

“What Does Gerotranscendence Mean to You?” Older Adults’ Lay Perspectives on the Theory

Taiane Abreu, MSc,^{1,2}  Lia Araújo, PhD,³  Laetitia Teixeira, PhD,²  and Oscar Ribeiro, PhD^{1,*} 

¹Center for Health Technology and Services Research at the Associated Laboratory RISE - Health Research Network (CINTESIS@RISE), Department of Education and Psychology, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal.

²Center for Health Technology and Services Research at the Associated Laboratory RISE - Health Research Network (CINTESIS@RISE), Institute of Biomedical Sciences Abel Salazar of Porto University (ICBAS), Porto, Portugal.

³Center for Health Technology and Services Research at the Associated Laboratory RISE - Health Research Network (CINTESIS@RISE), School of Education, Polytechnic Institute of Viseu (ESEV.IPV), Viseu, Portugal.

*Address correspondence to: Oscar Ribeiro, PhD. E-mail: oribeiro@ua.pt

Decision Editor: Ulla Kriebner, PhD, MA

Abstract

Background and Objectives: Gerotranscendence, a recent adaptive aging theory developed by Tornstam, postulates a mindset shift in old age from a materialistic viewpoint to a more transcendent one. Gerotranscendence is considered a promising aging model, as it approaches specific developmental challenges in late life. However, knowledge of this theory is still maturing and lacks laypersons’ perspectives to further validate its components. This study aimed to explore how older adults perceive gerotranscendence and gain insights of their understanding.

Research Design and Methods: Three focus group discussions were conducted with 18 participants (59–98 years old; mean: 79.5 years). The protocol included open-ended questions on what gerotranscendence, and its dimensions meant (based exclusively on their designations), as well as on the theory’s components (after further explanation). The discussions were recorded and transcribed, and a content analysis was performed.

Results: The data were organized into 2 themes: general suppositions and personal perceptions. This second theme was divided into (i) relatable thoughts and experiences and (ii) a different and complementary understanding of the theory.

Discussion and Implications: Despite the lack of knowledge of the meaning of gerotranscendence, older persons presented clear evidence that this topic was meaningful for them and that they experienced aspects of the cosmic, coherence, and solitude dimensions of gerotranscendence. However, at specific points, some participants had distinctive and complementary ideas compared with those espoused by gerotranscendence theory. Obtaining laypersons’ perspectives provides a more in-depth understanding of gerotranscendence theory and the cultural aspects it may encompass.

Keywords: Aging theories, Gerotranscendence, Laypersons, Older adults, Successful aging

As the population grows older and life expectancy increases, aging theories have emerged to better understand this process and encourage a healthy, positive approach to growing older. The concept of successful aging encompasses this idea by combining active engagement with life with the maintenance of functional capacities (Burton et al., 2024) in three crucial components: (1) the prevention of disease and disability, (2) the preservation of high cognitive and physical function, and (3) the extension of active engagement in life (Kim & Park, 2017; Rowe & Kahn, 1997).

Several approaches to defining successful aging have been presented over the years, and multicomponents, based on biological, psychological, and social aspects became widely generalized (Carver & Buchanan, 2016; Cosco et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2015; Rowe & Kahn, 1997). In a review of successful aging studies, physiological ($n = 97$), engagement ($n = 52$), and well-being constructs ($n = 51$), as well as personal resources ($n = 27$), and extrinsic factors ($n = 6$) were identified (Cosco et al., 2014). Studies based on older adults’

perception of successful aging also highlight the concept’s multidimensionality and the psychosocial emphasis of successful aging (Cosco et al., 2013). A recently published study that compares different English-speaking countries and cultures (Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, USA, and UK) revealed the importance of an active, independent, and engaged lifestyle (Burton et al., 2024), reinforcing how successful aging is a multidimensional concept across cultures and how many biopsychosocial aspects need to be taken into consideration (Martin et al., 2015).

Social determinants of health such as economic stability (e.g., income, employment, and access to resources), education (e.g., literacy levels and access to quality education), and social and community context (e.g., social support networks, community engagement, and discrimination) have been reported to be important variables that can influence successful aging (Chelak & Chakole, 2023). Rowe and Kahn (2015) further highlight that structural factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and access to quality healthcare

Received: February 6 2024; Editorial Decision Date: February 10 2025.

© The Author(s) 2025. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the Gerontological Society of America. All rights reserved. For commercial re-use, please contact reprints@oup.com for reprints and translation rights for reprints. All other permissions can be obtained through our RightsLink service via the Permissions link on the article page on our site—for further information please contact journals.permissions@oup.com.

significantly affect individuals' ability to age successfully, emphasizing the importance of addressing inequities to promote an active and engaged aging process. Moreover, the concept of active aging represents one of the ways to manifest the broader framework of successful aging as it can be defined by "the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age" (World Health Organization [WHO], 2002, p. 12). An example of this is how older adults may face challenges in accessing healthcare, economic opportunities, and social inclusion, influenced by their geographic location or the availability of community resources, which can hinder their ability to sustain an active and engaged aging process.

Psychosocial approaches based on internal and/or social phenomena have been the focus of increased interest (Cosco et al., 2014) and have as proponents' notorious theories from the gerontological field. Psychosocial theories are in fact an important part of the aging studies and successful aging appears as a concept that comprehends cognitive aspects, subjective matters, sociological, and psychological issues (Bengtson et al., 1996). Schroots (1996) divided psychosocial theories in aging into three types: classical theories, such as disengagement theory; the modern theories, like the lifespan developing theory; and new theories, such as the gerotranscendence theory. The gerotranscendence theory has similarities with the disengagement theory and Erikson's lifespan theory but could be considered a "new wave" theory in gerontological studies for addressing multicoping strategies and redefinition of reality, which can be considered innovative, as it reinvents topics from classical and modern theories (Schroots, 1996).

The importance of considering the quality of life throughout the aging process, along with longevity itself, led to the development of many studies on successful aging and the emergence of various approaches to this concept. Successful aging theories can be related either to biomedical or psychosocial models, with the latter being classified into two major domains: logic models (based on logical reasoning on the aging process), and nonlogical models (based on the psychological mechanism behind the adaptation process). These models are called nonlogical because they do not require logical thought and strategic control of cognition as logical models do (Gondo, 2012). The logic model can be illustratively represented by Baltes' (1987) selection, optimization, and compensation model, which postulates strategies to adjust to losses in life, and by Carstensen's (2021) socioemotional selectivity theory, which states that when people perceive they have limited lifetimes, their motivational orientations change; they now seek emotions and meanings rather than worry about the future. These theories suggest that one develops a strategy to deal with losses and difficulties in which cognitive resources and logical thoughts are important to maintain well-being. Nonlogical models, on the other hand, tend to be used more by the oldest-old (especially for the limitations in this period of life) and can be represented by the psychosocial developmental theory (Erikson & Erikson, 1997) and the gerotranscendence theory (Tornstam, 2005). The psychosocial developmental theory stipulates that specific tasks must be performed in each developmental stage to feel a sense of competence and that in the last stage of life there is a need to accept physical frailty and attribute meaning in life (*ego-integrity*). Gerotranscendence theory postulates that going from a materialistic viewpoint in life into a more transcendent

one is a way of adapting oneself to the challenges that come with old age. Both theories discuss the maturation process that comes with aging, and they are related to mental health and meaning in life (Minney & Ranzijn, 2016; Tornstam, 2005). The gerotranscendence theory was considered a new concept of successful aging, particularly important when considering the oldest-old (Gondo, 2012), as it didn't require preservation of high cognitive and physical function. Instead, it would be a strategy that occurred in people already with cognitive difficulties, without logical and conscious thinking on adaptive and successful aging strategies (Gondo, 2012).

The gerotranscendence theory was developed in 1989 and is considered a psychosocial model of successful aging that advocates that a mindset shift occurs in three dimensions: cosmic, coherence, and solitude. The cosmic dimension refers to a deeper feeling of connection with life, nature, the universe, and past generations, a decrease in the fear of death, and a reinterpretation of childhood events. The coherence dimension is about an increased connection with the self, reflecting upon past events without the feeling of regret, and a decrease in self-centeredness. The solitude dimension concerns the need for solitude as a meditative moment, and a changed meaning and importance of relationships (Schroots, 1996; Tornstam, 2011).

Given the broad characteristics and positive potential of gerotranscendence on older adults' well-being, different studies have investigated the association between gerotranscendence and several psychological constructs; some associations are still new and require further evidence to consolidate, but evidence has shown the relationships between gerotranscendence and wisdom (Brudek, 2021; Kim, 2020), positive thoughts about death and dying (Jeong et al., 2020), purpose in life (Hsiao et al., 2018), life satisfaction (Abreu et al., 2021; Degges-White, 2005; Lewin & Eugene Thomas, 2001; Tornstam, 2005; Wang, 2011), religiosity (Abreu et al., 2021, 2022; Braam et al., 2016; Bruyneel et al., 2011; Girard, 2014; Hsieh & Wang, 2008), and mental health (Bruyneel et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2019; Degges-White, 2005; Tornstam, 2005; Wang et al., 2011). Taken together, the number and variety of reported associations endorse gerotranscendence as a promising aging theory, especially regarding research from a more interdisciplinary, however, psychologically focused perspective.

The general potential of gerotranscendence as a psychosocial theory echoes the continuous interactions between oneself and the social environment, meaning that the context in which an individual lives can play an important role in the mindset change needed for gerotranscendence (Heinz et al., 2017; Jewell, 2014; Lewin, 2001; Xu, 2018). Therefore, both the psychological processes of each person, that is, the way they interpret life events (Read et al., 2014), and social and cultural influences can facilitate or obstruct the development of gerotranscendence (Jewell, 2014; Lewin, 2001). Assuming gerotranscendence as a contextually sensitive theory means that it can be developed from the sociocultural perspective of a given society (Lee et al., 2020) and that different cultural aspects can represent different ways of achieving it and being gerotranscendent. This aspect can be considered controversial, as some authors might question whether gerotranscendence is a universal theory (Jewell, 2014; Rajani & Jawaid, 2015). However, existential matters, such as religiosity (Lewin, 2001) and spirituality (Janhsen et al., 2021), are often considered sociocultural dependent, and as gerotranscendence has a close

connection with them, namely, its cosmic dimension (Abreu et al., 2022; Dalby, 2006), studying the influence of different cultural settings is essential for the theory's development.

Fung (2013) postulates on how older adults pursue their own cultural values as they age. The author claims that as individuals get older, they tend to seek for more meaning in life, and a way to do that is by affirming and internalizing their culture. The internalization of cultural values and the pursue of affirming them as an emotional meaning from life could be related to the cultural differences found in aging theories (Carstensen, 2021; Fung, 2013; Martin et al., 2015; Utz et al., 2002), particularly gerotranscendence (Dalby, 2006; Lewin, 2001). In this context, successful aging can also be cultural dependent, as different cultures have different understandings of "good aging," as well as some cultures might have more consistent successful aging determinants than others, therefore demanding some compensatory mechanisms as a sign of flexibility of how successful aging can be considered in different environments (Martin et al., 2015). And as successful aging is defined as an active engagement with life with the maintenance of functional capacities, it may be linked to the emotional flexibility, which is a key aspect of resilience and refers to the capacity to adapt to shifting emotional situations that one develops with age (Waugh et al., 2011). This emotional flexibility is fundamental for successful aging, as it benefits older adults to navigate life changes, managing stress, sustaining mental health, and contributing to a higher quality of life (Isaacowitz, 2022). Besides individual benefits, emotional flexibility also allows older adults to affirm their cultural values (e.g., religion and beliefs) as a means of enhancing well-being (Baltes, 1987; Carstensen, 2021; Fung, 2013; Minney & Ranzijn, 2016).

One way of gaining in-depth insights into how older individuals perceive the aging process and how cultural aspects influence this perception can be achieved by analyzing lay views, that is, the perspective of people without professional or specialized knowledge in a particular subject. In health research, lay people can be defined as "people who are neither health care professionals nor health services researchers, but who may have specialized knowledge related to health" including patients and the general public (Entwistle et al., 1998, p. 463). Consulting laypeople in academic studies can provide more detailed perspective on the factors under investigation, representing a form of "public understanding of science" that emphasizes scientific knowledge (Henderson, 2010). This can happen in three different categories: "supporters of dominant (professional) interests, supporters of challenging (managerial) interests, and supporters of repressed (patient) interests" (Hogg et al., 2001, p. 2). Studies involving laypersons' perspectives on successful aging have revealed that older persons usually have a broader view of aging, considering psychological well-being, including spirituality, as a more crucial factor than researchers often anticipate (Burton et al., 2024; Cosco et al., 2013; Gondo, 2012; Martin et al., 2015). As gerotranscendence can be considered one of the psychological models of successful aging, consulting laypeople would be significant to expand and complement the knowledge of such theory (Cosco et al., 2013; Entwistle et al., 1998). Tornstam (2005), following a quantitative study on gerotranscendence, consulted three older adults about the mindset development on late life figuring out how important it was to explore it in a qualitative way. In that study, which has no detailed methodology available, the author interviewed participants about

each topic of gerotranscendence and registered their answers as a way to illustrate gerotranscendent thoughts about the theories' topics.

Laypersons' views offer a unique approach that can improve the quality of research, as they often contrast with those of professionals (Entwistle et al., 1998). This difference can guide researchers in directing their studies, as involving laypeople heightens the perceived relevance of the research, thereby facilitating the implementation of the findings (Bowling & Dieppe, 2005; Entwistle et al., 1998). Obtaining laypersons' perspectives may also add legitimacy and value to the theory (Bowling & Dieppe, 2005; Burton et al., 2024; Entwistle et al., 1998).

The aim of this study is to explore how older adults perceive gerotranscendence and gain insights into their understanding of the theory. It is expected that this study will offer a deeper insight into how gerotranscendence is perceived, experienced, and interpreted in the daily lives of older individuals, thereby contributing to the expansion and improvement of the theory. It is important to refer that this study is implemented in a Portuguese population, where the Roman Catholic religion is predominant, there is a large population of older adults with a low educational background (Moreira, 2020), and theories like gerotranscendence are not very accessible or discussed among the population in general.

Method

Data Collection

Three focus groups were conducted between November 2022 and June 2023, with a duration of 1 hr each. The groups had between five and eight participants each (a total of 18 participants). One focus group was conducted at a university of third age, and the other two were performed in long-term care facilities. All institutions were in urban areas from the north region of Portugal. The screenplay for the focus group had 12 open-ended questions/topics for discussion about gerotranscendence (Supplementary Material), and it consisted of two steps: (i) asking the participants what they think gerotranscendence was and what its dimensions meant based exclusively on their designations and (ii) providing a brief explanation of what gerotranscendence was and what each dimension referred to, considering its theoretical assumptions (e.g., the following explanation was given when presenting solitude: "Another point brought up by the social dimension is a greater need to spend periods of time alone. The theory understands that these moments of solitude would be important to bring peace and well-being"; Tornstam, 2005), and then asking the group whether and how they understood what the theory postulates (e.g., "Have you experienced anything related to this need? How do you think this can be important or not for your well-being?"). Two interviewers were present in each group session. The sessions were fully audio and video recorded and transcribed with the authorization of all the participants. The participants were de-identified to preserve anonymity.

Data Analysis

A content analysis, as referred to by Mendes and Miskulin (2017), was performed to explore the participants' relatable thoughts with gerotranscendence theory and their complementary and different perceptions of the theory. The content analysis followed the phases of:

- (i) Familiarization with the data, in which the two first authors actively read the transcriptions multiple times to identify key meaning and recurrent patterns that were relevant to the theoretical background. This identification involved distinguishing and then grouping responses into patterns and themes based on shared characteristics.
- (ii) Generation of initial codes with the two first authors creation of a list of ideas, highlighting adequate quotes according to the theoretical framework (i.e., quotes that clearly illustrate or reinforce the theme). This process allowed a second perspective to confirm that the quotes aligned with the theme and were not biased by individual interpretations.
- (iii) Search for themes, in which authors transformed codes into themes, identifying how different codes could belong to the same theme or not.
- (iv) Review of extracts, where the two first authors individually read all the codified extracts for each theme, and considered whether they appear to form a coherent arrangement.
- (v) Review of themes: a phase where the first two authors met to discuss and define the main ideas, categorizing participants' responses both before and after prior explanations. They identified two subthemes: opinions that aligned with gerotranscendence theory and opinions that offered complementary perspectives.
- (vi) Third author verification, where the third author analyzed all themes to confirm if the extracts were adequate for each theme.
- (vii) Naming themes, where the themes were named as "general suppositions" when the participants gave their opinion without any previous explanations; personal perceptions when the participants gave their opinion after a brief explanation, and the subthemes "relatable thoughts and experiences" (when the participants agreed and personally related to gerotranscendence theory) and "different and complementary perspectives on the theory" (when the participants had something to add to the theory's ideas or had distinctive understandings of the topic).
- (viii) Producing the final report, where the three authors provided a clear, concise, and logically structured text that accurately conveyed the key themes and content patterns identified in the analysis, ensuring coherence and avoiding redundancy (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The data from the three focus groups were analyzed jointly because the goal was not to examine differences between groups. After transcribing the sessions, they were all added to one single document, and the analysis was made regarding the topics presented and their following answers without a group differentiation, that is, considering the three focus groups as one. Combining different groups, interviewed with the same objective and by the same guide, can provide a broader view of general trends and themes, allowing a comprehensive overview of the studied topic. All the presented phases were discussed with the third author of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Permission for data collection was obtained from the ethics committee of the [institution name blinded for review] (ref: blinded for review). All participants were previously asked to

give written informed consent and were provided with information on the study. The author contacted the institutions and asked for people to participate in a focus group regarding the global theme of "Aging and Well-being" to avoid previous research on the subject. No specification on gerotranscendence or any other aging theory was mentioned to avoid bias.

Results

The focus groups had a total of 18 participants, all of them were Portuguese. Eight participants lived in their own homes and were students from a university of the third age, whereas 10 participants were residents in long-term care facilities. Most participants (12) were women, and their mean age was 79.5 years (standard deviation [SD]: 7.99; range: 59–98 years old); 72.2% of participants were Catholics, 11.1% identified as other Christians (e.g., Spiritists and Seventh-day Adventists), 11.1% did not have a religion, and 5.6% were Protestants. The mean of years of education was 11.11 (SD: 4.97), with a small difference between the students of the third age (mean of 12.8 years) and the long-term care facilities residents (11.3 years). Most participants were widowed (7) or married (6). As no important sociodemographic differences were noticed regarding the location where the group was conducted (university of the third age vs long-term care facilities), the participants will be referred to as one group. The two global themes obtained in the content analysis are presented next.

General Suppositions

The focus groups' opening questions concerned the participants' perceived meanings of gerotranscendence and its dimensions, without any previous explanation of the theory. The goal of these questions was to understand how older adults understood the translated terminologies originally used by Lars Tornstam. The first question was about the word "gerotranscendence" and what they thought it meant. Most of the participants did not know what the word could refer to, and those who expressed their opinions said it would be "something related to aging and old age"; only one participant specifically made the connection between the prefix "gero," which is related to aging, and the word "transcendence," which was referred to as being associated with "something from another level [meaning of a higher reach, of a level above that which is normal or average], something different that surpasses us" (sic), and one participant made the connection between words: "'Gero' reminds me of age. 'Transcendence', from another level, a level we don't have here. Another level, not our everyday level, not that, but something else, something that transcends us." (sic).

Regarding cosmic transcendence, most participants succinctly presented the idea of something "beyond," "superior," "related to the universe," and "from another dimension." Some participants discussed issues of the universe, making a parallel between what happens in nature and what happens in human life, as well as how everything changes over time in nature and how it happens in the same way as humans grow old. For example, one participant said, "It is [the same] as Lavoisier's quote, which states, 'Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed,' and this transformation is what is in everything."

Concerning the self-dimension or coherence, the idea of focusing on the self was naturally mentioned and attributed

to the term, which was interpreted as something both negative (selfishness), for example, “a dimension of self? Probably refers to selfishness,” and positive (self-care) e.g., “I think we start to appreciate ourselves more.” In addition, the idea of being consistent with oneself, such as acting according to one’s values or being true to one’s essence, and the idea of reflecting on one’s actions and beliefs more frequently were brought to discussion. Illustratively, in one of the focus groups, one participant said, “... We are becoming more coherent as we become older, at least that is how I feel, that I am more coherent. I’m not impulsive. I think and act more coherently, much more coherently than when I was young or middle aged. There is no doubt.”

Finally, for the social dimension or solitude, few participants expressed their opinions, and when they talked about what they believed it to be, they brought up the idea of loneliness. The participants had never heard of the term “solitude” and referred to it as being a synonym for loneliness: “For me, solitude is the same as being lonely” (sic).

Personal Perceptions

The remaining questions followed a brief explanation of gerotranscendence theory and its components. This theme could be divided into two subthemes: the thoughts and experiences sustaining the theory and complementary and different perspectives on the theory. Most participants agreed with the presented topics and spontaneously gave examples of why they agreed. These included thoughts related to a decrease in self-centeredness, a greater connection with the universe, and a decrease in the fear of death. Experiences concerning how their mindsets changed with aging were also mentioned, as this sentence examples: “This part of my life [becoming older] allowed me to have more time to reflect on life and the need to make such reflections.” Participants considered that it allowed them to become more reflective, thoughtful, and considerate with themselves and others. Overall, these experiences and thoughts were said to provide a feeling of achieving some sort of maturity, as it can be exemplified by the following comments: “... I cannot be coherent if I do something that goes exactly the opposite way, or almost the opposite way, to what I said, can I? And I can’t accept that.” and “We have evolved [with aging] and being consistent means that our actions should align with our thoughts. That’s what coherence is, right?” Another characteristic of this subtheme is how the participants found relatable thoughts and experiences often perceived through the lens of spirituality and religion (e.g., [about feeling in the present and in the past at the same time] “I experienced this because our true being is immortal. The only permanent thing is our souls; our true being is spiritual”). Furthermore, the perspective of transforming/evolving oneself throughout the passage of time and of moving to greater levels of consciousness was made clear in the participants’ perspectives, as illustratively mentioned in one focus group: “There is indeed a greater connection with the universe, I think, a different sensitivity. I felt, I feel, it was a transformation; it was almost a radical transformation, from my youth to now, what I went through, and the different stages of life, and there is no doubt that it was a huge transformation.” Table 1 presents the demonstrative quotes on the relatable thoughts and experiences of the participants on the main gerotranscendence topics.

Personal perceptions also included complementary and different perspectives on the theory. This subtheme refers to

topics such as the idea of a shifting mindset with old age, a higher connection with grandchildren than with past generations, the prevalence of the fear of death, regrets about the past, and the lack of importance of solitude. When asked about their opinions on gerotranscendence, the participants said that their “ways of thinking” generally remained the same with age, but there were some changes in their attitudes or general viewpoints of life. There was also the idea that going through tough moments in life made a greater contribution to a new mindset than did age itself. As one participant in the focus groups highlighted, “I agree that some things changed, but I don’t agree that my ideas changed with age; it takes experience to have a different viewpoint.”

Another topic that the participants brought to the discussion was the connections they felt with past generations. They claimed that a connection with past generations existed but that there was also a connection with new generations, which was specifically evident in their concern with the future of their grandchildren. The participants mentioned how they worried about the financial and emotional states of their grandchildren. The last point about cosmic transcendence that the participants mentioned was the lack of recognition of a decrease in the fear of death or the feeling that they had lived long enough. For these participants, the idea that there was still a lot to be experienced, and the thought of death was mentioned to not have changed with age.

Regarding the coherence dimension, the participants regretted the bad situations they found themselves in and believed that regretting could be good to prevent similar mistakes in the future. Therefore, some sort of repentance for their mistakes was considered something positive and protective. As for the solitude dimension, for some participants, there was no recognition of the benefits of being alone. Socializing was important for them. Moments of solitude were interpreted as something negative and depressing. Along with that understanding, there was also the idea that one does not have to be choosy anymore of company, especially if this was the case in the past. Table 2 presents the different and complementary perceptions and demonstrative quotes of the participants on the main gerotranscendence topics.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the aspects of gerotranscendence with a group of older adults and to complement the gerotranscendence theory by integrating laypersons’ views. Consulting laypersons on academic theories is an interesting approach to explore how such theories are perceived and can be better used in the communities where they are destined. Initially, when the concepts were provided without further explanation, gerotranscendence was often associated with aging and with something that was “beyond us.” However, no association was established between the suffix “gero” and the word “transcendence,” which meant that the participants could not associate the term with some kind of transcendence that occurs as a result of the aging process only by hearing the word. On the other hand, this may mean that the participants lack sufficient knowledge about aging and human development. Something similar happened with the cosmic dimension; there was an idea about transcendence (embedded in a spiritual meaning), but it was not associated with aging; as for solitude, the word was associated with loneliness and, therefore, to a negative experience. These interpretations

Table 1. Demonstrative Quotes on the Relatable Thoughts and Experiences Presented by the Participants

Gerotranscendence topic	Relatable thoughts and experiences	Representative quotes
Gerotranscendence in general and the perception that something changes with the aging process	Recognition that the changes that come with age are mainly evident in the way of dealing with life issues; adopting a thoughtful and calm perspective when facing problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Being calmer when talking to other people, not getting irritated or excited right away, which ends up being more thoughtful and calmer, doesn’t it? In many aspects of life” • “I feel a difference. Sometimes, I forget things, my routine is different, I speak faster, [and] I would like to control things, but I can’t. Life helps us a lot; it’s different for me living here now than it was in my home before. I want to help people as much as I can, but it’s not always possible.”
Cosmic transcendence in general	Recognition of the link between aging and the emergence of or increase in cosmic transcendence; reporting a need to reflect on aspects of cosmic transcendence (e.g., feeling connected with the universe, to life, to nature, and to past generations).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There is indeed a greater connection with the universe, I think, a different sensitivity. I felt, I feel, it was a transformation; it was almost a radical transformation, from my youth to now, what I went through, and the different stages of life, and there is no doubt that it was a huge transformation.” • “Yes, I agree. Because what this phase provoked in me was more time to reflect and the need to do this reflection.”
Connection with past generations	Connection with past generations through frequent thinking about one’s parents and grandparents or recognizing physical or behavioral similarities between oneself and past generations, which can be related to spiritual issues or those that refer to nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I feel that a lot [connection with past generations]. I think a lot about my parents, especially my mother, who was the one I lived with the most, and I even talk to her. Can you believe it?” • “I feel that! I feel and I think many times when I have to take action; it’s not thinking about what my parents would do, but according to their ideas, with the way they were, then yes, I think about it many times.”
Time and childhood	Feelings of time transcendence through childhood memories and a reinterpretation of childhood situations, which is possible because of a more mature and a different understanding of parents’ lives and circumstances; thinking about the past, particularly about childhood, as something that arises with the aging process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’m in this moment in my life...I was watching people and thinking like, ‘Has this happened before?’ I felt it already.” [about transcending time] • “I remember some things now, and I haven’t even thought about them for a long time. I’m remembering, and these things are mostly pleasant. I really think about them; that’s true for me.”
Life and death	Great awareness of death as something closer with aging, despite the overall willingness to live longer; fear of suffering when dying but not necessarily fear of death itself, which can have spiritual/religious roots.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “When we are born, our day [of death] is already set; we are the ones who don’t know. But it [the fear of death] decreases with time, the fear decreases, and we become old people waiting for death.” • “I am aware, although I still want to stay here for a long time and participate in things like this, but there is an awareness that I am in the end of life, that life is ending, and maybe that is why there is a decrease in the fear of death. We try to take care of ourselves and take care of our health so that we have a life that is as long as possible.”
Decrease in self-centeredness	A primary focus on family members or close friends, rather than on oneself, as something that naturally emerges with age; highlighting a sense of unity, believing that it is necessary to consider the reality of people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Because of old age, I feel more mature, and I think more about others, much more, and I feel we are one, that life is about spiritualist humanism, not materialist humanism, that doesn’t exist anymore; matter is a temporary state of energy, so it doesn’t exist.” • “Exactly and as I grow older, I accept this idea about others, above all, to consider the reality of others because things are not always as they seem; sometimes, you can have a bad day and still be a beautiful, intelligent, and good person. We need to see beyond the appearances.”
Ego–integrity	A greater reflection on mistakes rather than regrets or remorse per se; awareness of what was done well, accompanied by an effort to broaden this perception instead of overestimating the negative side; a sense of learning and willingness not to repeat the same mistakes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The past is in the past. In my life, I regret some things, but that is not good; it is better to meditate and remember the good things that I’ve done, what I did badly, and reflect upon that. I think I if I did something bad, I tried to make something good out of it. I did mostly good things. I don’t have any remorse. I went through horrible phases in my life, with accidents and all kinds of bad things; I replaced it with good acts, and I think that when the day comes, I will rest peacefully. That is what I think.” • “I think that when we are younger, we think it is either Black or White, and now with age, we see gray.”
Solitude	Pleasantness and the need for time spent alone; solitude as an opportunity to read, listen to music, and enjoy one’s own company.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yes, I get along very well alone [...] Ah, there are times when I’m at home, I turn off the television and I read a book alone.” • “It’s a need, solitude is a need. That’s what I think, and even when one lives with several people, one may need solitude.”
Changed meaning and importance of relationships	Being selective in friendships over time, especially in late life, which is considered as something positive regardless of the social result achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I really think I selected people better as I was reaching old age. For me, friendship is not just the person you will have coffee with; I think friendship is something more. People will show you if they are your real friends. And I chose my friends according to this idea. I can say that I lived most part of my life alone because of that, but I live better now than when I had certain so-called ‘friendships.’” • “Yes, yes, yes. I get older, and I no longer have the patience to put up with boring and reactive people.” [laughs]

Table 2. Demonstrative Quotes on the Different Perceptions on the Theory Presented by the Participants

Gerotranscendence topic	Different perceptions	Representative quote
Gerotranscendence in general and the perception that something changes with the aging process	The ideas or the “way of thinking” remains the same with age, but that there are some changes, whether in attitude or viewpoint of life.	“Maybe my way of thinking did not change, but my attitude toward something changed, I think it got better with age, mostly.”
Connection with past generations	Along with a connection with past generations, there is also a connection with future generations, more specifically a concern for the future of family members.	“My mind is connected with [not only] the past but also with the future, regarding my descendants [grandchildren].”
Life and death	There is still a fear of death in later life, because there is fear of suffering, and because there is still a lot to be experienced.	“I am aware [of life’s end], although I still want to stay here for a long time and participate in things like this [referring to the focus group], but there is an awareness that I am in the end of life, that life is ending, and maybe that is why [the theory says] there is a decrease in the fear of death. We try to take care of ourselves and take care of our health so that we have a life that is as long as possible.”
Ego–integrity	Regretting what didn’t go well is a necessary step to prevent similar mistakes in the future and it would be something positive and protective.	“There are regrets. I regret many things [...] Of course, I have to recognize the bad things I did; therefore, I can recognize similar situations and make sure they will not happen again.”
Solitude	Socializing would be more important than spending time in solitude.	“It’s depressing; being alone is depressing [...] I want to do what I like; I want to socialize a lot more.”
Changed meaning and importance of relationships	Selectivity with companies does not currently exist, as it already happened in the past.	“I would say that I don’t need to be [more socially] selective if I already was like that in the past; now I’m at peace with my life choices.”

represent how important it is to present context and explanation when introducing gerotranscendence terms, as they are not part of the participants’ vocabulary and could cause confusion and distance the participants from the theory. As for the coherence dimension, the participants were able to make an association with aging by relating being coherent with themselves throughout life and even feeling an increase in coherence as they grew older. Such interpretation reveals how the term “coherence” makes sense to participants, as their understanding of the term is similar after a brief explanation. This connection between coherence and aging might be related to Erikson’s life cycle theory or lifespan theory, more specifically to the ninth stage of the theory, in which the life crisis would be integrity versus despair (Yount, 2009). This stage also mentions an ego–integrity process, which was an inspiration for Tornstam’s idea of ego–integrity (Tornstam, 2005, 2011). Those who reach integrity would have a higher feeling of well-being and a sense of restructuring and completion of their lives (Cabaco & Mateos, 2019; Yount, 2009).

After a brief explanation of gerotranscendence theory was provided to the participants, they shared their personal perceptions and relatable thoughts and experiences about the theory. The participants were able to relate to all topics presented and even narrated personal experiences to exemplify their viewpoints, which might mean that gerotranscendence was relevant and significant. These findings corroborate those of previous studies that reported how assumptions on gerotranscendence are naturally brought up in the discourse of older adults (Heinz et al., 2017; Jeong et al., 2012; van Rhyn et al., 2022). The spontaneity in which these themes appeared and the ease with which the respondents related aspects of the theory to their own lives indicate that these topics may have already been the subjects of reflection at some point in their lives, reinforcing the relevance of gerotranscendence for

this population and the potential need to work on it. This is particularly noticeable as participants confirm perceiving a change that occurs with aging, but also express that dealing with these changes can be challenging (Table 1), therefore having a space to reflect upon it with specialized professionals can help in better addressing these issues.

However, several complementary perceptions on all three core components of the theory were also observed. The disagreements, which were few, were not necessarily opposed to the initial ideas of the theory. The first disparity concerns the definition of the theory itself. According to several participants in the focus groups, there is no “transformation” or “shift” but rather an “adjustment” that happens because of the maturity one achieves as one gets older. This idea itself is not very distinctive from the original, but it adds the notion that perhaps gerotranscendence does not refer to a radical change but rather to a progressive one that is aligned with an individual’s life. Van Rhyn et al. (2022) explored this topic when interviewing the oldest-old and noticed that many personal characteristics continue to evolve with age, highlighting the idea of a progressive adjustment and connecting it with the gerotranscendence theory. In this sense, life events, especially those that are adverse in nature, contribute to personal development toward gerotranscendence.

The cosmic dimension discussion had interesting complementary points about connections with generations and the fear of death. Even though Tornstam (2005) postulated about the connection gerotranscendent people had with both younger and past generations, the author focused on the connection with previous generations. In this study, participants mentioned a connection with past generations, especially parents and grandparents, but also stressed their connections with younger generations, especially grandchildren. This topic is more explored in other theories, such as

Erikson's life cycle theory, more specifically in the seventh stage of life crisis, entitled "generativity *vs.* stagnation." In this stage, the positive aspect of the crisis—generativity—would involve, among other things, caring about the community, a desire to be productive, and concern for future generations (Gilleard, 2020; Wiktorowicz et al., 2022; Yount, 2009). Another theory that postulates this is the socioemotional selectivity theory, proposed by Carstensen (2021). According to this theory, when individuals face a limited time to live, they prioritize significant relationships and practice meaningful activities (Heinz et al., 2017). Participants expressed it very firmly, regarding connection with generations, as well as solitude, as they affirmed how meaningful it is to have the family close, reminiscing memories, and creating new moments with them. From this perspective, generativity can create a desire for immortality, as it increases one's connection with family members and cultural elements; at the same time, it can create death anxiety or a death-denial attitude among older adults (Major et al., 2016). This aspect could be related to the fear of death shared by the participants, especially because the fear of death is deeply related to the fear of suffering or being a burden to family members (Baars, 2017; Cicirelli, 2003; Rezapour, 2022).

The coherence dimension had one point in which the participants brought complementary reflections. Regarding ego-integrity, some participants mentioned having regrets in life but not in the sense of dwelling on their mistakes from the past but in terms of learning from these mistakes as a form of maturation, which might be a different approach to ego-integrity. This approach is mentioned by reminiscence theory and by the life review concept (Butler, 1963). Both postulate the importance of recalling past events or experiences and reviewing the past in different ways, especially in later life, and they have been referred to as a means to achieve gerotranscendence (Wadensten & Hägglund, 2006). The regrets mentioned by participants were mainly perceived as a way to learn something and to do it differently in the future, not as a way to ruminate the mistakes. Therefore, regretting some past situations to reflect upon them and learn might be as useful as not having any regrets, as both paths can lead to the acceptance of life and to a redefinition of reality, which are the core elements of the gerotranscendence ego-integrity (Tornstam, 2011; Xu, 2018).

In the solitude dimension, the participants had different ideas about the need to be alone. They acknowledged its importance but considered cherishing moments with loved ones as something more significant to their well-being. Participants, in general, expressed how significant it was for them to spend time with family, friends, and even meeting new people, as long as these persons were considered interesting. Sharing moments with loved ones was something so important that the idea of intentionally spending time alone seemed strange for them. It is noteworthy that the participants had a difficult time understanding the concept, as it was new to them (which could affect their perceptions). As for the "changed meaning and importance of relationships," many participants had a complementary idea that they considered themselves careful in choosing their relationships throughout life, so they did not recognize such changes in late life. These thoughts, which show a need to spend time with family and close friends, are related to the socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 2021).

Gerotranscendence seems to be linked to the study participants' contextual background—the current generation of Portuguese older adults is very religious and connected with their beliefs (Coutinho, 2023). This aspect may explain how easily the participants found relatable thoughts and experiences with the cosmic dimension, which was often perceived through the lens of spirituality and religion (e.g., about feeling in the present and in the past at the same time). Portuguese older adults also tend to have an attachment to family members and value their time with family and close friends (Von Humboldt et al., 2012), which can explain their connections with past and younger generations and their perceptions of being selective with friends throughout life.

In summary, this study shows that older adults are not familiar with the gerotranscendence terms, however, when presented with the meaning of the theory's aspects, the participants could relate to what was presented, considering it as meaningful. Laypeople's perspectives are, in general, well connected with gerotranscendence theory, adding relevance to the theory, and corroborating its importance for the aging process. However, the reported complementary points about considering that their "way of thinking" remained the same over the years, the connection with younger generations, the fear of death, some regrets toward life choices, not recognizing benefits of solitude, and that being selective with friendships is not something that happens with old age but rather throughout life indicate that the theory can be more flexible and connected with other aging perspectives. The aim was to explore gerotranscendence aspects from older adults' perspectives and gain insights into their understanding of the theory as a way to provide interventions that unite the gerotranscendence theory and the older adults' perceptions, suggesting that future gerotranscendence interventions might benefit from considering harmonizing concepts, such as generativity and reminiscence. From this study, it is also possible to conclude that, when working with humanistic and developmental theories for older age, it is insightful to explore the opinion of those to whom the theory is directed, as a way to verify if academic perceptions are aligned to laypersons' needs and experiences. Finally, exploring a new social approach also revealed particularities that can change according to cultural elements, for example, how solitude did not seem to be as appreciated as in studies from Nordic (e.g., Tornstam, 2005) and Asian countries (e.g., Wang, 2011). This difference might be a matter of different definitions, perceptions, or even values associated with the term depending on the individual or, in this case, the country. As there are no specifications on how solitude was presented to participants, nor the values of the participants were assessed it is not possible to define the reason why the results were different when comparing to these studies.

Limitations and Future Research

Having three focus groups in this study can be seen as a possible limitation to the discussion of the topic. This is because each group may have addressed specific issues that the other groups did not, potentially restricting the depth of the overall conversation. If the focus groups were consolidated into one, a more comprehensive and integrated discussion would have been facilitated. However, this would make the group too large for a focus group, which would mean that many participants would not have opportunity to

express their opinion. This study also did not assess gerotranscendence through any scale or instrument (e.g., the Gerotranscendence Scale Type 2) to verify whether gerotranscendence levels were high among the participants who constituted the focus groups. Even though the participants had a chance to revisit life aspects and reflect on their experiences, another limitation is the lack of reflection on how the participants could be more gerotranscendent as a way to improve the benefits participants could have from taking part in the study. This could be done by asking the participants what they think one could do to become more gerotranscendent. Future research could also explore the connections between gerotranscendence and other models of successful aging, as investigating how gerotranscendence aligns or contrasts with established aging theories and determining the practical implications of such similarities and differences are suggested. This approach will contribute to a broader understanding of older adults' needs and preferences in the context of successful aging.

Another important issue for future studies is the need to comprehend how gerotranscendence can be understood in different cultural settings. The participants from the focus groups had an idea of the theory and its components based on the meaning of the words comprising it, but they could not further elaborate on their ideas. It is important to highlight that this difficulty in understanding without previous explanations can indicate the complexity of the theory's designation and its components (e.g., mentioning the term "cosmic") and the importance of having a higher educational background to explain such abstract matters. When dealing with a population with a few years of education, professionals may need to adapt the language they use for inclusion. This is a topic that needs attention, although it is not frequently discussed in gerotranscendence research (Chen et al., 2019; Wadensten & Hägglund, 2006; Wang et al., 2011); even interventions targeting gerotranscendence lack to present a thorough reflection on this issue and may need to address the challenges of discussing gerotranscendence with participants with lower education background (Abreu et al., 2023). Future studies that aim to perform interventions to develop gerotranscendence should take this into consideration and provide a brief explanation of the theory and its dimensions for better comprehension.

Finally, continuing the incorporation of lay perspectives into the investigation of aging theories is essential. By accessing laypersons' perspectives, researchers can gain valuable qualitative data that can enrich the depth of their studies. This approach ensures that the research is not only exclusively focused on academic or theoretical viewpoints but also embraces the lived experiences of older individuals, allowing a more holistic understanding of the subject matter.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary data are available at *The Gerontologist* online.

Funding

This review is supported by the National Funds through FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., within a PhD scholarship (reference UI/BD/151489/2021) and within CINTESIS, R&D Unit (reference UIDB/4255/2020 and UIDP/4255/2020).

Conflict of Interest

None.

Data Availability

The data, analytic methods, or materials are available to other researchers for replication purposes by request to the first author. The study reported in the manuscript was not preregistered.

Institutional Ethics Committee

2023/CE/P11(P406/2022/CETI).

References

- Abreu, T., Araújo, L., & Ribeiro, O. (2022). Religious factors and gerotranscendence in later life: A scope review of empirical studies. *Current Psychology*, 42, 13938–13950. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02706-x>
- Abreu, T., Araújo, L., & Ribeiro, O. (2023). How to promote gerotranscendence in older adults? A scoping review of interventions. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 42, 2036–2047. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07334648231169082>
- Abreu, T., Ribeiro, O., & Araújo, L. (2021). Gerotranscendence, religiosity, and life satisfaction: A study with clergy and consecrated religious individuals. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality and Aging*, 35, 92–111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528030.2021.1978366>
- Baars, J. (2017). Aging: Learning to live a finite life. *Gerontologist*, 57(5), 969–976. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnw089>
- Baltes, P. B. (1987). Theoretical propositions of life-span developmental psychology: On the dynamics between growth and decline. *Developmental Psychology*, 23(5), 611–626. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.23.5.611>
- Bengtson, V. L., Parrott, T. M., & Burgess, E. O. (1996). Progress and pitfalls in gerontological theorizing. *Gerontologist*, 36(6), 768–772. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/36.6.768>. <https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article/36/6/768/567083>
- Bowling, A., & Dieppe, P. (2005). What is successful ageing and who should define it? *British Medical Journal*, 331(7531), 1548–1551. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.331.7531.1548>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1978.tb01621.x>
- Braam, A. W., Galenkamp, H., Derkx, P., Aartsen, M. J., & Deeg, D. J. H. (2016). Ten-year course of cosmic transcendence in older adults in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 84(1), 44–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091415016668354>
- Brudek, P. (2021). Polish version of Lars Tornstam's Gerotranscendence Scale Type 2 (GST2-PL). *Psychiatria Polska*, 55(6), 1305–1325. <https://doi.org/10.12740/PP/120790>
- Bruyneel, S., Marcoen, A., & Soenens, B. (2011). Gerotranscendence: Components and spiritual roots in the second half of life. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.870233>
- Butler, R. N. (1963). The life review: An interpretation of reminiscence in the aged. *Psychiatry*, 26, 65–76.
- Burton, E., Teater, B., Chonody, J., & Alford, S. (2024). What does it mean to successfully age?: Multinational study of older adults' perceptions. *Gerontologist*, 64, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnae102/7731211>
- Cabaco, A. S., & Mateos, L. M. F. (2019). Contributions of gerotranscendence in aging: A vision focused on the ethics of needs. *Cauriensia*, 14, 475–490. <https://doi.org/10.17398/2340-4256.14.475>
- Carstensen, L. L. (2021). Socioemotional selectivity theory: The role of perceived endings in human motivation. *Gerontologist*, 61(8), 1188–1196. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnab116>

- Carver, L. F., & Buchanan, D. (2016). Successful aging: Considering non-biomedical constructs. *Clinical Interventions in Aging*, 11, 1623–1630. <https://doi.org/10.2147/CIA.S117202>
- Chelak, K., & Chakole, S. (2023). The role of social determinants of health in promoting health equality: A narrative review. *Cureus*, 15, e33425. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.33425>
- Chen, S. C., Moyle, W., & Jones, C. (2019). Feasibility and effect of a multidimensional support program to improve gerotranscendence perception and depression for older adults: A pragmatic cluster-randomized control study. *Research in Gerontological Nursing*, 12(3), 148–158. <https://doi.org/10.3928/19404921-20190212-01>
- Cicirelli, V. G. (2003). Older adults' fear and acceptance of death: A transition model. *Ageing International*, 28(1), 66–81. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12126-003-1016-6>
- Cosco, T. D., Prina, A. M., Perales, J., Stephan, B. C. M., & Brayne, C. (2013). Lay perspectives of successful ageing: A systematic review and meta-ethnography. *British Medical Journal*, 3, e002710. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2013-002710>
- Cosco, T. D., Prina, A. M., Perales, J., Stephan, B. C. M., & Brayne, C. (2014). Operational definitions of successful aging: A systematic review. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 26(3), 373–381. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1041610213002287>
- Coutinho, J. P. (2023). Portuguese youth religiosity in comparative perspective. *Religions*, 14(2), 147. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020147>
- Dalby, P. (2006). Is there a process of spiritual change or development associated with ageing? A critical review of research. *Ageing and Mental Health*, 10(1), 4–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607860500307969>
- Degges-White, S. (2005). Understanding gerotranscendence in older adults: A new perspective for counselors. *Adultspan Journal*, 4(1), 36–48. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0029.2005.tb00116.x>
- Erikson, E. H. & Erikson, J. M. (1997). *The life cycle completed: Extended version*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Entwistle, V. A., Renfrew, M. J., Yearley, S., Forrester, J., & Lamont, T. (1998). Lay perspectives: Advantages for health research. *British Medical Journal*, 316(7129), 463–466. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.316.7129.463>
- Fung, H. H. (2013). Aging in culture. *Gerontologist*, 53(3), 369–377. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnt044>
- Gilleard, C. (2020). The final stage of human development? Erikson's view of integrity and old age. *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, 14(2), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.3384/ijal.1652-8670.1471>
- Girard, R. (2014). Spirituality, religiosity, and gerotranscendence. *Master of Social Work Clinical Research Papers*. https://sophia.stkate.edu/msw_papers/318
- Gondo, Y. (2012). Longevity and successful ageing: Implications from the oldest old and centenarians. *Asian Journal Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 7(1), 39–43.
- Heinz, M., Cone, N., da Rosa, G., Bishop, A. J., & Finchum, T. (2017). Examining supportive evidence for psychosocial theories of aging within the oral history narratives of centenarians. *Societies*, 7(8), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc7020008>
- Henderson, J. (2010). Expert and lay knowledge: A sociological perspective. *Nutrition & Dietetics*, 67(1), 4–5. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-0080.2010.01409.x>
- Hogg, C., Soc Admin Studies, D., & Williamson, C. M. (2001). Whose interests do lay people represent? Towards an understanding of the role of lay people as members of committees. *Health Expectations*, 2–9.
- Hsiao, C. -Y., Yeh, S. -H., Wang, J. -J., Fu, L. -Y., Lin, I. F., & Li, I. C. (2018). The effect of gerotranscendence reminiscence therapy among institutionalized elders: A randomized controlled trial. *Neuropsychiatry*, 08(03), 881–892. <https://doi.org/10.4172/neuropsychiatry.1000415>
- Hsieh, L. -Y., & Wang, J. -J. (2008). The relationship between gerotranscendence and demographics in institutionalized elders. *Journal of Nursing*, 55(6), 37–46. <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-58049197815&partnerID=40&md5=ad080cd19e9a5a2e41d4f35e647e2e2f>
- Isaacowitz, D. M. (2022). What do we know about aging and emotion regulation? *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 17(6), 1541–1555. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17456916211059819>
- Janhsen, A., Golla, H., Mantell, P., & Woopen, C. (2021). Transforming spirituality through aging: Coping and distress in the search for meaning in very old age. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality and Aging*, 33(1), 38–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528030.2019.1676362>
- Jeong, S. Y., McMillan, M., & Higgins, I. (2012). Gerotranscendence: The phenomenon of advance care planning. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging*, 24(1–2), 146–163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528030.2012.632712>
- Jeong, S. Y. -S., Moon, K. J., Lee, W. S., & David, M. (2020). Experience of gerotranscendence among community-dwelling older people: A cross-sectional study. *International Journal of Older People Nursing*, 15(2), e12296. <https://doi.org/10.1111/opn.12296>
- Jewell, A. J. (2014). Tornstam's notion of gerotranscendence: Re-examining and questioning the theory. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 30(1), 112–120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2014.04.003>
- Kim, H. K. (2020). Effects of perceived health condition, gerotranscendence, and wisdom on successful aging of elders. *Medico-Legal Update*, 20(3), 681–687. <https://doi.org/10.37506/mlu.v20i3.1479>
- Kim, S. H., & Park, S. (2017). A meta-analysis of the correlates of successful aging in older adults. *Research on Aging*, 39(5), 657–677. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0164027516656040>
- Lee, Y. W., Kim, N. C., Ahn, S. Y., Cho, M. O., Choi, K. S., Kong, E. S., Kim, C. G., Kim, H. K., & Chang, S. O. (2020). Exploring the subjective frame of references in the development of gerotranscendence in Korean older adults: Q methodology. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 32(0), 202–211. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659620903775>
- Lewin, F. A. (2001). Gerotranscendence and different cultural settings. *Ageing and Society*, 21(4), 395–415. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0144686x01008285>
- Lewin, F. A., & Eugene Thomas, L. (2001). Gerotranscendence and life satisfaction: Studies of religious and secular Iranians and Turks. *Journal of Religious Gerontology*, 12(1), 17–41. https://doi.org/10.1300/J078v12n01_04
- Major, R. J., Whelton, W. J., Schimel, J., & Sharpe, D. (2016). Older adults and the fear of death: The protective function of generativity. *Canadian Journal on Aging [La Revue Canadienne du Vieillessement]*, 35(2), 261–272. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0714980816000143>
- Martin, P., Kelly, N., Kahana, B., Kahana, E., Willcox, B. J., Willcox, D. C., & Poon, L. W. (2015). Defining successful aging: A tangible or elusive concept? *Gerontologist*, 55(1), 14–25. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnu044>
- Mendes, R. M., & Miskulin, R. G. S. (2017). L'análise de conteúdo como metodologia. *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, 47(165), 1044–1066. <https://doi.org/10.1590/198053143988>
- Minney, M. J., & Ranzijn, R. (2016). We had a beautiful home but I think I'm happier here: A good or better life in residential aged care. *Gerontologist*, 56(5), 919–927. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnu169>
- Moreira, M. J. G. (2020). *Como envelhecem os portugueses envelhecimento, saúde, idadismo*. Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos. https://ffms.pt/sites/default/files/2023-07/2023%2007%2003%20Infografia_Dia%20Mundial%20da%20Popula%C3%A7%C3%A3o.pdf
- Rajani, F., & Jawaid, H. (2015). Gerotranscendence: A critical review. *Journal of Psychology & Clinical Psychiatry*, 4(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.15406/jpcpy.2015.04.00184>
- Read, S., Braam, A. W., Lyyra, T. M., & Deeg, D. J. H. (2014). Do negative life events promote gerotranscendence in the second half of life? *Ageing and Mental Health*, 18(1), 117–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2013.814101>
- Rezpour, M. (2022). The interactive factors contributing to fear of death. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.905594>

- Rowe, J. W., & Kahn, R. L. (1997). Successful aging. *Gerontologist*, 37(4), 433–440. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/37.4.433>. <https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article/37/4/433/611033>
- Rowe, J. W., & Kahn, R. L. (2015). Successful aging 2.0: Conceptual expansions for the 21st century. *Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 70(4), 593–596. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbv025>
- Schroots, J. J. F. (1996). Theoretical developments in the psychology of aging. *Gerontologist*, 36(6), 742–748. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/36.6.742>
- Tornstam, L. (2005). Gerotranscendence: A developmental theory of positive aging. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=gnh&AN=110902&site=ehost-live>
- Tornstam, L. (2011). Maturing into gerotranscendence. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 43(2), 166–180.
- Utz, R. L., Carr, D., Nesse, R., & Wortman, C. B. (2002). The effect of widowhood on older adults' social participation: An evaluation of activity, disengagement, and continuity theories. *Gerontologist*, 42(4), 522–33. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/42.4.522>. <https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article/42/4/522/686616>
- van Rhyn, B., Barwick, A., & Donnelly, M. (2022). Embodied experiences and existential reflections of the oldest old. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 61(101028), 101028–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2022.101028>
- Von Humboldt, S., Leal, I., & Pimenta, F. (2012). Adjustment and age through the eyes of Portuguese and English community-dwelling older adults. *Studies in Sociology of Science*, 3(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.3968/j.sss.1923018420120303.1544>
- Wadensten, B., & Hägglund, D. (2006). Older people's experience of participating in a reminiscence group with a gerotranscendental perspective: Reminiscence group with a gerotranscendental perspective in practice. *International Journal of Older People Nursing*, 1(3), 159–167. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-3743.2006.00031.x>
- Wang, J. J. (2011). A structural model of the bio-psycho-socio-spiritual factors influencing the development towards gerotranscendence in a sample of institutionalized elders. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 67(12), 2628–2636. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2011.05705.x>
- Wang, J. J., Lin, Y. H., & Hsieh, L. Y. (2011). Effects of gerotranscendence support group on gerotranscendence perspective, depression, and life satisfaction of institutionalized elders. *Aging and Mental Health*, 15(5), 580–586. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2010.543663>
- Waugh, C. E., Thompson, R. J., & Gotlib, I. H. (2011). Flexible emotional responsiveness in trait resilience. *Emotion*, 11(5), 1059–1067. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021786>
- Wiktorowicz, J., Warwas, I., Turek, D., & Kuchciak, I. (2022). Does generativity matter? A meta-analysis on individual work outcomes. *European Journal of Ageing*, 19(4), 977–995. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-022-00727-w>
- World Health Organization. (2002). *Active ageing: A policy framework*. Author.
- Xu, J. (2018). A tripartite function of mindfulness in adjustment to aging: Acceptance, integration, and transcendence. *Gerontologist*, 58(6), 1009–1015. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnx100>
- Yount, W. R. (2009). Transcendence and aging: The secular insights of Erikson and Maslow. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality and Aging*, 21(1–2), 73–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528030802265361>