Students’ Thoughts and Attitudes Regarding Seniors (STARS)

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Introduction

- The United Nations reports that nearly every country globally is experiencing growth in the size and proportion of the population of older adults. By 2050, the global population of adults over the age of 65 will double from the current 760 million to 1.5 billion (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2019).
- With the population of older adults growing at an unprecedented rate, challenges are emerging, including ageism. A term coined in 1968, scholars define ageism in several different ways. The World Health Organization describes the phenomenon as “the stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age” (World Health Organization). Like racism and sexism, ageist attitudes can exist unconsciously and afflict both the young and old (Lesser 2012).
- Despite the wealth of literature on ageism in undergraduate students, there is not much known about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their attitudes towards older adults.

Objectives

1. Assess attitudes of undergraduate students towards older adults
2. Analyze correlations between participants’ degree of ageism and their race, gender, and level of contact with older adults
3. Use results to better understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted undergraduate students’ attitudes towards seniors

Methods

- Qualtrics survey with demographic information and the Fraboni Scale of Ageism (FSA)
- Distribution of survey via snowball sampling
- SPSS Data Analysis
- Paper that synthesizes results

Results

- Average respondent: Caucasian 19-year old female who had regular contact with two or three of her grandparents during her childhood
- Correlation between what age students consider adults to be old and FSA score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean FSA Score*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>54.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Caucasion</td>
<td>57.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(ages 5-13)</td>
<td>Low contact¹: 56.86</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High contact²: 55.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ages 14-18)</td>
<td>Low contact¹: 55.78</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High contact²: 55.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>with older adults</td>
<td>Low contact³: 56.31</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High contact⁴: 54.50</td>
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Fraboni Scale of Ageism (FSA) Scores

Discussion

- Lack of correlation between demographic information and FSA score contradicts published literature
- Low mean score does not support suspicion that the pandemic has caused a surge in ageism
  - Limitations
    - Nonrandom sample
    - FSA does not account for benevolent ageism
- Future studies could repeat the study with a larger and randomized sample and use a scale that assesses both types of ageism

References