



Ageism: A comparative study among young adults

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ABSTRACT

Ageism considered as stereotyping and discrimination towards age. Bigotry against older people can be detrimental for their health and well-being. The present study aims to find out the effect of gender (male and female) and staying condition (who stayed with old and who didn't stay with old) on benevolent and hostile ageism. A total number of 98 participants have been selected by purposive sampling technique. The current study is a 2X2 factorial design. Results found young adults who are not staying with old have scored more in benevolent ageism than those who are staying with old people. Result from the simple effect analysis showed that female participants who are staying with old have more hostile ageism compare to those who are not staying with old.

Keywords— Ageism, stereotype, Young adults, Elderly people

1. INTRODUCTION

The life span of people is increasing day by day with the growing advancement of medical sciences and technology and ultimately it provokes the rising population of elders. According to a report released by Ministry of Statistics number of citizens over 60 years jumped from 7 crore in 2001 to 10.3 crore in 2011 (The Indian Express). It is said that old age is the evening of life and people always want to live but nobody wants to be old. It is an ineluctable phase of life which we all have to pass through once. Usually people enjoy the evening of a day but unfortunately maximum numbers of people fail to enjoy the evening of their life because they come across the different kinds of problems. Social issues always ruled over all the problems, because a healthy environment leads to healthy mind and healthy relationship.

Declination in financial and physical capacity makes the elderly to feel worthless and burden on their children. Around 2/3 of the population below or close to the age group of 30 years feel awkward while talking about the old age in India. In consideration to this six out of every 10 elderly couple are forced by their children to leave home. Discrimination towards aged or Ageism is one of the worst kinds of discrimination in today's world. The term Ageism was first coined by Butler (1969) as a systematic discrimination and stereotype against aged. Though it has been taken overall as negative but it includes positive attitudes towards age which is called benevolent ageism (Hummert, 1990).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Older people are characterised by many negative characteristics like narrow minded, stubborn, foolish, unable to do daily work and lack of decision-making capacity etc. Young generation discriminate elderly population because they need constant care, medical attention and they become dependent. People always expect to get good return by investing their time, effort and money even if they are educated and well aware of the old age problems, which ultimately affect the wellbeing of the geriatric population. Ageism affects their self-esteem, they begin to perceive themselves incapable which hurt and demotivate the old people, they started to think themselves inferior and withdraw themselves from social gatherings and participation.

A study conducted Caspi (1984) found that direct contact between younger and older could cause younger people to develop more positive attitude towards old. Contradictory findings by Angiullo et al., 1996; Carmel, Cwikel & Galinsky, 1992 suggest that the amount and frequency of direct contact with elderly people is not associated with development of positive attitudes toward elderly. Knox, Gekoski, and Johnson (1986) examined that most research focuses on finding the amount of direct contact with old whereas a very few studies aim to find the quality of the direct contact of younger with elderly people, which results a failure to find positive relationship with elderly. Similar study revealed that attitudes toward older people are predicted by the self-reported quality of contact with elderly, not by the frequency of contact (Knox et al., 1986; Schwartz & Simmons, 2001).

Studies conducted on undergraduates have revealed that undergraduates hold negative attitudes towards old people (Angiullo et al., 1996; Fraboni et al., 1990; Kalavar, 2001; Rupp et al., 2005). However other researchers found more positive attitudes (O'Hanlon & Brookover, 2002; Harris & Dollinger, 2001) and neutral attitudes (Funderburk et al, 2006) of undergraduates towards older adults.

Cuddy et al., (2005) had conducted a cross-cultural study in the Far East and Middle East (McConatha et al., 2003) found negative attitudes toward older people in collectivist societies. Levy and Banaji (2002) has also shown in their study, young people are more likely to hold negative stereotypes toward older people. Moreover According to Nelson, younger people are perceived with more stereotypical attitude and less power towards elderly than middle aged people (2002b).

From the above literature findings, we can observe that there is very little study available on ageism. Most of the studies have been conducted in western context and the results are ambiguous. Since Indian culture is collectivist in nature and most of the Indian always stay with their family members including grandparents. Thus, studying ageism in Indian context could give a new insight to the ageism research.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study attempts to find out the interaction effect of gender (male and female) and staying condition (who stayed with old and who didn't stay with old) on the dimensions of ageism.

4. METHOD OF STUDY

4.1 Design

The present study adopted 2X2 factorial research design. The first factor is gender (male, female) and the second factor is staying condition (who stayed with old people and who didn't stay with old people). The study aims to find out the effect of gender and staying condition on benevolent ageism, hostile ageism and ambivalent ageism.

4.2 Sample

A number of 98 sample was selected by employing purposive sampling technique from different college in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The age ranges between 20 years to 26 years and it includes both male and female. Total 45 young adults were staying with elderly and 53 were not staying with elderly.

4.3 Tools

Ambivalent Ageism scale: Ambivalent ageism scale was developed by Lindsey A. Cary, Alison L. Chasteen and Jessica Remedios in 2017. This scale consists 13 items in which 4 items measure hostile ageism and 9 items measures benevolent ageism. The subjects are supposed to read each item carefully and indicate his/her degree of agreement or disagreement on a seven-point rating scale. The S's response to each item are scored 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 for strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly agree, Agree, Strongly agree respectively.

4.4 Procedure

The study strictly adheres the ethical guidelines of research. Before starting the actual research verbal informed consent was taken from all the participants. The researchers visited each participant individually. The communication was initiated by establishing a good rapport with each participant. When the researchers felt that the participants are comfortable, they were given the Ambivalent ageism questionnaire with adequate information. The researchers have given enough time to the participant to understand the instructions and questionnaire properly. After the participants were done with filling their responses the researchers thanked each participant for their participation and cooperation.

5. RESULTS

The data obtained from all the participants were analysed according to the objectives by Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Results for the objective were given in different table below.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Benevolent ageism, hostile ageism and Ambivalent ageism scores of male, Female young adults who stayed with old people and those who didn't stay with old people

Variables		Male	Female	Staying with Old	Not staying with old
Benevolent ageism	Mean	42.73	43.39	40.44	45.24
	SD	9.86	9.77	10.43	8.68
Hostile ageism	Mean	14.96	16.43	15.71	15.6
	SD	4.66	6.09	6.36	4.5
Ambivalent ageism	Mean	57.98	59.82	56.26	61.03
	SD	12.86	9.3	11.53	10.75

Table 2: Two-way analysis of variance performed on the benevolent ageism scores of young males and females, who stayed with old people and those who didn't stay with old people

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p
Gender	1.3	1	1.3	.01	.9
Staying condition	591	1	591	6.48	.01
Gender*staying condition	137.13	1	137.13	1.5	.22
Error	8567.05	94	91.13		
Total	190816	98			

Table 2 reveals that there is no significant difference between male and female young adults, but there is a significant difference ($F=6.48$, $p<.05$) between those who stayed with old and those who didn't stay with old in the dimension of benevolent ageism.

The mean score of young adults who stayed with old and that of who didn't stay with old are 40.44 and 45.24 respectively. Here it can be said that those young adults who didn't stay with old people have more positive attitude towards older people than those who stayed with old people.

Table 3: Two-way analysis of variance performed on the hostile ageism scores of young males and females, who stayed with old people and those who didn't stay with old people

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean squares	F	P
Gender	69.34	1	69.34	2.46	.12
Staying condition	2.84	1	2.84	.10	.75
Gender* Staying condition	142.26	1	142.26	5.06	.02
Error	26850	94	28.01		
Total	2838.2	98			

From Table 3 it has clearly shown that the interaction effect of gender and staying condition is significant ($F=5.06$ & $p=.02$) so we can't explain the main effect of gender and staying condition. Thus, simple effect analysis will be employed to know which group is better. Simple effect analysis compares each level of one independent variable with each level of other independent variables.

Table 4: Results of test of simple effects for staying condition X gender interaction.

Staying condition	Gender	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Error	P
Living with old	Male	13.88	- 4.12	1.59	.01
	Female	18	4.12	1.59	.01
Not living with old	Male	15.96	.73	1.45	.61
	Female	15.23	- .73	1.45	.61

The result table 4 was done to compare gender with each level of staying condition. It has been noticed from the above table-4 that there is significant difference ($p= .01$) between male those are staying with old and the female who are also staying with old but there is no significant difference ($p= .61$) between male and female who are not staying with old.

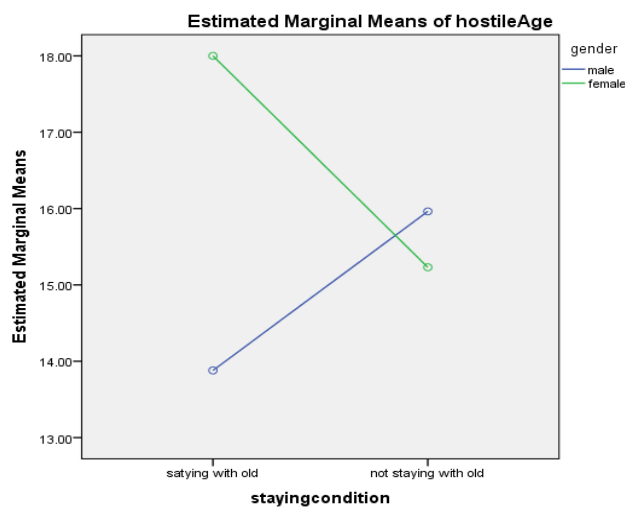


Fig. 1: The interaction effect between gender and staying condition

6. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Findings from Two-way analysis of variance performed on the dimension of benevolent ageism (Table-2) revealed that those who didn't stay with old people have more positive attitudes (benevolent ageism) towards elderly than who stayed with old. Current findings support the view of (Angiallo et al., 1996, Carmel, Cwikel & Galinsky, 1992). However, this contradicts the findings of Caspi (1984) which suggested that direct contact between younger and older persons could cause younger people to develop more positive attitudes toward the elderly. Caspi (1984) had given his view more than 30 years back in western society. During this long period of time society has changed a lot and so many factors are responsible for attitude formation. One of the important factors is culture to form attitude formation and mind set of younger generations. The present study is conducted in India which is undergoing a rapid change in socio-cultural and economic dimensions and unlike western culture in India elderly persons are taken care of by their children. The Youngers who are staying with old they experience of real problems and difficulties of living with elderly which ultimately develop negative attitudes towards elderly population.

Findings from table-3 shows that there is a significant interaction effect between genders and staying condition thus, simple effect analysis was done to find out the difference. It was noticed from table-4 that females who stayed with old score more in hostile ageism than males who stayed with old. There could be two possible reasons. The first is females are more caring and nurturing in nature so they are given more responsibility in the family including taking care of the old people in India. The samples of the present study were collected from all the young student population and in this stage their primary focus was on establish their career. Therefore, they find the extra work at home including taking care of their grandparents as burden on themselves, which

results forming negative attitude. The second one is attitudes of elderly towards the females. Many Indian families prefer a male child over a female one due to their socialization process. Therefore, many times the female children end up with constant nagging from their elderly at home, which again play an important role to form impression and attitude.

7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATONS

Due to urbanization break up in the joint family system the generation gap is widening day by day. Thus, negative attitude towards older people is becoming more prominent. In order to have a more balanced and caring family as well as social structure these negative attitudes needs to be modified. The findings of the present study will help in delineating the negative perception and attitude towards old age by adequate counselling and social message; so that young people developed a better understanding of older people and also older peoples' perception and attitudes of old age. The result could be used to make intervention module for improving the psychological well-being of the elderly population.

7.1 Limitation of the present study

- The present study has the limitation of taking small sample size which does not represent true characteristics of the population.
- The study does not take into account other intervening variables like duration of staying with old people, other age group, place of domicile, personality etc. which could have an effect on the dependent variable.

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