Research Article

Effects of Ageism Discourse on Successful Aging

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to reveal the effects of ageism discourse on successful aging. The study was carried out with 49 elderly and 49 young people living in Yenişehir, Mersin, Turkey. The snowball sampling method was adopted in the sample. Of the elderly participants, 27 were women and 22 were men. 4 women and 6 men were working in any job and the others were retired. There were 11 people in the sample who were 80 years or older. 12 individuals (7 women, 5 men) lived alone, and the others lived with their families. This study shows that four basic dimensions are effective in the perceptions of elderly and young individuals about each other and about aging. On the other hand, these four factors were identified as related factors in the questions about successful aging. In the answers given to the questions, the common factors affecting successful aging were determined as the dimensions of ageism discourse.

Keywords: Aging discourse; discrimination discourse, ageism, successful aging, Geotechnology

Introduction

Discourse is a current issue that affects social, economic, legal, political and many systems in today's World [1-4]. The emergence of the pandemic, technological and cyber developments threaten the personal information security and privacy of individuals [5-6]. Psychological, cognitive, and physiological regressions/declines that occur with increasing age increase this safety risk even more [7-8]. Ageism discourse can increase the psychological effects that individuals are exposed to in the aging process. Therefore, examining the effects of ageism discourse on successful aging is especially important in the period of COVID-19. The aim of this study is to reveal the effects of ageism discourse on successful aging.

Methods

Adopted Research Method

Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research methods, which is an important method in dealing with social problems in depth, was adopted in the study [9]. This method provides answers to the research questions determined at the beginning with the data ob tained from the participants through the interview [10]. In addition, since phenomenology is a qualitative research method, it can help to eliminate the negative aspects of common method biases caused by quantitative research data [11]. Because the participants can answer the question in a limited scope in quantitative research.

Ethical Rules

A participant consent form was presented to the participants regarding the purpose, title, content, possible risks, and other ethical issues of the study. This form was explained in detail to all individuals. 32 young and 49 elderly people who did not want to participate in the study were not asked any questions and were excluded from the study.

Inspiration Point and Sampling

Ageism is increasing day by day due to the gradual increase in the elderly population and the regressions in old age [12-15]. Ageism causes discourse due to the cyber and technological developments and declines related to aging [13-15]. The effects of these

discourses on successful aging in aging constitute the subject of the research. In this context, the research questions were determined as follows: What are the effects of ageism discourse in aging on successful aging? In this context, what are the dimensions/factors of Ageism Discourse? After these questions were determined, the target sample group for the research was determined. As the age group most affected by the discourse, individuals aged 65 and over were determined as the target sample group. The age range of 15 to 25 age was chosen for the young sample. It is very difficult to reach the target sample in the qualitative research method. Therefore, the target sample should be limited.

Results

Demographic Variables

The study was carried out with 49 elderly and 49 young people living in Yenişehir, Mersin, Turkey. The snowball sampling method was adopted in the sample. Of the elderly participants, 27 were women and 22 were men. 4 women and 6 men were working in any job and the others were retired. There were 11 people in the sample who were 80 years or older. 12 individuals (7 women, 5 men) lived alone, and the others lived with their families. The age range of young individuals was between 15 and 25. 36 of these participants were university students, and the others were high school and secondary school students. Twenty-four of the young participants were female and 25 were male.

Analysis Method

Participants were asked questions as indicated in the appendix. These questions were determined in accordance with the literature review, research question, and the purpose of the study. According to the findings obtained from the qualitative data, 1598 unique sentences and 9246 words were analyzed. This analysis consists of a classification of concepts, determination of upper and lower headings, data extraction, classification, merging, linking, determination of dimensions, and output stages [16-18]. The findings were presented to two separate committees consisting of seven members each. Each committee voted on the consistency of the results and links. The following tables were created with the results obtained. Results for younger people responses are presented in Table 1 & 2.

Table 1: Results for Younger People responses.

Items	Sub-Dimensions	Dimensions
The elderly people complain about the behavior of the younger generation.	Intergenerational communication and relationship	Incompatibility, Asociality*SA
The elderly people complain about everything, they whine.	Social cohesion	
Elderly people are incompatible.	Human	
The elderly drive slowly in traffic.	physical, psychological, cognitive	Age-related regression*SA
Elderly people are senile.	cognitive, pathological	
Elderly people have poor perception, they forget quickly.	cognitive, pathological	
The elderly cannot be trusted.	Behavior	
Elderly people get sick all the time.	Health	
The elderly are stingy and tend to save.	Economic	
The elderly are in a poor state in terms of hygiene.	Hygiene	Lack of personal care*SA
Elderly people dress classically and outdated.	Personal care	
The elderly do not contribute to society, they only consume.	Consumption	Resisting innovation*SA
The elderly are not innovative, they do not understand technology.	Innovation, adaptation to technology	
Elderly people cannot use social media.	Adaptation to technology	
*SA: Successful aging: The responses of the Q3 about successful aging were correlated with the identified dimensions.		

Table 2: Results for Elderly responses.

Items	Sub-Dimensions	Dimensions
Young people complain about the behavior of older people.	Intergenerational communication and relationship	Incompatibility, Asociality*SA
Young people are very weak and inexperienced in solving problems.	Social cohesion	
Young people do not want to fit in with the elderly.	Human	

Young people drive fast and dangerously in traffic.	physical, psychological, cognitive	Age-related regression*SA
Young people see us as senile.	cognitive, pathological	
Young people complain about the forgetfulness of the elderly.	cognitive, pathological	
Young people do not trust the elderly. The old do not trust the young either.	Behavior	
Young people think that elderly people are not healthy. But many elderly people take care of their health.	Health	
Young people are wasteful, they do not save, they do not think about the future.	Economic	
Young people are in a bad situation in terms of hygiene. Putting on makeup or caring about appearance is not hygiene.	Hygiene	Lack of personal care*SA
Young people see the elderly as demode. Young people do not like classic clothing. Wearing ripped is not in fashion.	Personal care	
Young people do not contribute to society, they only consume.	Consumption	Resisting innovation*SA
They think old people don't understand technology. We attach importance to face-to-face communication, social and human relations.	Innovation, adaptation to technology	
Social problems have increased due to the use of social media by young people. Just because young people use social media doesn't make them perfect.	Adaptation to technology	
*SA: Successful aging: The responses of the Q3 about successful aging were correlated with the identified dimensions.		

Conclusion

A three-dimensional structure related to ageism has been identified in the literature (stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination) [19-24]. This study shows that four basic dimensions are effective in the perceptions of elderly and young individuals about each other and about aging. On the other hand, these four factors were identified as related factors in the questions about successful aging. In the answers given to the questions, the common factors affecting successful aging were determined as the dimensions of ageism discourse.

The fact that the discourse about aging resulted in a significant level of ageism for both groups reveal the importance of the perception and discourse of aging. The fact that the findings create a four-factor structure that affects the perception of aging and causes the discourse of ageism can provide a significant improvement in the interaction between the elderly and young people. As shown in Figure 1, ageism discourse creates a four-factor trajectory. It is recommended that practitioners and policymakers develop projects that will eliminate the negative effects of these four factors. In addition, the application of these findings in different samples may help to reveal cultural differences.
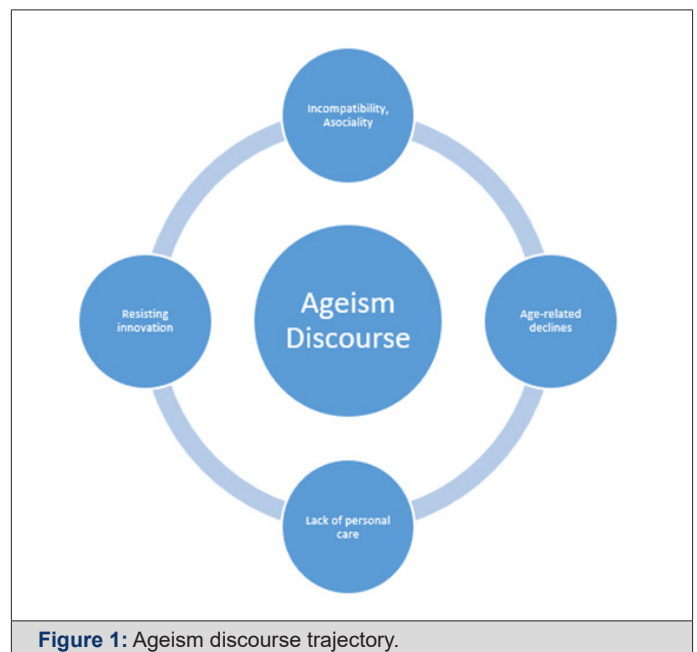

Figure 1: Ageism discourse trajectory.

Acknowledgment

Appendix.

Research questions

Q1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of aging? Why?

Q2. Can you give information about the discourses about aging and ageism? Why?

Q3. How do such discourses about aging affect your perception of aging and your successful aging? Why?

Q4. What kind of discrimination do the young/elderly people make? On what subjects? Why?

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