# SUBJECTIVE AGE IDENTITY:
# A COMPARISON BETWEEN CANADIAN AND TURKISH SENIORS

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## INTRODUCTION

Research on subjective age identity has consistently found that older adults in the U.S. and Canada, on average, feel and ideally would choose to be younger than their chronological ages (e.g., Barrett, 2005; Hubley & Hultsch, 1994; Montepare & Lachman, 1989). Researchers comparing subjective age findings in Finland (Uotinen, 1998), Japan (Ota, Harwood, Williams, & Takai, 2000), and Germany (Westerhof, Barrett, & Steverink, 2003) to those in the U.S. have reported that, although participants in each country tended to feel younger than their actual ages, this was particularly the case for Americans. In addition, with the exception of Westerhof and Barrett (2005), little research has explored relationships between subjective age and psychosocial variables outside of the United States.

## PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to compare Canadian and Turkish samples of older men and women, matched on age and education, on (a) subjective age identity, (b) gender differences in subjective age identity, and (c) relationships between subjective age measures and measures of satisfaction with self (i.e., satisfaction with each of health, self-esteem, life satisfaction) and self-rated health in Canadian and Turkish samples of older adults.

## METHOD

### Participants

The sample was comprised of 77 Canadian (62.3% female) seniors taken from a larger survey of older adults (Michalos, Hubley, Zumbo, & Hemingway, 2001) and selected to match 77 Turkish (59.5% female) seniors aged 54 to 94 years ($M = 72.5$, $SD = 8.60$) on age and education. The majority of participants (42.9%) were widowed, with the rest being married or common law partners (37%), divorced or separated (13.6%), or never married (6.5%). In terms of educational level, 29.8% of the participants indicated that they did not complete high school, 14.3% completed high school, 31.8% had some post-secondary education, and 24% had a university or post-graduate level degree.

## Procedure

Participants completed a questionnaire packet that included a demographic form, a self-rated health question, and the following questionnaires: (1) Subjective Age Identity Scale and (2) Satisfaction with Self Scale, both developed by the second author. These two measures were adapted into Turkish for this study, with the assistance of two faculty members from Bogazici University, Turkey.

## Measures

*Subjective Age*

Participants' physical, mental, social, look, and ideal age were measured by asking respondents whether they felt (1) *much younger*, (2) *somewhat younger*, (3) *about the same*, (4) *somewhat older*, or (5) *much older* than their chronological age in each of these areas. Factor analyses, using principal axis factoring and conducted separately for the Canadian and Turkish samples, indicated that the physical, mental, social, and look age items could be combined into a single Subjective Age Scale mean score. Alpha was .78 for the Canadian sample and .85 for the Turkish sample. Ideal Age was used as a separate variable as was a single-item measure of satisfaction with present age that was measured on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *very dissatisfied* to (5) *very satisfied*.

*Satisfaction with Self*

Participants' satisfaction with several aspects of their selves (i.e., satisfaction with health, self-esteem, present age, and life overall) was measured on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *very dissatisfied* to (5) *very satisfied*.

*Self-rated Health*

Participants rated their health on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) *very poor* to (5) *excellent*.

## RESULTS

*Mean Comparisons*

Separate gender x country ANOVAs conducted with Subjective Age Scale scores, Ideal Age, and Age Satisfaction mostly produced non-significant results. The exception was a statistically significant main effect of gender for the Subjective Age Scale mean score, $F(1,143) = 4.73$, $p < .05$, partial eta-sq. = .03, with men ($M = 2.42$, $SD = .71$) feeling significantly younger than women ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .74$).

A series of one sample t-tests, comparing the mean scores of the three subjective age measures to a rating of 3 (Subjective Age Scale scores and Ideal Age: "*about the same as my age*"; Age Satisfaction: *"evenly balanced"*), were performed to determine whether Canadian and Turkish seniors, on average, maintained significantly different subjective age identities than their chronological ages. The results indicated that participants felt significantly younger than their chronological ages ($M = 2.60$, $SD = .74$), $t(148) = -6.60$, $p < .001$, $d = .54$, would choose to be significantly younger than their chronological ages ($M = 2.36$, $SD = .73$), $t(152) = -10.84$, $p < .001$, $d = .88$, and, on average, were satisfied with being their present age ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .96$), $t(137) = 10.16$, $p < .001$, $d = .87$.

*Regression Analyses*

Three stepwise regression analyses were conducted separately for the Canadian and Turkish samples to determine the relative importance of age, self-rated health, and satisfaction with each of health, self-esteem, and life overall to the Subjective Age Scale scores, Ideal Age, and Age Satisfaction. A Relative Pratt Index (RPI; Thomas, Hughes, & Zumbo, 1998) was computed to

determine the relative contribution of each predictor variable to the model when there was more than one predictor.

Table 1 presents the regression results for the <u>Subjective Age Scale score</u>. The model for the Canadian sample accounted for 31% of the variance and was composed of satisfaction with health and self-rated health. The model for the Turkish sample, however, accounted for only 11% of the variance and was composed of satisfaction with self-esteem. Table 2 presents the regression results for <u>Ideal Age</u>. None of the variables entered into the model for the Canadian sample, but the model for the Turkish sample consisted of satisfaction with self-esteem which accounted for 16% of the variance. Table 3 presents the regression results for <u>Age Satisfaction</u>. The model for the Canadian sample included satisfaction with self-esteem and satisfaction with life overall; it accounted for 48% of the variability. The model for the Turkish sample included only satisfaction with life overall and accounted for 11% of the variability.

## DISCUSSION

This appears to be the first study to (a) examine relationships between subjective age identity and satisfaction with self, and (b) compare subjective age results between Canada and Turkey. The present study found both Turkish and Canadian seniors felt younger and would choose to be younger than their actual ages, but were also satisfied with being their age. The most striking findings from the regression analyses were: (a) the dominant role of health satisfaction and self-rated health in explaining variability in Subjective Age Scale scores for the Canadian sample but not the Turkish sample, and (b) the role of satisfaction with self-esteem in Subjective Age Scale scores and Ideal Age for the Turkish sample and Age Satisfaction for the Canadian sample.

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Table 1: Regressions of Age, Health, and Satisfaction Variables on Subjective Age Scale Scores for Canadian and Turkish Seniors

| | B | Std. Error | Beta | Sig. | Zero order correlation | Relative Pratt Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Canadian Seniors:* | | | | | | |
| Health Satisfaction | -.218 | .063 | -.377 | .001 | -0.503 | .612 |
| Self-rated Health | -.335 | .134 | -.272 | .015 | -0.447 | .392 |
| *Turkish Seniors:* | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem Satisfaction | -.277 | .095 | -.335 | .005 | -0.335 | --- |

Table 2: Regressions of Age, Health, and Satisfaction Variables on Ideal Age for Turkish Seniors

| | B | Std. Error | Beta | Sig. | Zero order correlation | Relative Pratt Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Turkish Seniors:* | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem Satisfaction | -.304 | .082 | -.399 | .000 | -0.399 | --- |

Table 3: Regressions of Age, Health, and Satisfaction Variables on Age Satisfaction for Canadian and Turkish Seniors

| | B | Std. Error | Beta | Sig. | Zero order correlation | Relative Pratt Index |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Canadian Seniors:* | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem Satisfaction | .442 | .142 | .427 | .003 | 0.666 | .593 |
| Life Satisfaction | .288 | .130 | .304 | .029 | 0.640 | .405 |
| *Turkish Seniors:* | | | | | | |
| Life Satisfaction | .249 | .093 | .331 | .010 | 0.331 | --- |

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