# Middle-aged Individuals' Desired Image of Old Age in Japan

How the middle-aged view their own old age from a qualitative and quantitative

perspective

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## Purpose

Japanese society is aging rapidly and the length of old age is progressively becoming

longer. Middle-aged individuals should prepare for their old age; however, many do not.

In order to create a positive attitude toward old age, this paper tried to clarify what type

of old age middle-aged people expect and find related factors. The purpose of this

investigation was to define the desired image of middle-aged people's old age and the

factors relating to this. This investigation consisted of three studies. The first study

aimed to explore middle-aged individuals' views of their desired image of old age and

the relevant factors from a qualitative research perspective. The second study prepared

the scales to measure this desired image according to the data from the interviews in

the first study and revealed the main concepts associated with this image. The third

study defined the factors related to the desired image.

## First study

## Purpose

The purpose of the first study was to define the desired image of middle-aged people's old age from a qualitative point of view.

## Methods

The data for this study were gathered from semi-structured interviews conducted with 17 middle-aged individuals (8 men and 9 women) aged 45 to 55 years who were living in the suburbs of Tokyo. The data were analyzed using the KJ method of Affinity Diagrams and narration, devised by the Japanese cultural anthropologist, Jiro Kawakita (1997).

## Results

The desired image was integrated with four constituent concepts: "having a desired old age image," "not having a desired old age image," "having a stereotyped view of old age," and "having a belief in life and death." The sub-concepts of "having a desired old age image," and "desire for independence (do not want to burden family)" seemed to support "desire for challenge and activity."

## Second study

## Purpose

Firstly, this study prepared the scales of the desired image from the data of the interviews in the first study, in order to confirm the reliability and validity of the data. Secondly, whether aspects of Guttmann Scale could be applied to explain the two

sub-concepts, i.e., "desire for challenge and activity" and "desire for independence" was investigated. The third purpose was to confirm the variance of the scales.

## Methods

The KJ method was used for creation of the scale items. Data used for analysis were responses obtained from 214 participants. Furthermore, the survey was conducted by mailing the questionnaire to those living in a suburb of Tokyo, Hino-city, for lineage extraction, which were 800 people aged 45 to 55 years selected from the list of people with voting rights. The new data from the survey were analyzed via SPSS Version 23.0 (IBM Corp., 2014) and Amos Version 23.0 (Arbuckle, 2014). The Green method was used for the verification of the Guttmann scale.

## Results

As result of the confirmatory factor analysis of 11 items, the ideal goodness of fit, CFI = .986, RMSEA = .027 was confirmed. However, the concepts "desire for challenge and activity," "desire for independence," and "not having a desired old age image" could be considered as the three main concepts and not three sub-concepts. Therefore, exploratory factor analysis was conducted for each of the three factors and it was confirmed that these were individual factors. The three factors were named as "desire for challenge and activity (same in first study)," "desire not to burden (in first study

desire for independence and do not want to burden family)", and "escape (in first study not having a desired old age image)." The factor "challenge and activity" comprised four items and its reliability, measured via Cronbach's α, was .788. "Desire not to burden" also comprised four items and its reliability was α = .678. The factor "escape" was made up of three items and its reliability was α = .611. The verification of the Guttmann scale was tested using the Green method's five conditions. As a result, eight items passed the five conditions and showed the existence of hierarchy, i.e., a two-step hierarchy for proceeding to higher-ranking desires by satisfying lower desires. In the verification of the variation of the scale, the concept, "desire not to burden" showed a ceiling effect and proved to be the desired image held by many middle-aged people.

### Third study

### Purpose

 The purpose of the third study was to define factors related to the desired image of middle-aged individuals. The possible related factors chosen in reference from previous research were sex, subjective health condition, subjective socioeconomic status, ageism, and self-esteem.

### Methods

 The same data from the second study were used. These data were analyzed using

SPSS Version 23.0 (IBM Corp., 2014). Correlation analyses and multiple regression analyses were carried out for this investigation.

## Results

The concept, "escape" had a significant correlation with sex, ageism, and self-esteem ($p < 0.01$). Moreover, the results of multiple regression analyses also revealed "escape" as a factor relating to sex ($p < 0.05$), ageism ($p < 0.01$), and self-esteem ($p < 0.01$). In addition, because self-esteem had a significant correlation with subjective health condition ($p < 0.05$) and subjective socioeconomic status ($p < 0.01$), it is suggested that these are indirect factors of the desired image.

## Conclusion

The desired image of one's old age among middle-aged people is composed of three concepts: "desire for challenge and activity," "desire not to burden," and "escape." A two-step hierarchy of the desired image found that "desire not to burden" supported "desire for challenge and activity." In the group "escape," majority of participants were women who had negative and stereotypical ideas of ageism and low self-esteem. Moreover, their subjective health condition and subjective socioeconomic status were not good.