

The Performance among Gerotranscendence, Life Satisfaction, and Creativity for Retirees from the Taiwan Region

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Abstract

This study seeks to understand the current status of retirees at various levels Gerotranscendence, life satisfaction, and creative performance. This paper mainly explores three research variables through a literature review, and puts forward relevant suggestions based on the analysis results. It is hoped that government administrative agencies, relevant units, and subsequent researchers will pay attention to the research variables and provide specific suggestions and references.

Keywords

Retirees, Gerotranscendence, Life Satisfaction, Creativity

1. Introduction

In his theory of life development stages, Levinson posited that the transition between middle adulthood and late adulthood typically occurs between the ages of 50 and 60 years. In Taiwan region, the official retirement age is 65 years, and the “2022 Abridged Life Table of Taiwan Region” published by the Ministry of the Interior indicates that the average life expectancy of the citizens from Taiwan region is 79.84 years. These statistics indicate that retirees in Taiwan region can expect to experience between 20 and 30 years of postretirement life. Managing this extended period and smoothly transitioning between pre- and post-retirement life while maintaining a fulfilling and worthwhile existence is a crucial challenge that retirees and government agencies must address.

Another considerable challenge is the unprecedented rate of population aging in Taiwan region—the fastest in the world. According to the Ministry of the Interior's population reports, Taiwan region became an aging society as early as 1993 and became an aged society by 2018. Furthermore, Taiwan region is expected to officially become a super-aged society by 2025, with individuals aged 65 years and above constituting over 21% of the total population. Taiwan region will have achieved this transition in just 32 years. According to estimates from the NDC, in 2012, an average of six working-age individuals supported each older individual. However, by 2030, this ratio is projected to decline to 2.5 working-age individuals per older individual.

For any country, the aging of the population is a natural, inevitable, and dynamic process. However, with lifespans continuing to increase, the novel concept of “gerotranscendence” has been proposed to help societies and older individuals adjust to the demographic challenges of an aging population. Gerotranscendence involves successful aging, which encompasses healthy and active aging and transcending the limitations of old age. [Tornstam \(1997\)](#) introduced the concept of gerotranscendence, proposing that it embodies the mature wisdom of older adults that enables them to conclude their life journey meaningfully while contributing positively to society. Gerotranscendence represents the ultimate goal that older adults should set for themselves in the aging process. This study investigated the behaviors and state of gerotranscendence among the retirees from Taiwan region to assist them in navigating the aging process by enhancing their self-worth and quality of life and enabling them to achieve a state of health and well-being. Retirement marks the beginning of a new life stage, and living richly and meaningfully during this stage ensures that life is not lived in vain. Retirees should continue to be a valuable resource for society and remain productive. Aging should not signify a withdrawal from or end of life. By contrast, aging may provide an opportunity to contribute to the ongoing development of society. After retirement, retirees face numerous challenges, such as physiological changes, shifts in social roles, interpersonal relationship problems, and other psychological or material changes. In recent years, Taiwan region and other areas have focused on the challenges faced by the retired population. Research on retirees has predominantly focused on factors such as preretirement attitudes, postretirement psychological needs, life needs, utilization of human resources, life adaptation, and social participation. Before retirement, how well retirees can adapt to changes in their lives strongly affects their overall life satisfaction. Retirees frequently experience a loss of occupational identity, reduced income, and negative stereotypes and prejudices regarding aging, such as perceptions of decline and deterioration. These factors can lead to feelings of loss, loneliness, and uselessness. In addition to economic concerns, retirees face challenges related to health, psychological well-being, life adjustments, social adaptation, and leisure activities.

In discussing the potential contributions of older adults to society after retirement, [Blanchard \(2005\)](#) observed that creativity is not exclusive to children; older adults can also express creativity if they have the opportunity. Moreover, an

individual's creativity can be developed and enhanced through learning and training. The creativity of older adults also does not necessarily diminish with age; through education and training, the creativity of older adults can be developed and strengthened. In *The Creative Age*, Cohen (2000) emphasized that creativity is crucial to healthy aging. Cohen identified several substantial benefits of creativity in later life, including: 1) improving mental and emotional health more effectively than in younger individuals; 2) enriching and enhancing physical health; 3) providing methods to enrich interpersonal relationships with family and friends; and 4) being able to serve as a model for others by expressing creativity in old age.

Cohen (2006) also discovered that older adults who actively engage in creative activities experience noticeable improvements in their physical and mental health. These improvements comprise a reduced likelihood of falls, reduced doctor visits, reduced medication use, reduced vision problems, reduced feelings of loneliness and depression, and increased participation in other activities. The creativity of older adults and their involvement in creative activities contribute substantially to improving individual quality of life and reducing the burden on families and society. The present study systematically collected, organized, and investigated research on gerotranscendence, life satisfaction, and expression of creativity among retirees.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Life Satisfaction

2.1.1. Connotation of Life Satisfaction and Relevant Research

The definition of life satisfaction has been interpreted variously by scholars, although a consensus is gradually emerging. For example, Campbell (1976) asserted that life satisfaction involves an evaluation of one's current environment. Additionally, Shichman and Cooper (1984) described life satisfaction as an individual's ability to lead a fulfilling life characterized by happiness and high quality. Moreover, Brandmeyer (1987) viewed life satisfaction as a cognitive assessment made in the process of achieving desired goals that relies on an understanding of the discrepancy between what is internally felt and actually experienced to determine whether an individual has adapted well to those circumstances. Fisher (1992) defined life satisfaction as the affirmation of one's life experiences and satisfaction with the roles one plays, and Gregg (1996) considered life satisfaction to be an attitude toward life or a degree of contentment with life. Furthermore, Lemon et al. (1972) indicated that life satisfaction is the extent to which an individual feels content and happy with their overall life situation. Life satisfaction is thus a multifaceted concept that involves both the overall degree of contentment with life and the alignment between goals and achievements throughout the life course. Ford posited that life satisfaction is the degree to which individuals fulfill their desired life goals or meet their needs. Accordingly, the present study defined retirees' life satisfaction as the subjective level of contentment with overall life circumstances, happiness, and the degree of alignment between goals and actual achievements throughout the life course.

2.1.2. Theories Related to Life Satisfaction

Of the numerous theories relevant to this study's definition of life satisfaction, the present study explored Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the family life cycle theory, and the attachment theory, as discussed in the following sections.

1) Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, self-actualization is the highest human need. Older adults often pursue higher levels of self-esteem, which lead to self-actualization. The hierarchy of needs can vary depending on an individual's values and the challenges they face. Throughout life, individuals transition through various roles—such as marrying, having children, and aging—and their needs evolve accordingly. At each stage of life and with each role transition, individuals are prompted to develop their potential and strive toward their goals.

2) Family Life Cycle Theory

Duvall combined a theory of the life cycle with human developmental perspectives and proposed eight stages of the family life cycle, dividing the cycle on the basis of a family's eldest child's age. Subsequently, Carter and McGoldrick extended the theory by introducing the concept of the interaction between the individual life cycle, the family life cycle, and the multigenerational family life cycle.

3) Attachment Theory

Cicirelli (1983) suggested that as children grow to adulthood, their attachment behaviors evolve, gradually shifting toward concern for and maintenance of their attachment figures. The defining characteristic of parent-child attachment in adulthood is the continued psychological closeness maintained through contact and interaction with parents, regardless of physical or temporal distance. In attachment relationships, the bond between children and their mothers is stronger than that between children and their fathers. Therefore, older adults must learn new knowledge and attitudes to make active, positive role adjustments and enhance their ability to adapt to their environment. This study explored whether these theories are applicable to and supported in the context of retired individuals in Taiwan region.

2.2. Gerotranscendence

2.2.1. Connotation of Gerotranscendence and Related Research

Gerotranscendence is a neologism derived from the combination of two parts: "gero", meaning old or aging, and "transcendence", which is defined as surpassing cognitive limitations and transcending the constraints of the universe (Hauge, 1998). Melin-Johansson et al. (2014) observed that aging is a process of changes in the physical, psychological, and social dimensions as age increases, leading to a decline in physiological functions, loss of social capabilities, and deterioration of cognitive and learning abilities, and is a natural dynamic process. On the basis of this discussion, gerotranscendence can be understood as navigating the process of change or overcoming the decline of aging. The Swedish sociologist Tornstam (1994) was the first to clearly define gerotranscendence as a shift in older adults'

perspective from a materialistic and practical worldview to a broader cosmic perspective accompanied by an increase in life satisfaction. Wadensten (2007) noted that gerotranscendence involves older adults adapting their lifestyles as they age, enabling them to calmly face changes and the process of growing old. Wang (2011) contended that gerotranscendence enables older adults to understand aging as the final stage of natural development, a process through which humans attain maturity and wisdom, leading to a sense of satisfaction with life. Thus, gerotranscendence represents the ultimate goal of aging that older adults aspire to achieve. Gerotranscendence involves acceptance of changes in the body and appearance, a serene approach to death, and the rediscovery of self-worth, all of which are accompanied by an increase in life satisfaction.

2.2.2. Theories Related to Gerotranscendence

A review of the literature revealed that few foundational theories relate to gerotranscendence. Rogers (1970) posited that a person is a singular and unique individual who is constantly exchanging energy with their environmental energy field, forming an inseparable entity with the environment. This process is in constant flux, undergoing transformation with every moment of life, and the aging process is no exception. Reed (1983) offered a contrasting perspective, suggesting that as individuals reach old age, their physical functions gradually deteriorate. However, mentally, they can reframe these external physical changes as resources for adapting to their environment. This process involves integrating their life stages and reconstructing their sense of self-worth to achieve a sense of satisfaction with life. At this stage, the driving force that aids individuals in progressing toward maturity is the capacity for self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is a dynamic process and a natural phenomenon within the aging process, reflecting the growth and maturation of an individual's spirituality. Self-transcendence expands an individual's perspective, leading to a continual quest for the meaning of life. Even in the later stages of life, when the body has ceased growing and its functions have begun to decline, this developmental process continues, leading to interactions with the surrounding environment (Levenson, Jennings, Aldwin, & Shiraishi, 2005). As individuals enter old age, although their physical functions gradually decline, they can reframe these external physical changes as resources for adapting to their environment. Reed (1991) suggested that self-transcendence is related to the psychological well-being of individuals in later life and that it becomes more prominent as individuals approach the end of life. Thus, self-transcendence involves perceiving oneself as part of the universe, transcending the limitations of the body and mind as well as those of time and space. Self-transcendence is thus a natural phenomenon in the aging process that leads individuals toward greater maturity and wisdom, ultimately enabling them to create meaning in life. By contrast, the disengagement theory posits that old age is a process of gradual withdrawal from existing social roles, in which older adults reduce their participation in social systems and their interactions with others. However, some individuals are unwilling to withdraw from their social roles due to aging. Instead, these

individuals, often empowered by the freedom that comes with retirement and old age, are eager to engage in social activities to fulfill both personal and societal expectations.

Tornstam (1994) posited that aging represents the final stage of human development, a natural process that combines wisdom with greater maturity. Upchurch (1999) observed that as physical functions gradually decline, individuals mentally reframe these external physical changes as resources for adapting to their environment, integrating their life stages, reconstructing their sense of self-worth, and achieving life satisfaction. The driving force that facilitates this progression toward maturity is the capacity for self-transcendence. This theory aligns with the perspectives of Rogers (1970) and Reed (1983). However, Tornstam (2003, 2010) further refined the theory of gerotranscendence into three distinct dimensions: 1) Cosmic perspective: Older adults achieve self-transcendence by perceiving themselves as part of the universe, transcending the limitations of the body and mind as well as those of time and space. This natural phenomenon in the aging process leads individuals toward greater maturity and wisdom, enabling them to create meaning in life. This dimension is consistent with Reed's theory of self-transcendence. 2) The self: This dimension involves the holistic growth of older adults, marked by a shift from self-centeredness to altruism. Older adults transcend physical development, learning to care for their bodies without being overly concerned with changes in appearance or function. Instead, they focus on spiritual and existential needs, reconstructing their sense of self-worth. 3) Social and personal relationships: In this dimension, older adults tend to reduce general social activities and increase time spent in solitude. They become less concerned with others' opinions, reduce their desires for material possessions, and concentrate on their spiritual life. This shift results in a broader perspective and greater tolerance, leading to increased maturity and wisdom. Aging is a natural process, and when older adults transcend their past and re-engage with all aspects of life from a broader perspective, they enter the stage of gerotranscendence. At this stage, they become more mature and filled with wisdom (Tornstam, 1994).

2.3. Expression of creativity

2.3.1. Connotation of Creativity and Related Research

Since Guilford introduced the concept and significance of creativity at the 1959 Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, research on creativity has flourished (Amabile, 1996). The term "creativity" can be traced back to the Latin word *creare* and the Greek word *krainein*, which respectively mean "to create" and "to fulfill." Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines creativity as "the ability to produce original ideas" and "bringing something new into existence." However, the definitions of creativity are diverse and broad, with numerous schools of thought offering various interpretations of its meaning. For example, Simonton (1988) proposed that creativity could be divided into three variables: knowledge and skills, effort, and the resulting product. Zhou and George (2001) described

creativity as the generation of new and useful ideas by employees, which are expressed through the sharing of opinions. Sternberg (2003) summarized creativity as encompassing abilities such as exploration, imagination, hypothesis generation, synthesis, and invention. Research on the concept and definition of creativity has evolved from early unidimensional studies to more multidimensional approaches that consider both individual and sociocultural factors and cognitive and affective components. In recent years, the multiple definitions of creativity have shifted toward a confluence approach. Therefore, this study defined the expression of creativity among retirees as the ability to generate innovative concepts and ideas through the interaction between cognitive processes and the external environment, producing outcomes that are both original and useful.

2.3.2. Theoretical Concepts of Creativity and Related Research

An extensive body of theories and research related to creativity has been developed. From the viewpoint of psychoanalytic theory, creativity emphasizes the unconscious and the superego. By contrast, behavioral theory posits that all complex behaviors are learned, highlighting the role of environmental stimuli in triggering creativity. The humanistic theory focuses on self-actualization, whereas the historiometric approach studies creativity and the lives of historical figures renowned for their inventiveness, seeking to identify common factors among them. On the basis of the aforementioned confluence approach, the present study explored creativity through multiple integrated dimensions, including the componential model of creativity, the triarchic theory of creativity, the interactionist model of creativity, and the systems theory of creativity. Each of these theories will be examined in detail to identify and construct the theoretical foundation for this study, as outlined in the following sections.

1) Amabile's Componential Model of Creativity

Amabile (1983) was the first scholar to construct a comprehensive framework for creativity, incorporating cognitive, personality, motivational, and social factors that influence the creative process, positing that creativity results from the interaction between individual characteristics, cognitive abilities, and the social environment. Her work examined both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, environmental factors, and their association with creative output, laying the groundwork for the social psychology of creativity. Amabile suggested that creativity is composed of domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills, and task motivation. The more these three components interact and overlap, the higher an individual's creativity. Her most critical contribution was recognizing the role of motivation in the creative process and the influence of the social environment on creativity—areas that had been largely overlooked by previous researchers. This perspective highlights that, in addition to the individual's internal creative processes, external motivation plays a crucial role in influencing creativity.

2) Triarchic Theory of Creativity

Sternberg (2003) proposed the triarchic theory of creativity, suggesting that creativity emerges from the interaction of three key elements: intelligence,

personality and motivation, and cognitive thinking styles. This theory is conceptually similar to Amabile's (1983) componential model of creativity because both approaches emphasize the roles of motivation and cognitive styles in fostering creativity. However, the primary difference between these theories lies in the factors they prioritize: Sternberg positions intelligence as a critical factor influencing creativity, whereas Amabile focuses on domain-relevant skills as a determinant of creative potential.

3) Gardner's Interactionist Model of Creativity

Gardner (1993) proposed the interactionist model of creativity, which emphasizes the role of interaction in the creative process. According to this model, creativity is influenced by an individual's personal traits, intelligence, social support, and opportunities within their field. Gardner's model underscores the importance of the interaction between the individual, others, and the work environment, suggesting that creativity emerges from the dynamic interplay of these factors.

4) Csikszentmihalyi's Systems Theory of Creativity

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) argued that creativity is a system wherein selection and variation are the primary mechanisms of evolution. Creativity is not composed solely of individual factors; rather, it results from the interaction among three key elements: the individual, the domain, and the field. Without the support of the domain and the field, an individual can hardly display creativity. The domain is a symbolic system of cultural knowledge, the function of which is to preserve and transmit creative products to future generations. Whether a creative product has lasting value depends on the field, which functions as a gatekeeper, controlling and selecting which innovations are recognized and preserved. When an individual's creative ideas or products are developed, they must undergo evaluation and approval by the gatekeepers in the field for the creativity to be supported and further developed. This process is cyclical: The domain communicates to the individual, who identifies innovative possibilities within the domain's transmitted knowledge, generating creative variations. These variations are subsequently evaluated by the field to determine whether they should be retained within the domain.

In summary, creativity theories have increasingly adopted a multidimensional confluence approach. This study applied Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) systems theory of creativity as the primary theoretical foundation to explore the current state of creativity performance among retirees.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Summary of Literature on Gerotranscendence and Life Satisfaction

Gerotranscendence involves a shift in older adults' perspective on events, the acceptance of changes in their body and appearance, the rediscovery of self-worth, and an accompanying increase in life satisfaction. Tornstam (1994) pioneered the theory of gerotranscendence, applying it to studies of the aging process in which

older adults face various physical, psychological, and social changes. **Tornstam's studies (1994, 1997)** suggested that the theory of gerotranscendence challenges the conventional negative perceptions of aging by viewing the aging process from a positive and expansive perspective. This new understanding encompasses time, space, the universe, life, and death, emphasizing that as older adults enter the stage of gerotranscendence, they experience development and change, which lead to increased life satisfaction. **Tornstam (2003)** later noted that greater gerotranscendence was associated with greater life satisfaction. **Wadensten (2007)** and **Wang (2011)** observed that gerotranscendence enables older adults to positively and actively adapt to changes in an aging society, to acknowledge and accept transformations and experiences, and to navigate old age successfully. This process helps them discover meaning in life and self-worth, enhancing their quality of life, reducing the burden on younger generations, and contributing to stable social development (**Chen et al., 2019**). **Wang (2011)** argued that gerotranscendence enables older adults to understand that aging is the final stage of natural development, a process in which humans achieve maturity and wisdom, leading to a sense of satisfaction with life. Finally, gerotranscendence refers to the change in the elderly's perspective on events, acceptance of changes in body and appearance, calm treatment of death, rediscovery of self-worth, and the consequent increase in life satisfaction.

3.2. Summary of Literature on Gerotranscendence and Creativity Performance

Although studies have acknowledged that creativity can slow the aging process, the present study focused on whether creativity can assist older adults in achieving and benefiting from gerotranscendence. Physiological states deteriorate over time as organs weaken and age, but creativity does not. If older adults continue to learn and consistently apply creativity, this creativity can not only stimulate vibrant energy in later years but also merge with the experiences of their youth to produce a more mature wisdom. **Cohen (2006)** clarified that creativity is not limited by age; the aging process does not inherently diminish creativity; the experiences and wisdom gained over the years can lead to even richer creativity. **Nuland (2007)** reached similar conclusions, suggesting that older adults should continue learning, pursue wisdom, engage in social activities, and express and practice their creativity to achieve a state that transcends their chronological age. **Herman (2011)** also observed a correlation between aging and creativity, suggesting that creativity can alter an individual's perceptions and experience of successful aging. Creativity may encourage the development of healthy aging, active aging, creative aging, and even gerotranscendence. Creativity is present throughout the life course of older adults and profoundly affects their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being when they express creative outcomes. When older adults use creativity related to aesthetic experiences, they can continually accumulate small peak experiences that nourish and enhance their spirituality. As soon as these small peak experiences

and spiritual growth reach a threshold, the capacity for self-transcendence may emerge and gerotranscendence is likely to occur.

3.3. Summary of Literature on Life Satisfaction and the Expression of Creativity

Older adults who exhibit higher levels of creativity, experience fewer negative emotions, and possess greater self-control are more likely to deepen their spirituality. This deepened spirituality can help them achieve experiences of gerotranscendence and enhance their satisfaction with their quality of life. Similarly, [Herman \(2011\)](#) observed that engaging in creative activities can enrich the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of older adults, increasing their life satisfaction. Therefore, a positive association exists between creativity and life satisfaction, although further empirical research is required to obtain a clear understanding of this connection.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

1) By 2030, Taiwan region will have an average of 2.5 working individuals supporting each older adult. If this trend continues, the burden on Taiwan region's younger population will multiply, leading to severe social and economic imbalances. Therefore, whether older adults can maintain their health, achieve financial independence, and return to the workforce to extend their careers after retirement and reduce the burden on younger generations is a critical challenge that warrants thorough exploration.

2) Life satisfaction is a crucial indicator of the quality of life and successful aging of older adults and is a primary life goal during old age. Successful aging can be defined as maintaining the range and level of activities from one's middle years while minimizing discomfort. To assist older adults in successfully adapting to aging, enhancing life satisfaction is essential. Accordingly, the living conditions and life satisfaction of retirees warrant further study.

3) Older adults' creativity and participation in creative activities contribute substantially to improving their quality of life and reducing the burden on families and society.

4) The findings of this study can encourage government authorities, administrative bodies, organizations, and future researchers to focus on future retirees and develop appropriate preparations and responsive policies.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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