

Globalization, Ageing Process and Attitudes of Younger Generations to Ageing

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ABSTRACT

Due to the increase of aging population in all societies, it seems important to explore this issue from different aspects in order to improve the position of the elderly and recognise their contribution to the society. The aim of this study was to examine the experiences and views of the Generation Z on the discrimination and prejudices against the elderly. There were 6 participants in the focus group, 4 girls and 2 boys, all of whom belong to the Generation Z. The data was collected in the focus group who answered open-ended questions. Results of the qualitative research indicate: 1) that there is an unfavourable attitude towards the elderly in the investigated group of children; 2) causes of discrimination against the elderly; 3) prejudice against the elderly. Encouraging the society to provide better education (especially for children and young people), direct contact with the elderly (organising exchange of experience and transfer of traditional and cultural values), as well as better presentation of ageing and old age in the media would contribute to the decrease of global ageing and improve attitude of the younger generation towards ageing animosity. Family has the main influence on young people's views and it is necessary to motivate parents to present ageing and old age in a favourable light. Furthermore, it is important to work with the elderly in terms of empowerment and developing a more positive self-image.

Key words: Generation Z, prejudice, family influence, society

Introduction

We often hear in everyday life that ageing and old age are synonyms. This view is not surprising because we encounter difficulties as soon as we try to define these terms – what is ageing, when does it start and what is old age? However, it is necessary to differentiate between ageing and old age at the conceptual level. Ageing is a biological, psychological and social process during during which changes in functionality occur with age¹.

Today there are many perspectives for understanding human growth and development. Modern theories offer different appropriate, realistic and systematic understandings of ages of man and grasping the uniqueness of the individual. A lot of attention is paid to studying social perception of the phenomena such as racism and sexism while only a small number of studies have analyzed in more detail the phenomenon of the third –ism², ageism, which is a concept connected with prejudice and stereotypes. It is highly significant since it creates a political interest in the elderly; cultural and social expenses accumulate because wisdom, social contacts and experience of the elderly are not used, which is at the same time a breach of basic hu-

man rights according to which it is democratic and ethical to judge a person by his/her personal characteristics and not by those of the group they belong to³.

Nowadays we are witnessing an increase in the number of older people in the society whose growing needs will have to be fulfilled thus making governments consider the social components of life naturally including their social status and networks⁴. Therefore, being unfamiliar with factual information about the needs of the elderly and even more about their contribution to the modern world creates an opportunity for developing new stereotypes and prejudice against the elderly.

Prejudice, ageism, globalization

When we talk about ageing and old age we often wonder how and when stereotypes and prejudice against the elderly are formed. According to Hayslip and Panek⁵ some of the typical prejudices against aging are the following: as people grow old they get more alike, old people become senile, old age is a time for peace and serenity, old people

are not interested in sex, old people have rigid attitudes, old people are not creative or productive, old people have learning disabilities, old people are lonely.

The term ageism includes notions of ageing and old age. Ageing refers to the physiological process which starts immediately after birth. It is common to all people, it cannot be stopped, and it progresses with different degrees of intensity. Barren and Schroots⁶ explain ageing as a two-fold process of gains and losses, interrelated and occurring simultaneously. We often have negative attitude towards the elderly. Stereotypes usually emphasize negative traits of older people. Dozois⁷ describes the term »ageism« as a process of systematic stereotyping and discrimination against the elderly. Pečjak⁸ claims that ageism is a reaction to the frustrations and stress young people and economically active population are exposed to in everyday life. Ageism is also a consequence of the increasing segregation of the older population. Nowadays there are fewer families with multiple generations living together. It leads to a lack of understanding of older generations eventually resulting in stereotyping. It is important to emphasize the difference between age perception and ageism. Age perception is a behaviour which distinguishes between the expected functionality at a certain age and the condition of the individual.

Globalization is an unstoppable process of connecting information, ideas, goods, capital and people. It results in well connected people who have a need for continuous motivation, development and creativity thanks to the overall constant information and communication technology advances. The world is becoming interconnected⁹. It is important to point out that many older people need help from their family members or the society because of illness, burnout or age. We are aware of the fact that regardless the overall social and technological development many older adults remain isolated and marginalized because of poverty, illness or age, and are less visible than other members of the society. Panel, Morbey and Means¹⁰ think that they have become »forgotten recluses« despite numerous debates, politics and resources. Globalization has started both positive and negative processes. Positive aspects of globalization are evident at the cultural, political, economic and religious levels. Negative aspects of globalization are visible in the economic exploitation of small and weak countries, as well as in the danger of small nations completely disappearing when integrated into big nations. All the positive and negative sides of globalization influence intergenerational relationships. Krasulja, Radojević, Janjušić and Vujić¹¹ believe that each generation has its own characteristics that need to be considered. The traditional generation are people who were born between 1900 and 1943; they are disciplined and organized, they value tradition, work, order and rules; they have acquired vast knowledge and extensive experience and are retired now. Baby boomers are people born between 1944 and 1960; their priority was education and career; they are workaholics and like short-term planning. People born between 1961 and 1980 belong to Generation X – they are technically-minded, flexible and adapt to change easily. Generation Y were born between 1981 and 1994 – they grew up with the Internet and other information technologies; they

are highly educated and have a lot of knowledge. Generation Z were born between 1995 and 2004 – they actively participate in their education; they are excellent at information technology, but have weak communication skills.

Methods

This paper primarily used focus groups as a qualitative research method. The interviews with the participants took place on the premises of the Institute of Public Health to avoid distraction, telephone calls and mobile phones. The answers and notes were taken down during the discussion. The discussion lasted a total of 90 minutes and its course was directed towards the content of the questions asked. The participants voluntarily took part in the research. The study aimed to encourage in-depth discussion in the focus group to explore the attitudes of Generation Z towards the elderly and explain their beliefs and views.

Sampling

The focus group consisted of six pupils (nurses/medical technicians) from the Bjelovar Vocational Nursing School (Medicinska škola Bjelovar), four girls and two boys. The participants were 18 years old and belonged to Generation Z.

Participants in the focus group live with their parents in Bjelovar, a town with around 40,000 inhabitants. None of them live with an older person over the age of 65 and they all have grandparents living elsewhere. All the participants can use today's modern technology.

Instrument

All the questions were pre-prepared and open-ended to ensure maximum flexibility when answering and reaching an agreement.

Questions:

1. In your opinion, are older people satisfied with their position in the society?
2. In your opinion, does the society show enough interest in and solidarity with the elderly?
3. Do you think that most prejudices against the elderly come from people your age?
4. What do you think is the main cause, the main trigger for discrimination against the elderly?
5. In your view, what are the most important values?
6. Does the family upbringing affect young people's views on ageing?
7. How would you describe an older person?
8. In your opinion, can the elderly be useful to the society?

Results

Parts of the text about views of Generation Z about the attitudes of the society, causes of discrimination and prejudice against the elderly have been taken from the text

TABLE 1
PRESENTATION OF THE PROCESS OF IDENTIFYING THE CODED SEGMENTS IN THE ANSWERS

TYPE OF QUESTION	QUESTION	ANSWERS
Questions about the attitude of the environment towards the elderly	1,2 and 3	<p>Participant 1 (negative attitude of the environment towards the elderly, disrespect, lack of interest) I definitely think they are not; <u>we don't respect them as we should, as it used to be. We, young people, do not have enough time for the elderly;</u> we are too preoccupied with our obligations as it is.</p> <p>Participant 2 (negative attitude of the environment towards the elderly) Yes, when I think about it, <u>older people used to be respected and they are not nowadays,</u> we don't even notice them. Anyway, I don't have anything in common with the elderly, except during my practical work. When we spend time with them <u>we don't have time to listen to their stories,</u> they are a little boring. In your opinion, why is this so?</p> <p>Participant 3 (negative attitude of the environment towards the elderly, excluding them from the society) It is difficult to explain why this is the case, why older people are not satisfied with their position in the society. However, <u>older people don't have a role in our society although they used to be the head of their family.</u> They were the ones who made decisions, according to my parents who lived with their grandparents. <u>I think we spend less time with our grandparents. We don't pay enough attention to older people and we even don't visit them regularly.</u> My excuse is that my grandparents live far away.</p> <p>Participant 1 (negative attitude of the environment towards the elderly, disrespect for older people) Yes, I also agree that we don't communicate with the elderly. Our parents used to learn from older people, knowledge used to be passed from generation to generation. <u>We can find all the information we need on the Internet today. Older people don't use the Internet much and their experience is not relevant any more. Young people don't listen to the elderly,</u> they don't follow the trends.</p> <p>Participant 4 (negative attitude of the environment towards the elderly, disrespect for older people belonging to one's own generation) <u>I think that the society treats older people very badly</u> and I agree with all the facts mentioned so far. <u>I think that older people are sometimes ruder to one another than young people are,</u> and they argue all the time. <u>You know, there are old people who somehow do not respect other old people and nothing satisfies them,</u> they are angry and sullen all the time.</p> <p>Participant 5 (negative attitude of the environment towards the elderly, disrespect of the middle-aged for the elderly) I also agree, when I think about it. <u>The situation is very bad, it has never been like this, older people have never been treated so badly,</u> and I don't know the reason why. I can only see how people around me perceive the elderly. <u>Even our parents are often irritated by older people.</u> They won't listen. My mum often tells them to take their medicine, but they refuse and they eat fatty food all the time although they take cholesterol-lowering drugs and diabetes medications.</p> <p>Participant 6 (disrespect for the elderly because of unemployment, negative feelings) <u>The situation is very difficult. I think the society doesn't appreciate older people's contribution,</u> and the reason is the current situation in our society, especially regarding the unemployment. So, we are a bit nervous. <u>I think older people are taking our place in the society, we would like to work when we finish school</u> and there are no jobs. Would anybody like to add anything or do you agree with what you have told me?</p>

Questions about 4,5 and 6 causes of the discrimination against the elderly

Participant 3

(causes of discrimination against the elderly)

In my opinion the main cause of discrimination is the fact that we, young people, don't have future, it is hard to find a job nowadays. A lot depends on the older people, they act as though they are in charge, and think we don't know anything.

Participant 2

(causes of discrimination against the elderly, poor adaptation of the elderly to the young)

I also agree that the reason is employment, there is lack of work. Actually, when I think about it it seems to me that all the older people who are eligible for retirement should go so that we can work, find jobs and then we would have a more positive attitude towards the elderly. They would be less discriminated. Older people can't adapt to younger people, we have to adapt to them because we are younger.

Participant 1

I agree, too. Jobs, no future, we have to be angry with somebody.

Participant 5

(causes of discrimination against the elderly, ignoring)

We have already concluded the problem is that we, young people, think we know everything, we have information at hand. The Internet is available, the elderly can't use it and that's our advantage. We are, therefore, more focused on ourselves and what's happening in our world in which we communicate through social media.

Participant 4

(causes of discrimination against the elderly, ignoring)

Social media are very important to us; we can hardly wait to see what's on our mobile phone, if any of our friends have written anything, if there are any new posts; it's in; and we'll post this conversation, too. Ha! Ha! So, we can't actually learn anything from older people because they are not well informed, they don't use the Internet or social networks, and even if they do they are not in our circles. The elderly use today's modern technology less; it's not meant for them, anyway, they don't understand it.

Participant 2

Does the family upbringing affect young people's views on ageing?

(causes of discrimination against the elderly, the importance of upbringing)

It certainly affects our views, but our parents don't have enough time for us, they work a lot, they are preoccupied with their own problems and have too much work. Our parents expect us to learn everything at school, good manners, too. And we are talking about the elderly now; we have learnt everything we know about ageing from television or from our parents. There is not much talk about it at school.

Do the others agree?

Participant 5

(causes of discrimination against the elderly, the importance of upbringing)

There are a lot of parents who allow their children everything, and the reason is that they don't have enough time for us; my mum has to tidy the house and cook, and my dad works all the time. How can they be bothered with us on top of everything?

Participant 3

(causes of discrimination against the elderly, the importance of upbringing)

Our upbringing definitely affects our attitudes; we are products of our families. We often hear this from our environment, particularly from older people when they discuss young people's bad behavior. There are a lot of people our age who say very bad things about their parents, how they argue all the time, which is certainly not a good example for us, for our upbringing._

7 and 8

Participant 2

(Prejudice against old people's personalities)

Well, they are boring, they talk about their illnesses all the time and keep repeating the same things, how they are not satisfied with the society, how it was much better in Yugoslavia, how young people don't respect them, and how the society has forgotten them.

Questions about prejudices against the elderly

Participant 6

Yes, older people talk all the time how it used to be better in Yugoslavia, how Tito was good and just. They also say how their pension is low although they spent all their lives at work, how they would like to go back to work and that they would work better than young people.

Participant 4

(Prejudice against the usefulness of old people)

The elderly have a lot of time and they don't know how to use it. They say so themselves – that they are retired and have enough time. Well, they probably do. They walk around the town all the time; wherever you look you can see them, not to mention that you can see only the elderly in hospitals.

Participant 3

Older people can only offer their years of knowledge, but we can easily acquire it today anyway.

The Internet, you can find everything on the Internet. Older people know a lot, they have experience and they have been through a lot in life.

Participant 2

I think older people lose their will to work as time goes by. What I actually meant is that creativity decreases with age, the elderly are not very creative and they don't have any desire either.

Participant 5

(Prejudice against intellectual abilities)

I would only like add that in my opinion older people have a bad memory because of their age, but when they are retired they don't even try to gain new knowledge.

Do you all agree that the elderly have bad memory and that they are less creative?

Participant 1

They surely don't have the same memory as we do and they are somehow not creative. Maybe they seem less creative to us, our views are somewhat different than theirs. When we get old, we will know the answers to all the questions you asked. I think we all agree that we don't actually think about the elderly.

recorded during the discussion and the process of reaching an agreement. The text recorded during the discussion was divided into relevant topics, each of them analyzed into more detail and the coded segments were underlined (Table 1).

Participants' statements regarding the same aspects of the problem and their views on ageing are incorporated in the same category. Answers in each category are classified (Table)

Attitudes of Generation Z towards the Elderly

The aim of the study is to determine the attitude of Generation Z towards the elderly based on the results obtained during the discussion with the focus group. The following text will present categories formed into corresponding topics directly related to the set aims of the research. In order to achieve a better understanding we have divided the obtained results into three topics. Each topic consists of a number of categories described in detail.

An overview of topics and their categories

- Unfavorable attitude of the society towards the elderly (dissatisfaction of the society with the elderly, exclud-

ing older people from the society, incidence of prejudice and discrimination against the elderly in all age groups).

- Young people's views on the causes of discrimination against the elderly (negative feelings amongst young people as a trigger for discrimination against the elderly, insufficient orientation of young people towards true values, inadequate education of young people at home and at school, how the elderly treat young people).

- Young people's prejudices against the elderly (prejudice about old people's personalities, prejudice about the elderly's usefulness in the society, prejudice against the intellectual abilities of the elderly).

Unfavorable Attitude of the Society towards the Elderly

Dissatisfaction of the society with the elderly

The results of the research show that, in young people's opinion, older people are not satisfied with the attitude of the society towards them. The participants think that a change in the attitude towards the elderly has occurred and that young people do not respect them, which can be seen in the following statements:

TABLE 2
OVERVIEW OF RESPONSE CATEGORIES

STATEMENTS	TERMS
A) Unfavorable attitude of the society towards the elderly	
A1 – dissatisfaction of the society with the elderly	
1. »We don't respect them as we should, as it used to be.«	Disrespect for the elderly
2. »Older people used to be respected and they are not nowadays, we don't even notice them.«	Disrespect for the elderly in today's modern society
3. »Older people don't have a role in our society although they used to be the head of their family. They were the ones who made decisions.«	Disrespect for the elderly and their experience
4. »We can find all the information we need on the Internet today. Older people don't use the Internet much and their experience is not relevant any more.« »Young people don't listen to the elderly, they don't follow the trends.«	Young people's neglect of the elderly
5. »I think that the society treats older people very badly and I agree with all the facts mentioned so far.«	Negative attitude of the society towards the elderly, disrespect
6. »The situation is very bad, it has never been like this, older people have never been treated so badly, and I don't know the reason why.«	Negative attitude of the society towards the elderly
7. The situation is very difficult, I think the society doesn't appreciate older people's contribution	Negative attitude of the society towards the elderly, disrespect
A2 – excluding the elderly from the society	
1. »We, young people, don't have enough time for the elderly; we are too preoccupied with our obligations as it is.«	Lack of interest for the elderly, young people do not have time
2. »We don't have time to listen to their stories, they are a little boring.«	Lack of interest for the elderly, indifference, young people do not have time
3. »I think we spend less time with our grandparents. We don't pay enough attention to older people and we even don't visit them regularly.«	Neglect of the elderly, lack of interest for them
4. »We think older people are taking our place in the society, we would like to work when we finish school and there are no jobs.«	Attitude towards the elderly that they are not needed
A3 – incidence of prejudice and discrimination against the elderly in all age groups	
1. »I think that older people are sometimes ruder to one another than young people are to them, and they argue all the time. You know, there are old people who somehow do not respect other old people and nothing satisfies them.«	Discrimination against the elderly in their own age group
2. »Our parents are often irritated by older people. They won't listen. My mum often tells them to take their medicine.«	Discrimination of the middle-aged against the elderly
B) Young people's views on the causes of discrimination against the elderly	
B1 – negative feelings amongst young people	
1. »The main cause of the discrimination is the fact that we, young people, don't have future, it is hard to find a job nowadays.«	Dissatisfaction and frustration of young people with the elderly
2. »All the older people who are eligible for retirement should go so that we can work, find jobs and then we would have a more positive attitude towards the elderly.«	Dissatisfaction and frustration of young people with the elderly
B2 – insufficient orientation of the young people towards true values	
1. »We, young people, think we know everything, we have information at hand. The Internet is available, the elderly can't use it«	
2. »We can't actually learn anything from older people because they are not well informed, they don't use the Internet or social networks«	Ignoring the opinions of the elderly Ignoring the opinions of the elderly
B3 – inadequate education of young people at home and at school	
1. »It certainly affects our views, but our parents don't have enough time for us, they work a lot«	Inadequate family upbringing
2. »There are a lot of parents who allow their children everything, and the reason is that they don't have enough time for us;«	The role of parents in upbringing and formation of attitude
3. »Our upbringing definitely affects our attitudes; we are products of our families. We often hear this from our environment, particularly from older people«	Inadequate family upbringing
4. »There are a lot of people our age who say very bad things about their parents, how they argue all the time«	Family influence on upbringing and attitude formation

<p>5. »We have learnt everything we know about ageing from television or from our parents. There is not much talk about it at school.«</p> <p>B4 – how the elderly treat young people</p> <p>1. »A lot depends on the older people, they act as though they are in charge, and think we don't know anything.«</p> <p>2. »Older people can't adapt to younger people, we have to adapt to them«</p>	<p>Inadequate family upbringing Family influence on upbringing and attitude formation</p> <p>Inadequate education at school Bad behaviour of the elderly towards young people – the elderly consider themselves in charge Bad behaviour of the elderly towards young people – young people have to adapt to them</p>
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C) Young people's prejudices against the elderly

C1 – prejudice about old people's personalities	
<p>1. »Well, they are boring, they talk about their illnesses all the time and keep repeating the same things, how they are not satisfied with the society, how it was much better in Yugoslavia«</p>	<p>Prejudice that old people are boring</p>
C2 – prejudice about the elderly's usefulness in the society	
<p>1. »The elderly have a lot of time and they don't know how to use it. They say so themselves – that they are retired and have enough time.«</p> <p>2. »Older people can only offer their years of knowledge, but we can easily acquire it today. The Internet, you can find everything on the Internet.«</p> <p>3. »What I actually meant is that creativity decreases with age, the elderly are not very creative and they don't have any desire either.«</p>	<p>Prejudice that old people are idle and not useful</p> <p>Prejudice about the elderly's usefulness, years of knowledge are not crucial</p> <p>Prejudice about the elderly's usefulness, creativity decreases with age</p>
C3 – prejudice against the intellectual abilities of the elderly	
<p>1. »The elderly use today's modern technology less; it's not meant for them, anyway, they don't understand it.«</p> <p>2. »Older people have a bad memory because of their age, but when they are retired they don't even try to gain new knowledge.«</p>	<p>Prejudice against the elderly regarding understanding of modern technology</p> <p>Prejudice against the elderly – they have bad memory because of their age</p>

»...we don't respect them as we should, as it used to be«, »...older people used to be respected and they are not nowadays...«, »...older people don't have a role in our society although they used to be the head of their family...«, »...we can find all the information we need on the Internet today. Older people don't use the Internet much and their experience is not relevant any more«. International research supports the obtained results. Age discrimination research results show that, besides stereotypes about illness and older people's inability, the next most common form of age discrimination is disrespect for the elderly¹². Participants' answers clearly show that they have noticed changes in the attitude of the society towards the elderly, who, in their opinion, are not only disrespected but their contribution to the society is not appreciated either: »I think that the society treats older people very badly.«, »...very bad, it has never been like this, older people have never been treated so badly...«, »The situation is very difficult, I think the society doesn't appreciate older people's contribution...«.

Excluding older people from the society

Abuse, ignoring, avoiding and lack of interest in the elderly are also doubtlessly types of discrimination. The participants believe that the society does not show enough interest in the elderly: »We, young people, don't have enough time for the elderly... We don't have time to listen to their stories.« Neglect is also described: »We don't pay enough attention to older people and we even don't visit

them regularly.«, »Young people don't listen to the elderly«. The participants feel that older people are considered useless: »We think older people are taking our place in the society, we would like to work when we finish school...«. The problem of the lack of intergenerational solidarity was recognized by the Croatian Government which adopted a program for promotion of solidarity among generations between 2008 and 2011.

Incidence of prejudice and discrimination against the elderly in all age groups

Research participants have recognized discrimination in all age groups, which means that even the elderly themselves discriminate against the members of their own age group: »I think that older people are sometimes ruder to one another...«, »You know, there are old people who somehow do not respect other old people and nothing satisfies them...«. Research shows that negative prejudice against the elderly is shared by young, middle-aged and older people alike¹³. Participants in the research believe that middle-aged people behave badly towards the elderly – »...our parents are often irritated by older people«. If we regard the middle generation as a so-called sandwich generation, trapped between their children's needs and good parenting on the one hand, and their aging parents' needs and fulfilling their obligations as children on the other, we find the explanation why the frustrations of the middle generation are manifested in the way they treat older people.

Young People's Views on the Causes of Discrimination against the Elderly

Negative feelings amongst young people as a trigger for discrimination against the elderly

There is ample evidence which shows that frequent frustrations lead to hostile behavior in some individuals¹⁴. To justify their behavior they use stereotypes against the whole group despite the differences that characterize each member of the group³. According to research participants young people today are unhappy and frustrated: »...we, young people, don't have future, it is hard to find a job nowadays«, »...all the older people who are eligible for retirement should go so that we can work...« Young people feel that old people take their jobs. This clash of generations on the labour market results in the discrimination against the weak, i.e. older people. In a research on youth unemployment in Croatia young people named older employees as an obstacle to finding a job because they think older people occupy their positions¹⁵.

Insufficient orientation of young people towards true values

A research conducted among high school students in eastern Croatia shows that young people prioritize their values in the following way: love, health, friendship, money, freedom, honesty, education and work, while older respondents named family, honesty and friendship¹⁶. Results of this research confirm the abovementioned results. Research participants think that members of their generation are focused only on themselves and that they ignore older people's opinions: »...we, young people, think we know everything, we have information at hand...«, »...we can't actually learn anything from older people because they are not well informed...«

Inadequate education of young people at home and at school

Research participants have recognized the role of upbringing in a child's development, attitude formation and behavior later in life: »...our parents don't have enough time for us, they work a lot...«, »There are a lot of parents who allow their children everything...«, »Our upbringing definitely affects our attitudes; we are products of our families...«, »There are a lot of people our age who say very bad things about their parents...«. Family is the basis for positive youth development¹⁷. A study of important people in children's lives confirmed the thesis that both immediate and wider family are the most important educational factors¹⁶; thus the abovementioned also has impact on the development the value system. In order to influence the opinions and attitudes of children (acquiring values), parents should first become aware of their example for acquiring positive values so that their children could adopt them. Apart from the parents, another important educational factor is school, which should be the place for acquiring real values, and research participants have admitted it in the following statement: »...we have learnt everything we

know about ageing from television or from our parents. There is not much talk about it at school.« Teachers are important for children's education and their influence is about 12%. It is, therefore, important if and how socially desirable values are promoted in schools¹⁶.

How the elderly treat young people

Participants claim that older people are one of the causes of age discrimination: »A lot depends on the older people, they act as though they are in charge...«, »Older people can't adapt to younger people...« The individual is not only a member of the society undergoing a process of adjustment, but also the object of other member's expectations, so the society applies pressure on the individual to fit in, adjust, if he/she wants to be accepted¹⁸. In this context it means that older people are objects of young people's expectations.

Young People's Prejudices against the Elderly

Prejudice about old people's personalities

Regarding the character, the elderly are often attributed the following negative personality traits: conservatism, rigidity, bad temper, stubbornness, avarice, egocentricity, egoism, cynism, etc⁸. Young people, namely student population, have similar opinions. In a research conducted at the University of Zadar students described older people as senile (56%), bad-tempered (52%), nostalgic (15%), afraid of death (13%), forgetful (12%), too sensitive (12%), and stubborn (10%)¹⁹. Our participants also claim that our society is prejudiced and considers the elderly boring: »Well, they are boring, they talk about their illnesses all the time and keep repeating the same things...«

Prejudice about the elderly's usefulness in the society

Some authors claim that the prevailing opinion about the elderly in the society is that they are unable to contribute to the society and thus become useless members of the community²⁰. According to our participants the prevailing prejudice in our society is that older people waste their time: »The elderly have a lot of time and they don't know how to use it...«, and that they are not very useful to the society: »Older people can only offer their years of knowledge, but we can easily acquire it today anyway.« There are also stereotypes such as: »creativity decreases with age, the elderly are not very creative and they don't have any desire either.«

Prejudice against the intellectual abilities of the elderly

There are enormous differences among the elderly and numerous factors affect the speed and general decline of intellectual abilities⁸. Some of the most common prejudices against the elderly are related to their intellectual abilities²¹. »The elderly use today's modern technology less; it's not meant for them, anyway, they don't understand it.« Research participants state that older people have a poor

memory: »Older people have a bad memory because of their age...« (Figure 1)

On the basis of the obtained research results we can identify functions of institutions changing young people's views and helping them to stick to their opinion about the

elderly in the society: family, education and political systems.

According to the participants' answers we have found out that older people lose their function of the ones who used to transmit knowledge in their families: »...older peo-

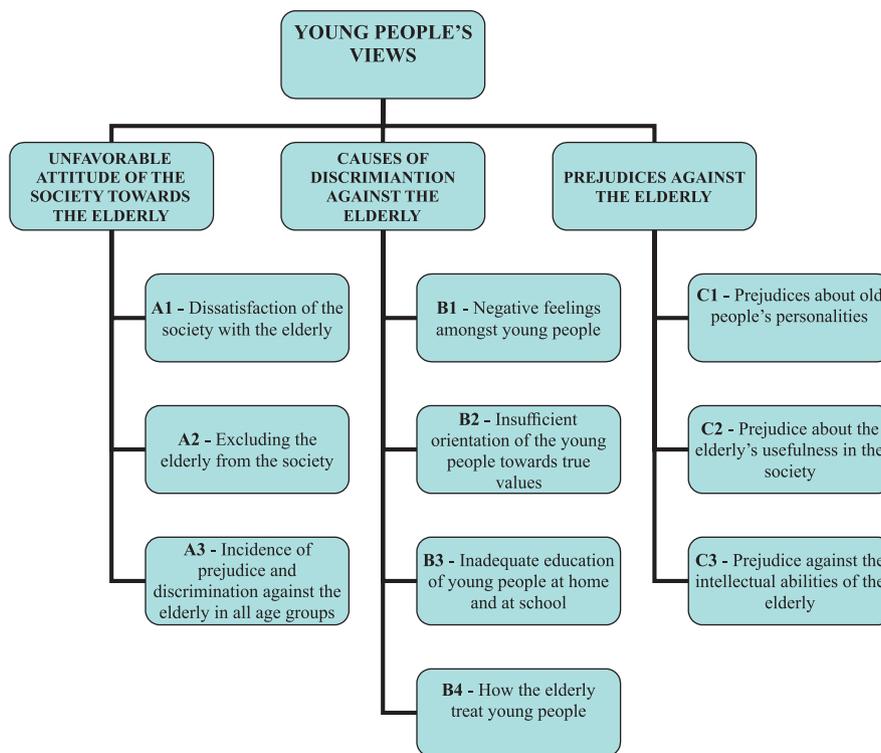


Fig. 1. An overview of statements according to the codes and categories.

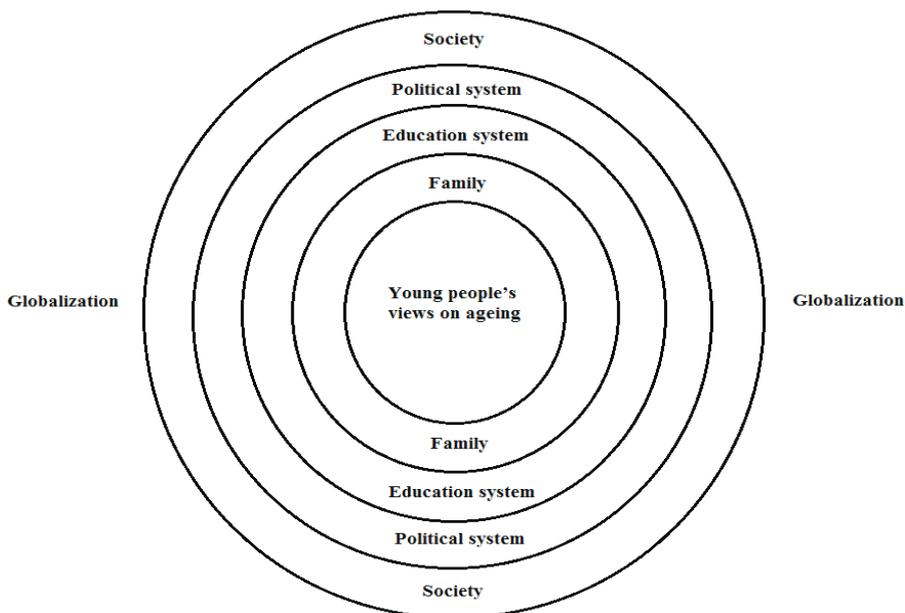


Fig. 2. Functions of institutions according to young people's views on ageing.

ple don't have a role in our society although they used to be the head of their family...«. »We can find all the information we need on the Internet today. Older people don't use the Internet much and their experience is not relevant any more.« Parents' role is also very important in children's education: »There are a lot of parents who allow their children everything...«, »Our upbringing definitely affects our attitudes; we are products of our families.« The next most important influence on young people's views is the education system: »We have learnt everything we know about ageing from television or from our parents.« Young people's responses indicate that the education system has an important role in forming their attitudes and views. And finally, the political system should reinforce the basic values in the society, but, according to the responses, the participants blame older people for the insecurity about the future: »...we, young people, don't have future, it is hard to find a job nowadays«, »all the older people who are eligible for retirement should go so that we can work«. After being influenced by the family, education system and political system, a complete opinion about the society is formed: »I think that the society treats older people very badly.«, »...The situation is very bad, it has never been like this, older people have never been treated so badly...«. »The situation is very difficult, I think the society doesn't appreciate older people's contribution.« Another factor affecting young people's views is globalization, which has caused positive and negative processes. The world is becoming interconnected and everything happening at a local level can be reflected globally. Globalization is a result of a continuous and overall information and communication technology progress: »we, young people, think we know everything, we have information at hand«, »...we can't actually learn anything from older people because they are not well informed...«. »Older people can only offer their years of knowledge, but we can easily acquire it today anyway«, »The elderly use today's modern technology less; it's not meant for them, anyway, they don't understand it.« (Figure 2)

Conclusion

Research results indicate there is a negative attitude of the environment towards the elderly. Our partici-

pants, belonging to Generation Z, believe that older people are excluded from the society and they have recognized negative attitude towards the elderly in all age groups, even amongst older people. Research participants have singled out causes of age discrimination against the elderly. Firstly, there are negative feelings amongst young people as a trigger for discrimination against older people; secondly, there is insufficient orientation of young people towards true values which can be associated with inadequate education (at home and at school); but older people should take some responsibility since young people think that the elderly often do not behave adequately towards young people.

On the basis of the obtained research results we can identify institutions changing young people's views and helping them to stick to their opinion about the elderly in the society: family, education and political systems.

The importance of dealing with age discrimination should be considered in the context of consequences for the society in general and individuals. The number of older people is growing and their dependence on other people for help and care is to be expected, which will require not only social action in order to adapt and build the necessary infrastructure, but also promote and enable the elderly to exercise their rights²². It is also important to encourage intergenerational solidarity and older people to expand their social network and become more active, realize their interests and strive together to create a society open for all generations. It seems we are living in an age of extreme popularization of youth, fun and attractiveness as a source of happiness while ageing is perceived as ugly, more than ever before. Experience that comes only with age is neglected, as well as skills that old people have and young do not. The whole environment, community, society and family should be involved in solving problems related to young people's views on ageing.

It is necessary to increase awareness of contribution of older people to the society and ways in which this contribution can be recognized. It is a priority to improve the media campaign, organize public debates and actions and include the elderly as a valuable segment of the society.

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GLOBALIZACIJA, PROCES STARENJA I STAVOVI MLADIH GENERACIJA PREMA STARENJU

SAŽETAK

S obzirom na porast udjela starije populacije u većini društava, čini se važnim istražiti ovu problematiku s različitih aspekata u cilju poboljšanja položaja starijih i prepoznavanja njihovog doprinosa u društvu. Cilj istraživanja bio je ispitati iskustva i mišljenja generacije Z, o predrasudama i diskriminaciji prema starijim osobama. Ispitanici su bili mlađe životne dobi, prema starosti pripadaju generaciji Z. Podaci su prikupljeni putem fokus grupe, a koristila su se pitanja otvorenog tipa. Rezultati kvalitativnog istraživanja ukazuju na: 1) nepovoljan odnos društva prema starijim osobama, 2) uzroke diskriminacije starijih osoba, 3) predrasude prema starijim osobama. Bolja edukacija (posebno djece i mladih), neposredni kontakt sa starijim osobama (omogućavanje susreta za razmjenu iskustava te prenošenja tradicijskih i kulturnih vrijednosti), te bolja medijska prezentacija starenja i starosti doprinijela bi smanjenju globalizacije starenja i boljem odnosu mladih generacija prema starenju. Važan utjecaj na poglede mladih ima obitelj i potrebno je motivirati roditelje da pozitivno prezentiraju starenje i starost. Također, važno je raditi i sa starijim osobama u smislu njihovog osnaživanja i razvijanja pozitivnije slike o sebi.

