

This theme that was emerged in middle-aged parents was quite similar to that one that emerged in grandparents. The participants revealed the theme of inner standards that indicated their own set of moral values and beliefs. Most of the participants focused on the virtues of tolerance, patience, hardworking, and struggle. These virtues were highlighted in the interviews of all participants, especially mothers.

Struggling and moving with both are very important to have a satisfying life, and these are necessities (46 years, female).

Facing every challenge of life with silence and patience is essential, especially to spend a good life (45 years, female).

Struggle and hard work are the key to success, and our lives are an example of it. Whatever I have in my life, it is the fruit of hard work (53 years, male).

Some of the participants also highlighted the values of honesty and corruption-free life. Many participants highlighted the importance of fair earnings.

People just want to succeed and earn more money, but the major thing is to earn fairly and give halal rizq to your children (55 years, male).

Successful Aging in Grandchildren (youngsters)

Subjective Success

Two similar subthemes, like in parents, were emerged in the theme of subjective success, namely, physical health and psychological health in grandchildren. The interviews revealed that the grandchildren in adolescence have a clear view of their physical strengths and abilities. They reported that being young, they can complete all of their tasks without any help. However, many of them reported that their mothers do not allow them to do any household tasks if necessary.

I have never cooked or did any house cleaning, rather than just a few tasks, if my mother is not available (18 years, female).

My only duty is to buy some of the house grocery from the nearest shop in case of necessity (19 years, male).

Despite being inactive in doing household chores, they all reported that they are active in their educational institutes and friend gatherings. They mentioned that the unique thing of this age is physical strength. The interviews of the participants also highlighted that age is just a number as sometimes they are pretty inactive, yet they know they can do whatever they want. While talking about successful aging, many participants reported that it has the freedom to choose their career without any pressure and perform well in life.

I have chosen the business field because I want to be a successful businessman, this freedom of opting my career at my age is successfully aging for me (20 years, male).

Social Relations

Like grandparents and parents, grandchildren have highlighted the importance of social

relations, especially family, in their lives. However, unlike their elders, the other central theme that emerged from interviews was the integral role of friends in their lives. Many participants mentioned that their friends understand them well.

I have good friends, and they help me in every matter of my life (18 years, female).

As all participants were school and university going and meeting their friends daily, the presence and participation of their friends in their life were significant throughout their interviews. A few participants mentioned that although they considered themselves less expressive, they still share their issues with their friends. The interviews also revealed the importance of having good friends in life.

Having good friends is a blessing who can guide you and help you; and I am lucky to have good friends (19 years, male).

Autonomy

As mentioned in the previous theme, 'subjective success' that has freedom in career choice is considered an integral part of successful aging during this age; at the same time, a separate theme, namely 'autonomy,' emerged from the interviews of grandchildren. Many participants have mentioned that this age is not linked to responsibilities like their parents and grandparents, which is why they have the freedom to enjoy their lives.

We do not have responsibilities at this age, as we all know that if we will not accomplish some task, our parents would (18 years, female).

Thus having a carefree and hassle-free life full of enjoyment is a hallmark of this age. Another subtheme that was specific to this age had options. A few participants reported that they have freedom of choice, and their elders have never forced their opinions on them. However, some of the participants mention that their parents are strict in terms of their upbringing. However, they also admit that having the liberty of choosing a career, friends, and lifestyle is necessary at this age as it leads to well-being.

My father is strict, but my mother helps me in enjoying my life and choosing whatever I want (19 years, female).

Having dreams and wishes like wanting to travel the world and do something good for society was also revealed in the interviews of some participants.

Academic Aspect

A significant theme that was emerged from the interviews of all participants was the importance of academics at this age. Almost all participants revealed that scoring good marks in

exams are important at their age to opt for a good institute in the future. Moreover, some also highlighted that achieving good marks in exams is their parent's wish and they just want to fulfill their dream.

My mother wants to see me a doctor, and I just want to make her happy (19 years, female).

Discussion

It is the first study to explore the concept of successful aging in three generations in Pakistan. This study adds to the existing literature that successful aging is not limited to old age only, and this concept is subjective with cultural dimensions. The study also reveals that the concept of successful aging differs from the model focusing on functional capabilities only (Lamb, 2014), but instead emphasizing multidimensional themes that are specific and unique to one's age. The study was carried out to generalize the concept of successful aging to middle age and young age groups. The interviews confirmed that the dimensions of successful aging are age and culturally specific. Two common themes have emerged in all three age groups including 'well-being' and 'social relations'; 'inner standards' was a common theme that emerged in the old age and middle age groups; where 'religiosity' was unique to old age, 'financial security' was exclusive to middle age, and 'autonomy' and 'academics' were emerged in adolescents.

Firstly, staying healthy and performing one's daily activities is considered a vital dimension of successful aging in all three groups in Pakistan. Still, there was less emphasis on staying disease-free. Another essential and noteworthy thing, in Pakistan, there is no concept of 'retirement' as all people do not have office-based jobs, that is, why old age is linked with being a grandparent and completing all responsibilities rather than having some significant figure (chronological age) (Amin, 2017). In grandparents, aging in old age is associated with getting free from all life responsibilities and preparing for meeting Allah. Older adults in Pakistan are not afraid of death as they believe that it is written; instead, they are more fearful of living life being dependent on someone else. For parents (middle age group), it is believed that although they have not reached the age of 60, yet they are getting old, so age is just a number for individuals in Pakistan, rather it is one's responsibilities and lifestyle that define one's age. As grandparents, parents are also afraid of getting dependent on anyone else; so acceptance of one's age and having a dependent-free life was a common theme in Pakistan's old age and middle-aged population. Unlike elders, grandchildren (adolescents) believe that having a disease-free, active, and healthy life is essential to age successfully. Young age is linked with physical strength and adventure, so this theme was significant in the third age group. All three age groups in Pakistan believe that being old is just in one's thoughts, and one can never get old as far as there are friends and family around.

Secondly, having strong social relations is a significant predictor of one's successful aging. For grandparents (old age), being elder at home and enjoying intergenerational care is one of the most significant roles in Pakistan. It is a common practice that children, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren will provide care and necessity to older people, and it is acceptable by parents and grandchildren. Similarly, in parents (middle age), it is considered a responsibility for the family's elders and youngers. Therefore, the family is regarded as an essential theme and a key predictor of

successful aging. Unlike elders, in grandchildren (adolescents), friends are as important as family. There is a strong dependence on friends, and the relationship with them is considered essential. In western models, there is an emphasis on independence, especially at old age and in age groups after 18; but in Pakistan, residing with a family at any age is a common practice. Older adults feel joy and pride that they are being loved and respected by their children; the youngsters before and even after marriage co-reside with their parents, which is a common practice in Pakistan.

Thirdly, having a set of inner standards was familiar to grandparents (old age) and parents (middle age). In Pakistan, people have developed their own beliefs based upon moral and religious values. These values are supposed to be followed to be a good person and to have a peaceful life, so this emerged a new and unique dimension of successful aging. In the western model, they believe that positive growth in life is considered necessary for successful aging. Still, in Pakistan, people believe that these virtues and values help an individual to have a successful experience. These inner values help people to select the right path, although it is full of hardships. This concept is related to self-actualization, which is also considered vital for successful aging. It has also been observed that these values and inner standards are progressively transferred from one generation to the other generation in Pakistan.

Fourth, religiosity was found essential and exclusive to old age. Being religious is considered a necessary aspect of successful aging for older people. It helps them keep going with their medical conditions and hardships and prepares them for death. Performing religious obligations, adds meaning to the life of older adults and help them stay positive. In Pakistan, older adults are considered a blessing for the family as they pray for the whole family. Although religious practices are also common in middle age and young age, old age considers religion a fundamental aspect of aging successfully. For the other two age groups, religion is viewed as a part of life and other responsibilities and obligations; but in old age, religion comes before any other liability.

Fifth, financial independence is a strong predictor of successful aging, exclusively to middle age. This finding is consistent with past findings of successful aging and with studies done in Pakistan. In Pakistan, parents (middle age) are considered the provider of older adults and children, and it is a widespread practice. Although in some cases, older adults do have financial security, even in those cases, the bread provider of the family is the middle generation, not the older one. Older ages with enough savings most often think to perform a pilgrimage or spend their savings on their children's celebrations rather than bearing the family's daily expenses. Similarly, even if the younger adults or adolescents have some source of earning like some job or scholarship, respectively; again, the middle generation is responsible for the financial support.

Sixth, autonomy emerged as a unique and exclusive theme in grandchildren (adolescents). The other two generations have a lot of responsibilities, including raising adolescents and caring for the family. Still, compared to the young generation, they are presumed to have fewer responsibilities, which is why they enjoy and demand autonomy. This finding is consistent with the past findings that indicate in Pakistan; autonomy is considered a basic psychological need (Stewart, Zaman & Dar, 2006), which is an essential milestone to become a functional adult as described by the westernized theory of adolescence development (Steinberg, 1990).

Seventh, another theme that was emerged exclusively in grandchildren (adolescents) was academics. Adolescents in Pakistan are concerned about their studies; similarly, parents are also much worried about their children's education (Mahmoodd & Iqbal, 2015) and have a great desire

to see their children settled. Grades and GPAs are considered essential for parents as well as children. This finding is also consistent with the previous results of Pakistan that indicate adolescents have a passion for grades because of the pressure of academic recognition, psychological stress, employability, and parental concern (Khan, 2014).

The perception of successful aging in Pakistan varies among the three generations and is subjectively based upon their economic and social standing and family setup. Although the family environment and culture differ in Pakistan, the caste system, geographical location, and socioeconomic status significantly affect people's mindsets (Jodhka & Shah, 2010). Families with low socioeconomic status are involved in a continuous struggle to get financial independence. Studies conducted earlier have explained that having a lower socioeconomic status, living in rural areas, and being older can lead to poor quality of life (Lodhi et al., 2019).

Limitations and Suggestions

The findings of the present study also have a few limitations. Firstly, the sample taken for the interviews was not representative of Pakistan. The study has ignored families from lower and upper socioeconomic status and relied only on the middle-class families living in Punjab. Successful aging is differently perceived in families with different socioeconomic statuses and geographical locations. Therefore there is a need to conduct a study on a larger population to understand the predictors of successful aging in intergenerational families. Secondly, this study focused on joint families, and none of the participants was experiencing loneliness or low family support. This study provides no information regarding what happens when people do not have a family or someone to care for.

The findings of the current study have implications for future research in Pakistan. First of all, there is a need to redefine and broaden the concept of successful aging in three age groups (old, middle, & adolescents). Secondly, this study highlights the importance of a well-defined support system for different age groups, so policies can be made to promote successful aging by focusing on social support. Finally, this study is a vital contribution to the literature and conceptualization of successful aging by exploring a cross-cultural perspective. This study challenges the past research that limits the criteria for successful aging to some objective and subjective parameters and a specific age (Lamb, 2014). Findings also highlighted the importance of adults in one's life as they are a constant source of support while transferring cultural values, social norms, positivity, experiences, and ways to have a better life.

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