

Full Length Research Paper

Correlations among attitudes about aging, willingness to communicate, communication satisfaction, and self-esteem of Filipino elders

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With the aim of understanding how Filipino elders function in the communication context, this study sought to determine their attitude about aging, willingness to communicate, and communication satisfaction, and how these variables correlated with their self-esteem. Eight hundred and one willing and able elders from different sectors of society were included in the study. Mixed methods such as survey, interview, and observation were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Results revealed significant correlations between the elders' attitude about aging and self-esteem, willingness to communicate and self-esteem, communication satisfaction and self-esteem. Further analysis proved that self-esteem could be predicted by the elders' attitude about aging, willingness to communicate and communication satisfaction.

Key words: Filipino elders, self-esteem, attitude about aging, willingness to communicate, communication satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

A number of studies have been done on the ramifications of an aging Philippine society so much so that the impact on the country's economy, the family structure, migration, and the like have been examined. Being a communication teacher, the author cannot help but be interested in matters that are more personal and relevant to her field of specialization such as the elders' self-worth as they age, their attitudes about aging, and their relationship with those around them. It would be interesting to find out how willing they are to interact with their families and

friends, how satisfied they are with those interactions, how their self-worth is associated with their attitudes about aging, and how their self worth is related to their willingness to interact. Understanding the elders' self-worth in the context of communication will provide us with a better appreciation of their condition and how to better interact with them.

Communicating with the elders is extremely important. Del Villar (2006) argued that of all the activities humans engage in, communication is perhaps the most

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consequential, dynamic, and ubiquitous. Our daily life is replete with all kinds of communication – from the moment we wake up in the morning to the time we close our eyes at the end of the day. In fact, on a typical day, we participate in a series of communication transactions of different kinds, levels, and contexts. Much of our fulfillment and pleasure as human beings depend on how well we communicate with our fellow humans in the different social groups to which we belong: our family, peers, office, organizations, and community. What better way to understand and appreciate the Filipino elders' self-worth than to see them in the context of the communication activity they actively, or maybe even passively, engage in.

Elders in the Philippines

According to the Philippine National Statistics Office (NSO), as of year 2000, senior citizens or those whose ages ranged from 60 and above, numbered 4.6 million making up 5.97% of the total Philippine population. Of the 4.6 million, a little more than half or 54.11% were females. Thirty five percent of the senior citizen population was between the ages 60 to 64 and 24.94% were in the 65 to 69 year age range. The median age was 68 years old. It was predicted that if the growth trend continued at its rate of 4.39% per year, the number of senior citizens would reach 7 million by year 2010.

NSO further reported that 60% of senior citizens had attained elementary education, 15.69% had reached secondary education, 4.85% had partial college education, and 5% had completed a college degree. Of the 4.6 million senior citizens, 57.41% were heads of households, and 25% were spouses of the heads of the households. Of the 15.3 million households in the country, 17.13% had senior household heads. It is interesting to note that 5.38% of senior citizens were living alone and majority of them were females. Most of them were in the age range of 60 to 64. As for health conditions, 7.21% of the senior population experienced some problems, the most common being low vision (54.11%), hearing difficulty (9.7%), partial blindness (8.43%), partial deafness (6.43%), and total blindness (4.52%).

Over half of the senior population had some forms of livelihood such as farming, forestry, fisheries, skilled and unskilled labor, business, and employment. Seventy percent worked in the country while 3.04% worked abroad.

The World Health Organization estimated that the life expectancy of Filipino males age 60 or over, as of 2002, was an additional 10.6 years while females had an additional 12.1 years (WHO, 2002). On the contrary, an average of 12.4 years for males and 14.3 years for females were taken away as a result of poor health. WHO (2002) added that those needing care would triple

by year 2050. Of those, 42.2% would belong to the 60 years old or older.

Casterline et al. (1991) claimed that the family support system was very important when it came to quality of life. Studies showed that there was not much change, from when they were younger, when it came to social position and standard of living. Ogena (2006) summarized that in the Philippines, it was still the family that remained the most crucial when it came to elders' support system despite changes that happened in the Filipino family such as smaller size, delayed marriages, intercultural marriages, family break-ups, and migration.

Medina (1991) wrote that elders in the Philippine society "have traditionally enjoyed a special place of honor (218)." They were seen as assets because they were respected and sought after for their experience and good judgment. For generations, caring for them had been understood as the responsibility of their adult children. Despite the transformations in the family and society, as a result of modernization and globalization, elders were still cared for. The government and other private institutions had also stepped in to complement what the family had fallen short of performing.

A survey, however, found that some elders no longer enjoyed as much respect as they once had (Social Research Center, University of Santo Tomas, 1986). The study found that the younger generation was less respectful and less compliant when it came to the old practice of showing respect.

Although elders generally expected their children to care for them in their twilight years, there were those who preferred to continue providing support to their married children. Domingo's survey (1988) of elders found that there were those who not only continued giving monetary support but also assumed the care of their grandchildren and the household.

In cases of elders who could not be cared for by their families, there were institutions sponsored by private and government organizations. At present, most of the residents of government institutions were from the very poor sector of society or those who were abandoned. Elders who could afford it lived independently and stayed in their old family homes. Others chose private institutions to care for them instead of living with their married children's families.

There were many problems that beset the elderly. Montes (1982) enumerated some of those problems such as loss of income, feelings of abandonment, loneliness, diminished physical abilities, and lack of free or affordable health services. Lolarga (1980) added that retirement could be an ordeal for those used to working most of their lives. The sudden loss of an important activity, like going to work could feel like losing a purpose for living. Medina (1991) added that diminishing physical abilities, especially the senses of sight and hearing could cause difficulties in relating with members of the family. As a

result, elders could feel misunderstood and isolated.

Study framework

The following sections cover related studies on the major variables under study: Self-esteem, attitude about aging, willingness to communicate, and communication satisfaction.

Self-esteem

Wrench et al. (2008) defined self-esteem as the “view people have of themselves in terms of total worth (48).” Those who have low self-esteem “tend to lack confidence in their own ability and to evaluate their own competence negatively...They expect failure in whatever they attempt to accomplish, including interactions with others (48).” Generally, those with low self-esteem feel more comfortable as followers while those with high self-esteem tend to be leaders. On the contrary, Rosenberg (1965) indicated that people with high-self esteem were satisfied with themselves, felt that they “have a number of good qualities”, “able to do things as well as most other people”, “have so much to be proud of”, “feel that [they] are persons of worth”, respect themselves, and have a positive attitude towards themselves.

Beebe et al. (2011) referred to self-esteem as self-worth. It is a “description of who you are... an evaluation of who you are...related to feeling and expressing positive messages toward others as well as being supportive of other people (43).”

Self-esteem is consciously or unconsciously assessed when people compare themselves to others. The comparison serves as a reference to how good they perform against others. Performing simple tasks may not be enough to judge one’s worth, but if the more important tasks were involved, then one’s worth could be challenged. Coupled with the worth one gives oneself is the general feeling of happiness. Having a high self-esteem is also associated with the feeling of welfare and satisfaction.

As illustrated by McKay and Fanning (1992), self-esteem has been repeatedly proven in the field of social sciences as vital for human survival. Without it, one’s existence could be “enormously painful.” They stressed that one mark that distinguished humans from animals was having the ability to be aware of the self and attaching value to it. The problem with this, they emphasized, was that when you have a low valuation of yourself (for whatever reason) you also “reject parts of yourself... [thus damaging] the psychological structures that literally keep you alive (1).” This self-rejection could result in the individual avoiding any perceived source of the problem. For instance, the person might avoid any forms of

interactions with other people because they might bring him pain. The person could literally limit his “ability to open [himself] with others, express sexuality, be the center of attention, hear criticism, ask for help, or solve problems.” The problem could become worse if the person built boundaries to protect himself. In examining the causes and effects of self-esteem, McKay and Fanning (1992) pointed out the difficulty saying that the issue could be compared to the “chicken and egg” question. As they analyzed, “it seems that self-esteem grows out of your circumstances in life, and at the same time, your circumstances in life are influenced strongly by your self-esteem. Which came first?”

Whichever came first, or whichever was the cause or the effect, self-esteem or the circumstances surrounding people, their self-esteem would be extremely important because it would affect their whole being. Having a positive well-being would always be associated with feelings of self-confidence. And if people were confident about themselves, they would also be at ease whatever their age. If they were confident they would also become more willing and consequently satisfied with communication with others. If there was one variable that could be used to gauge people’s general well-being, self-esteem should be it.

Attitudes about aging

Wrench et al. (2008) defined attitude as “a predisposition...a tendency that we have to do something...a tendency to evaluate people, ideas, or objects. Evaluative... means making judgments of good or bad, desirable or undesirable, or likable or unlikable (142).” It is a “hypothetical construct” which means that, similar to belief and value, it cannot be perceived by the senses and exists only in the mind. Although it exists only in the mind, it influences our behavior. Our evaluation of something will determine how we will behave toward it.

One’s attitude about aging is important in the sense that it has been found to be associated with life satisfaction. According to Elejalde-Ruiz (2011), attitude can make all the difference in that “how people feel inside, and their expectations of their capabilities, can have a greater impact on health, happiness and even longevity.” In an experiment conducted by psychologist Langer (1979), it was concluded that it was “expectation, not biology, [that lead] many elderly people to set physical limits on themselves; they assume they’ll fall apart, so they let it happen.” Sheehy (1995), too, concluded that “it is our psychological attitude and behavior that more likely determine the quality and duration of our third age (419)” and not just our genes.

Levy (1975), a social psychologist, reported that those who held negative attitudes towards aging were significantly more likely to have old age diseases when they

grow old compared to those who held positive attitudes. Levy further showed that those with positive attitudes lived longer by as much as 7.5 years than those with negative views. An explanation provided was that of the concept of self-fulfilling prophecies where “those who believe that older people remain active, vital and healthy members of society may take better care of themselves, continuing good eating and exercise patterns. They can see a point in giving up smoking or beginning an exercise plan even in their 60s and 70s. Conversely, people who thought that aging inevitably brought infirmity and illness could consciously or unconsciously let that happen”

Luszcz and Fitzgerald (1986) revealed that although older adults showed less negative attitudes towards themselves, their attitudes were still less positive when compared with their ratings of middle-aged adults. This means that they looked at themselves less positively than they looked at other adults younger than themselves. Heckhausen and Krueger (1993), on the other hand, concluded that the older the adults, the more positive their attitudes tended to be. The older adults, however, still believed that their positive traits declined while their negative traits increased as they aged. Heckhausen and Brim (1997) further found that the older adults' problems were consistent with their belief.

On the contrary, Cohen (2005) reported that older adults experienced “high morale... even among those who are frail. The positive outlook of people ... isn't the exception – it's the rule (14).” Cohen forwarded a number of factors responsible for this positive disposition among which are: “greater acceptance of life's realities, a greater sense of self, and a long-term perspective that makes it easier to accept the inevitable slings and arrows of daily life”. Cohen further explained that in addition to those psychological factors, new research proved that “changes in the older brain itself play an important role in the emotional aplomb and equanimity of many older adult (14).” Older brains, because of the physiological changes they have gone through have become more balanced. As a result of their maturity, they have developed “ability to control... emotions and modulate... behavior appropriately (17).” Despite challenges in life, mature brains have the “capacity to ride out emotional storms [with] more flexibility and resiliency (17).” These were also due to the experiences older adults went through which stimulated the growth and maturity of their brain.

Cohen (2005) also mentioned a research conducted by Canli and his colleagues in the Department of Psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, about the nature of older adults. Among their findings were: as adults matured, their experience of negative emotions became less severe; older adults paid more attention to positive stimuli rather than negative ones; elders were more likely to remember positive experiences rather than those which were negative. They concluded that as an individual matured, his “amygdalae showed decreased

reactivity to negative information while maintaining or increasing their reactivity to positive information (18)”. This concluded that older adults became generally “calmer in the face of life's challenges.”

The present study hypothesized that attitude about aging would influence the elders' circumstances in life. Specifically, the elderly who enjoyed a healthy attitude about aging would also possess a high self-esteem.

Willingness to communicate

Wrench et al. (2008) defined willingness to communicate (WTC) as “a predisposition to initiate communication with others (56).” It is an individual's inclination to engage in communication with other people. Using Wrench et al's indicators, it is said that people with a high willingness to communicate are more inclined to start a conversation with strangers such as a service station attendant, a physician, a policeman, a salesperson, a secretary, a garbage collector or even to speak in public occasions. Del Villar's study (2010) showed that Filipinos have a high Mean WTC of 70.20. Their WTC also had a low but significant correlation with their intercultural sensitivity ($r=.23$, $p\text{-value}=.00$). It was apparent from the study that respondents were actually comfortable communicating with people from other cultures and it was this feeling, among others, that made them interculturally sensitive. A follow up study of the intercultural sensitivity of Filipinos in the multinational sector (Del Villar, 2012) also resulted in a significant correlation between willingness to communicate and intercultural sensitivity ($r=.23$, $p\text{-value}=.00$).

In the present study, it is hypothesized that Filipino elders, being in the same cultural context as the respondents in the Del Villar 2010 and 2012 studies, would also have a high willingness to communicate. Further, elder respondents who reported high level of willingness to communicate would also experience high self-esteem.

Communication satisfaction

Hecht (1978) defined communication satisfaction as “the positive reinforcement provided by a communication event that fulfilled positive expectations (217).” He qualified that it was a “communication outcome” one gets after a fulfilling interaction. The situations and conditions within the situation were connected and resulted in satisfaction. Hecht further argued that “communication satisfaction was embedded in the communication event (217).” It followed therefore that an interaction, especially a fulfilling one, could result in satisfaction and in return could facilitate more interaction and enhanced relationships.

In a study by Arslan et al. (2010), it was found that there

was a significant correlation among self-esteem, life satisfaction, and conflict communication. Although life satisfaction in their study did not focus only on communication, it however covered a whole range of life experiences. A person with high self-esteem had a positive view of himself and a high level of satisfaction. He also reported employing an effective "positive problem solving approach" and could therefore deal with challenges that came his way.

The present study hypothesized that Filipino elders who reported having a high level of communication satisfaction would also have high self-esteem.

Based on the discussions of the variables above, the present study sought to find out if they were associated with self-esteem when in a communication context involving elderly Filipinos. Specifically, the following objectives were addressed:

1. To determine the Filipino elders' levels of: Self-esteem, attitudes about aging, willingness to communicate, and communication satisfaction.
2. To determine the correlations between the three variables (attitude about aging, willingness to communicate, communication satisfaction) and self-esteem.
3. To develop a model that could predict the elders' level of self-esteem

The following hypotheses were tested:

H1: Elders who enjoyed a healthy attitude about aging would also possess high self-esteem.

H2a: Filipino elders, being in the same cultural contexts as the Filipino respondents in the Del Villar 2010 and 2012 studies, would also have the same level of willingness to communicate.

H2b: Elder respondents who reported a high level of willingness to communicate would also experience high self-esteem

H3: Filipino elders who reported having a high level of communication satisfaction would also have high self-esteem.

METHOD

The study was descriptive in nature employing both quantitative and qualitative techniques with survey as the main method. Purposive sampling of 801 willing and able respondents, ages ranging from 60 and older, from different sectors of society (government and private institutions for the elderly catering to different socio-economic classes, elders living independently on their own, and those living with their families) was conducted in a face-to-face setting. Most of the respondents accomplished the questionnaires on their own while some needed assistance. Further, selected respondents (those who rated very high or very low in the questionnaires) were invited to participate in the interview. Observations were also conducted in selected contexts.

Instruments

The four instruments used were the following:

1. The Self-esteem Scale by Rosenberg (1968) is a ten item questionnaire about one's general feelings of worth about oneself. The highest possible score is 50 while the lowest is 10. An arbitrary classification into high, moderate, and low self-esteem was developed for purposes of the present study where 37 to 50 indicated high self-esteem, 23 to 36 indicated moderate self-esteem, and 10 to 22 low self-esteem. The questionnaire has an alpha estimate of .80.

2. The Generalized Attitude Scale by McCroskey (2006) is a five item questionnaire where one is asked to indicate, in a scale of 1 to 7, one's attitudes about aging. The scores range from 5 to 35. For purposes of the present study, an arbitrary classification of scores was developed where 25 to 35 indicate high attitude, 15 to 24 indicate moderate attitude, and 5 to 14 indicate low attitude. The questionnaire has an alpha estimate of .90

3. The Willingness to Communicate Scale by McCroskey (1992) is a 20 item questionnaire where one is asked to rate one's willingness to communicate in different situations. The scores range from 0 to 100. For purposes of the present study, an arbitrary classification was developed where 66.5 to 100 indicate high willingness, 33 to 66, moderate willingness, and 0 to 32.5 indicate low willingness. The questionnaire has alpha estimates of .85 to .90

4. The Modified Communication Satisfaction Scale was a modification of Hecht's Communication Satisfaction Scale (1978) and focused on the important indicators of satisfaction in communication in general. It has 19 questions that describe different situations wherein one could find oneself. Instead of rating one's most recent conversation, the modified scale rated one's conversations in general. An arbitrary classification, where 70 to 95 indicated high satisfaction, 45 to 69 indicated moderate satisfaction, and 19 to 44 low satisfaction, was developed for purposes of the study. It was tested for reliability in the present study resulting in an alpha estimate of .80.

Data analysis

1. To address the first objective (which was to determine the Filipino elders' levels of self-esteem, attitudes about aging, willingness to communicate, and communication satisfaction), scores in the Self-esteem, Attitudes about aging, Willingness to communicate, and Communication satisfaction scales were computed and summarized.

2. To address the second objective (which was to determine the correlations among attitude about aging, willingness to communicate, communication satisfaction and self-esteem), the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation test was done between attitudes about aging scores and self-esteem scores, willingness to communicate scores and self-esteem scores, and communication satisfaction scores and self-esteem scores at $\alpha = .05$ level of significance.

3. To develop a model that could predict the elders' level of self-esteem, the Multiple Regression test was conducted on all the variables.

RESULTS

Demographic profile of the respondents

Of the 801 respondents in this study, majority (358 or 44.7%) belonged to the 60 to 65 age bracket, 168 (21%) in the 66 to 70 age group, 152 (19%) in the 71 to 75 group, and a sprinkling from the 76 to 95 years old. Majority or 60.5% were females while 39% were males.

Table 1. Distribution of self-esteem scores.

Self-esteem	Frequency	Percentage
High	455	57.20
Moderate	300	37.70
Low	40	5

As to their civil statuses, majority (474, 605) were married, 240 (30%) were widows or widowers, 46 (5.7%) were single, 30 (3.7%) were separated, and 7 (9%) were divorced or annulled.

Majority or 39.2% had college education, 16% had partial college education, 21% had high school education, 14% had elementary, while only 10.1% reached post graduate education. As to continuing form of education or training, 11.2% or 86 continued further learning but majority or 88.8% (685) completely stopped any form of education.

Most of the respondents were no longer working (532 or 66.6%) while 266 or 33.3% still had an occupation. Only 6.8% (49) belonged to the upper income group, majority (580 or 80.6%) belonged to the middle income group, while 76 or 10.6% belonged to the lower income group.

As to their health condition, majority (501 or 64%) believed they were in good health, 88 or 11.2% believed they were in excellent health, 172 or 22% claimed they were not in good health, while 22 or 2.8% admitted they were in bad health. Sixty two percent (62.2 or 489) had some forms of leisure activities while only 297 or 38% did not. As much as 200 (25.4%) played some sports while 587 (74.6%) did not. Two hundred eighty one (281, 36.1%) went to cultural entertainments or events while 497 (63.8%) did not.

As to their place of residence, majority (559 or 70.3%) owned their house and lived with their family or relatives, 139 (17.5%) did not own their house and lived with family or relatives, 54 (7%) owned their house and lived alone (this finding was close to NSO's 2000 report where 5.38% of senior citizens in the country were living alone), 17 (2.1%) lived in a private institution, 11 (1.4%) lived in a government institution.

As to contacts with family, 70.1% claimed that they regularly communicated with members of their families while 24.2% did so occasionally. The rest indicated communicating only yearly to never. As to close friends, 56.5% regularly communicated with close friends while 36.4% communicated occasionally.

Filipino elders' level of self-esteem

Majority of the respondents (455 or 57.2%) registered high self-esteem, 300 or 37.7% rated moderate, while 40 or 5% rated low. The Mean self-esteem score was

36.81 (SD=7.42), which means that on the average the respondents had a high level of self-esteem. Based on the indicators of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), the elders generally felt satisfied with themselves, thought they were good most of the time, felt that they had "a number of good qualities," were able to do things "as well as most people," did not feel useless, felt that they were persons of "worth when compared with others," had respect for themselves, did not feel they were a failure, and had a "positive attitude toward themselves."

These findings supported what Cohen (2005) discovered about older adults - they generally felt good about themselves and these showed in their self-esteem scores. In the present study, a small group of healthy looking elder males (Mean age=75) living in a subdivision in Quezon City was observed. The group exemplified a high level of self-esteem. The elders would play tennis almost every afternoon. They would excitedly meet in the tennis court at around 4:00 pm even if the sun was still up and hot. With their tennis rackets, change of clothes, and jugs of water, they would go about their usual warm up exercises before playing doubles. All the while, they would happily poke jokes at each other. After a few games, they would proceed to the village coffee shop and continue talking until they decide it was time to head home.

Not all the elders in the study had a healthy self-esteem though. One 85 year old respondent mostly kept to herself. Her only interactions were those with the neighbors' helpers when they swept their front yards every afternoon. She would usually gossip about this neighbor and that, and endlessly complain about dirty gardens and astray dogs. When asked how she felt about herself, she reluctantly launched into a litany of misfortunes that life has so unfairly thrown her way. This respondent was among those who rated low in the self-esteem measure.

Table 1 shows the distribution according to self-esteem scores. It should be noted that not all the 801 respondents indicated their answers to all the items in the questionnaire resulting in some missing cases.

Filipino elder's attitude about aging

Among the respondents, 568 or 71.3% had a high positive attitude about aging, 194 or 24.3% had moderate, while 35 or 4.4% had low. The Mean attitude score was 26.88 (SD=6.19). This means that, on the average, the aging respondents viewed aging as good, right, beneficial, fair, and positive. Only 4.4% of the respondents saw aging as bad, wrong, harmful, unfair, and negative. Among the representative reasons given by those who viewed aging as good, fair, beneficial, and positive were:

1. It is good because it gives you time to reflect on life.
2. It is good because it is natural and part of life.
3. It is beneficial because now one has time to do what he failed to accomplish during his youth.

Table 2. Distribution of attitude about aging scores

Attitude about aging	Frequency	Percentage
High	568	71.30
Moderate	194	24.30
Low	35	4

4. It is good because you are respected.
5. It is fair because you give way for the young generation to take over.
6. It is positive because it symbolizes the beauty of life.
7. It is positive because you gain a wise view of life.

These results supported previous findings on elders' positive attitudes about their own aging. Hess' (2005) study, for instance, concluded that "older adults have more complex and positive representations about aging than younger individuals" (391) implying that they have a better perspective about their own aging. Their views about aging were more enhanced when compared with younger adults. Heckhausen and Krueger (1993) also found that adults generally looked forward to positive aging for themselves and this phenomenon became better among older adults. Generally, research on aging proved that "older adults' own attitudes about aging could have an effect on their behavior with very little influence from external sources. Evidence showed that self-referent beliefs related to ability were associated with performance and also changed with age" (Hess, 2007).

The present results also supported Cohen's (2005) argument that older adults have a generally positive attitude about life. Among the factors responsible were the elders' "greater acceptance of life's realities." Indeed, the positive attitude was evident among majority of the respondents. Elders saw aging as a natural event of life that must be accepted wholeheartedly. They saw no need to resist something as natural as aging.

Not everyone in the present study, though, felt positive. There were some who saw aging as a curse that could not be avoided. One 75 year old, for instance, loathed it but could not find a way out. She saw it as the reason she lost her physical beauty and her career. To this day, she still felt bitterness in her heart. Among the representative answers of those who viewed aging as bad, unfair, harmful, and negative were:

1. It is bad because your contemporaries are dying one after the other.
2. It is unfair because you see your family refusing to take care of you.
3. It is unfair because you are always misunderstood by your family.
4. It is bad because you tire easily and your body aches.
5. It is unfair because it can be very sad and lonely.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the attitude scores. It should be noted that not all the 801 respondents indicated their answers to all the items in the questionnaire resulting in some missing cases.

Elders' willingness to communicate

Most of the respondents (599 or 75.3%) expressed a high willingness to communicate in various situations, while 187 (23.5%) admitted moderate willingness. Very few (9 or 1.1%) expressed unwillingness to communicate. On the average, the elders reported a Mean WTC of 75.85 (SD=16.33). This means that generally they were highly willing to communicate with people on different situations. Using the indicators established by McCroskey (1992), the elders in the present study disclosed that they were comfortable about initiating a conversation with strangers such as a police officer, a physician, a service station attendant, or anyone they happened to be standing with while in line. They were even willing to speak in a public meeting or occasion if the situation called for it. During interviews for the present study, a group of elders admitted having developed more confidence as they aged. They felt that their age gave them the gumption to initiate talking to anyone. At their age, they felt they already had the courage to express their opinions and no longer worried about what others would say. These same elders rated high in the willingness to communicate measure. Not all the elders rated high in WTC. A few rated very low. One low rater admitted that talking to others had never been among his preferences and felt that he would not likely change. He would rather keep to himself.

As has been predicted, Filipino elders, in the general context, have a high level of WTC. This finding supported hypothesis H2a which stated that Filipino elders, being in the same cultural contexts as the respondents in the Del Villar 2010 and 2012 studies, would also have a high willingness to communicate.

Table 3 shows the distribution of the WTC scores. It should be noted that not all the 801 respondents indicated their answers to all the items in the questionnaire resulting in some missing cases.

Filipino elders' communication satisfaction

When tested about their level of communication satisfaction, majority of the elders (403 or 51%) reported experiencing a high level of satisfaction, 344 (43.5%) experienced moderate satisfaction, while only 44 or 5.6% reported low satisfaction. On the average, the mean satisfaction score was 66.63 with an SD of 13.03. This means that the elders generally experienced high communication satisfaction. Using the indicators of the conversations with people, they generally felt they were

Table 3. Distribution of Willingness to Communicate Scores.

Willingness to Communicate	Frequency	Percentage
High	599	75.30
Moderate	187	23.50
Low	9	1

Table 4. Distribution of communication satisfaction scores.

Communication satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
High	403	50.00
Moderate	344	43.00
Low	44	5

effective, worthwhile, satisfied, presentable, understood, interesting, could talk about anything, and could also laugh with others. A few, though, felt otherwise. The low raters felt unsatisfied in conversations and would rather not participate if given the choice.

Table 4 shows the distribution of communication satisfaction scores. It should be noted that not all the 801 respondents indicated their answers to all the items in the questionnaire resulting in some missing cases.

Correlation between the three variables (attitude about aging, willingness to communicate, and communication satisfaction) and self-esteem

Attitude about aging and self-esteem

When the elders’ attitude about aging scores was correlated with their self-esteem scores, results showed a moderate but significant correlation ($r=.368, p=.00$). The elders’ high positive attitude about aging ($M=26.88$) was positively related to their high self-esteem ($M=36.81$). The first hypothesis, (H1) that the elderly who enjoyed a healthy attitude about aging would also possess high self-esteem, was supported. This means that when the elders had a high positive attitude about aging, they also tended to have high self-esteem. As was emphasized by McKay and Fanning (1992), self-esteem influenced a person’s whole being and if that happened he/she would also develop a healthy attitude about events in his/her life like the physical and mental changes that came with aging.

In the present study, one elder with a high self-esteem disclosed that she saw aging as a milestone in her life and that she could not help but be excited about what the coming years would bring. Although she felt the negative physical manifestations of her aging body (arthritis, poor eyesight, lower level of energy) she accepted them and did her best to be productive.

In interviews conducted with members of a religious organization, a number of elders proudly bragged that their group still did charity projects for their church despite their aching joints. They did not mind their physical discomfort as long as they were together accomplishing good deeds.

Another elder who lived in an institution still managed to play the piano during their social gatherings. He disclosed that he may not be at his physical best at the moment but he still believed in himself and that he could still be productive. Aging, he continued, was a fact of life and he chose to face it positively. These elders who rated high in attitude about aging also rated high in self-esteem. There were also a few cases of respondents who rated very low in self-esteem; as expected, they also rated low in attitude about aging.

The present findings also supported Arslan et al’s (2010) conclusion that a person with a high self-esteem had a positive view of himself as well as a high level of satisfaction resulting in a positive approach to the challenges in life.

Self-esteem and willingness to communicate

When the elders’ willingness to communicate scores was correlated with their self-esteem scores, results showed a strong and significant correlation between the two variables ($r=.742, p=.00$). This means that when the elders had high willingness to communicate with other people, they also experienced high self-esteem (36.81 or high). As was hypothesized (H2b), Filipino elders who reported a high level of willingness to communicate would also experience high level of self-esteem.

A number of respondents who disclosed that they did not have any problems about their willingness to engage in conversations also reported high self-esteem. In fact, they gladly anticipated different situations that would allow them to share their minds because they felt that they had so much to impart. One grandmother even jokingly shared that she has found all the answers to all of life’s questions but sadly no one would ask for her guidance. Another grandfather admitted that he felt that age gave him so much self-belief he never experienced during his younger years. He used to shy away from communication situations, but now he welcomed them.

There were exceptions though. One 90 year old widower felt that he no longer had anything to contribute to society and that his opinions no longer mattered. He believed that his mind was already dimmed by time in the same way that his body was already weak. He chose to disengage by avoiding social gatherings that would only force him to talk. His family, according to him, no longer gave him any reasons to connect. This elder rated very low in the self-esteem and willingness to communicate scales.

Table 5. Correlation between self-esteem and the three variables.

	Attitude about aging	Willingness to communicate	Communication satisfaction
Self-esteem	.368**	.742**	.368*
sig (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	795	794	792

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Self –esteem and communication satisfaction

Another test was conducted to find out if a correlation existed between the elders' communication satisfaction and self-esteem. Results revealed a moderate but significant correlation ($r=.368$, $p=.00$). This shows that when elders experienced satisfaction with their communication with others (66.63 or moderate), they also had high self-esteem (36.81 or high).

The elder respondents generally felt they expressed themselves effectively, their conversations were worthwhile, they looked forward to more conversations, they felt that people wanted to know them more, others were interested in what they contributed, they took turns talking in a friendly manner, they laughed together, and by and large, they were satisfied with their conversations.

Some male elders admitted that because they no longer competed for superiority, they found that sharing experiences became more satisfying. They enjoyed their "bidahan" [bantering] during their regular afternoon coffee because it was now for camaraderie and not for competition.

Elder women also found comfort in their conversations with fellow women. They shared topics about family, health, and their joys and fears about aging. These participants all had high self-esteem.

Not everyone found satisfaction in conversations. Some chose to withdraw and just be by themselves. One 93 year old, for example, lived alone in her own home and chose to just keep to herself even when in the company of her family and relatives. She rarely went out. Her self-esteem score was very low, she suffered from hearing loss, and complained of a bad case of arthritis. Her family also disclosed that she already had the manifestations of the Alzheimer's disease.

The present findings also supported Arslan et al.'s (2010) conclusion that there existed a significant correlation between life satisfaction and self-esteem. As was explained, although their study was about life satisfaction, it however included a whole range of life experiences that included interactions with others.

As was hypothesized in the present study, there was a positive correlation between the two variables. The third hypothesis (H3), that Filipino elders who reported having a high level of communication satisfaction would also have high self-esteem, was supported.

Table 5 shows a summary of the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation tests conducted on self-esteem and the three variables.

Developing a model that could predict the elders' self-esteem

The three major variables (attitude about aging, willingness to communicate, and communication satisfaction) were tested to determine if they could be used to predict the elders' level of self-esteem. Results revealed that the variables had a high significant correlation ($r=.757$, $p=.000$) and that 57% of the variability in the dependent variable (self-esteem) could be explained by the independent variables (attitude about aging, willingness to communicate, and communication satisfaction). The model was also a good fit ($p=.000$). All the variables together were found to be significant predictors of the elders' self-esteem (attitude about aging ($p=.000$), communication satisfaction ($p=.015$), and willingness to communicate ($p=.01$). Below is the model derived from the Multiple Regression test:

$$\text{Self-esteem} = 6.933 + \text{attitude about aging} (.143) + \text{communication satisfaction} (.003) + \text{willingness to communicate} (.309).$$

This model means that for every unit increase in the attitude about aging score, there is an expected .143 increase in the self-esteem score; for every unit increase in the communication satisfaction score, there is an expected .003 increase in the self-esteem score; and for every unit increase in the willingness to communicate score, there is an expected .309 increase in the self-esteem score.

Table 6 shows the summary statistics of the Multiple Regression test.

Conclusion

This study sought to find the correlation between Filipino elders' attitude about aging, willingness to communicate, communication satisfaction, and their self-esteem. Results showed significant correlations between the elders'

Table 6. Regression analysis for variables predicting self-esteem (N=790).

	B	SE B	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	6.933	1.096		6.323	0.000
Attitude about aging	0.143	0.032	0.119	4.489	0.000
Communication satisfaction	3.773-02	0.015	0.066	2.444	0.015
Willingness to communicate	0.309	0.012	0.68	26.68	0.000

a. Dependent variable: Self-esteem.

attitude about aging and self-esteem ($r=.368$, $p=.000$); willingness to communicate and self-esteem ($r=.742$, $p=.000$); and, communication satisfaction and self-esteem ($r=.368$, $p=.000$). Further, Regression Analysis proved that self-esteem could be predicted by the elders' attitude about aging, willingness to communicate, and communication satisfaction ($r=.757$, $p=.000$) and that 57% of the variability in self-esteem could be predicted by the three communication variables.

The present study's findings confirmed past research that established that self-esteem plays a crucial role in determining a person's well-being. Having a high self-esteem is associated with feelings of well-being and overall satisfaction. Respondents in this study demonstrated that having a healthy self-esteem also indicated a healthy attitude about being older adults. Most of them disclosed feeling very good despite their age. These same elders were the ones who scored high in the Self-esteem questionnaire. A key lesson from these findings is that if elders feel good about themselves, they also feel good about aging; and if they feel good about aging they also become happy elders. It naturally follows that being around happy elders can be a pleasant experience for both them and their families.

Using the reasoning by McKay and Fanning (1992) that the situation could be likened to the 'chicken and egg' situation where self-esteem could be the cause or the effect, the elders' circumstances in life could likewise be the cause of their healthy self-worth. Another key lesson from the present study is that elders could be provided those circumstances in life to help influence their self-worth. The circumstances could range from comfortable living condition to being occupied with consequential activities, or simply receiving adequate attention. These circumstances may be simple and within the range of the family's resources. But the important thing is that elders should feel that they are given some attention and care.

The present study also confirmed past research on the important correlation between willingness to communicate and self-esteem. Respondents who looked forward to connecting with people from different age groups and statuses in life were also the ones who had high self-esteem. Most of the elders even looked forward to sharing their wisdom with younger people even if the latter now

refused to seek the former's counsel. Another key lesson from the study is that if elders are willing to interact with most people, they also feel good about themselves; and applying McKay's and Fanning's (1992) 'chicken and egg' situation, if elders willingly welcome interactions they also become happier. One way of encouraging elders to be more open and willing is to make them feel important. For instance, seeking their advice may make them feel needed in the family and community. Involving them in discussions that call for their counsel may be a good start. The more they are involved in interactions, the more willing they may participate in future interactions. The younger generation, too, can benefit from the insights and wisdom of the old. Keeping an open mind to the lessons of the past can be a good exercise in communication and goodwill.

This study also confirmed past research on the strong association between communication satisfaction and self-esteem. Respondents who generally felt satisfied with their conversations were mostly the ones with high self-esteem. Again, using McKay's and Fanning's (1992) reasoning about the 'chicken and egg' situation, another practical lesson from the present study is that not only does self-esteem influence communication satisfaction, feeling satisfied also causes self-esteem to improve. If the family wants its elders to feel good about themselves, it should also make sure that they benefit from interactions. For example, elders may be made to feel that their company is sought and that conversations with them is worth their family's time. They should also be listened to. Listening is an important part of a conversation and will grant the speaker some importance and satisfaction. As one elder fervently wished, she would love to have her family listen to what she had to say. Simple ways of letting elders know that conversations with them are rewarding will make them seek more sharing in the future. And the more they seek conversations the better they will feel about themselves.

Interacting with fellow humans is vital to everyone; it cannot be undermined. Its absence is akin to losing a vital life-giving connection. In this study, one significant manifestation of connection with others is willingness to communicate and the satisfaction one derives from it. Another important indicator of a healthy self-worth is one's

attitude about oneself in the context of the stage in life one happens to be. A case in point is how elders feel about their own aging and how comfortable they are with its consequent physical and mental drawbacks. Putting all of these together, having a healthy self-esteem is essential because it affects the elders' whole being. A healthy well-being is associated with feelings of assurance and security. And if elders feel secure about themselves, they also feel at ease connecting with those around them.

At this point, it should be noted that this study had a number of limitations. The first of which was that the sample, although quite big, could not be claimed as representative of the Filipino elders. Even if the findings had practical implications that could be applied to other Filipino elders, a bigger and more representative sample taken by probability sampling could provide more generalizable conclusions. Also, some of the respondents failed to or refused to answer all the questions resulting to some missing cases. A more ingenious way must be devised to assure better administration of questionnaires.

The findings of this study showed that the elders rated high in all the variables measured. This means that Filipino elders have a high self-worth, are positive about their aging, are willing to interact and are satisfied communicating with others. To explain this phenomenon, past findings from related research were used. In the future, the possible role of culture could also be explored. Since the present study concentrated only on self-esteem, attitude about aging, and selected communication variables, looking into the possible influence of cultural orientations could provide another layer in understanding the Filipino elders.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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