



Ageist Attitudes, Stereotypes and Behavior of Youth Towards the Elderly Within Georgia: How Significant are Intergenerational Contact and Perceived Distance?

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ABSTRACT

Georgia has an aging society, with a high percentage of senior citizens in the general population. However, only small number of research studies in the Georgian context have been conducted to ascertain young people's attitudes towards older adults. The study of age-related phenomena is important both from a scientific point of view and for developing awareness-raising interventions and social policy. The current study investigates young people's explicit and implicit ageist attitudes, stereotypes and behaviors towards the elderly. We consider whether perceived distance from older people and intergenerational contact exert an influence on these variables. The research instruments were first translated from English into Georgian and adapted to the local context using 150 young people as initial respondents. The survey research was then carried out with 450 respondents, employing convenience sampling in Tbilisi. Research has shown that young people express more positive than negative explicit attitudes toward the elderly while implicit measures also reveal ingrained negative attitudes. Most stereotypes about older people feature lower expectations regarding physical and mental health, but especially concerning cognitive function. Young people stereotypically perceive older people as warm and kind, but with limited cognitive capacity. These stereotypes are more relevant to the "pity" category identified in the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) representing a 'pseudo-positive' attitude toward older people and they tend to result in infantilizing behavior, i.e., not letting aged people take responsibility for their own lives. With increased perceived distance from older people, the frequency of intergenerational contact decreases. Similarly, younger people who harbor more robust explicit ageist attitudes toward older people frequently seek to increase perceived distance and minimize their contact with the elderly. More ageist attitudes are related to more ageist behaviours. Regression analysis shows that explicit attitudes have the strongest influence on ageist behavior followed by perceived distance, intergenerational contact and stereotypes. The current study can provide a basis for further research on this concept.

Keywords: young people, older people, stereotypes, explicit attitudes, implicit attitudes, ageist behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Current global demographic changes, such as increasing life expectancy and decreasing birth rates, lead to a growth in the share of the world's aged population, known as "population aging". Aging is a natural phenomenon, but attitudes toward aging are often ambivalent and hostile towards older adults. For example, from a sample of 99 traits that American undergraduates attributed to older adults, only one-third were positive (Schmidt and Boland, 1986).

Negative perceptions of old age make seniors feel more vulnerable and prevent them from successfully coping with aging. In general, negative attitudes towards the aged diminish the self-efficacy of the elderly population (Levy, 1996), their optimism (Gallagher & Lopez, 2009) and consequently their well-being. In contrast, studies show that positive attitudes toward aging are associated with better mental and physical health and well-being among the elderly (Steverink et al., 2001; Lyons et al., 2017). Older people with high self-efficacy are more physically active, more satisfied with their lives, and have fewer depressive symptoms (Luszczynska et al., 2005). Kim (2013).

Aging is often associated with the gradual deterioration of the biological processes and the increasing limitation of mental functions, a process ending in death. Consequently, there is a stereotypical notion that old age is the end-of-life stage when people are sick, weak, dependent on others, slow-moving, poor or lonely. Although older people are different from each other, they are still considered by many to be one homogeneous group (Schaefer, 1983, Rychtaříková, 2019), with unfavorable status in many societies, leading to age-related stereotypes, negative attitudes, and discrimination.

Stereotypes and ageism differ, people with positive attitudes toward older people can still display negative stereotypes of older people when conversing with them. An example is the two main types of communication: over-accommodation and baby talk. During over-accommodation, young people speak overly politely, slowly and loudly, consistent with the stereotype that older people have hearing problems or cognitive slowing (Kite ME, Wagner LS, 2002). Baby talk is simplified speech with exaggerated intonation (Caporael L; Culbertson G, 1986). Some older people have a positive attitude towards this kind of speech as it is easy to understand, while the older people with high cognitive and social functioning consider such treatment humiliating (Giles H, Fox S, Harwood J, Williams, A, 1996). These forms of communication reflect a tendency to diminish the autonomy of the elderly to take responsibility for their lives (Fiske et al. 2002; Cuddy et al. 2005).

In a short period after the introduction of the concept of ageism, the research of this concept expanded considerably in terms of the development of theoretical background as well as empirical measures. However, there is still little research on age-related attitudes, stereotypes, and behaviors toward older people in Georgia. Georgia is a nation with an aging population and the share of the older population is systematically increasing; elderly make up 15.4 % of the Georgian population in 2021 (Geostat, 2021), while in 2000 it was 12.9%, 2010 - 14.1%. However, based on the local studies, we can assume that the aging of the nation in Georgia should not be caused by the high standard of living of the elderly in the country (Sumbadze et al., 2020), but rather due to current demographic changes, such as decreasing birth rate, high percentages of Georgian labor migration among adults of working age.

Only a few research in the Georgian context have been conducted mainly within the master's theses focused on studying young people's attitudes towards the elderly. Therefore, it is important to study the age-related phenomenon in the context of Georgia, which is important both from a scientific point of view, as well as for the development of evidence-based awareness-raising interventions and social policy. Due to a lack of practical research experience in this field, research instruments also need to be developed and adopted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Age stereotypes are different from ageism because stereotypes can be both positive and negative, while ageism is considered to be a negative factor in one's attitude. According to Butler (1980), who first introduces the concept, ageism is the negative attitude of others and the elderly towards themselves and the aging process, while Palmore (2001) points to positive consequences of ageism for the elderly, including free medical care, discounts or tax breaks. Rupp et al. (2005) found that negative attitudes toward the elderly are more noticeable among young males, although both females and males reveal common stereotypes towards the elderly (Levy & Banaji, 2004). Both, individualistic and collectivist cultures have a negative attitude towards the elderly (Cuddy et al., 2005). Children begin to distinguish between "young" and "older" "categories" from childhood, which is associated with the formation of stereotypes about older people. Stereotypes are generally associated with categorization and reflect a person's beliefs about the characteristics of a group of people.

One reason for people's stereotypes and superstitions is that they consider out-group members different from themselves. The consequence of categorization highlights the perceived similarities between the self and other in-group members on the one hand, and the perceived differences between the self and outgroup members on the other hand. People fear their relationships with individuals from different groups will be unpleasant, leading them to avoid interrelationships (Mallett, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008). Negative views of aging in general and negative age-related stereotypes, in particular, are closely related to age discrimination or prejudice towards older adults (Kotter-Grün, 2015).

According to the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954), one way to reduce prejudice is to facilitate increased contact among heterogeneous group members. As a result of closer contact, people perceive members of external groups more similarly, which helps to inculcate positive attitudes towards them. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis in which they reviewed more than 500 studies charting the impact of intergroup contact on group attitudes. The analysis showed a positive effect of increased contact in overcoming negative stereotypes and superstitions.

It is also essential to consider ageism along with the proximity factor. Proximity implies both geographical access and social interaction. It should be noted that the closer a representative of a particular group is to an individual, the greater his or her acceptance will be. Therefore, when one closes the distance and increases the proximity of a youth to a particular aging demographic group, the age discrimination will generally vanish over time. Therefore, with less distance, stereotypes tend to vanish or become less pernicious (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018).

The theoretical framework of ageism theories

Macro-level modernization theory reflects the loss of social status of the elderly, which is mainly related to the development of industrial production or the development of technology and medicine. It will also address how the experience-based knowledge of older people is devalued (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018). Contact between adults and children over 65 is declining, not at a younger age (Hagestad and Uhlenberg, 2006). Given high rates of youth mobility in large cities, intergenerational contact is reduced and family ties are weakened (Ayalon and Tesch-Römer, 2018).

According to the Functional Perspective theory, negative attitudes toward the elderly are ego-defensive for people having such stereotypes (Snyder & Meine, 1994). These stereotypes help young people ignore or avoid facing unwanted aspects of aging, including human fragility and the inevitability of death.

Terror Management Theory (TMT; Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991) reveals that culture and religion are only creations that impose meaning and help people deny their mortality. As older people tend to be more associated with death than younger ones, younger persons may hold negative attitudes towards older people to distance themselves from them and thus deny their mortality. This distancing is as spatial as it is cultural. It evokes negative feelings or ignorance among the respective groups and thus contributes to developing stereotypes and superstitions.

A Stereotype Content Model (SCM) that defines how different social groups are organized in society and how prejudices are formed about these groups by members and non-members alike should also be considered. In contrast to the one-dimensional model where antipathy was the only attitude expressed (e.g. Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1981), SCM identifies two main dimensions - warmth and competence, the combination of which creates the following clusters: warm and competent, warm and incompetent, cold and competent, and cold and incompetent. According to this model, the same group may have a high status in one respect and a lower on the other, reflecting the stereotypes attached.

Studies show that ageism most commonly arises among young people, whose perceptions of the aged may incline to discrimination and stereotype. In light of the mixed research results on the topic, the current study aimed to investigate young people's ageist attitudes, stereotypes and behaviors towards the elderly, and examine whether perceived distance from older people and intergenerational contact between youth and older people exerts an influence on these variables.

Research questions

- What kind of age-related explicit and implicit attitudes, stereotypes and behavior do young people express towards older people?
- How are attitudes, stereotypes and behavior toward older people related to the perceived distance and intergenerational contact between youth and older people?

Due to a lack of research experience in this field, development and adaptation of relevant research instruments were an important part of the study's methodology.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

The research used convenience sampling. The sample included 450 young students, selected from 3 biggest universities and VET colleges in Tbilisi¹. The questionnaire was distributed among 1000 students provided by the universities and 500 VET students provided by VET colleges. Response rate was 45%. The criteria for inclusion of the participants in the sampling were ages of 18-29 as this age group considered as young in Georgia. Filling up the questionnaire took between about 20 minutes.

Research Tools

This research used social-demographics information, such as age as a continuous variable and gender, education and employment status as categorical variables. Three scales were included in the research: The Fraboni Scale of Ageism (FSA) (Fraboni et al., 1990), Expectations Regarding Aging Survey was used (ERA-12) (Sarkisian, C., et al, 2005) and Relating to Older People Evaluation (ROPE) (Cherry and Palmore 2008).

The scales were first translated from English into Georgian and then back into English according to the standard forward-reverse procedure (Gjersing et al., 2010). Three researchers then compared the translated Georgian questionnaire with the original; the text was edited in Georgian. The sample size was determined to be at least five people for each item enumerated in the biggest FSA scale (Gorsuch, 1983). Internal consistency and split-half reliability were used for ensuring reliability in assessing a sample of 150 young people whose average age was 21 ($SD= 2.05$).

Explicit Attitudes

FSA (Fraboni et al., 1990) was used in the research in order to assess ageism in a multidimensional manner. The original scale consists of 29 items designed to assess both cognitive and affective components of ageism. Participants should respond to the items using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The total score range is from 26 to 116. Higher scores correspond to higher levels of ageism. The FSA measures three levels of prejudice, as derived from Allport's (1958) five levels related to ageism: anti-location (e.g., "Many elderly people just live in the past"), avoidance (e.g., "It is best that elderly people live where they won't bother anyone"), and discrimination (e.g., "Elderly people should find friends their own age").

Five items of the original FSA were excluded as these items affected the total according to Cronbach's α -value of the scale. Therefore, 24 items were included in the final scale. Cronbach's α -coefficient for these 24 items was 0.71. The split-half reliability was 0.75. Total scores ranged from 24 to 96.

Implicit attitudes

Implicit attitudes were measured using a tool developed by Sharon Shiovitz-Ezra et al. (2016); before using the instrument two-side translation was provided and experts examined it in the using face validity. The participants were presented one of two versions of a hypothetical

¹ Tbilisi State University, Ilia State University and Technical university; VET College "Spektri", "Mermisi" and "Ikarosi".

scenario. The first version states: "Let us suppose that you discover that an apartment next to your home is for sale and a 29-year-old couple with no children has purchased it; the husband is an engineer in hi-tech, and his wife is a high school teacher". The second version is the same, apart from the couple's age: a 76-years-old couple with no children; the husband is a retired hi-tech engineer, and the wife is a retired high school teacher.

The sample was split randomly; half of the respondents responded to the first version, while the other half responded to the second version. Respondents were required to answer five questions on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (very much). The questions included the following: 1) "How eager would you be to befriend the new couple?" 2) "Do you think they could become good neighbors?" 3) "If you went on vacation, how comfortable would you be asking them to water your plants?" 4) "How likely are you to ask them for a work tool if you need it?" 5) "How much do you foresee that you would suffer from the noise that your new neighbors would make?"

Age-related Stereotypes

To measure ageist stereotypes a short version of Expectations Regarding Aging Survey was used (ERA-12); It is an explicit scale with 12 items (Sarkisian et al., 2005). The scale covers physical, mental, and cognitive function expectations. As the instrument is designed to be used among old people in the current research, nine items were included relevant to young people (items 3, 9 and 12 were excluded). Cronbach's α -coefficient for the scale is – 0.77.

Ageist Behaviors

Relating to Older People Evaluation (ROPE) (Cherry and Palmore 2008) self-reporting scale was adapted for measuring ageist behaviors. The scale includes 20 items, covering both negative and positive age-related behavior, such as: telling old people jokes about old age; using simple words when talking to old people; or avoiding older people because of their age. In the present survey 16 items of the original ROPE were used. It included four items, such as: 2. *Sending birthday cards to old people that joke about their age*; 11. *When an older person can't remember something, I may say "That's what they call a 'Senior Moment.'"* 18. *Avoiding older people because they are cranky*; 20 *Calling an old woman, "young lady," or calling an old man, "young man."*

In the final version, six statements are related to positive and 10 to negative behaviors. The Cronbach's α -coefficient for these 16 items on the scale was 0.72. The split-half reliability was 0.70.

Intergenerational contact

Intergenerational contact was measured on the scale – "In general, how often do interact with elderly people other than your family members?"

1. Almost every day
2. Several times a week
3. 1-2 times a week
4. several times a month
5. 1-2 times a month
6. Several times a year

Perceptions of young people about the distance between the generations

For measuring the perceived distance between younger and older people, the 7-point scale was used, with 1 denoting the least distance and 7 the greatest distance, both in social and physical terms.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary. Before the online survey, a consent form was distributed and signed by all respondents, which expressed their readiness to participate in the research, The participants were assured of confidentiality and their anonymity was protected. The data were privately stored and made available only to the researchers.

Data Analysis

The survey data were entered into the SPSS 26 program, which was used to perform quantitative data analysis; descriptive statistics were used to describe raw data using summary statistics (percentage, mean) and tables. In addition, the researchers used a T test, correlational analysis using Spearman's correlation and regression analysis.

Research Results

The average age was 23.5 ($SD=2.05$), minimum age -18 and maximum - 29. The majority of survey respondents were females (78%), while 22 % were males. All demographic data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic data

Variables		Percentage
Sex	Male	23
	Female	77
Education	University students	85.6
	VET students	13.8
Employment status	Employed	38.1
	Unemployed and searching employment	42.7
	Unemployed and does not searching employment	19.2

Families consist of on-average four- members ($SD=6.22$, min- 1 max-6); about 23.82% of young people lived with intergenerational families, which included at least one woman aged 65 and more. 15.6% of survey respondents lived with at least one senior female aged 75 and older. Respondents' who lived in family units that include at least one male aged 65 made up an additional 11.8% of the survey, while those with male family members 75 and older were 8.2%. More than one-half of the respondents lived within two-generation households, and approximately 1/3 within three-generation families ($M=.2.47$; $SD=.709$). Thus, the Georgian family remains firmly anchored in at least two-generational units by tradition that should be a factor influencing the perception of elders.

Young people think that females can be considered old at the age of 66.9 ($SD=6.22$, min-max-50-80) or above, and males at the age of 67.1 ($SD=6.89$, min-max-41-85) and above.

Attitudes, Stereotype and Behaviors of Young People towards the Older Population

Explicit Attitudes

The survey used an adapted version of FSA (Fraboni et al., 1990); Total score range is from 24 to 96. Higher scores mean higher levels of ageism. 11 items had a higher than average value (2 points), and 14 items had a lower than average value. But the mean score on the scale was 45.96 ($SD=9.21$), which shows slightly positive explicit attitudes towards elderly.

Table 2. Mean and Standard deviation of FSA items

	Items	M	SD
1.	Many old people are stingy and hoard their money and possessions.	1.79	.76
2.	Many old people are not interested in making new friends, preferring instead the circle of friends they have had for years.	2.43	.92
3.	Many old people just live in the past.	2.62	.89
4.	Most old people should not be trusted to take care of infants.	1.72	.72
5.	Many old people are happiest when they are with people their own age.	2.22	.77
6.	Most old people would be considered to have poor personal hygiene.	2.10	.73
7.	Most old people can be irritating because they tell the same stories over and over again.	1.9	.84
8.	Older people complain more than other people do.	1.90	.81
9.	I would prefer not to go to an open house at a senior's club, if invited.	1.81	.84
10.	Teenage suicide is more tragic than suicide among the old.	2.09	1.05
11.	I sometimes avoid eye contact with old people when I see them.	1.45	.85
12.	I don't like it when old people try to make conversation with me.	1.38	.73
13.	Complex and interesting conversations cannot be expected from most old people.	1.44	.75
14.	Feeling depressed when around old people is probably a common feeling.	1.57	.73
15.	Old people should find friends their own age.	1.46	.71
16.	Old people should feel welcome at the social gatherings of young people.	3.15	.89
17.	It is best that old people live where they won't bother anyone.	1.41	.69
18.	The company of most old people is quite enjoyable.	3.20	.67
19.	Most old people are interesting, individualistic people.	3.08	.76
20.	I personally would not want to spend much time with an old person.	1.71	.85
21.	Old people deserve the same rights and freedoms as do other members of our society.	3.77	.62
22.	Most old people should not be allowed to renew their driver's licenses.	1.9	.88
23.	Old people can be very creative.	3.49	.69
24.	I would prefer not to live with an old person.	2.10	.92
25.	Old people do not need much money to meet their needs.	1.83	.79

As table 3 shows, the scores of the subtotal and total scales are low, revealing positive, explicit attitudes of youth toward the elderly. The scores on avoidance and discrimination are likewise low, showing lower discrimination toward elderly people and less avoidance of them.

Table 3. Scores by the subscales and a total of explicit attitude

	M	SD
Avoid	1.62	.46
Discriminate	1.86	.45
Prejudice	1.99	.53
Total	1.83	.37

Implicit Attitudes

As mentioned above, the participants were presented with one of two versions of a hypothetical scenario involving a 29-year-old couple with no children and 76-year-old pair with no children. T Test was run for these two groups (the respondents addressing the younger couple and the respondents addressing the older couple) that was statistically significant. The respondents reported that the young couple would make better neighbors and said they would like to befriend them. They believed that the young couple would make more noise than the older couple, though they would feel comfortable asking the older couple to water their plants. The difference between the total points is small (1.1) in favor of the youth. Thus, implicit attitudes show slightly negative aspects towards older people (see table 4).

Table 4. Implicit Ageist Attitudes

Frequency of meeting	M 29 year-old couple	M 76 year-old couple	T	Sig
How much would you like to befriend with the new couple	6.20	5.96	2.522	<.05
Do you think they might make good neighbors?	7.20	6.83	.387	<.05
How likely are you to ask them for a work tool if you need it?	6.92	6.83	1.434	-
if you would go on vacation, how comfortable would you be to ask them to water your plants	5.16	5.59	-3.348	<.05
How much do you expect your new neighbors to disturb you with noise?	3.13	2.21	12.937	<.05

Stereotypes

For measuring ageist stereotypes, a shortened version of adapted Expectations Regarding Aging Survey was used (ERA-12). The ERA-12 is a 12-item survey measuring expectations regarding aging with three scales (expectations regarding physical health for example “Having more aches and pains is an accepted part of aging.”; expectations regarding mental health – “It's normal to be depressed when you are old”; and expectations regarding cognitive function – “It's an accepted part of aging to have trouble remembering names”), and one global scale combining all items. The ERA-12 scale with nine items demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability.

The lower score reflects lower expectations. As the table 5 shows, the expectation is low within all three domains, while the lowest rating of all is the evaluation of the cognitive domain. The score is low accordingly on the whole scale, with an overall score of 24.78, showing low expectations in general, and diminished belief in the aptitudes of older people.

Table 5. Ageist stereotypes

	M	SD
Expectations regarding physical health	2.24	.55
Expectations regarding mental health	2.58	.65
Expectations regarding cognitive function	2.11	.73
Total Mean	2.75	.66
Total sum	24.78	

Ageist Behaviors

The research used an adapted version of Relating to Older People Evaluation (ROPE) (Cherry and Palmore 2008). In the last version, six statements were related to positive factors and 10 to negative behaviors.

Respondents reported more positive behaviors towards older people than negative. Among the negative behaviors, it was more common to “use simple words when talking to old people”, and “talk louder or slower to old people because of their age”. Positive behaviors include: “holding doors open for old people because of their age” and “offering to help an old person across the street because of their age”.

Table 6 presents the prevalence of the positive and negative ageist behaviors.

Table 6. Ageist behaviors

	Items	M	SD
Positive			
1.	Compliment old people on how well they look, despite their age	2.41	.62
2.	Enjoy conversations with old people because of their age	2.56	.58
3.	Hold doors open for old people because of their age	2.58	.58
4.	Offer to help an old person across the street because of their age	2.11	.80
5.	Ask an old person for advice because of their age	2.03	.80
6.	Vote for an old person because of their age	1.2	0.51
Negative			
7.	Tell an old person, you're too old for that	1.22	.51
8.	When an older person has an ailment, I may say, That's normal at your age	1.44	.62
9.	When I find out an old person's age, I may say, you do not look that old	1.99	.63

10.	Talk louder or slower to old people because of their age	2.18	.71
11.	Use simple words when talking to old people	1.82	.80
12.	Ignore old people because of their age	1.21	.50
13.	Tell old people jokes about old age	1.30	.50
14.	Avoid old people because of their age	1.22	.53
15.	When a slow driver is in front of me, I may think, It must be an old person	1.30	.59

The findings showed that respondents report more positive responses to advanced age than negative. Positive $M = 2.16$ ($SD=.39$); Negative $M = 1.52$ ($SD=.35$). $T= 27.67$, $p<.05$. The correlation between positive and negative behavior is significant ($r=.163$; $p<.05$).

About 49.1% of the surveyed young people have witnessed negative behavior towards older people, especially on public transport and in shops. Most did nothing to protect the elderly and did not intervene (64%). Among the negative phrases spoken to older people which the participants reported hearing:

- "You do not understand well because you are old."²
- "Nobody cares about this opinion as it is from Denikin's time."³
- "You are old to use a computer correctly."
- "You cannot understand our generation; you are stuck back in olden times."

The young respondents think that the reason for negative behavior is mainly related to the fact that older people are less open to changes and innovations (52%), followed by deterioration in cognitive skills of older people (43.6%) and older people's reliance on traditional attitudes and approaches (38.6%).

Intergenerational contact

Only 0.9% of respondents never have social relations with older people other than family members, while about 1/3 have contact with older people every day (30.9%), and about 19.6% get together several times a week.

The average frequency of contact on a 7-point scale is 4.80 ($SD=1.97$), showing quite frequent contact with the older generation.

Perceptions of young people about the distance between the generations

The physical and social distance noted by the participants on a 7-point scale is almost the same, showing a moderate distance - 3.24 and 3.2 ($SD =1.95$ and 1.79 respectively). The unified perceived distance is 3.22 ($SD=1.78$; min-1, max-7).

Some of the respondents are afraid of older people ($M = 2.42$, $SD=1.44$), which indicates the distancing of young people from the elderly.

² In the Georgian language this word has a very negative meaning – "beberi"

³ This expression is used to emphasize that something is dated and old-fashioned

Correlational and Regression Analysis

Correlation analysis was run on the research variables: explicit and implicit ageist attitudes, stereotypes, positive and negative age-related behavior, frequency of contact, and perceived physical and social difference (see Table 7).

Table 7 the correlational analysis between the variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Explicit Ageist Attitudes	1.83	0.37	1	.136**	-.226**	.322**	-.152**	.371**
2. Implicit Ageist Attitudes	6.02	.98		1	-.136**	-.073	-.085	.098*
3. Stereotypes	24.8	12.1		-	1	.009	.058	-.210**
4. Perceived distance (social and physical)	3.2	1.8		-		1	-.293**	-.184**
5. Intergenerational contact	4.8	1.9		-	-	-	1	.130**
6. Ageist Behavior	1.8	.28		-	-	-	-	.1

* $p < .05$

** $P < .01$

The correlation between explicit and implicit ageist attitudes is moderate and positive (.136; $p < .05$). In the correlational and regression analysis there was included ageist behavior combining both positive and negative ageist behavior.

Explicit ageist attitudes are negatively correlated with stereotypes (-.226; $p < .05$) and intergenerational contact (-.152; $p < .05$) (-.233; $p < .05$), while they are positively correlated with implicit ageist attitudes (.136, $p < .05$), perceived distance (.322; $p < .05$) and ageist behavior (.371; $p < .05$).

Ageist stereotypes are negatively related with ageist behavior (-.210; $p < .05$).

The intergenerational contact variable is positively related with ageist behavior (.130; $p < .05$) and negatively with ageist explicit attitudes (-.152; $p < .05$) while there is no collation with implicit attitudes or ageist stereotypes.

In addition, ageist behavior is negatively correlated with the lower expectations for mental (-.160; $p < .05$) and physical health (-.183; $p < .05$) and cognitive domains (-.139; $p < .05$).

When one increases the variable of frequency of contact, the perceived distance diminishes. The same can be said about attitudes; with stronger age-related attitudes, the perceived distance

with the older people grows larger, implying less contact with them. Stereotypes are not significantly related to perceived distance or intergenerational contact.

Regression analysis (table 8) shows that ageist behaviors are determined by explicit ageist attitudes, stereotypes, intergenerational contact and perceived distance ($R=.251, p<.05$). More ageist attitudes are related to more ageist behaviours.

Table 8. Regression analyses predicting ageist behavior

Regression term	b	SE	β	t	P
Ageist behavior					
Constant	2.075	.106		19.551	.000
Explicit ageist attitude	.197	.038	.126	2.587	.010
Implicit ageist attitude	-.025	.013	-.087	-1.992	.059
Stereotypes	-.005	.001	-.205	-4.456	.000
Intergenerational Contact	.014	.007	-.096	-2.017	.044
Perceived distance	-.032	.008	-.205	-4.456	.000

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The research used three different research instruments to measure attitudes (FSA), stereotypes (ERA-12) and behavior (adapted version of ROPE) to capture the ageism phenomenon's complexity. No other research has used the same scales to study ageism in Georgia; therefore, the study has contributed to a preliminary testing of the scales within a different international culture.

The data reveals a degree of ambivalence and mixed feelings about the elderly; young people have slightly positive explicit than negative attitudes towards the elderly, avoidance and discrimination are also low, while implicit measures reveal some negative aspects. It should be considered that self-reporting measures, referred to as direct measures of attitude, may be influenced by social expectations and norms and do not signify an absence of ageism. Unlike explicit measurements, implicit measures take a more indirect approach minimizing the influence of conscious cognitive processes, e.g., social desirability. Fazio (Fazio, 1995) used the term strong attitudes, which are close to what was later called implicit attitudes; attitude object-evaluation links are automatically activated by providing a mere retrieval cue to the object category. Similarly, in the case of ageism, if a person has a negative attitude toward older people, a stimulus that activates the category of the elderly or old age, or both will automatically activate a negative evaluation. It should be emphasized that implicit attitudes and beliefs influence behavior under certain conditions but not under other conditions. Implicit negative attitudes do not always lead to discriminatory behavior.

Most stereotypes in the current research about older people express lower expectations for physical and mental health domains, especially in the cognitive functioning domain reflecting the respondents' stereotypical beliefs about older adults. People with positive attitudes towards older people can still display negative stereotypes about older people.

Stereotype Content Model (SCM) (Fiske et al. 2002; Cuddy et al. 2005) distinguished two dimensions of stereotypes: warmth and competence. Based on these dimensions, four modalities can be identified: a) Pity: high warmth + low competence; b) Envy: high competence

+ low warmth; c) Admiration: high warmth + high competence; d) Contempt: low warmth + low competence). Our research findings are more relevant to the "Pity" category, reflecting younger people's fondness for the elderly, but undercut by their inherent disrespect (Glick & Fiske, 2001a,); these stereotypes tend to reflect 'pseudo-positive' attitudes towards older people (Nelson 2005). Accordingly, respondents reported using two main types of miscommunications: over-accommodation and baby talk. During over-accommodation, people speak slowly and loudly, consistent with the stereotype that older people have hearing problems or cognitive slowing (Kite ME, Wagner LS, 2002). Baby talk is simplified speech with exaggerated intonation (Caporael L; Culbertson G, 1986). Though some older people like this kind of speech as it is easy to understand, older people with high cognitive and social functioning consider such treatment to be humiliating (Giles H, Fox S, Harwood J, Williams, A, 1996). These forms of miscommunication reflect a tendency to diminish the autonomy of the elderly, and thus deny them the self-sufficiency to take responsibility for their lives (Fiske et al. 2002; Cuddy et al. 2005). Arluk and Levin (1984) point out, infantilizing makes older people think they are no longer independent and often leads to lower self-esteem and a passive acceptance of the dependent role in society. Older people believe and act according to such stereotypes, reinforcing them among both young and old.

It should be mentioned that the diverse nature of the stereotypes (that older people are both warm and incompetent) leads to an ambivalent pattern of behavior by younger people. They may express compassion, helpfulness, and positive feelings or ignore and exclude elderly citizens from their consideration. Moreover, young people generally treat the elderly well, and they reported more positive behaviors toward older people than negative ones. At the same time, young people believe that age discrimination against senior citizens in Tbilisi is expressed mainly in mild forms and they have witnessed some rudeness and/or damaging behavior of young people towards older people in public spaces, including stores, public transport and on the streets. Those findings reinforce the conclusions of previous studies (Shiovitz-Ezra., at al. 2016; Cherry and Palmore 2008), that help for older people often comes from the charity (Zucker & Weiner, 1993); mainstream society often helps vulnerable groups if they are considered weak and warm-hearted. Such help may include physical assistance with crossing the street, carrying heavy things, or technical help using electronic equipment or accessing the digital features on mobile telephones.

More ageist attitudes are related to more ageist behaviors. Explicit attitudes strongly influence ageist behavior followed by perceived distance, intergenerational contact and stereotypes. The correspondence between attitudes and behavior can be explained by the Planned Behavior theory (Ajzen, 1985), according to which attitudes are predispositions to behavior.

The current research shows that the relationship with older people decreases as the perception of distance increases, and the lack of real-life contact allows explicit ageist attitudes to become stronger. Age is one of the first things we notice and use it to categorize others (Nelson, 2005). Older people are perceived as a homogenous outgroup, with more inferior evaluations than young people, mainly based on negative demographic stereotypes. When faced with negatively evaluated outgroups, people engage in avoidance-oriented behavior, which is often an implicit and automatic response (Paladino & Castelli, 2008). As a result, individuals are motivated to create psychological and physical distance between themselves and members of that group (e.g., Cesario, Plaks, Hagiwara, Navarrete & Higgins, 2010). People who fear the unpleasant

consequences of relationships with individuals from different demographic groups often avoid intergenerational relationships (Mallett, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008), a pattern that was observed in a limited number of respondents in our research. In an attempt to distance themselves from the negatively evaluated out-group, the attitudes of in-group members towards the elderly may become more prejudicial, leading to ageism (Greenberg, Schimel, & Martens, 2002; Bousfield, A. & Hutchison, P., 2010). According to Functional Perspective theory, negative attitudes toward the elderly have ego-defensive function for people having such stereotypes (Snyder & Meine, 1994). These stereotypes help young people ignore or avoid facing unwanted aspects of aging, including human fragility and the inevitability of death.

The current research analysis confirms that many young people live with older family members, since according to the Georgian cultural tradition older and younger generations often live together in both the urban and rural family unit. Older people often do not go to senior citizens' homes. The elderly are the family members of young people, often living together in one home, but this factor alone won't vanquish ageist stereotypes and attitudes. High-quality contact is crucial for both younger and older generations to meet without preconceptions.

The current research shows that stereotypes about older people are a significant social problem. Ageism is gaining political recognition worldwide, as the populations of most developed countries are aging rapidly and placing new demands on the economic system. Younger people hope and expect that their own current generation will eventually come to change the negative, even normative, perception of old age. Instead, they anticipate a more active, productive and successful lifestyle in old age, which can be called "innovative aging" (Dannefer and Shura 2009). Strategies for positive revaluation of seniors' contributions and improved images of active and innovative aging should be introduced to the public, showing that older people are an important societal resource regarding their experience, knowledge and competencies. However, this process requires time and many changes in people's attitudes and perceptions.

Meta-analysis of 63 studies (1976–2018) with a total sample of 6124 participants shows that the three most successful interventions to reduce ageism are education, intergenerational contact and a combination of the two (Burnes, et al, 2019). More substantial effects were found for females, adolescents and young adult groups.

Education about aging is crucial for realizing that aging does not mean personal and societal devaluation but a time of development and fulfillment. It should be considered that not much is happening regarding aging-related education within schools, families, or communities in Georgia. Education about aging might help to combat ageism and counteract societal myths and misinformation (Palmore, 2004). An educational curriculum must include formal or informal learning activities aiding the younger generation to embrace psycho-social aspects of senior citizens' lives while also laying out opportunities for deeper intergenerational interaction, understanding, mutual support, acceptance, and connection to the elderly.

Following Allport's contact hypothesis (1954), intergenerational contact should be encouraged and supported. Other research also shows that Georgia's elderly population has limited social contact with young people, including (Kitiashvili & Makharadze, 2021) with their neighbors, relatives, and friends. Intergenerational contact should be supported, enhancing the quality of

relationships and solidarity, as well (Caspi, 1984; Schwartz & Simmons, 2001). Other studies also highlight the importance of examining the frequency and quality of contact with older people (Schwartz and Simmons, 2001). Cross-cultural studies of ageism show that the differences between cultures are quite large. The specific conditions of each culture should be taken into account in the process of planning and implementing successful interventions against ageism.

The potential significance of this research is to study the concept of ageism among Georgia's young population. The elderly population in Georgia is increasing and many other countries face the same demographic shift, therefore researchers have to find ways to integrate the expectations of youth and elderly by investigating productive aging.

Well-established measurement instruments in this area are critical; thus, developing reliable measures is needed in the future. This pioneering study can be considered a basis for more comprehensive and large-scale national research into ageism-related issues. Future research should capture the views of different generations and ethnic groups, gender-related and education-related issues as they come into relation with ageism, and aging in its cross-national dimensions.

Limitations of the research

The current research has certain limitations. This survey can be considered pilot research given its small sample size. The sample included only young people from Tbilisi, with the majority of respondents of Georgian ethnicity, rather than drawn from Georgia's ethnic and religious minorities. Due to its small sample size, the research findings are not segregated by age group, gender, or level of education. The role of mediating variables such as intergroup anxiety, perceived difference and others should be studied further.

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