

## MEMBERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS AND SELF-ESTEEM IN THE CONTEXT OF BIOLOGICAL INVOLUTION IN ADULT FEMALE

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**Abstract:** *Personal successes and failures and internalization of others opinions influence, among other factors, self - image. In adulthood a person remodels his or her self-image on the ground of perceived body-image and according with status and successes. Our investigation was designed as a comparative study between adult female members of an organization and adult female non-members of an organization regarding their self-image, in the context of biological involution characteristic to the 45 - 55 age sub-periods. All participants in our study were considered professional successful. Our hypothesis was confirmed at a highly significant level.*

**Keywords:** *motivational area, adult female, biological involution, self-image, organization.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Biological involution does not imply only a genetic program of individual ontogenesis, but also subjective experiences, emotional feelings, and mental states [1,3,10]. Attention is mostly driven by the physical changes, psychological ones being neglected.

Despite the controversies about age stages between different authors in developmental psychology, we consider in this article the 45 - 55 age interval as being part of adult life. Often characterized by professional and socio-cultural identities [1,12], this stage is marked by biological involution, tensioned events, depression, and changes in the usual life rhythm [10,11]. "Middle age crisis" is used by researchers to describe the moment in which middle age women realize the changes produced in their lives, such as getting old, occupational changes, children departure.

Personal successes or failures and others' interiorized opinions influence self - image. As an adult, a person rechanges his/her self-image according to the way in which he/her perceives the corporal self and her achievement. Women without a professional activity or those obsessed with the idea of

getting old are more vulnerable in developing depression or negative self-esteem. Can we talk about differences regarding self - esteem between adult women who belong to an organization and those who don't, while both categories have professional success?

### 2. BIOLOGICAL INVOLUTION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AGING

Psychological aging is the result of age-induced changes in biostructures [10], which constitute the material support of mental life and that of actual performance of psychological functions [2]. These changes are determined by intern factors (such as heredity, usage of the nervous system) and external factors (ecological, social and cultural factors) [3].

Events in the social environment (the socio-professional environment, socio-cultural environment and relational environment), which particularly occur in the life of adults [11], have a strong echo on the psychological plan, being the ground of psychological aging. Retirement from professional activity, waiving of some activities, diminishes in biological potential, frequent somatic illnesses, possible

disabilities, decreases in the number of family members (death of life partner, children become adults), disappearance of old friends are some of these social events [2].

Regressions in the sensorial plan associated with diminished informational flux and relational sphere [1,12], determine psychological suffering changes such as helplessness, isolation, ideas of injuries. Another important factor of psychological changes and disorders is becoming aware of biological involution and associated uncertainties regarding the future perspectives. Psychology of senescence is characterized, in general, by unequal and non-linear involution of discrete psychological functions, associated with important individual differences determined by innate predispositions, previous level of psychological abilities development, level of achieved performance, experience, cultural level and educational level [13].

Psychology of senescence has three general aspects [2, p.45]:

- The differential character, which highlights significant differences between persons and between the systems or functions of the same person.

- Multiple determination of the psychological senescence, the aging process is the result of individual interactions with the particular physical, biological and social environment, which determine the degree of aging to depend less on the age and more on genetic, somatic, moral and social characteristics of the individual.

- Relative character of disabilities, physiological senescence appears without obvious signs as a consequence of the fact that human body and mind can compensate and balance deterioration by using complex reserves. For example, although intelligence reaches maximum performance in fluidity between 16 and 25 years old, we cannot talk of deterioration of intelligence after this period of age, many times similar or even greater performance are obtained later.

According to PhD Constantin Bogdan (1997), normal functioning of an elder implies physical, psychological and social balance.

Psychological changes imply [2]:

1. Changes in attention or diminished ability to concentrate, diminished voluntary attention which lead to decreases in mnemonic ability, especially in the short-term memory; information in long-term memory appears to be much more organized and systematized.

2. Changes in thinking which are characterized by decreases in spontaneity, flexibility, quick adaptation disorders and stereotypes. Decreases in the number of neurons and of nervous connexions do not affect in the same way every cerebral structure or region. These differential characteristics appear in behaviour.

3. Several disharmonic pre-existent traits can be accentuated or even developed at the character dimension.

4. The affective dimension is dominated by depression, apathy, coldness, which lead to an unstable or irritable behaviour. Somatic sufferings, sleep and appetite disorders, feeling of culpability and uselessness, self-blaming are symptoms of involution depression.

Characteristics of the aging process are obvious at all personality dimensions [14]. Depending on the attitudes systems developed in relation with complex existential state of the adult, a person may be in one of the following frequent condition: existential situation is perceived as being overwhelming and disarming, constructive or refused [2].

Those approaching the first condition will develop aging models with high pathological risk; egocentric, introvert, depressive and anxious, and hypochondriac traits are in advantage. Those persons approaching the second condition will develop optimal aging models. We mention here adults or elder persons who have a balanced and structured personality and who can reorganize their potential and invest it in an activity in concordance with their new, post-retirement, personal, familial and social conditions.

Persons in the third condition will also develop aging models with high pathological risk but in a different manner. As a dominant characteristic of these people is the strain their excessive "hyper-ego" imposes. Not admitting specific deterioration of their age, these persons remain at activity levels that go beyond their possibilities and risk to suffer

somatic or psychological break-downs much difficult to overcome later.

We should also mention a disharmonic structure of personality on the ground of biological involution giving the elders a general negative state [13]. The analytical adult will become the pestiferous old man, the prudent adult will become the suspicious old man, the meticulous adult will be the stereotypical old man, the economic one becomes miser and so on.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*Purpose of the research:* to conduct a comparative study on self - image in female adults who belong to an organization and self - image in female adults who don't belong to an organization, according to specific biological involution of the 45 -55 age stage.

*Research objectives:* to stress biological involution influence on female adults' self - esteem; to identify the biological factors that influence adult women's self - esteem; to point out the necessity of maintaining women's health through their involvement in family and society; to identify the professional factors that influence adult women's self - esteem.

*General hypothesis:* under the impact of biological involution, women's self - esteem records negative changes, especially in persons who don't belong to an organization.

*Specific hypotheses:*

1. There is a significant correlation between the degree of biological involution and self - esteem level in adult women (of 45 - 55 years old).
2. There is a relation of interdependence between corporal self perception and social self - esteem in adult women (of 45 - 55 years old).
3. There is a correlation between professional dissatisfaction level and self - esteem level in adult women (of 45 - 55 years old).
4. There is a correlation between health problems associated with the age and self - esteem level in adult women (of 45 - 55 years old).

*The investigated sample:* all the participants (80 persons) were adult women,

with ages between 45 and 55; 41 persons were working in different organization, while 39 women were free-lancers.

*Instruments used:* biological involution questionnaire; self - esteem questionnaire; social self - esteem inventory; corporal self perception questionnaire; observation guide.

### 4. RESULTS

*Hypothesis 1:* The correlated variables in hypothesis 1 are biological involution level and self - esteem level. Bravais - Pearson correlation coefficient was used in order to determine the relation between the two variables. We obtained:  $r = -0.406$ ,  $N = 80$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The statistically significant negative correlation allows us to affirm that the hypothesis is confirmed: while biological involution accentuates, self - esteem level decreases.

*Hypothesis 2:* The correlated variables are corporal self perception and social self - esteem level. The result of the correlation was statistically significant:  $r = 0.289$ ,  $N = 80$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Hypothesis was confirmed: as adult women are more satisfied with their physical appearance, the level of social self - esteem increases.

It was also noticed that participants' occupation influences their perception of physical appearance, and social self - esteem. The result of the correlation (Bravais - Pearson correlation coefficient) between participants' occupation and the way in which they perceive their physical appearance was:  $r = 0.265$ ,  $N = 80$ ,  $p < 0.005$ . The coefficient is statistically significant which means that corporal self perception improves as participants' occupation is higher.

Regarding the relation between participants' current occupation and their social self - esteem, the result of the correlation was:  $r = 0.238$ ,  $N = 80$ ,  $p < 0.005$ . The correlation is statistically significant: as participants' current occupation is higher, their social self - esteem is higher.

*Hypothesis 3:* The correlated variables are the level of professional dissatisfaction and self - esteem level. The result of the correlation (Bravais - Pearson correlation

coefficient) was:  $r = -0.263$ ,  $N = 80$ ,  $p < 0.005$ . The statistically significant negative correlation confirms the hypothesis. As participants' professional dissatisfaction increases, self - esteem decreases.

*Hypothesis 4:* The correlated variables are health problems associated with the age and self - esteem level. The result of the correlation (Bravais - Pearson correlation coefficient) was:  $r = -0.245$ ,  $N = 80$ ,  $p < 0.005$ . The statistically significant negative correlation confirms the hypothesis. As health problems associated with the age accentuate, self - esteem level decreases.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Most of the women (78% from the investigated sample) build their self - image during adolescence. The fundament of self - image construction was corporal self, psychological and social selves playing a secondary part. Therefore, biological involution in adult life determined negative changes in self - image, because the changes associated with the process of getting old are evident and irreversible (on a scale from 1 - unnoticed to 20 - extremely evident, the mean for the degree of getting old is 16, which means a high level of biological involution at the participants in the research).

For testing the main hypothesis, we used independent sample t test for difference of means between the self - image of adult women belonging to an organization and the self - image of adult women who don't belong to an organization. The difference is statistically significant ( $t = 4,12$ , higher than the 3,62 value corresponding to  $p < 0,001$ ), confirming therefore the fact that the self - esteem suffer, under the impact of biological involution, negative changes in persons who don't belong to an organization. A possible explanation is that the persons involved in an organization perceive their corporal self in a more positive manner (the comparison with others is at a low level as a consequence of standard conduct or uniforms - on a scale from 1 to 5, the mean is 1.7; for persons whot don't belong to an organization, the mean is 4.1, the comparison being at a much higher level).

Women involved in an organization receive, also, much more compliments and encouragements when compared with freelancers. This helps them to accept more easily the process of getting old.

The objectives of the research were partially achieved, the necessity of maintaining women health through involvement in family and society and identification of specific differences in the perception of corporal, psychological, social selves of female adults regardless of their social status, their culture or nationality remaining as points of interest for future researches.

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